

What Are We Buying?

According to the Homescan data, consumers spent \$223 billion on food at retail stores in 1999. Expenditures on fruits and vegetables accounted for 7.6 percent and 7.7 percent of this total. Fresh fruits and vegetables accounted for more than half of all expenditures on fruits and vegetables, while canned vegetables and fruit juices accounted for almost one-third of expenditures. In comparison, consumers spent 9 percent on bakery products, 8 percent on red meat, 6 percent on carbonated soft drinks, 4.3 percent on cheese, 3.4 percent on breakfast cereals, and 3.2 percent on candy (table 2).

We ranked the 27 fruits and 30 vegetables in our sample according to quantity purchased, expenditures, and total servings purchased, regardless of the form in which they were purchased (fresh, canned, frozen, or juice). Again, totals include only the processed products that are plain, unflavored, and/or unsweetened (to the extent possible).

Among the 27 fruits, Americans spent the most money on oranges, bought the most pounds of bananas, and ate the most servings of apples (table 3). These three fruits were the top three in quantity and servings, and among the top four in expenditures (consumers spent more on grapes than apples). For most fruits (except for watermelon and plums), quantity, cost, and servings are closely related.

Among the 30 vegetables, potatoes accounted for the largest share of expenditures, pounds purchased, and servings eaten (table 4). Potato totals were more than three times as many pounds purchased, and nearly four times as many servings (but only 15 percent more dollars) as tomatoes, the second most popular vegetable in all three categories.

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Table 2—Expenditures on food purchased at retail outlets, 1999

Food Category	Dollars	% of total	Food Category	Dollars	% of total
All foods	222,862,762,989	100			
Meat, poultry, and fish	41,078,298,793	18.4	Salty snacks including nuts	9,082,146,112	4.1
Red meat	17,664,342,800	7.9	Potato chips and sticks	2,500,371,872	1.1
Cold cuts, hot dogs, and spreads	8,559,269,929	3.8	Nuts and seeds	2,073,034,267	0.9
Poultry	6,429,383,509	2.9	Corn chips	1,624,490,878	0.7
Fish and shellfish	4,718,826,619	2.1	Popcorn	969,086,339	0.4
Bacon and sausage	3,706,475,935	1.7	Miscellaneous	885,989,636	0.4
			Pretzels	582,217,099	0.3
Bakery, cereal, and grain products	38,005,481,355	17.1	Cheese products	446,956,021	0.2
Cakes, pies, cookies, and other sweet products	11,881,544,428	5.3			
Bread, rolls, bagels, biscuits, and muffins	9,148,486,715	4.1	Candy, gum, and mints	8,104,053,108	3.6
Cereal	7,496,772,893	3.4	Candy	7,163,102,158	3.2
Crackers, croutons, and bars	4,812,948,468	2.2	Gum	650,816,951	0.3
Rice, pasta, and noodles	2,410,965,454	1.1	Mints	175,090,160	0.1
Crusts, shells, and tortillas	1,280,885,167	0.6	Marshmallows	115,043,838	0.1
Barley, meal, grits, and flour	629,221,254	0.3			
Miscellaneous	344,656,975	0.2	Sauces, gravies, marinades, etc.	5,796,967,387	2.6
			Sauces	3,819,277,789	1.7
Dairy, eggs, and dairy/egg substitutes	30,560,579,959	13.7	Catsup, mustard, relish	859,817,937	0.4
Milk, cream, and milk/cream substitutes	10,535,389,250	4.7	Dips and spreads	451,324,196	0.2
Cheese	9,614,062,455	4.3	Gravy	364,609,882	0.2
Desserts, toppings, and yogurt	7,389,271,370	3.3	Vinegar and cooking wine	211,079,375	0.1
Eggs and egg mixes	1,584,148,655	0.7			
Butter	969,467,368	0.4	Salad dressings, cooking fats and oils	4,937,384,840	2.2
Sour cream	468,240,860	0.2	Salad dressing	2,284,275,202	1.0
			Margarine	1,264,788,199	0.6
Beverages other than juice	22,978,356,323	10.3	Cooking oil	1,215,793,487	0.5
Soft drinks	13,284,342,252	6.0	Shortening and lard	172,527,951	0.1
Coffee, tea, cocoa, and breakfast drinks	5,653,300,350	2.5			
Fruit drinks and cider	2,903,185,329	1.3	Sugar/sugar substitutes, syrups, jams, etc.	3,819,112,513	1.7
Water	1,047,754,065	0.5	Sugar	1,171,015,097	0.5
			Peanut butter	879,583,291	0.4
Prepared meals/foods and soups	21,824,493,722	9.8	Jams, jellies, etc.	588,370,669	0.3
Entrees	9,688,724,654	4.3	Syrup	518,034,553	0.2
Miscellaneous	5,160,473,481	2.3	Sugar substitutes	289,307,738	0.1
Soups and stews	4,058,105,056	1.8	Honey	172,445,256	0.1
Pizza	2,375,599,930	1.1			
Snacks	541,590,601	0.2	Baking ingredients, gelatin, and pudding	2,214,189,078	1.0
			Chocolate syrup and chips	528,776,413	0.2
Vegetables	17,078,081,999	7.7	Pudding, gelatin, and other desserts	1,300,739,961	0.6
Fresh vegetables	8,465,366,602	3.8	Frosting and icing	351,249,832	0.2
Canned vegetables	4,837,535,868	2.2			
Frozen vegetables	2,663,600,587	1.2	Baby food	547,893,734	0.2
Vegetable juice	575,116,743	0.3			
Dried vegetables	536,462,198	0.2			
Fruits	16,835,724,066	7.6			
Fresh fruit	8,610,268,154	3.9			
Fruit juices	5,532,993,792	2.5			
Canned fruit	1,575,493,542	0.7			
Dried fruit	938,922,676	0.4			
Frozen fruit	178,045,903	0.1			

Source: ACNielsen Homescan data.

Table 3—Fresh and processed fruits: Quantity purchased at retail outlets, expenditures, and servings, 1999

Item	Quantity purchased		Expenditures		Servings	
	Million pounds	Ranking	Million dollars	Ranking	Millions	Ranking
Apples	2,243.2	3	1,530.5	4	1,3026.0	1
Apricots	48.8	22	91.4	18	374.6	18
Avocados	91.8	17	94.5	17	376.2	17
Bananas	3,606.5	1	1,622.6	2	9,737.6	2
Blackberries ¹	5.9	26	21.6	24	31.8	26
Blueberries	86.9	18	136.3	16	511.5	15
Cantaloupes	696.3	7	422.5	7	1998.4	9
Cherries	100.3	16	173.4	14	415.1	16
Cranberries	50.4	21	37.1	23	134.7	22
Figs	0.2	27	0.6	27	1.7	27
Grapefruit	753.4	6	411.7	8	2,252.0	7
Grapes	1,323.4	4	1,541.9	3	6,877.6	4
Honeydew	118.3	15	79.7	19	289.9	19
Kiwi	55.5	20	49.9	22	232.4	21
Mangoes	65.0	19	50.8	21	246.3	20
Nectarines	209.4	13	215.6	13	1,120.3	12
Oranges	2,836.7	2	1,687.8	1	7,038.7	3
Papayas	20.9	24	16.3	26	89.1	24
Peaches	365.1	10	353.3	10	1,594.6	10
Pears	259.5	12	230.7	12	1,051.5	13
Pineapples	409.7	9	346.2	11	1,410.2	11
Plums/prunes	346.5	11	790.8	5	2,414.8	6
Raspberries	16.9	25	64.4	20	102.0	23
Strawberries	418.8	8	620.8	6	2,174.0	8
Tangelos	21.9	23	20.9	25	73.1	25
Tangerines	154.1	14	154.0	15	599.6	14
Watermelon	1,166.8	5	375.5	9	3,558.7	5
Total	15,472.4		11,140.9		57,732.5	

Note: Includes only plain, unflavored, and/or unsweetened (to the extent possible) processed products.

¹Excludes some fresh blackberries that were included in a category called 'other berries' that could not be separated by type of berry.

Source: Calculated by the authors using ACNielsen Homescan data.

Table 4—Fresh and processed vegetables: Quantity purchased at retail outlets, expenditures, and servings, 1999

Item	Quantity purchased		Expenditures		Servings	
	Million pounds	Ranking	Million dollars	Ranking	Millions	Ranking
Asparagus	127.5	18	211.0	14	316.4	21
Beans, green	997.5	5	594.0	6	4,320.1	5
Beets	43.0	22	28.0	23	124.4	23
Broccoli	429.9	10	433.7	9	3,325.4	8
Brussels sprouts	32.4	23	43.1	22	156.8	22
Cabbage	464.5	9	195.9	15	3,666.1	6
Carrots	997.3	6	796.3	3	5,668.2	4
Cauliflower	156.0	17	174.9	17	980.4	15
Celery	350.0	12	281.0	12	2,135.2	12
Collard greens	20.0	25	18.5	25	57.3	26
Corn, sweet	1,096.8	4	726.3	4	3,434.5	7
Cucumber	368.1	11	276.3	13	2,282.3	11
Eggplant	26.0	24	25.3	24	87.2	24
Kale ¹	5.3	30	4.7	30	24.5	30
Lettuce, iceberg	621.2	7	484.1	8	3,230.4	9
Lettuce, red leaf/green leaf	82.2	20	86.9	20	446.1	20
Lettuce, romaine, fresh	109.2	19	128.0	19	854.5	17
Mushrooms	220.0	15	527.6	7	1,778.2	13
Mustard greens ¹	9.3	29	8.5	29	45.0	27
Okra ¹	13.3	27	18.0	26	65.6	25
Onions	1,292.0	3	717.2	5	6,007.0	3
Peas, green	525.7	8	340.3	11	1,741.2	14
Pepper, bell	342.4	13	381.5	10	2,516.5	10
Potatoes	4,964.9	1	1,717.6	1	26,226.8	1
Radishes	76.2	21	62.0	21	582.9	18
Spinach	172.1	16	162.5	18	555.7	19
Squash, summer	10.9	28	12.8	28	40.4	29
Sweetpotatoes	291.2	14	176.8	16	937.8	16
Tomatoes	1,618.5	2	1,495.1	2	6,970.3	2
Turnip greens ¹	16.3	26	13.7	27	45.0	28
Total	15,479.7		10,141.7		78,622.1	

Note: Includes only plain, unflavored (to the extent possible) processed products.

¹Excludes some fresh greens that were included in a category called 'other vegetables' that could not be separated by specific vegetable.

Source: Calculated by the authors using ACNielsen Homescan data.