MUNICIPAL MONEY MATTERS

Philadelphia City Controller Christy Brady

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Cost of Thanksgiving: From the Bicentennial to America's 250th

In 1776, the year the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia, Thanksgiving was very different from the celebrations we know today. As the colonies fought for independence, the Continental Congress called for a day of fasting and prayer. It wasn't until 1863 that President Abraham Lincoln established Thanksgiving as an annual national observance.

As Philadelphia celebrates America's 250th anniversary, we look back at how Thanksgiving costs have changed since the nation's Bicentennial in 1976. A traditional meal for 10 people is estimated to cost $73.21, compared to $15.93 in 1976, an increase of approximately 360%.

During that time, the prices of many Thanksgiving staples have increased significantly, including dinner rolls (721%), fresh cranberries (485%), and whole milk (482%).



How the Cost of a Traditional Thanksgiving Meal Has Changed Since America's Bicentennial

Item	1976*	2026**	50 Yr. $ Diff	50 Yr. % Diff
Turkey, 16 lbs.	$7.54	$30.56	$23.02	305%
Whole Milk	$0.86	$5.01	$4.15	482%
Pumpkin Pie Mix	$1.52	$4.51	$2.99	197%
Whipping Cream	$0.70	$2.76	$2.06	294%
Cubed Stuffing, 12 oz	$1.35	$5.94	$4.59	340%
Green Peas, 1 lb.	$0.32	$1.85	$1.53	477%
Dinner Rolls, 12 rolls	$0.58	$4.76	$4.18	721%
Sweet Potatoes, 3 lbs.	$0.68	$3.94	$3.26	479%
Fresh Cranberries, 12 oz	$0.35	$2.05	$1.70	485%
Pie Shells	$0.87	$5.07	$4.20	482%
Misc. Ingredients/Relish Tray	$1.16	$6.76	$5.60	483%
Total	**$15.93**	**$73.21**	**$57.28**	**360%**

* Cost adjusted over time using BLS CPI Inflation Calculator.

**The cost for each item was calculated by averaging prices from six separate grocery stores in the City of Philadelphia.

Blast from the past: In 1976 Philadelphia celebrated the nation's bicentennial, commemorating 200 years since the Declaration of Independence was adopted. Mayor Frank L Rizzo started his second term, while William G. Klenk II remained as the City's Controller. Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visited to present Philadelphia with the Bicentennial Bell, and the African American Museum was built in 1976 to celebrate America's Bicentennial.

This year was also significant for sports in Philadelphia as the city hosted multiple major games and the Flyers made their third consecutive appearance at the Stanley Cup Finals.

From all of us here at the Controller's Office, we wish you a happy and healthy Thanksgiving!

Each month Controller Brady looks forward to bringing transparency and accountability of our city, right to you.