

Basic food costs at SA's big retailers compared

The high cost of food has been a hot topic. Reasons for the increases range from the war in Ukraine to the weaker rand, and natural disasters such as the floods in KwaZulu-Natal - a province in which many South African factories are situated.



Source: Supplied

Personal finance portal JustMoney compared the costs of 13 basic goods at three leading supermarket outlets.

Last year, the company examined the cost of 12 basic food items at three major retailers – Checkers, Pick n Pay, and Woolworths. This year, the survey included a 13th item – cooking oil – the cost of which has risen due to the factors noted above, in addition to a mismatch between supply and demand, and unnecessary stockpiling.

Pick n Pay most affordable

While the cheapest shopping experience last year could be found at Checkers, this year the position goes – only just – to Pick n Pay. For example, the retailer's 16-piece uncooked chicken packs cost R83.82 on the day that JustMoney shopped, versus R124.18 for a similar item at Checkers and R186.28 at Woolworths. A 2.25 litre bottle of Coca-Cola at Pick n Pay cost R13, compared with R17.99 at Checkers and R20.99 at Woolworths.

The 2022 items included one of each of the following: A loaf of white bread, a small pack of bananas, a 2.5kg bag of sugar, 80 Freshpak rooibos teabags, one litre of long-life milk, two litres of cooking oil, a 410g tin of baked beans, nine rolls of

toilet paper, a 2.25 litre bottle of Coca-Cola, 16 pieces of uncooked chicken, a 2kg bag of potatoes, a 2kg bag of white rice and 2kg Sunlight 2-in-1 washing powder.



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Last year, the cost of these household baskets came in at R368.71 at Checkers, R411.99 at Pick n Pay, and R442.34 at Woolworths. This year, including the addition of cooking oil, the totals were R519.71 at Pick n Pay, R521.06 at Checkers, and R624.16 at Woolworths.

“Our advice to consumers is to roam the aisles across supermarket chains, or make comparisons on the shopping apps, as there are plenty of discounts and specials to be found,” says Shafeeka Anthony, marketing manager of JustMoney.

Checkers boasts best loyalty benefits

While Pick n Pay Smart Shopper offered the best benefits in 2021, this year the accolade went to Checkers. Major savings were available immediately when swiping an Xtra Savings card.

A nine-roll Rose Collection toilet paper pack was thus reduced from R69.99 to R59.99, two bottles of 2.25 litres of Coca-Cola went for R30.99 (usually R17.99 each or R36 overall), and a 2kg bag of Spekko white rice came in at R24.99 versus R32.99 without an Xtra Savings card.

Woolworths offers best shopping experience

Once again, Woolworths ranked highest in terms of shopping experience. JustMoney notes the stores are designed for comfort as much as convenience, and products are visually appealing. It also helps that café-quality coffee can be had in-store – and for only R23 when using a WRewards card, versus up to R40 for a similar coffee elsewhere.



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Loyalty cards can boost affordability

Checkers: Shoppers can save on more than 1,000 products each month by swiping their Xtra Savings card. These discounts are clearly marked in store, and savings are accumulated straight away at the till.

Pick n Pay: Swiping the Smart Shopper card on purchase in store will earn consumers a point per R2 spent. The more swipes, including at partners such as BP, the more points accumulated, which can be spent in any Pick n Pay store.

Woolworths: Woolworths' loyalty programme provides up to 10% instant savings on over 1,000 specially marked food, fashion and homeware items. The more spent, the higher the tier and the greater the rewards. Additional Green Rewards apply on eco-friendly products.



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JustMoney states that these findings show that all is not lost for local grocery shoppers. The main supermarkets are reaching out to consumers with store-card specials, combo deals, in-house items, and low-cost brands that are new to market.

“It makes such financial sense to become a savvy shopper, comparing costs on similar (if not exactly the same) items, adding up rewards on loyalty cards, and calculating how much it costs to buy in bulk,” says Anthony.

“You can also save money by purchasing food and beverages online or via an app. Benefits include fuel savings, parking cost avoidance, fewer distractions to tempt you, and the convenience of using a digital platform. Look out for website specials and discounts on items that you won’t find in physical stores.”

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