

Go ahead, judge me for my grocery bill





There are a lot of things you can learn by studying your grocery store receipts. GETTY IMAGES

Food, Honestly is a monthly column discussing how people actually eat right now – not through reviews or recipes, but through real talk about cost, convenience and everyday food decisions. We want you to participate in that discussion by telling us what matters to you. Email allysoneatsden@gmail.com to keep the conversation going.

Not long ago, Bon Appetit magazine published a wildly entertaining (and mildly classist) column called The Receipt. Each week, an orchestra conductor or a pastor or a person in some other occupation that made way more money than you'd think would share receipts for every single thing they ate, often at restaurants.

The comments were gold, as judgey and sarcastic as Internet people can be.

As much as it made me chuckle to read about a pilot in San Francisco's \$555 pork chop, what I really want to know is what regular people spend at the grocery store. A The Receipt for normal people at Safeway. Like, is my \$130 a week average for my family of four admirable or alarming? Am I slowly killing my children by not buying organic and farm-raised everything? Am I too obsessed with eliminating food waste, or not obsessed enough?

If you share my "Am I Normal?" neurosis, let me offer you a glimpse into my spending habits, culinary aspirations and unresolved psychological issues via Exhibit A: my \$144.30 King Soopers receipt. Please feel free to judge me. I would.

Here are my four major conclusions:

1. I am very cheap.
2. I live in low-grade fear that non-organic cuties and spinach will someday give my children a terrible disease, but not enough to spend an extra \$1.50.
3. It's possible that I buy way more bananas than the average person.
4. And I should probably seek therapy for my deeply ingrained scarcity mindset. (But then again, it's kind of difficult to rationalize \$200-an-hour therapy when you have, you know, a scarcity mindset.)

Total spent: \$144.30*

*Note that we have no food allergies or dietary issues of any kind, unless you count my husband's distaste for chicken and, well, pretty much any non-bacon or steak meat and my 12-year-old son's 10,000-calories-a-day intake as issues.

Most expensive item: a skirt steak for \$17.28, the smallest one they had, because a \$20 steak feels downright Elon-esque.

Least expensive item: a lime for 50 cents that I'm pretty sure I ended up throwing away, but my husband always thinks he needs fresh limes and then does not do anything with them. This makes me crazy, but he insists and so I choose my battles.

Percentage of Kroger brand items: 53. This actually seems deceptively low, because it's not like I bought the fancy steak; I just don't know the brand. I also have no brand loyalty whatsoever and would have happily eschewed the \$3.79 Keebler chocolate pie crust (I really like cheesecake) had Kroger given me the opportunity to. The Barilla rigatoni was on sale, making it the same price (\$1.99) as the Kroger brand — score!

Organic? I bought the Simple Truth brown eggs for \$2.99; does that count? Also, rainbow carrots for \$2.49.

Things I maybe should have bought organic, but did not: An avocado for \$1; Sun Pacific cuties for \$4.49; Kroger tender spinach for \$2.19; tomatoes for \$1.40; a cucumber for 79 cents; and Italian parsley for \$1.29.

Price difference had I purchased said organic items: Maybe \$4? I should really look into this, but my scarcity brain tells me that \$4 is reckless spending. Most purchased item: Two cream cheeses at \$1.79 each (remember that I really like cheesecake?); two packages of bacon at \$3.99 each (I recently discovered the greatness of BLTs at age 44); two packs of Reese's peanut butter cups for \$2.49 each (for the kids!); and 5½ pounds of bananas for \$3.07 (is that a lot of bananas? I don't even know!).

Impulse buys: This might be the most embarrassing category of all. Nothing. I am a very disciplined person who sticks to the list, and even the treats for the kids were premeditated, so I did not indulge in anything extra this week.

Worth it: The Kroger brand sliced Muenster for \$2.49 seems like a steal, as does its gallon of milk for \$1.99. (Scarcity mind loves a good three-day sale!)

Not worth it: The \$3.67 Taylor Farms salad kit that I threw out a week and a half later because who ever wants to eat salad? Not me! Plus, the Private Selection honey ham for \$6.99 that no one eats in spite of me yelling, "Make a sandwich!" whenever the kids complain that there's no food in the house.

And the \$1.79 bundle of mustard greens that my husband thought was lettuce.

Total number of items: 45

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Dinners made with all this food: Skirt steak with chimichurri and roasted carrots; Dijon sausage rigatoni; rice bowls with cucumber salad and gochujang shrimp; bacon, spinach and shallot frittata; and pizza.

Cost per family dinner: \$12.50, but with the huge caveat that we have a fully stocked kitchen so many of the ingredients — especially things like oil, spices, condiments, frozen items and canned goods — didn't need to be purchased this week. Had I bought everything new, I surely would have had an aneurysm at checkout.

So there you go. Judge me and my King Soopers spending habits. I'll just be over here calculating the unit price of therapy.

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