**Monster Month for the Meat Department in October 2024**

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**October in Review**

* October sales were heavily disrupted in the substantial Southeast region, where hurricanes Helene and Milton left millions of people without power for varying amounts of time. While boosting the sales of some center-store categories, the net result for fresh categories varied widely in the Southeast.
* The Consumer Sentiment Index by the University of Michigan remained relatively stable at 70.5 in October 2024. The early November readings show some consumer optimism. The overall sentiment index increased to 73 in the first week of November 2024 — the highest in seven months. The expectations index soared to 78.5, the highest since July 2021 and expectations over personal finances climbed by 6%.
* Circana’s monthly survey of primary shoppers found that 88% of all meals are home-prepared, whereas the share who have gotten takeout in the past few weeks is down a bit (49%), just like meal delivery (15%). On the other hand, 50% of consumers have gone to a restaurant over the past few weeks.
* The vast majority of purchases continue to happen in-store, with only 12% of consumers in the Circana survey indicating they purchase most or all groceries online. Another 24% purchase some or a little online, leaving 64% of consumers who purchase groceries in-store exclusively.
* 79% of consumers in the Circana survey report they will celebrate Thanksgiving the usual way. Check the What’s Next? section for the big lessons from the 2023 season.

**Inflation Insights**

In October 2024 (the five weeks ending 11/3/2024), the price per unit across all foods and beverages in the Circana MULO+ universe stood at $4.29. This reflects an increase of 2.2% over October 2023. While fresh food (+2.8%) increased more than center-store (+2.0%) prices, the gap narrowed in October compared to the last few quarters. Compared to the pre-pandemic baseline, the average price per unit of $4.29 is 37.0% higher than the 2019 average of $3.13. October inflation also accelerated a bit in comparison to the third quarter of the year, when prices increased 1.8% across all food and beverages.

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| Avg. price/ unit vs.YA | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | Q3 2023 | Q4 2023 | Q1 2024 | Q2 2024 | Q3 2024 | Oct  2024 |
| Total food & beverages | +2.0% | +5.7% | +5.5% | +12.5% | +6.1% | +4.0% | +2.4% | +1.2% | +1.5% | +1.8% | +2.2% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total U.S., MULO+

The average price per pound in the meat department across all cuts and kinds, both fixed and random weight, stood at $4.67 in October 2024, up 1.9% year-on-year. Processed meat prices rose the least in October, at a mere +0.1%.

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| Price inflation (price/volume) | Price/volume | Change vs. YA | Change vs.3YA |
| Total meat (FW and RW) October 2024 | $4.67 | +1.9% | +11.5% |
| Total meat latest 52 weeks | $4.57 | +2.2% | +13.7% |
| Fresh meat October 2024 | $4.48 | +2.9% | +8.4% |
| Fresh meat latest 52 weeks | $4.42 | +3.4% | +13.0% |
| Processed meat October 2024 | $5.18 | +0.1% | +8.6% |
| Processed meat latest 52 weeks | $4.94 | -0.2% | +8.5% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+

October brought a mix of price movements. Beef and hot dogs increased further, but it was fresh exotic (which includes bison) that had the highest price increase in October, at +6.8% over last year’s October. Several proteins experienced price decreases, including lamb, bacon and processed chicken.

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| October 2024 | Price/lbs | Change vs. YA | Latest 52 weeks | Price/lbs | Change vs. YA |
| Fresh beef | $6.68 | +3.5% | Fresh beef | $6.65 | +5.6% |
| Fresh chicken | $3.09 | +1.8% | Fresh chicken | $3.07 | +0.2% |
| Fresh pork | $3.15 | -1.2% | Fresh pork | $3.19 | +2.7% |
| Fresh turkey | $3.07 | 0.0% | Fresh turkey | $2.68 | +0.4% |
| Fresh lamb | $8.02 | -2.8% | Fresh lamb | $8.03 | -8.8% |
| Fresh exotic | $8.87 | +6.8% | Fresh exotic | $8.69 | +3.5% |
| Bacon | $6.18 | -5.7% | Bacon | $6.10 | +2.0% |
| Packaged lunchmeat | $6.02 | +2.1% | Packaged lunchmeat | $5.90 | -1.9% |
| Dinner sausage | $4.51 | -0.3% | Dinner sausage | $4.46 | -0.6% |
| Frankfurters | $3.64 | +4.4% | Frankfurters | $3.61 | +2.8% |
| Breakfast sausage | $4.77 | +1.6% | Breakfast sausage | $4.74 | +0.5% |
| Smoked ham | $3.70 | +2.0% | Smoked ham | $2.84 | -2.3% |
| Processed chicken | $6.43 | -2.2% | Processed chicken | $6.66 | -3.4% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+

**Meat Sales**

Meat department sales were on a roll in October, with fresh meat sales driving 8.0% gains to lead the department to an overall 5.4% increase over October 2023. The five October weeks generated $10.0 billion, with $7.1 billion for fresh meat. While inflation played a role, pound sales increased by 3.4%, also driven by strong gains in fresh meat.

In the 52-week view, dollars trended 4.3% ahead of last year. This increase reflects a combination of mild price increases and pound gains of 2.0%. Importantly, pound sales are also easily ahead of two years ago, at +1.7%.

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|  | October 2024 | | | | | Latest 52 weeks | | | |
|  | Dollar  size | Dollars  vs. YA | Dollars   vs. 2YA | lbs  vs. YA | lbs vs. 2YA | Dollars  vs. YA | Dollars   vs. 2YA | lbs  vs. YA | lbs vs. 2YA |
| Total meat department | **$10.0B** | **+5.4%** | **+5.6%** | **+3.4%** | **+0.9%** | **+4.3%** | **+5.1%** | **+2.0%** | **+1.7%** |
| Fresh meat | **$7.1B** | **+8.0%** | **+9.6%** | **+4.9%** | **+2.2%** | +6.4% | +8.2% | +2.9% | +3.2% |
| Processed meat | **$2.9B** | **-0.5%** | **-2.9%** | **-0.6%** | **-2.8%** | -0.3% | -1.3% | -0.1% | -2.0% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, MULO+

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|  | Dollars | $ vs. YA | Lbs vs. YA |
| October 2024 | **$10.0B** | **+5.4%** | **+3.4%** |
| W.E. 10-06-24 | $2.154B | +10.0% | +9.7% |
| W.E. 10-13-24 | $2.016B | +4.2% | +2.2% |
| W.E. 10-20-24 | $1.978B | +6.3% | +4.5% |
| W.E. 10-27-24 | $1.911B | +5.2% | +3.4% |
| W.E. 11-3-24 | $1.956B | +0.8% | -2.4% |

All October weeks experienced dollar growth in comparison to year-ago levels, with a big bump for the week ending October 6th. During this week, dollar sales increased 10.0% over the same week in 2023 and volume rose 9.7%.

Volume sales stayed ahead of last year during the October weeks, but fell slightly behind in the final week ending November 3rd, at -2.4%.

With October delivering another strong performance, the year-to-date meat department sales reached $87.0 billion, which reflects an increase of 4.7%. Year-to-date pound sales reached 18.6 billion, which is up 2.4% over the same period last year.

**Assortment**

Meat department assortment, measured in the number of weekly items per store, averaged 425 SKUs in October

2024. That number has been very steady all year and it will be interesting to see where the number will net out once the full holiday set is up.

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|  |  | | Average meat department items per store selling for … | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **2019** | **2020** | | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **Q2 23** | | **Q3 23** | | **Q4 23** | | **Q1 24** | | **Q2 24** | | **Q3 24** | | **Oct 24** |
| Total meat | 478 | 448 | | 448 | 439 | 434 | 437 | 433 | | 434 | | 430 | | 428 | | 424 | | 425 | |
| Change vs. YA | -- | -6.2% | | -0.0% | -2.1% | -1.0% | -1.8% | -0.9% | | -1.2% | | -0.7% | | -2.0% | | -1.0% | | -0.5% | |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+, average items per store selling

**Fresh Meat Sales by Protein**

Most proteins grew year-over-year dollar sales in October, led by beef and lamb. While inflation played a role, beef also grew pound sales by 7.5% in October, which was well ahead of the gains seen in chicken and pork. Lamb, at +11.5%, had the highest growth in October in comparison to October 2023. In the full-year view, lamb also had the highest year-on-year pound increases, at +14.4%, followed by exotic (mostly bison), and beef.

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| October 2024 | | | |  | | | | Latest 52 weeks | | |
| Type | **$ sales** | **$ vs. YA** | | | **Lbs vs. YA** | **Type** | **$ sales** | | **$ vs. YA** | **Lbs vs. YA** |
| Total fresh meat | **$7.1B** | | **+8.0%** | | **+4.9%** | **Total fresh meat** | **$72.2B** | | **+6.4%** | **+2.9%** |
| Fresh beef | $3.9B | | +11.2% | | +7.5% | Fresh beef | $39.5B | | +9.2% | +3.5% |
| Fresh chicken | $1.9B | | +5.5% | | +3.6% | Fresh chicken | $19.3B | | +3.3% | +3.1% |
| Fresh pork | $809M | | +4.8% | | +6.1% | Fresh pork | $8.4B | | +3.4% | +0.7% |
| Fresh turkey | $290M | | -4.1% | | -4.1% | Fresh turkey | $3.3B | | +4.1% | +3.7% |
| Fresh lamb | $81M | | +8.4% | | +11.5% | Fresh lamb | $889M | | +4.4% | +14.4% |
| Fresh exotic | $20M | | -9.0% | | -14.8% | Fresh exotic | $224M | | +10.3% | +6.6% |
| Veal | $5M | | -2.0% | | -6.7% | Veal | $44M | | -7.7% | -8.7% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, MULO+

**Processed Meat**

While September brought improved pound sales for processed meat with a strong Labor Day performance, pounds declined year-over-year in October, albeit by a mere 0.6%. Packaged lunchmeat pound sales were down 2.3% year-over-over and smoked ham sales are off to a slower start of the holiday season. As holiday purchase patterns continue to change, moving back closer to the holiday week, this is likely to self-correct in November. See the “What’s Next?” section for the 2023 Thanksgiving trends. In the full-year view, processed meat dollar and volume sales remained very close to last year’s levels.

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|  | October 2024 | |  | | | Latest 52 weeks | | | |
| Type | **$ sales** | **$ vs. YA** | | **Lbs vs. YA** | **Type** | | **$ sales** | **$ vs. YA** | **Lbs vs. YA** |
| Processed meat | **$2.9B** | **-0.5%** | | **-0.6%** | **Processed meat** | | **$31.5B** | **-0.3%** | **-0.1%** |
| Packaged lunchmeat | $677M | -0.2% | | -2.3% | Packaged lunchmeat | | $7.0B | -2.5% | -0.6% |
| Bacon | $652M | -0.8% | | +5.3% | Bacon | | $6.8B | +3.1% | +1.1% |
| Dinner sausage | $521M | +3.3% | | +3.6% | Dinner sausage | | $5.6B | +2.6% | +3.2% |
| Frankfurters | $287M | +6.1% | | +1.6% | Frankfurters | | $3.2B | +1.2% | -1.5% |
| Breakfast sausage | $229M | +1.8% | | +0.2% | Breakfast sausage | | $2.4B | +2.2% | +1.6% |
| Smoked ham | $81M | +1.6% | | -12.0% | Smoked ham | | $1.9B | -2.9% | -0.6% |
| Processed chicken | $80M | +16.0% | | +18.6% | Processed chicken | | $745M | -2.2% | +1.2% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+

**Grinds**Ground beef had another enormous month, with $1.6 billion in sales during the five October weeks. This was an increase of 8.5% in dollars and 4.6% in pounds versus October 2023. Ground pork and veal were the only grinds that lost ground year-over-year.

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|  | October 2024 | | |  | | | | Latest 52 weeks | | |
| Type | **$ sales** | **$ vs. YA** | | | **Lbs vs. YA** | **Type** | **$ sales** | | **$ vs. YA** | **Lbs vs. YA** |
| Ground beef | $1.55B | | +8.5% | | +4.6% | Ground beef | $15.1B | | +9.5% | +3.1% |
| Ground turkey | $194.6M | | +2.3% | | +3.6% | Ground turkey | $1.9B | | +3.8% | +5.2% |
| Ground chicken | $32.2M | | +7.3% | | +7.2% | Ground chicken | $323M | | +8.6% | +8.3% |
| Ground pork | $22.8M | | -2.1% | | -0.4% | Ground pork | $227M | | +2.9% | +3.1% |
| Ground lamb | $6.0M | | +15.1% | | +15.0% | Ground lamb | $51M | | +3.1% | +1.6% |
| Ground veal | $1.0M | | +0.3% | | -6.9% | Ground veal | $9.5M | | -7.7% | -16.5% |

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO+

**What’s Next?**

The two biggest holidays of the year are upon us. Here are some of the big takeaways from Thanksgiving 2023:

* Thanksgiving is the second-largest holiday of the year, behind only Christmas. The two weeks leading up to Thanksgiving 2023 reflected a sales lift of $2.4 billion (+6%) versus the average weekly sales throughout the year.
* The week leading up to and the week of the holiday account for 82% of the Thanksgiving sales uplift. Yet, early purchases can lead to repeat purchases and incremental items.
* Retailers increased the number of promotions for typical Thanksgiving basket items, but the depth of the discounts in 2023 was just a few percentage points higher than the discounts seen throughout the year. Leveraging secondary locations can help optimize the purchase.
* Nearly 80% of the main Thanksgiving meal is completely homemade, and 34% of respondents ​in Circana’s survey of primary shoppers say they expect to pay more for Thanksgiving groceries but will purchase the same amount this year.​
* Today’s prices for the typical Thanksgiving basket compared to 2023 point to approximate 2% inflation. However, today’s typical Thanksgiving ring will be around 26% higher than 2020 prices. For their everyday shop, consumers are visiting more stores capitalizing on sales promotions, underscoring the importance of capturing the most or all of the important Thanksgiving cart.

The next performance report in the [Circana](http://www.circana.com), 210 Analytics and [Hillphoenix](http://www.hillphoenix.com) series will be released mid-December to cover the November and Thanksgiving sales trends.

**Date ranges:**

2023: 52 weeks ending 12/31/2023

Q1 2024: 13 weeks ending 3/31/ 2024

Q2 2024: 13 weeks ending 6/30/2024

Q3 2024: 13 weeks ending 9/29/2024

October 2024: 5 weeks ending 11/3/2024