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## Christmas dinner should cost us a dollar or two less this year

It appears that Christmas dinner this year will cost a dollar or two less than last year, but a few more dollars than two years ago.

To mark the festive season, Statistics New Zealand has estimated the cost of traditional and barbecue Christmas dinners for a family of two adults and two children. The cost of each meal has been estimated using prices collected for the November 2009 food price index, and costs have been compared with prices for November 2008, 2007, and 1999.

This Christmas a traditional dinner is likely to cost about \$48.80, compared with about \$50.50 last year, a fall of about \$1.80 (3.5 percent). Since Christmas 2007, the cost of a traditional Christmas dinner has risen by about \$3.40 (7.4 percent) and since 1999 it has risen by \$13.50 (38.3 percent).

The cost of a kiwi barbecue Christmas dinner is likely to fall by about 90 cents (1.9 percent) from about \$49.80 last Christmas, to about \$48.80 this Christmas season. Over two years, the cost has risen by about \$2.80 (6.1 percent) since Christmas 2007 and by about \$11.10 (29.5 percent) since 10 years ago.

The biggest savings this year in the overall cost of a traditional Christmas dinner should come from whole chicken, which fell by about 50 cents, and kumara, which fell by about 40 cents. Savings for the barbecue dinner this Christmas will come from cheaper potatoes, which fell by about 30 cents from last year, and cheaper steak, which fell by nearly 40 cents.

Over the past two years, the increased cost of a traditional Christmas dinner was largely due to lamb, which was up about \$1.00 and whole chicken, up about 90 cents. For a barbecue Christmas dinner, the largest price increases since 2007 came from salted peanuts, which were up about 80 cents, followed by steak, up about 60 cents.

In the 10 years since Christmas 1999, the \$13.50 increase for a traditional Christmas dinner came mainly from lamb, which was up about \$4.90 and whole chicken, which was up about \$2.20. The cost of the Kiwi alternative, a barbecue Christmas dinner, rose about \$11.10 over the 10 years, with the price of steak being up about \$3.90 and pavlova up \$1.20.

The attached table shows prices for a range of Christmas dinner food items in November 1999, 2007, 2008, and 2009.

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**Food for thought**

For both Christmas dinners, the dessert is home-made pavlova. The pavlova is believed to have been created to honour the Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova when she toured Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s. Where it was created and the nationality of its creator have been a source of great debate between our two nations for many years.

Season's greetings from Statistics New Zealand.

Geoff Bascand

**15 December 2009**

**Government Statistician**

**END**

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