



Jack Monroe @BootstrapCook Wed Jan 19 12:30:02 +0000 2022

Woke up this morning to the radio talking about the cost of living rising a further 5%. It infuriates me the index that they use for this calculation, which grossly underestimates the real cost of inflation as it happens to people with the least. Allow me to briefly explain.

This time last year, the cheapest pasta in my local supermarket (one of the Big Four), was 29p for 500g. Today it's 70p. That's a 141% price increase as it hits the poorest and most vulnerable households.

This time last year, the cheapest rice at the same supermarket was 45p for a kilogram bag. Today it's £1 for 500g. That's a 344% price increase as it hits the poorest and most vulnerable households.

Baked beans: were 22p, now 32p. A 45% price increase year on year.

Canned spaghetti. Was 13p, now 35p. A price increase of 169%.

Bread. Was 45p, now 58p. A price increase of 29%.

Curry sauce. Was 30p, now 89p. A price increase of 196%.

A bag of small apples. Was 59p, now 89p (and the apples are even smaller!) A price increase of 51%.

Mushrooms were 59p for 400g. They're now 57p for 250g. A price increase of 56%. (This practise, of making products smaller while keeping them the same price, is known in the retail industry as 'shrinkflation' and its insidious as hell because it's harder to immediately spot.)

Peanut butter. Was 62p, now £1.50. A price increase of 142%.

These are just the ones that I know off the top of my head - there will be many many more examples! When I started writing my recipe blog ten years ago, I could feed myself and my son on £10 a week. (I'll find the original shopping list later and price it up for today's prices.)

The system by which we measure the impact of inflation is fundamentally flawed - it completely ignores the reality and the REAL price rises for people on minimum wages, zero hour contracts, food bank clients, and millions more.

But I guess when the vast majority of our media were privately educated and came from the same handful of elite universities, nobody thinks to actually check in with anyone out here in the world to see how we're doing. (Fucking terribly, thanks for asking.)

Every time there's a news bulletin on the rising cost of living, I hope that today might be the day that that some real journalism happens, and someone stops to consider those of us outside of the bubble. Maybe today might finally be that day.

(But seeing I've been banging on about this for a decade now, it's probably not going to be. Thanks for reading anyway, I appreciate it.)

And just to add:

- an upmarket ready meal range was £7.50 ten years ago, and is still £7.50 today.
- a high-end stores 'Dine In For Two For £10' has been £10 for as long as I can remember.
- my local supermarket had 400+ items in their value range, it's now 91 (and counting down)

The margins are always, always calculated to squeeze the belts of those who can least afford it, and massage the profits of those who have money to spare. And nothing demonstrates that inequality quite so starkly as tracking the prices of 'luxury' food vs 'actual essentials'. ■

To return to the luxury ready meal example, if the price of that had risen at the same rate as the cheapest rice in the supermarket, that £7.50 lasagne would now cost £25.80.

Dine In For £10 would be £34.40.

We're either all in this together, or we aren't.

(Spoiler: we aren't)

Now, picture if you will, the demographic of the voter who has kept the current Party in power for the last 11 years. Imagine the Chancellor having to explain to them that their precious microwave dinner now cost almost four times what it did yesterday.

Yeah, didn't think so.

I mean of all the things, the Prime Minister claiming that he's cutting the cost of living while the price of basic food products shoot up by THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY FOUR PERCENT is the one I'm properly angry enough to riot over.