

III.1 Commodity Demand

Between 1970 and 1997 United States per capita consumption of food increased in most categories. In the meat category, decreases in red meat consumption were more than offset by increases in poultry and fish. The largest percentage increases in consumption were in fresh fruit, tree-nut and processed vegetable categories. Eggs were the only category showing a decrease. (Comparable data by state are not available.)

TABLE 27

United States Per Capita Consumption of Major Foods, 1970-97

	Eggs	Meat, Poultry, & Fish	Dairy Products	Fruit, Fresh	Fruit, Processing	Vegetables, Fresh	Vegetables, Processing	Tree-Nuts
Year	Number	Pounds						
1970	308.9	177.3	563.8	101.2	136.5	152.9	182.5	1.7
1975	276.0	170.9	539.1	101.8	150.3	147.1	189.9	1.9
1980	271.1	179.6	543.2	104.8	157.5	149.3	187.2	1.8
1985	254.7	185.4	593.7	110.6	158.8	156.1	201.9	2.4
1990	234.3	183.5	568.4	116.3	157.1	167.2	215.6	2.4
1995	235.4	193.0	584.4	124.6	160.8	175.1	229.9	1.9
1997	238.7	190.3	579.8	133.2	161.5	185.6	230.4	2.2

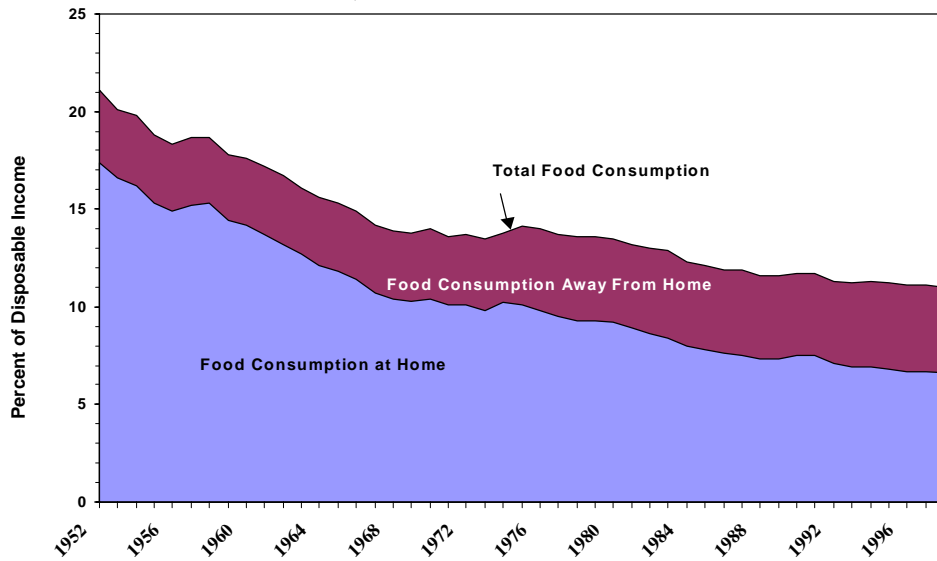
Source: Putnam, Judith Jones, and Jane E. Allshouse, "Food Consumption, Prices, and Expenditures, 1970-97," Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, USDA.

- Although California is the nation's largest agricultural producer, Californians still consume many foods imported from other states and countries. Almost all of the pork, much of the beef and much of the grain used for baked products, pasta and livestock feed come from Midwestern states. Tropical products that don't grow well here, such as bananas, are imported from Central and South America. During the local off-season, California imports commodities that it produces, such as winter tomatoes from Florida and Mexico.

■ Although overall United States food consumption has increased in recent decades due to population growth and other factors, increasing per capita income and falling relative price of food have led to food taking up a smaller part of Americans' budgets. In 1998, Americans spent 11% of their disposable personal income on food, compared with 21% in 1952. We also ate more meals away from home.

FIGURE 32

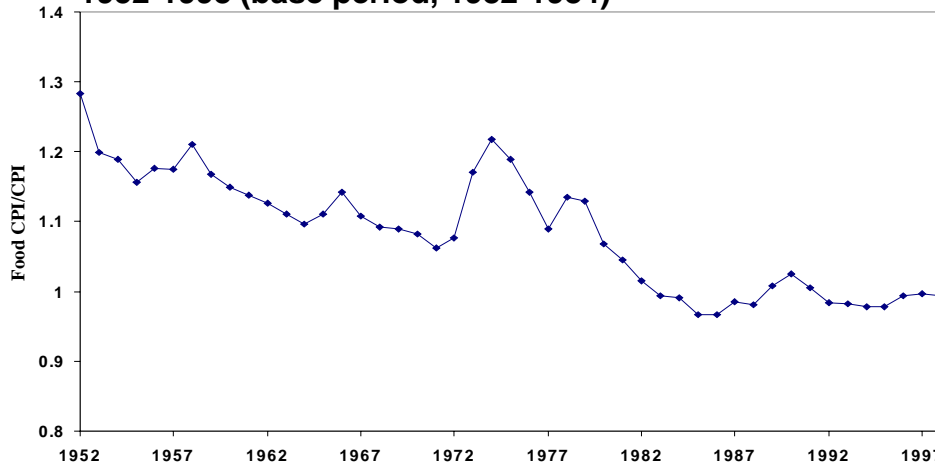
United States Food Expenditures as a Share of Disposable Personal Income, 1952-1998



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Market Indicators Briefing Room, online data.

FIGURE 33

United States Index of Relative Retail Food Prices, 1952-1998 (base period, 1982-1984)

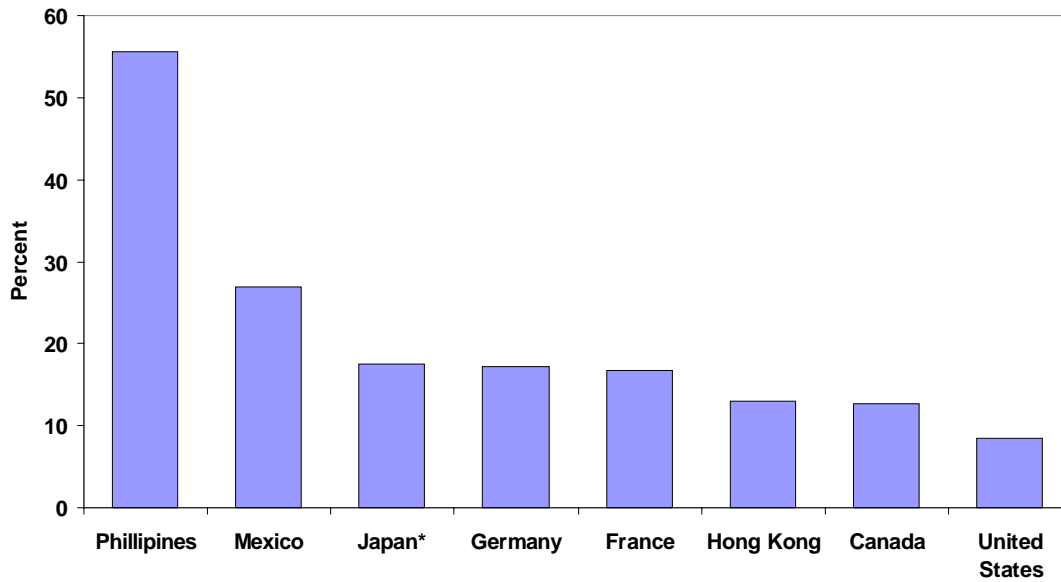


Sources:

1. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts, online data, 2000.
2. USDA, Economic Research Service, Food Market Indicators Briefing Room, online data, 2000.

FIGURE 34

Food and Alcoholic Beverages Consumed at Home as a Share of Total Personal Consumption Expenditures, 1994



* Includes tobacco

Source: Putnam, Judith Jones, and Jane E. Allshouse, "Food Consumption, Prices, and Expenditures, 1970-97," Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, USDA.

- Relative to the rest of the world, Americans used a smaller share of their personal consumption expenditures for food consumed at home. This measure does not include food consumed away from home, which in the United States represented about 40% of total food expenditures in 1998.