



The MGC Food Review 2009

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Introduction

The Food Account system has been extensively reviewed during 2007-2008 and this paper tries to summarize what we agreed at that time.

Aims of the Food Account

The first aim of the account is to ensure that it balances out, i.e. that we have enough income to pay for what we consume.

Other aims include having a system:

- which is broadly 'fair' so trying to take into account the circumstances of the individual and their ability to pay.
- which is environmentally & humanly sustainable and so trying to use those foods that have the least impact on the environment and the human labor.
- which is reasonably easy to understand.
- which makes it clearly cheaper to eat the same quality food at home than eat out.
- which encourages people to eat communal meals.

The variables we can alter

The food system at the moment has the following variables we can alter to meet our aims:

1. The three rates for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner.
2. The fixed-rate monthly charge
3. The people on low income policy.
4. The children food policy.
5. The agreed/not agreed food list

Where we shop

Although in principle we would like to support small independent organic shops, we also recognize that this would not be possible because of budget reasons. At the same time we understand and respect the fact that some members feel really strongly about where they shop for ethical principles.

Given the above, the agreement is that these members may shop in expensive shops (like Waitrose, Planet Organic, Fresh & Wild, etc.) and the surplus difference in price will be paid by themselves.

As an indicator/orientation for prices comparison, we agreed to use Sainsburys produce prices.

Above all, we really value members common sense as well as honesty and trust in shopping.

Portion Sizes

This may vary slightly for every member although as a good rule of thumb a dinner portion could consist of a main course plate with some grains, some vegetarian or vegan protein, some kind of vegetable and salad.

We agreed to tick the food chart according to what is being eaten . If at dinner time the portion of food consumed equals a breakfast portion, then it's perfectly fine to record a B on the dinner column. The other way round also applies (if a lunch portion is eaten at breakfast, this needs to be recorded as an L in the breakfast column).

Also any food that is consumed outside the standard meal times (B/L/D) needs to be recorded on the food chart. So a couple of handful of nuts or two pieces of fruit may constitute a breakfast (depending on the fruit).

Luxury Items

We have a system in which some items are considered to be 'luxury' items. If people want these, they can buy them from their own money, but they should not be bought from community funds.

That's the easy bit! The difficult bit is arriving at common agreement about what is a luxury item. After hours of discussion, we have agreed that certain foods are luxury.

Appendix A is intended to be a rough indication of the standards that we agreed at the time of the review.

Other considerations

There are some areas where other principles apply:

ORGANIC

We generally like the idea of eating food which has been grown organically and also accept that our budget does not allow us to buy everything from an organic source.

We have agreed that the following items can be bought from organic sources:

- Tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa powder
- Root vegetables
- Basic bread, eggs
- Milk, plain yoghurt and cheese (up to £9 per kilo)
- Margarine
- Apples & bananas

- Vegetable oil
- Food bought in bulk (if cheaper than/same price as Sainsburies)

Other items can only be bought from organic sources where there is no difference in price between organic and non-organic items.

FAIR-TRADE

We may wish to make it a priority to buy fair-trade foods whenever possible even though they can be more expensive, because we recognize the great harm that can be done in other countries through the exploitation of cheap labour. This applies especially to tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa powder and bananas.

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

It is important for us to support anyone who for some medical reason cannot eat a particular kind of food as much as possible even though the alternative may be more expensive.

This also includes anyone who for religious reasons does not eat certain foods.

This will be agreed on a case by case basis.

CHEESE

We have agreed to only have vegetarian cheese in both houses as we recognize that this would support better our vegetarian principles and household status.

VEGANS

We encourage diversity and respect for people's food choices so we recognize that vegans have special dietary requirements especially regarding proteins.

We have agreed to purchase vegan proteins (e.g. nuts or tofu products) for up to £9 per kilo.

SEASONAL FRUIT & VEG

We agreed to try to buy seasonal produce.

AIRMILES

We agreed to try to limit the air miles of food.

COMMUNAL MEALS

We agreed to have a community meal once a week with a rota of who's cooking.

Special occasion food & drink

This regards occasions like birthday breakfasts, Christmas dinner, autumn meal (welcome back meal), etc.

The agreement is that we are happy to use certain ingredients that we would normally regard as luxury as long as they aren't in tons! 😊
Again common sense is greatly appreciated here.

Regarding alcohol and fruit juice for special occasions, historically we would buy a little alcohol to start off the party/dinner being the host and guests would bring their own to top up. This could still apply although we have agreed that every occasion will be taken into consideration separately also depending on budget.

People on low income food policy

We definitely want to be supportive of people on low income especially for those who are made redundant, who get very sick, who lose their job and who are first time students.

Every person will be considered separately based on their individual circumstances.

We have agreed to have maximum 1/3 of members on reduced food rates at any given point.

Children food policy

We welcome parents with children in the community and appreciate that children's food might not always match the sizes of our adult meals nor their taste. To accommodate that we agreed on the following prices for kids meals:

- children aged 0-6 years: no charge for food
- children aged 6-12 years: 50% of adult food charge (B/L/D respectively)
- children aged 12 and onwards: 100% of adult food charge.

The fixed-rate monthly charge (see below) for children until the age of 12 is 30%; from the age of 12 they are charged the full amount.

The community will not pay junk or convenience food for children in the same way we don't fund it for adults (see luxury items).

Guests

When guests are invited by members to have a meal in the community, the charges that apply are the current food rates being used at the time of the meal, and are paid by/via the host.

The fixed-rate monthly charge

This is a charge that everybody pays regardless of whether they are here or on holiday and regardless of how many meals they had in the month.

The fixed-rate charge covers:

- TV licences for both houses
- Telephone line rentals for both houses
- Magazine subscriptions
- Bulk food
- Leaving presents
- Weekend away
- Summer party
- Toilet paper
- Cleaning products
- Washing up liquid / laundry liquid
- Hoover bags / light bulbs
- Autumn meal
- Christmas meal

Food review and updates

We have an Annual Food meeting in February/ March where any important major food issue can be discussed and agreed upon.

We also have a quarterly update tied in with Co-op meetings where the Food Treasurer can give feedback on the health of the food account and any minor issue that may arise.

Appendix A

LUXURY ITEMS

Alcohol (wine, beer, etc)
Biscuits, cakes, chocolate, sweets, ice cream
Crisps, nachos
Fruit juice
Fruit yoghurt
Fruit concentrate
Ready made meals, complete pizzas, prepared food, convenience food, processed pre-packed food
Pre-prepared salad/vegetables in a bag (except spinach)
Some organic food (other than tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa powder, bananas, apples, root vegetables, vegetable oil, eggs, milk, yoghurt, basic bread & food bought in bulk)
Expensive cheese (max price £9 per kilo organic or not)
Expensive nuts (eg pine nuts, macadamias, walnuts, pistachios – max price £9 per kilo)
Expensive tofu products (max price £9 per kilo organic or not)
Expensive rye bread (max price £1.35 per 400g-500g loaf)
Expensive fresh or packaged herbs
Out-of-season fruit & vegetables at high prices
Expensive jams, spreads, pates (max price £1.50 per jar or £3.50 per kilo)
Expensive honey (max price £2.50 per lb)
Exotic/expensive fruit (eg figs, passion fruits, physalis, pomegranates, papayas, pineapples, lychees, Sharon fruit, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, red currant unless on special offer)
Expensive dried fruit (such as dried exotic fruit & berries)
Fresh pasta (unless on offer)
Fabric conditioner (and other non essential washing products)