

THE HOME FRONT ARCHIVE

NEW
2027
VERSION

THE RATION BOOK

What America Lived On

1941–1945

VOLUME I

HISTORY EMPIRE

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

— BEFORE THE RECORD —



A Note Before You Begin

What this book is, where its numbers come from, and how to read the arithmetic

SECTION IV

1943

Sixty-Four Red Points

Meat, butter, and fats went on the same ledger the sugar bowl had already joined.

On March 29, 1943, the Office of Price Administration folded meat, cheese, butter, and other edible fats into a single new currency. War Ration Book Two had been in hand five weeks already, its blue stamps spending against canned goods; now the red stamps in the same book carried a second job. Every man, woman, and child in the country woke up with sixty-four red points to spend over the coming four weeks — sixteen a week, on average, though nothing forced a household to spend them evenly.

The system did not ration meat by the pound. It rationed meat by the point, and the Office of Price Administration set a different point cost for nearly every cut of nearly every animal. A butcher's counter in April 1943 was, in effect, a second cash register: one transaction in dollars, a second in perforated paper.

THE MEAT COUNTER, CUT BY CUT

BEEF & VARIETY MEATS

O.P.A. OFFICIAL TABLE N° 1 • EFFECTIVE MAR. 29, 1943 • PTS/LB

Porterhouse steak <i>per lb</i>		8 PTS
Sirloin steak <i>per lb</i>		8 PTS
Round steak <i>per lb</i>		8 PTS
Chuck or shoulder <i>per lb</i>		7 PTS
Rump roast, boneless <i>per lb</i>		8 PTS
Short ribs <i>per lb</i>		4 PTS
Hamburger, ground beef <i>per lb</i>		5 PTS
Liver, kidneys, tongue (variety meats) <i>per lb</i>		3-6 PTS

SECTION VIII

1943

What a Week Cost

One family, one grocery list, one ration book — priced item by item

Start with a household of four. Two adults, two children, living in one of the large cities the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracked for its wartime price reports — New York, Chicago, Boston, the reporting basis the government itself used to set ceiling prices and judge whether rationing was working. This family does not shop once. It shops every week, against a ration book that resets its points and a price list the Office of Price Administration has frozen at a ceiling. What follows is that week, reconstructed line by line from the Bureau's own 1943 table.

The source is exact: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Retail Prices of Food, 1942 and 1943*, Bulletin No. 799, Table 4 — the "Large Cities Combined" annual average for 1943. Every price below is that document's number, not a period newspaper's estimate and not a modern retrospective's guess. Eighteen items, one week, one basket.

THE WEEKLY BASKET — FAMILY OF FOUR, 1943

B.L.S. BULLETIN 799 · TABLE 4 · 1943 ANNUAL AVG → TODAY

Milk, fresh delivered 14 qt/wk · 15.5¢/qt	\$2.17		\$42.03
Eggs, fresh 2 doz/wk · 57.2¢/doz	\$1.14		\$22.08
Round steak 2 lb · 43.9¢/lb	\$0.88		\$17.05
Chuck roast 2 lb · 30.2¢/lb	\$0.60		\$11.62
Bacon, sliced 1 lb · 43.1¢/lb	\$0.43		\$8.35
Butter 1 lb · 52.7¢/lb	\$0.53		\$10.21
Oleomargarine 1 lb · 23.6¢/lb	\$0.24		\$4.57
Cheese 0.5 lb · 37.4¢/lb	\$0.19		\$3.62
Bread, white 5 lb · 8.9¢/lb	\$0.45		\$8.72
Flour, wheat 3 lb · 6.11¢/lb	\$0.18		\$3.49
Coffee 1 lb · 30.0¢/lb	\$0.30		\$5.81
Sugar 2 lb · 6.8¢/lb	\$0.14		\$2.71
Potatoes 15 lb unit · 68.4¢	\$0.68		\$13.17
Onions 2 lb · 7.5¢/lb	\$0.15		\$2.91

— REFERENCE —

1941-1945

The Point & Conversion Tables

The full O.P.A. charts, reproduced item by item, with every figure's today conversion.

— END OF THE FREE SAMPLE —



The Record Continues

What the complete Volume I holds