



More grocery shoppers have switched to store brands: Are we better off?



By **Sue Gleiter** | sgleiter@pennlive.com on December 10, 2014 at 10:00 AM, updated December 10, 2014 at 7:12 PM

Jenn Fisher of Lower Swatara Twp. said she has been using coupons for about four years as a way to save money on food bills. (*Sue Gleiter, PennLive*)

Jenn Fisher of Lower Swatara Twp. is a die-hard couponer, and it pays off.

For about four years, Fisher has carried a file folder filled with clipped coupons along with her on supermarket shopping trips. On average, she said she shaves about 50 percent off her total food bill.

Making careful purchases and using coupons has become a necessity for Fisher and her husband, Chris. "Just because the economy has gotten bad. My hours got cut at work," she says.

Since the recession hit, shoppers have become more savvy about how to save money on trips to the supermarket. Just look at the popularity of the extreme coupon shows on television.

According to **Deloitte's 2014 American Pantry Study**, Americans are still behaving as if the recession is not over and continuing to rely on money-savings strategies at the grocery store.

About 94 percent of those surveyed in the study say even if the economy might be improving, they will remain cautious about spending.

Shoppers also continue to bypass national brands for store brands, according to

the study. Nearly 88 percent of those surveyed said they have found store brands that are just as good as national brands and they feel as if they are saving money without giving up quality.

Fortunately for shoppers, the supermarket industry didn't take quite the hit as other retail sectors did when the economy tanked.

Construction of new stores slowed down and there were several cases of acquisitions, said Bob Gorland, vice president of Matthew P. Casey & Associates in Harrisburg, which specializes in supermarket site selection and feasibility studies.

For the most part, shoppers were watching their spending, cutting back on restaurant visits and making more food purchases at the grocery stores.

"In general, it was the industry that almost did the best among the retail industry. It's the old saying, 'Everyone's got to eat.' As people got laid off they said, 'We've got to eat at home more often.'" Gorland says.

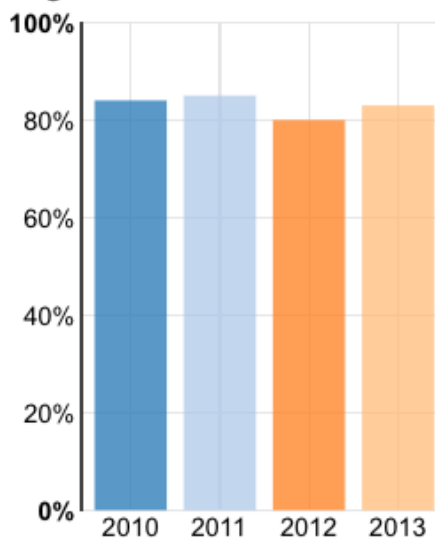
Now, coming out of the economic downturn, Gorland says supermarket chains are relaxing a bit. Locally, Giant Food Stores recently opened its new store in Hampden Twp. while Karns Quality Foods relocated its Lemoyne store into a bigger building just across the street.

COMING THURSDAY: Sales/income tax, 8 a.m.; donations, 9 a.m.; welfare, 10 a.m.

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Consumer sentiments

"I look closely at every spending category for savings"



"Even if the economy improves, I will remain cautious with my spending"

