

My Trade Deficit With the Grocery Store

A Slightly Sardonic Tale of Self-Sufficiency



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I am SO tired of having a trade deficit with the grocery store. Every week, I buy hundreds of dollars worth of groceries, and all they take from me in return are my plastic bags for recycling. Thieves! Finally, I decided it was enough. I threatened the grocery store manager that if they didn't stop ripping me off and exploiting my household, I would retaliate with the biggest tariffs they had ever seen. She stared at me, nonplussed.

I refused to negotiate over my demands, and last week, on Liberation Day, I imposed a huge surcharge on everything I buy at the grocery store. To figure out how much to charge myself, I used a Very Scientific Formula I found online, with Greek letters and everything. I divided my grocery store trade deficit by the total

amount I buy from them and discovered I have a 99.999% trade deficit with the grocery store. Thieves!

My next step was to create a big poster showing that the grocery store has been charging me 99.999% on my plastic bag returns. I showed it to the store manager, who told me I was nuts and that they charge no such thing. I showed her my Very Scientific Formula with Greek letters, but she refused to confess her trade barriers. Nevertheless, I decided to be kind to the grocery store and informed her that I would discount the grocery surcharge I would place on myself to 50%, effective at 12:01am EDT the next day. "Suit yourself," she said, shaking her head.

The following day, as the cashier scanned my groceries, I instructed him to raise the price on each one by 50%. He looked at me quizzically, but I stood firm and told him the short-term pain would be worth it in the long run, after I had eliminated my trade deficit with the grocery store and could grow all my food at home.

When he totaled my bill, I noticed he had applied a 15% discount because of my grocery store loyalty card. "What's this?!" I demanded. "We like to treat our neighbors and good customers to a preferential discount," he said. Thieves! I told him the loyalty card was a horrible, unfair deal I had stupidly negotiated with the grocery store many years ago. I ordered him to immediately cancel the loyalty agreement and charge me 15% more, on top of the 50% surcharge. "No more of these unfair trade deals," I muttered, as he cut up my loyalty card and I paid the extra money.

At home, I informed my family that I would be baking all our bread, growing vegetables, and inquiring with the homeowner's association about keeping a dairy cow in the backyard. They looked at me quizzically. "Do you have the skills to bake bread?" they asked. "No," I answered, "but it will be the most amazing bread you've ever tasted." After paying my 50% surcharge on the flour, yeast, and salt, the first loaf I baked cost me only \$68.25! It was hard as a rock, but it was Made-At-Home bread and therefore vastly superior to what I could get at the grocery.

Next, it was time to grow fruits and vegetables. I went to buy supplies but noticed that my trade deficit with the garden center was increasing, so I applied a 25% surcharge to the seeds, fertilizer, and garden equipment I purchased. Then I posted a press release on my neighborhood listserve announcing a multi-trillion-dollar greenfield investment in my backyard garden. Nobody cared, so I issued another press release.

At the ribbon cutting, watched with anticipation by squirrels and rabbits, an experienced gardener neighbor told me it would take a couple of years for my backyard garden to produce vegetables reliably. He suggested I avoid paying a

50% surcharge at the grocery store until the garden is well established. What a squish! I ignored his advice, telling him that my policy of surcharging myself would never change, and the goal of vegetable self-sufficiency would pay off in the long term.

Meanwhile, the domestic household population started to get restless. The kids asked why the Reese's Peanut Butter Cups had gone missing from their lunch boxes. I put on a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles and sternly lectured them that life is not about buying cheap baubles at the grocery store. "Nobody needed peanut butter cups during the McKinley administration, when we took over Guam!" I exclaimed.

The kids tried to barter the Made-at-Home bread I put in their lunch boxes for peanut butter cups at school. Oddly, they found no takers. The other day, I found a peanut butter cup wrapper in the couch cushions. I think they are being smuggled into the house under fake origin markings. Need to crack down on that.

FAST FORWARD -- ONE YEAR LATER:

My homemade bread enterprise produces one loaf a week, and the cost is only \$79.85! (Inflation seems to have mysteriously returned, though I don't know why.) But people are saying it's the most amazing bread they've ever seen.

Strangely, the bananas and coffee I planted in my backyard died. The squirrels and rabbits who came to my groundbreaking ceremony ate most of my other seeds—thieves! But I did get one tomato the other day and immediately issued a press release.

We've got a lot more debt now, after I took out a third and then a fourth mortgage on the house to subsidize the bread making and the vegetable garden. The neighbors nixed the dairy cow, so we had to give up milk consumption. Our household net income seems to have plunged dramatically, though I cannot figure out why. But all that is irrelevant because I can hike the surcharge I pay on everything to 60 or 70 percent, and it will bring in so much money it will make your head spin.

The biggest news is that my trade deficit with the grocery store has been eliminated! I now have a trade deficit with the charity food bank. But I know how to fix that.
