

Food Delivery Services

by Megan Buhr and Alexis Lefort

Summary

We all know that the easiest way to “flatten the curve” is to stay home, but what happens when you run out of food? Although Governor Baker has ordered non-essential businesses to stay closed, places that sell food remain open (sometimes with limited hours). Public health experts suggest limiting trips, so delivery services are becoming more popular.

There are three primary types of food delivery: services offered by the grocery stores themselves, such as AmazonFresh, Stop & Shop’s Peapod or Walmart Grocery; general shopping services such as Instacart and Shipt; and services that deliver from independent sellers, such as Hornstra Farms and Market2Day.

Please note that experiences change day by day. What’s true as we’re writing about it right now might change in a few hours. And keep in mind that nearly all of the delivery services work with “independent contractors” who don’t have the financial option to stay at home and self-isolate and are not being paid very much. So, TIP WELL!



Company	What’s Offered	Cost	How To Try It
AmazonFresh	Fresh produce, pantry staples, household & personal care items, and Whole Foods groceries.	Must be an Amazon Prime member. Free delivery on orders of \$50 or more; otherwise a \$10 delivery fee.	Download the Amazon app or visit amazon.com/fresh .
Instacart	Personal shopper service. Participating local stores: Wegmans, Aldi, Total Wine & More, Costco, CVS, Petco, BJ’s, Fresh Market, Stop & Shop, Big Y, Shaw’s, Star Market.	Starting at \$3.99 with minimum order of \$10; free with Instacart Express (\$99 per year or \$9.99 per month) with a minimum order of \$35.	Download the Instacart app or visit instacart.com .
Peapod	Owned and operated by Stop & Shop. All Stop & Shop products are available.	Delivery fees start at \$3 with a \$30 order minimum.	Download the Peapod app or visit peapod.com .
Shipt	Owned and operated by Target. Participating local stores: CVS, Office Depot/Office Max, Petco, Roche Bros., Shaw’s, Target.	Shipt charges a \$14/month or \$99/year membership fee and offers free delivery on orders over \$35.	Download the Shipt app or visit shipt.com .

Company	What's Offered	Cost	How To Try It
Walmart Grocery	Anything Walmart sells, from groceries to regular store items.	\$7.95 to \$9.95, free with Delivery Unlimited (\$98 per year or \$12.95 per month). Pick up is free.	Download the Walmart Grocery app or visit grocery.walmart.com .
Roche Bros.	All products available at Roche Bros.	Delivery fee of \$9.95, pick up fee of \$6.95.	Visit shopping.rochebros.com .

General Food Delivery Services

Instacart – the largest of the food delivery services, with a spotty history of how they treat their employees. My understanding is that the employees have been organizing to demand better treatment.

Instacart works through people signing up to be personal shoppers, they then get a list of orders and decide which ones to take. Some stores seem to have more people willing to shop at them, and some stores have a longer wait before you can expect your delivery.

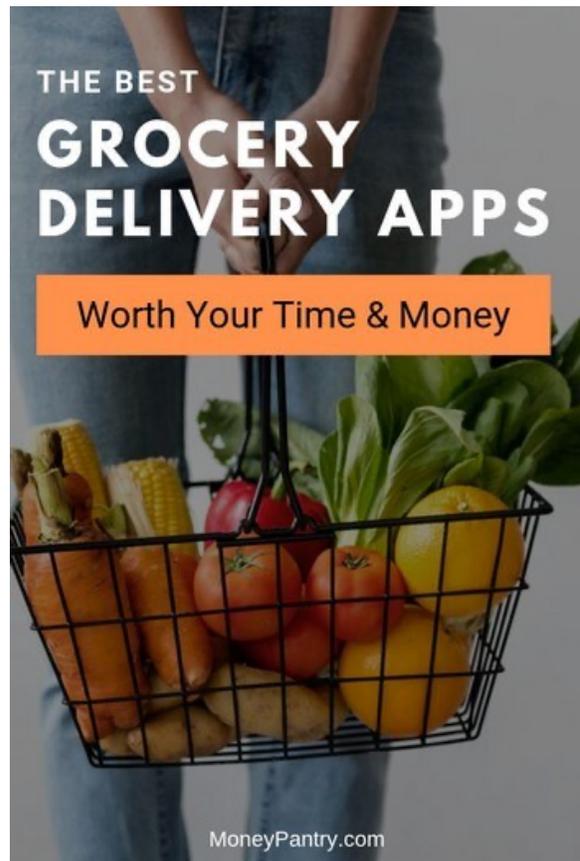
In normal times, Instacart promises a certain delivery window, but right now the delivery window for most stores is “within the next 5 days.” I’ve placed three orders with Instacart, and have received two so far, and have been happy. My Fresh Market order came the same day, and my Costco order came the next day. My Market Basket order is taking longer, but we’re still well within the delivery window that I agreed to.

Shoppers stay in touch with you via text message as they shop, asking about replacement items as necessary and seeking clarification.

Note that these shoppers are literally going through the supermarket in real time, so if the supermarket is out of stock, they don’t have access to any warehouse or special backroom stock. My Fresh Market shopper went in the evening, and there wasn’t much produce left: I may have had better luck if they’d gone in the morning, but that’s just a roll of the dice when using a service like this. At present, Instacart services Fresh Market, Wegman’s, Aldi, Market Basket, Total Wine and More, Costco, CVS, Petco, BJ’s, Stop & Shop, Big Y, Shaw’s, and Star Market.

Shipt – came highly recommended last week, and so I gladly paid the \$12.99 monthly fee if it meant that I could have groceries delivered within a day or two. However, I have yet to find a store on their service that has an open delivery window, and I have been trying nearly every day.

I know that things are difficult for all businesses right now but considering that I had to pay an upfront fee (no trial period like Walmart offers) for absolutely no delivery options, I can’t recommend Shipt right now. The stores they claim to offer delivery from are CVS, Petco, Roche Brothers, Target, Office Depot, and Shaw’s.



Food Delivery from Specific Grocery Stores

Amazon Fresh – delivers directly from Whole Foods. You must be a member of Amazon Prime (which is currently \$119 a year). I ordered from Amazon Fresh a couple weeks ago, and my food was delivered within the promised two-hour delivery service. However, today there were no delivery slots available, but a banner across the top of the website says that “new delivery windows are opened throughout the day.”



Peapod – Stop and Shop’s food delivery service that has been around for several years. I have used it in the past and loved it. However, delivery windows are very hard to get right now: you can schedule a delivery up to 2 weeks in advance, and I suggest that you log on shortly after midnight, to snag the day that has just opened up. I, however, stupidly lost my day by trying to book two deliveries (each a week apart): the website changed my first delivery date instead of adding a second one. So, I haven’t received any food from Stop and Shop yet: my order will supposedly come on Saturday.

Roche Brothers – I have heard very positive things about Roche Brother’s delivery: however, when I tried to make a purchase, the website says that time slot availability is at capacity. I would recommend trying the “log in shortly after midnight” trick.

Walmart Grocery – Walmart’s delivery service has a \$12.99 a month / \$99 a year fee, with a 14-day free trial. Despite my commitment to journalistic excellence, I could not justify signing up for yet another delivery service to try it out for myself, so I can’t offer any personal thoughts.

Farmer’s Markets and Small-Scale Producers

Hornstra Farms – this local gem has been delivering in Hingham for generations, and their service has not stopped. However, because of increased demand among current customers (I know that my milk order has about doubled with 3 kids at home all day), they are not taking new home delivery customers. I spoke with Courtney, and she recommended their curbside pickup: if you bring a list to the store, someone will come to your car to get it, do your shopping, and deliver your items directly to your car.

Market2Day – founded a few years ago by a Hingham resident as a way to make Farmers Market shopping more convenient for people who can’t make it to their local market during the relatively short weekly window that they’re open.

Boy, are they in the right place at the right time for the current times! Register and enter your zip code, and you will be presented with a number of local Farmers Markets that will deliver to your address. Just like brick and mortar (or maybe it’s tent and table?) Farmers Markets, each market has slightly different vendors, and you select what you want from each vendor. They are very clear about when you need to get your order in and when your delivery will arrive, and although I haven’t placed an order yet, I plan to this week.

Mass Food Delivery – Before I found out about Market2Day’s options, a friend recommended Mass Food Delivery as another farmer’s market delivery service. I got a giant box of mostly root vegetables and some amazing mushrooms and was very pleased. However, when I went to place a second order, the website said that they do not deliver to Hingham. I’ll keep trying, because I dream about those mushrooms sautéed in butter and garlic (let’s just say that a substantial portion never made it into the risotto), and I’m including it because perhaps enough orders will make them reconsider.

Rock River Farm – delivers dry aged beef to the South Shore every Saturday, and they are currently trying to increase their home delivery market as their restaurant market has largely dried up. A friend who received a delivery from them was very happy with them.

I would remiss if I didn't also mention that many restaurants are also doing delivery and curbside pickup. Restaurants are hurting right now and trying to pay their basic expenses by offering takeout and delivery.

If you have a favorite restaurant that you want to support, get in touch to see if they'll deliver.

To Sum Up

If you need food immediately, my recommendation is to sign into Instacart and click through the stores to see if you can get any deliveries that day. Note that because of increased demand, and plenty of newly hired shoppers who are still figuring out how to efficiently shop for others, delivery may still be delayed: please still tip very well, the shoppers are doing the best they can.

If you have more time, I would recommend going the Farmers Market route: they keep track of inventory as you shop via the website, so you are more likely to get what you ordered. However, this does require planning up to a week ahead, as deliveries only happen on certain days and you must get your order in a few days before that.

As a final note, if you're wondering why staples are so hard to find these days, this is a really fascinating article about the supply chain of retail v. commercial goods: <https://marker.medium.com/what-everyones-getting-wrong-about-the-toilet-paper-shortage-c812e1358fe0>. It's really not about "hoarding," it's about an overwhelmed retail supply chain, while goods that were supposed to be destined to a commercial market are lying in warehouses with nowhere to go. There was poor planning somewhere, but it's not really the supermarket's fault (they would be selling you anything you wanted to buy if they could!), and it's definitely not the person doing your food shopping and delivery's fault, so please show grace and understanding that some items are hard to find right now. And, most importantly, TIP WELL.

Store Index

Looking for your favorite supermarket? Here's a list of how to access their products:

Aldi – Instacart
Big Y - Instacart
BJ's – Instacart
Costco – Instacart
CVS – Instacart or Shipt
Fresh Market – Instacart
Hornstra – If you're not already a customer, they will do curbside delivery
Market Basket – Instacart
Petco – Instacart or Shipt
Roche Brothers – Roche Brothers Delivery, or Shipt
Shaw's – Instacart or Shipt
Star Market – Instacart
Stop and Shop – Instacart or Peapod
Target – Shipt
Total Wine – Instacart
Wegman's - Instacart