

Ransacked American Grocery Stores Are Still Pretty Amazing

The other night I made my first post-lockdown grocery store run. And I'll admit it was a bit unsettling.

It was strange seeing a security guard. It was strange wearing a mask. It was strange feeling a sort of fear of my fellow shoppers. And it was really strange and disturbing to see shelves stripped of goods. The whole experience of going grocery shopping became a bit nerve-wracking.

But still: in the midst of a panic, I could look around and see dozens of varieties of ice cream. There were produce bins full of fresh fruit from all over the world. There were turkeys and smoothies and fresh bread and milk and eggs.

The abundance is staggering. Yet the fact that my mind focused on the (relatively few) empty shelves is a testament to how much wealth of variety we have to enjoy even in troubled times.

What's my point?

I guess it's worth being grateful for the wealth generally available to all Americans in the form of shopping choice and resilient availability of life's necessities (and not-so-necessaries). Even in an economic slump, which seems likely, much of that choice will still continue to be available. In the grand scheme of history, that's pretty crazy.

I will look forward to a day when a grocery run is the same calm, peaceful, unrushed, and unafraid affair it was only a few weeks ago. But until then I won't believe that I am living in great hardship, at least where food is concerned.

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