



## Affordable Organic Groceries? Azure Standard's Drop System Makes It Possible

By Lisa Esile, MS  
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As a busy mom, I'm always on the lookout for convenient ways to stock up on pantry staples like beans, grains, and gluten-free flours, without breaking the bank. I prefer to buy organic where I can, but finding organic products at reasonable prices can be challenging, even in a town with a good selection of natural and whole-food options. So when a couple of fellow health-conscious moms told me about a monthly grocery service called Azure Standard—where you can order organic groceries at great prices and just “meet the truck” to pick them up—it felt like striking gold. Years later, I'm still using the service. Read on to learn how it works, why it's become an important part of my monthly grocery routine, and some things to consider before using the service.

### A Different Kind of Grocery-Delivery Service

Azure Standard is the passion project of Oregon farmers David and Kimberley Stelzer. The seeds for Azure Standard were planted nearly four decades ago, after the Stelzers made the bold decision to transition their conventional farm to organic for the sake of their and their customers' health. With national organic food distribution dominated by giant multinationals, getting their products to customers proved difficult. “I just came

up against roadblock after roadblock,” says David Stelzer.

Instead of giving up, the Stelzers created a modest product catalog and began selling directly to local families. That grassroots effort has since grown into a nationwide operation: Azure Standard now delivers natural and organic goods to more than 2,600 community drop points across all 50 states, each coordinated by a local volunteer.



Kimberly and David Stelzer

Azure's unique drop-point delivery system allows customers to bypass the “last mile” of typical home delivery—the most expensive part of e-commerce fulfillment. “By cutting that out, we're able to offer a more affordable option for families and people who really care about what they eat,” says Stelzer.

Azure Standard farms more than 4,000 acres of organic produce and partners with vetted small and mid-size producers to source additional items.

But beyond just produce, the Azure online store features

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over 12,000 products—including flours, grains, legumes, heirloom seeds, natural cleaning supplies, and more. All items must meet Azure's [strict standards](#): no preservatives, artificial food colorings, refined sugars, pesticides, or GMOs. Many items (though not all) are also certified organic.



David and his son, Zechariah Stelzer

## How It Works

To order, create a free account at [AzureStandard.com](https://AzureStandard.com) and enter your ZIP code to find nearby drop locations. (If there isn't one nearby, you can apply to [start a new one](#).) Drop pages include notes on how local pickups are handled and whether coordinators can hold orders if you're running late. Shipping fees range from free (for orders over \$50 in states near Oregon) to a surcharge of 8.5% on your order. After placing your order, you'll get an estimated delivery date, followed by an email with a confirmed pickup time a few days before delivery.

At the monthly drop—often a parking lot or someone's driveway—local Azure Standard shoppers gather to collect their items, which are sorted alphabetically. Those who can help unload the truck.



An Azure truck, contents offloaded and organized

If you prefer home delivery, Azure can also ship directly to your door for an added freight cost.

## Why I Like It

I've been using Azure Standard off and on for two years for my family, and I love it. It's easy to get started, and true to Azure's mission, items are competitively priced—organic items are often cheaper than non-organic options elsewhere. My sack of organic [buckwheat](#) groats comes in at \$1.89 per pound!

But you don't have to buy bulk to get good prices. Kim Newhouse, my local drop coordinator, says, "I like that I can get [bulk goods], but I can also get the small things. So, I can just get one jar of jam, one jar of peanut butter, or a 1-pound bag of something, and it's reasonably priced."



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Me, excitedly picking up my order.

Beyond produce and pantry staples, Azure Standard carries many hard-to-find items not typically stocked in conventional stores—like unfine-milled flours, rolled organic barley flakes, and bulk quinoa flakes. They also offer a wide variety of non-food items, including health and beauty products that run the gamut from aromatherapy to skin care.

Azure sends reminder emails to help ensure you remember to place your order. You're able to place your order in the middle of the month, but still add items right up until the cut-off point.

The packaging is recyclable or compostable (think cardboard boxes, paper bags, and compostable packing peanuts), which makes the experience feel even more aligned with my values. And I love that my purchase supports small- to medium-size businesses.

It was easy to find a drop—there were two close to where I live—but if I moved to an area where there wasn't one, I'd look into setting up my own.

## The Drawbacks

The biggest drawback to using Azure Standard is that the

drop system requires you to pick up your items at the scheduled drop time, which can add logistical complexity for those with unpredictable schedules. While some coordinators may be able to hold items temporarily, this isn't guaranteed. Because Azure deliveries are made via monthly routes, it's not a replacement for regular grocery runs.

Delicate fresh produce like lettuce may lose some crispness if your drop is at the end of the delivery route. So if you're ordering fresh produce, you may want to start small so you can see how the items arrive, or reach out to Azure for recommendations based on your position in the delivery cycle.

Additionally, Azure no longer carries tofu, so you'll need to source that elsewhere.

## The Bottom Line

If you're looking for high-quality whole-food, plant-based ingredients at an affordable price point, Azure is a great option, and the service is especially useful if there are limited grocery options where you live. Plus, there's a feel-good factor that comes from supporting smaller businesses and meeting up with health-minded neighbors once a month!



The Stelzer family in the early days