

ATTITUDES TOWARDS COOKING IN THE HOME – UK – 2024

Home cooking has strong health and money-saving associations. Simple recipes and ideas on how to deliver flavour to meat-free meals will be key opportunities.



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Attitudes Towards Cooking In The Home - UK - 2024

This report looks at the following areas:

- Cooking habits for evening meals, including cooking completely or partly from scratch, and use of prepared meals
- Behaviours of home cooks, including preferences for recipes with short ingredient lists and concerns about ultra-processed foods
- Sources of inspiration for cooking in the home, including recipe websites/magazines and social media
- Attitudes towards cooking, such as the desire for more flavour in meat-free meals



Home cooking has strong health and money-saving associations. Simple recipes and ideas on how to deliver flavour to meat-free meals will be key opportunities.

Overview

Making meals healthier is the top reason for cooking meals completely/partly from scratch, with 59% of home cooks listing this reason. Moving forward, interest in healthy eating is expected to gain further momentum, highlighting the pressing need for shortcut products and ready meals to reassure consumers about their better-for-you credentials.

42% of home cooks say that concerns about ultra-processed foods have made them cook at home more compared to a year ago. Meal components such as processed meat, meat substitutes and cooking sauces stand to face growing scrutiny if this topic continues to gather media attention. This points to an opportunity for less processed variants and frozen foods' preservative-free proposition to win favour. It also dials up the need for processed products to showcase their 'clean label' credentials.

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The meat reduction trend is now firmly mainstream. With interest in sustainability expected to grow, this will bolster its relevance moving forward. With **half** of all adults looking for more guidance on how to deliver more flavour in meat-free meals, this creates a sizeable opportunity for meat-free meal components, as well as for sauces and seasonings.

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Report Content

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opportunities related to cooking in the home

- Home cooks prioritise convenience
- Convenience is in high demand for home cooks
- Strong desire for more flavour in meat-free meals
- Many want help on how to make meat-free meals more flavourful
- UPF spotlight bolsters the appeal of cooking
- Natural and frozen products have an opportunity to shine amid UPF spotlight

Market dynamics and outlook

- HFSS restrictions will have mixed effects on meal component products
- Strong interest in healthy eating; UPF concerns could pose headwinds

What consumers want and why

- Scratch cooking leads for evening meals
 - Graph 1: type of evening meal prepared most often in households, 2018-23
- Making meals healthier is top reason for cooking
 - Graph 2: reasons for cooking evening meals completely/partly from scratch, 2023
- Recipe websites/magazines and cookbooks are top sources of inspiration; younger demographics look to social media
 - Graph 3: sources of inspiration for cooking in the home, 2023
- Many feel guilty for not cooking from scratch
 - Graph 4: behaviours related to cooking in the home, 2023
- Mealtimes are seen widely as a good way to bring people together
 - Graph 5: attitudes related to home cooking, 2023

MARKET DYNAMICS

Macro-economic factors

- Economic output has stagnated since the cost-of-living crisis began
 - Graph 6: GDP, 2021-23
- Inflation is still the key factor affecting consumers' finances
 - Graph 7: CPI inflation rate, 2021-23
- Pressures on finances fuel meals at home and cooking
 - Graph 8: saving money as a reason to cook evening meals from scratch/partly from scratch, by financial situation, 2023
- Interest rates expected to fall in 2024, but borrowing pressures will remain

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- Food and drink prices still top the list of consumer concerns
 - Graph 9: "Have you been affected by any of these issues over the last two months? Please select all that apply.", 2023
- Consumer sentiment: the recovery is continuing...
 - Graph 10: the financial wellbeing index, 2016-23
- ...and people feel more confident about their financial prospects
 - Graph 11: the financial confidence index, 2016-23

Social, environmental and legal factors

- Government measures on HFSS slow to roll out
- Impact of HFSS regulations will not be felt equally
- Strong consumer interest in healthy eating
 - Graph 12: how often people try to eat healthily, 2018-22
- Media spotlight on ultra-processed foods
- UPF spotlight could pose a threat to several meal component categories
- Salt reduction remains on the health agenda
- Interest in sustainability expected to rebound

WHAT CONSUMERS WANT AND WHY

Scratch cooking and use of prepared meals

- Cooking from scratch is favoured by home chefs
- Scratch cooking leads for evening meals
 - Graph 13: type of evening meal prepared most often in households, 2018-23
- ASDA launches scratch cooking range
- Oldest groups are the keenest scratch cooks...
 - Graph 14: type of evening meal prepared most often in households, by age and presence of children, 2023
- ...with younger groups and parents drawn to convenience
 - Graph 15: selected behaviours related to cooking at home, by age and presence of children under 17, 2023

Reasons for cooking from scratch

- Making meals healthier is top reason for cooking
 - Graph 16: reasons for cooking evening meals completely/partly from scratch, 2023
- Three in five cook to make meals healthier
- Position prepared products as an easy way to eat well
- M&S encourages shoppers to 'Follow the Flower', Tesco launches veg-led meal components
- Saving money is a key reason to cook
- "Slow-cooked" callouts can add value
- Spotlight energy-saving cooking methods
- Many list enjoyment as a reason to cook at home...

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- ...but two in five see it as a chore

Behaviours related to cooking in the home

- Convenience is a pull for home cooks
 - Graph 17: behaviours related to cooking in the home, 2023
- Three in four prefer recipes with a short list of ingredients
- Co-locate meal components
- Communicate on-pack ease of making and only needing few ingredients
- Ultra-processed foods spark widespread concerns
- 'Natural' variants have an opportunity to shine...
- ...as do frozen products
- Heightened need for "clean label" formulations
- Open up the manufacturing process
- Drive awareness about ingredients used

Sources of inspiration for cooking in the home

- Recipe websites/magazines and cookbooks are top sources of inspiration for cooking in the home
 - Graph 18: sources of inspiration for cooking in the home, 2023
- Older demographics more likely to engage with traditional channels
 - Graph 19: sources of inspiration for cooking in the home, by age, 2023
- Half of 16-24s find cooking inspiration on social media
- Recommendations are a key source of inspiration for 16-34s
- Social media offers a platform for implicit recommendations
- Foodservice gives meal ideas to 30% of 16-24s

Attitudes towards cooking in the home

- Help for adding flavour to meat-free meals appeals
 - Graph 20: attitudes related to home cooking, 2023
- Opportunity for flavoured meat-free components...
- ...to spotlight flavour to win favour
- Sauces can unlock occasions by highlighting how they boost the appeal of veggie dishes
- Seasonings tailored to elevating veggie dishes stand to chime
- Many say cooking for friends and family is a way of showing love, two in five feel guilty for not cooking
- Spotlight time saved to spend more time with loved ones
- Brands can tap into strong image of mealtimes as a way to bring people together

APPENDIX

Report scope and definitions

- Report definition
- Abbreviations and terms

Methodology

- Consumer research methodology

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This is marketing intelligence published by Mintel. The consumer research exclusively commissioned by Mintel was conducted by a UK licensed market survey agent ([See Research Methodology for more information](#)).

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