

The pandemic has permanently changed our relationship with food. Our research found that what we eat has grown in importance to us over 2020, and this trend is set to continue. As the rhythm of everyday life became repetitive over the long lockdown, we started using food to punctuate and invigorate our days. This has stuck. Our mealtime rituals have become more meaningful. What we eat is now a hot topic of daily conversation. And with millions of us working from home, cooking has become the new commute.

COOKING



Our behaviour towards food as individuals and households has been reshaped. Firstly, the events of the year have made us more organised as a nation. Our research found that 52% of us have been carefully planning meals and writing shopping lists since March and will continue to do so in the post-Covid world. And two-thirds of us have been, and will continue to be, more watchful of waste. At the same time, food has taken on greater significance. Of the tens of millions of us who've spent the majority of the year working from home, three-quarters say cooking dinner now provides the break between 'working time' and 'home time'. Where once the journey from the office to the front door would punctuate the day, that role is now being fulfilled by time spent at the chopping board.

77%

of those who have been sitting down for meals with housemates or families plan to carry on

These days, the commuter belt is the one around our waists. We've always been creatures of habit but 63% of respondents who've been working from home say mealtimes have become more of an event. Preparing something to eat has taken on particular significance among young professionals, three-quarters of whom say the ritual has become more important to them. Searches for the word 'lunch' on Waitrose.com are up by 105% compared to last year, and people are also talking about food more: six in ten of us say food has become more of a regular topic of conversation, either in person or on video calls. Eating out has been hard this year. So people have been recreating restaurant style meals at home, says Waitrose executive chef Martyn Lee. He sees this trend continuing.