



FOOD 2021 AND DRINK REPORT

WAITROSE
& PARTNERS

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THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW CONSUMER WORLDVIEW

"Our daily rituals, our attitudes towards supermarkets and the way we shop have been fundamentally reshaped"

If someone had told you last Christmas that 2020 would be defined by a global pandemic and a series of national lockdowns, you – like me – simply wouldn't have believed them. But that is precisely what has happened. There's no question that this has been a challenging year for us all. Yet from the disruption and uncertainty of Covid-19 we have seen the emergence of a new consumer worldview. Our Food and Drink Report 2021 finds that our daily rituals, our attitudes towards supermarkets and the way we shop have been fundamentally reshaped by the pandemic. These changes are here to stay. The 'new normal' that we all spoke about back in the spring isn't new anymore. It's just normal. Call it a pivot, a new dawn, or a fresh start, but one thing is clear: things will never be the same again.

Mealtimes have taken on new significance. With so many of us working from home, meals have become focal points around which days revolve. After all, having the family together in one place at one time is something that wasn't always possible with our busy lives pre-Covid. But people have also been using mealtimes to partition their days. Three-quarters of home workers tell us that cooking dinner provides the divide between their 'working day' and their 'home' time. Cooking, it seems, is the new commute. Meanwhile many people have turned the space that lockdown has created in their favour. Over half of our respondents say they secretly enjoy not having to go out as much.

People also value food more than before. This is partly because for a brief period there were concerns about shortages. Also because good food is essential for our physical and mental health. But it is mainly because food raises the spirits, lightens the mood and comforts the soul. There is a new respect for people working in supermarkets too. Essential workers in every sense, they have been among the heroes of the pandemic. They are too often taken for granted, and it is wonderful that their hard work has been recognised.

Perhaps the most seismic shift, however, has been in how we shop. Almost 70% of the people who shopped for food online during the pandemic say they'll continue to do so. There has been a quiet revolution. At Waitrose, we've risen to the task: we've increased our Waitrose.com weekly delivery slots almost four-fold to more than 200,000 and we're currently growing online sales faster than any other grocer. Our online business is on track to treble its size to become a £1 billion business in its own right by the end of this year.

If there's one good thing that will endure from 2020, it's a greater sense of community and kindness. Our shops and Partners are at the heart of the communities in which we operate, and we're immensely proud of their support to people who need it – both throughout this year and also right now through our Give a Little Love campaign, helping families alongside the fantastic charities FareShare and Home-Start.

I hope you enjoy the Waitrose & Partners Food and Drink Report 2021.

JAMES BAILEY

Executive Director

WHICH TRENDS ARE GOING UP?

TORNADO OMELETTE

This Korean dish was huge on TikTok in the US and is now causing a storm over here. It's basically a mound of rice or noodles (or a muffin) draped in a swirly omelette. It may resemble a giant yellow Walnut Whip but it tastes sensational. Sales of its ever-flexible key ingredient – eggs – are up 22% this year.

FORAGING

This trend is a box-ticker for all families. It's healthy and fun, it keeps the children occupied, it happens outdoors and it comes with a large dollop of nostalgia. From blackberries to sloes, many of us are foraging again. UK-wide social media interest is up 89% on the year.

SLOW IT DOWN

More home working has super-charged the trend for slow-cooked meat, with searches 46% up on Waitrose.com and sales of oxtail up a hearty 258%. Slow-cooking cuts are great value, fool-proof, and can deliver deceptively fancy results.

WINTER BBQS

Al fresco eating could stick around after social distancing measures disappear. After all, we've invested in the pizza ovens, mushroom heaters and fire pits that make it so fun. For an on-trend BBQ, look to Korean and Thai cuisines.

ASIAN ESSENTIALS

Store cupboard essentials from Asia are the fastest growing of our Cooks' Ingredients range. They're as tasty as they are versatile, and have been a massive hit over lockdown. Chinese Rice Vinegar is up 194%, Mirin Rice Wine is up 188% and Japanese Rice Vinegar is up 180%.

POSH COFFEE AT HOME

Popping out for a cup of coffee has been tricky this year. So we've all become baristas at home. UK social media mentions for coffee machines are up 14%, while sales of 'bean to cup' coffee machines are up 64% at John Lewis, and coffee beans by 44% at Waitrose.



222%

Searches on Waitrose.com for 'pickling' are 222% higher

PRESERVING AND FERMENTING

This mega-trend combines three smaller trends: experimenting with techniques, reducing waste and making use of seasonal gluts of products. Preserving is where it's at right now. UK social media mentions of preserving and fermenting are up by 28%. Searches on Waitrose.com for 'pickling' are 222% higher.

ORGANIC FOOD

Provenance, animal welfare, taste and value have never mattered more. Sales from our Duchy range are up 13% in total, while sales of organic chickens are up 42% and vegetables are up 23%. Every hour we sell 375 bags of Waitrose Duchy Organic carrots from our shops or website.

BRITISH SEAFOOD

Clams, cockles, mussels and oysters are back. Sales of British seafood have tripled over the last six months. Sorry to appear shellfish, but we can't get enough of them.

VIRTUAL COOKING

We launched our virtual Cookery School in June, offering 200 interactive classes and free webinars for groups of eight. Thousands of customers have joined in, with curry nights and fresh pasta classes proving the most popular.

THE FACTS & FIGURES

Waitrose carried out extensive research into the top food and drink trends of 2020. We conducted OnePoll consumer research on a wide range of topics with 2,000 people across the UK of all ages – not exclusively Waitrose shoppers. This research was supported by insights from our food, drink and retail experts, as well as from Waitrose shoppers. It is backed up with sales data from millions of purchases throughout the year. All sales figures are compared with the same period the previous year, unless otherwise stated.

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. 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.

77%

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

"Many people have been able to more regularly cook and eat dinner together this year, something we have often dreamt about, and will be reluctant to go back to a daily commute. 2021 could be the year of permanent adjustment and making our working lives work harder for us. Protecting time spent cooking, eating, being with loved ones and just appreciating the simple pleasures in life we may never have previously had the chance to do".

NATALIE MITCHELL

Director of Technical, Quality, Innovation & Supplier Management

THE WFH REVOLUTION

74%

of people who've been working from home say cooking provides a break between their 'work time' and their 'home time'

72%

sometimes eat last night's leftovers for lunch

70%

try harder to cook different meals at the weekend

59%

have become wannabe baristas and spend more effort making coffee when on a break from work

But recreating experiences at home doesn't stop at food: we've been replicating the vibe of the cocktail bar, the coffee shop, the cinema or the music festival under our own roofs or in our gardens.

Due to schools closing, children have become more involved in cooking. Eighty children joined our virtual cookery classes in the summer, and we hosted a monster cupcake webinar at Halloween. Jonathan Hehir, innovations manager at Waitrose, says many children have never been as close to the detailed workings of a household as they have this year. One in five parents say their children are cooking more at home compared to before the pandemic.

THE RISE OF FLEXIBLE

PULSES

UK social media mentions are 7x greater than this time last year

EGGS

sales up 22% this year

STORE CUPBOARD ON ICE

we've rediscovered our freezers, using a wider range of frozen ingredients as staples, and 55% of us plan to do this long-term



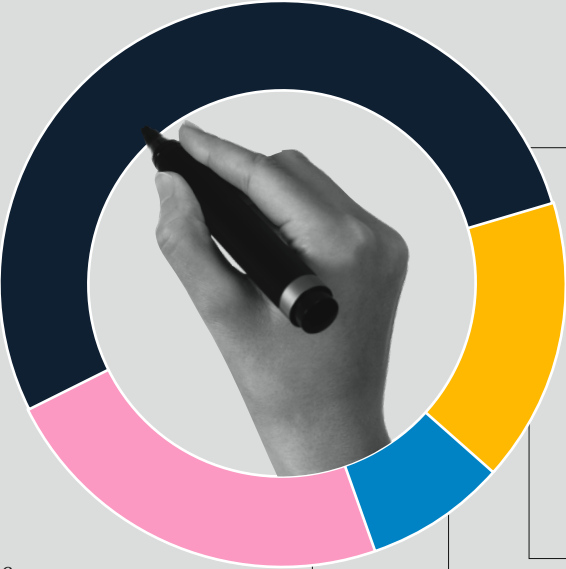
25%

UK-wide mentions of food on social media are up by 25% compared to last year.

"During lockdown it was a real joy to eat well and spend time cooking. We got into the habit of eating some really lovely food as we didn't have much else to focus on, and this habit has stuck."
Ange, 27, Bristol

"I have got better at planning due to Covid, which I think helps me to stick to the budget. And I make better use of what I buy and have less waste than before."
Leah, 36, Stockport

"During the pandemic I have regarded food as one of the luxuries that we can enjoy."
Issy, 27, Manchester



THE COVID PLAN-DEMIC

53%

I have been planning meals more during the pandemic and intend to carry on

16%

I have been planning meals more during the pandemic and don't intend to carry on

8%

I haven't been planning meals more during the pandemic but I intend to start

23%

I haven't been planning meals more during the pandemic and I don't intend to start

The pandemic has caused an unprecedented surge in online food shopping. Our research found that a quarter of us bought food online for the first time this year, with the highest uptake being among people under 35. The unexpected googly that 2020 has bowled at the nation will hopefully be a one-off. But it has permanently changed the way we consume: six in ten of us say that changes we've made to our overall shopping habits this year will stick over the long term.

SHOPPING

A huge 69% of people who shopped for food online during the pandemic plan to continue doing so. Over three-quarters of us now do at least some of our grocery shopping online, compared to 61% a year ago.

We have seen first-hand this online surge. Waitrose.com has more than trebled its size and is on track to become a £1 billion business in its own right by the end of the year. Before Covid struck, our online food operations accounted for 5% of our total business. This figure will soon be 20%. To cater for this we are growing our delivery capacity to over 250,000 delivery slots a week, up from 55,000 pre-Covid. Over recent months Waitrose.com has increased its online sales faster than any other grocer, according to independent figures from Kantar.

Our research exposed some unexpected trends. It's often assumed that young people are society's digital natives. However while one in four people across all age groups bought food online for the first time this year, the figure rises to a third for people under the age of 35. Conversely, just one in five people over 55 made their online food shopping debut in 2020. It seems that when it comes to buying groceries online, the older generations have been leading the way.

Four in ten of us embraced alternative delivery methods over the pandemic, for example by ordering restaurant delivery boxes or speedy shopping services. Waitrose on-demand grocery trial with Deliveroo now reaches over three million households. Nearly two-thirds of those who used such services plan to continue. People aged between 18 and 24 are the most likely to carry on. But physical stores remain vitally important. And almost 70% of people who used local convenience stores to 'top up' shop over the Covid crisis will continue to do so.

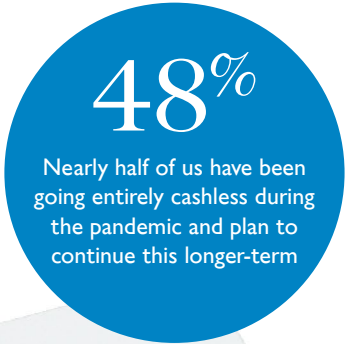
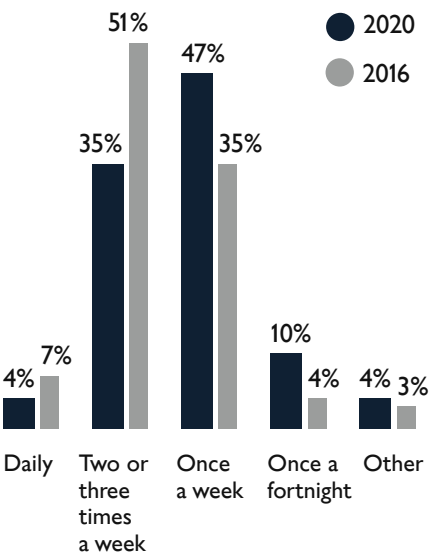
"We're seeing huge shifts in how we all shop, and for a high proportion of people these changes look to be permanent. Waitrose.com will soon account for 20% of our total business, and its rapid growth has helped us respond to the extreme demand this year. Key for us in fulfilling our customers' needs as we continue to respond to these changing habits is ensuring a seamless experience between physical and online shopping, as more than three quarters of our online customers also shop in our stores".

LAURA BURBEDGE
Director of online, Waitrose

AN ONLINE SURGE



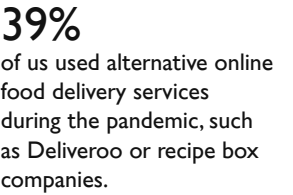
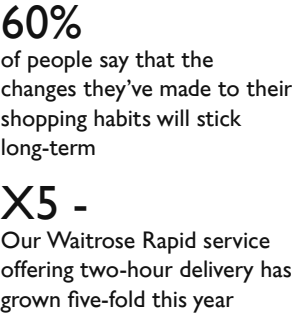
2020 VS 2016 HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOP FOR FOOD?



THE CASHLESS SOCIETY

Pre-Covid, 22% of all transactions in Waitrose stores were made with cash
This figure has fallen to around 10% of all transactions

DID YOU SHOP ONLINE FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR?

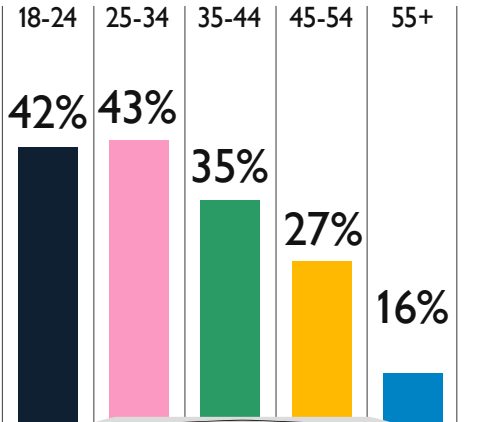
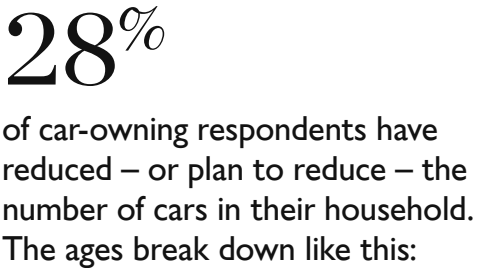


"Many people are discovering the benefits of the weekly shop again. While during lockdown we tried to minimise trips to a shop, many have found benefits of this more thoughtful approach to planning food - such as cutting waste or saving money - meaning the habit may stick."

JANE ORCHARD
Manager, store innovation

FAREWELL TO THE CAR?

The year 2020 could mark the end of Britain's love affair with the car. Nearly 30% of car owning households told us they've reduced the number of vehicles they run, or plan to do so. This figure rises to almost half - 43% - among people under 35. We're all living more locally now, so who needs wheels?
When it comes to wider environmental concerns, food waste is also top of our minds. Three-quarters of people we polled said that they feel ashamed when they waste food. As a result, 77% of respondents tried not to waste food over the pandemic. Of these, 83% will carry on doing so post-Covid. And half of us say we're now making a conscious effort to save energy at home - switching off lights or keeping the heating a bit lower.



Our attitudes towards food have changed as much as our behaviour. As a country we have a new appreciation for the food we buy and how we buy it. Concerns about product shortages at the start of lockdown may have been short-lived – but they made us value the food on our plates more. The pandemic has focused our minds on the things that matter.

A NEW APPRECIATION



Our research found 57% of us value food more than we did in the pre-Covid world. This figure rises significantly among 25-34 year olds. And having seen the Herculean efforts of supermarket workers in keeping the shelves stocked, 70% of us value the role of supermarket staff more than we did at the turn of the year.

People's attitudes towards their finances have changed too. Six in ten of us are more conscious about how we spend money than before, while 77% are concerned about the economy looking ahead. These concerns grow with age.

These shifts in perspective are having interesting knock-on effects. Given that few of us have experienced the fear of food running low before, we are retreating to traditional recipes and food preservation techniques, such as fermentation and pickling.

"An increase in the importance of food and its power to bring us together has pushed many of us back to old fashioned meal planning and recipes. Comfort and nostalgia are back."

MARTYN LEE
Executive Chef

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT?:

"I see supermarkets as more important in my life than they were before the pandemic."

59% of people living in Britain either agree or strongly agree



65% of women

65% of 25-34 year olds

Almost half of us say we've tried out – and will continue to use – new recipes, ingredients or cooking techniques over the pandemic. This rises to 60% among 18-24 year olds, who have discovered the urge to experiment.

We're being more resourceful. Seven out of ten homeworkers say we sometimes eat last night's leftovers for lunch: lasagne toasties or bubble & squeak with spare mash could soon become household staples. People are keen to get the maximum value from each meal, according to our experts. For example, roast chickens are stretched over two meals rather than one. We're also keeping it simple: sales of our Essential range are up by almost 10% this year.

At the same time, life has become about simple pleasures. The majority of us are finding joy in small things, such as gardening and cooking. A third of us grew our own food during the long lockdown and will continue to do so. Meanwhile, localism matters. On UK-wide social media, searches for 'buy local' are up 39% while 'local shops' are up 179%.

As ever, technology played an important role in our lockdown lives. As we stayed in contact with loved ones via FaceTime, Zoom, WhatsApp or Skype, almost 40% of us believe we've become more tech-savvy over the year. Interestingly, people aged between 35 and 44 are the cohort who say that their understanding of technology improved the most over lockdown.

91%

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

91% of over-55s who tried not to waste food during the pandemic will continue to do so... but only 75% of 18-24 year olds say they'll do the same

"I choose better quality products in some areas than I did pre-Covid as food and quality seems more important now."

Linda, 49, Birmingham



"I've seen that Covid has brought people together and brought all-round respect. We've made lots of new friends when delivering shopping – they appreciate it so much and they're so nice. We find now that cars always let us into traffic with a friendly wave."

ALEX OSEI BONSU BEM

Waitrose & Partners delivery driver who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for helping over 100 vulnerable customers in Buckinghamshire during Covid-19

57% of us value food more than we did

70% of us value the role of supermarket workers more than we did at the start of 2020

55% of us say the pandemic has changed our spending habits for good

77% are concerned about the economy

61% of us are more conscious of how we spend money compared to before the pandemic

British food is firmly in vogue. With more and more people worried about farming food and farming standards from overseas and wanting to support our nation's farmers, 2021 will be the year of choosing to buy more British produce.

FUTURE OF BRITISH FARMING

BRITAIN'S FARMING IMPERATIVES:

74%
of people want to see more food businesses in the UK express their ongoing support for local British producers.

60%
of us are concerned that the UK's food standards will drop following Britain's exit from the EU and want to see them protected.

Concerns are highest in London, the North-East and Scotland.

61%
worry there will be a rise in factory farmed meat coming into the UK if standards are not safeguarded and want this to be prioritised.

BRITISH SHOPPERS PLEDGE TO BACK BRITISH:

Over half of us living in the UK say we will only buy meat from British reared animals in the event of a trade deal with a country outside of the EU. Almost half have said they will buy more organic produce if the Government strikes a deal with a country that uses more pesticides than the UK. This is highest among those under 34.

73%
of us say affordability is important but it must not come at the price of British standards.

WAITROSE.COM

searches for British and high welfare produce since peak of trade negotiations:

British produce	160%
British beef	450%
British regional cheese	x20
Free range	370%
Views of Waitrose animal welfare commitments	1,530%

DEMAND FOR GREENER PASTURES

60%
of us want UK businesses to bring forward their carbon net zero commitments.

1/3
of us would like to see supermarkets commit to helping reduce deforestation.

41%
of us want to see supermarkets do more to cut food waste, with three-quarters saying they'd like to see suppliers use surplus food to help tackle poverty in the UK.

WE ASKED PEOPLE LIVING IN THE UK WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF FARMING STANDARDS:

2/3
said firm assurances over food safety and welfare are more important than price.

"The appetite among the British public to support homegrown produce is high - standards and value are no longer an 'either/or' but part of the same package."

JAMES BAILEY
Executive Director

Two thirds of people in the UK would like to see the government investing more in agricultural innovations, such as agri-tech, regenerative agriculture and vertical farming in order to help feed our growing population and reduce climate change. But what could the sustainable farm of tomorrow look like?

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FARM

FARMING WITH NATURE

Regenerative agriculture has the potential to reverse the impacts of climate change. Farming practices like zero-till, precision farming and agroforestry are tried and tested techniques proven to enrich soils, enhance ecosystems and improve watersheds. By farming with nature and helping to capture carbon, we can generate healthy yields while improving our natural ecosystems.

Did you know: Waitrose is the only supermarket in the UK to run its own farm. Fresh produce including mushrooms, apples, pears, and wheat flour are grown, picked and packed directly from the farm and sent straight to Waitrose branches around the country.

"For 90 years, the Leckford Estate has continued to adapt and modernise farming practices, and we're incredibly excited that it will be at the centre of the John Lewis Partnership's innovation over the next 15 years to ensure Waitrose is able to reach its target of sourcing from only net zero farms by 2035"

ANDREW HOAD
Head of Leckford Estate

68%
of people in the UK would like to see the government investing more in agricultural innovations, such as agri-tech

IMPROVING EFFICIENCIES WITH AGTECH

AgTech is an emerging industry that has the potential to improve yields, help prevent climate change impacts and enable food production in previously unsuitable regions. Whether it is utilising space in urban landscapes to farm vertically, developing food synthetically to help feed the world or employing robot harvesters to autonomously look after processes on farm, there are many exciting new technologies currently being trialled that could change the face of the agriculture industry in the next 10 years.

REDUCING WASTE THROUGH CIRCULARITY

The global population is set to reach 9.8 billion by 2050 and reducing food waste and using surplus materials could be critical in helping to feed them. Whether it's utilising fresh byproduct on farm or insects to create alternative animal feed, or using less than perfect fruits and vegetables to make cordials and juices, there are countless ways we can use byproduct practically and this will only grow in the coming decade.

CONNECTING CUSTOMERS DIRECTLY WITH BRITISH FARMS

More shoppers in the UK are showing an appetite for local British produce, with 44% saying they'd consider subscribing to a service that sent fresh produce directly from farm to door.

MEASURING THE WELL-BEING OF FARM ANIMALS

It's easy to know if an animal is being fed well, has good housing and is in good health. What's harder is to determine their mental well-being. But new scientific studies being researched and developed right now will help determine a farm animal's mental state, ensuring that farm welfare is the highest it's ever been before.

REGENERATING OUR OCEANS

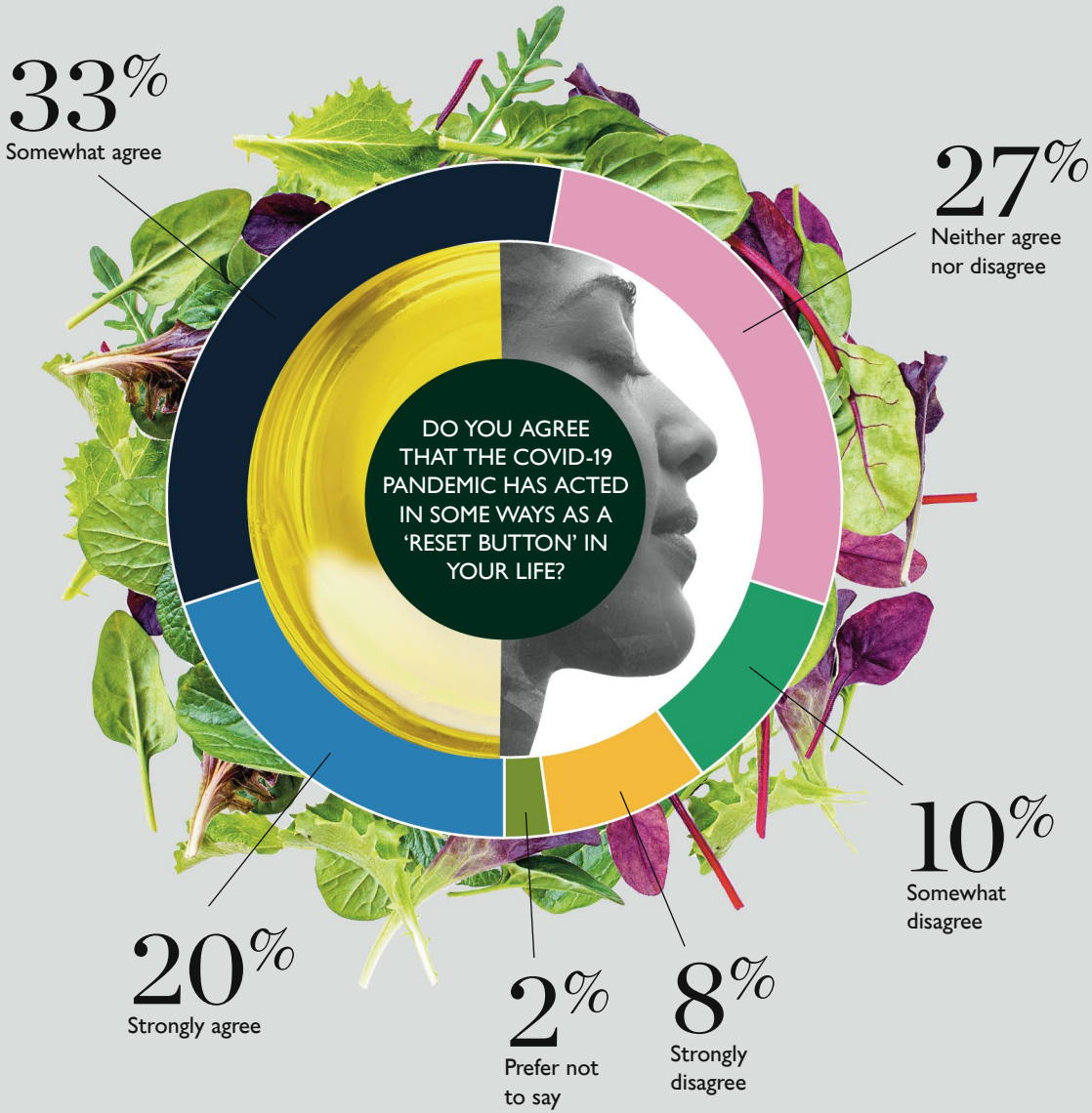
Global fish stocks and many marine ecosystems are under threat following decades of overexploitation, but it is not too late to stem the tide. In the wild, regenerative agriculture practices such as the "rewilding" of vulnerable ecosystems via marine protected areas could help revitalise our oceans. In aquaculture systems, the future could see the creation of multi-trophic aquaculture farms, and use of circular systems utilising byproducts from wild fisheries for aquaculture feed or farmed fish waste to cultivate fresh produce.



Maintaining our physical and mental wellbeing has been paramount over the pandemic. But this has led to a permanent readjustment in many people’s psyches. Our research found that 53% of us feel the pandemic has acted as a ‘reset button’ in our busy lives. Many of us have used the year as an opportunity to ditch the clutter and hunker down. And – whisper it – 58% of us say we’ve secretly enjoyed the lack of pressure to go out. In short, we’ve used this year’s events to create space on our internal hard drives – space that we intend to keep free.

HEALTH

THE PERSONAL RESET



ARE YOU SECRETLY A BIT HAPPIER TO NOT HAVE TO GO OUT AS MUCH?

58%
either strongly agree or somewhat agree

“This ‘reset’ has, for many, prompted a desire to shape our future, not just arrive there.”

JOHN VARY
Futurologist

Our research found that almost 70% of us feel there’s more of a need to keep up our mental and physical stamina now than before the pandemic. Almost 60% of respondents have been trying harder to keep themselves physically healthy during the pandemic. Healthy recipes on Waitrose.com have seen the biggest growth of all recipes this year, up by 134%. There has been an increased interest in immunity-boosting food, in gut health, and in foods with high nutritional density. Meanwhile 62% tried to keep themselves mentally healthy, suggesting that – by a whisker – people have prioritised their mental health over their physical health over the pandemic. People aged between 25 and 44 were most concerned about looking after their mental health.

We’ve been enjoying the small things. Over four in ten of us currently grow our own food, up from three in ten last year, and 71% of these plan to continue. And of the 70% of us who decluttered our homes during lockdown, three-quarters will carry on doing so as normality returns.

- ON WAITROSE.COM**
- 57%**
The guide to portion sizes has seen searches rise
 - 230%**
High fibre recipes are up
 - 330%**
High protein recipes are up
 - Among the most popular pages on our website have been ‘How to Start a Kitchen Herb Garden’ and ‘Veg You Can Start Growing in Summer’

630%
Healthy Mediterranean meal plan views are up 630%

“With so many unknowns, our overall health is one thing we can try and take care of. Lots of us say we’re making long-term changes to support our mental and physical well-being this year - taking time to plan and prepare nutritious meals, moving a bit more, and carving some space for ourselves.”

DR JOANNE LUNN
Health Manager

COMMUNITY – THE RETURN OF LOCAL LIVING

There is no doubt that, emerging from the pandemic, there is a greater sense of community up and down the country. Not only do we care about the people around us more, but we are living more locally. There is a renewed sense of togetherness out there. This can be seen in everything from street WhatsApp groups to the notion of the ‘20-minute neighbourhood’, in which life’s essential components – places to work, shop, learn, take exercise and receive medical care – are within easy reach of our homes.

Our research found that 60% of those who got involved with their local communities over lockdown plan to continue being involved going forward. Community interaction during the pandemic was particularly high among people under 45. We found that almost 70% of the people aged between 35 and 44 who reached out to those around them will carry on post-pandemic. People in the North East are most likely to keep this community spirit going in the future.

Family has become more important to us too. Half of all respondents said they took part in regular family catch-ups over lockdown. Of these, 72% will carry on.

John Vary, Futurologist at the John Lewis Partnership, expects we’ll see more ‘crowdsourcing’ of ideas in our communities to solve local problems in the future. This is because local residents are best placed to identify their community’s needs. We’ll share more, whether that involves educational resources, digital spaces or even pet ownership. This increased connectivity will bring financial, time and emotional benefits, Vary says. Neighbourhood projects are springing up everywhere, such as the Every One Every day initiative in Barking and Dagenham.

Of those who got involved in their local communities over lockdown

60%
intend to carry on

31%
of us have been doing family games nights. Just under half of those – 49% – say they’ll carry on

156%
Despite the pandemic, we saw our biggest ever Halloween sales this year as people looked for inventive ways to make it feel special, and searches for ‘Halloween’ on Waitrose.com were up 156%

The Waitrose and John Lewis Give a Little Love campaign - working with Home-Start and FareShare to help over 100,000 families in need this Christmas - is inspired by the spontaneous acts of kindness that emerged this year as we went into the long lockdown.



“Our customers told us that supporting vulnerable people in the UK is the most important charitable cause to them personally, with 23% saying it is their top concern of all the options and 57% placing it in their top three.”

LINDSEY CROMPTON
Social Impact Manager

It's been a year of significant shifts in how and what we're drinking. From old favourites in new, environmentally-friendly packaging, to a surge in drinks that remind us of holidays abroad, and an overall more considered approach to alcohol consumption. Here are this year's Top of the Pops.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DRINKING



**Pierpaolo Petrassi MW,
Head of Drinks**

FORMATS

Consumer awareness of the ethical credentials and sheer convenience of alternative formats has never been more prevalent. Lockdown saw people reduce the number of visits they made to shops, so larger formats like bag in box were in demand and customers haven't looked back. Wine in cans, cocktails in post-friendly sachets and bag in box wine have all pushed the boundaries of how people expect to buy good-quality drinks. This trend will only continue as we see more innovation in the industry and more customers embracing different types of packaging than ever before.

THE OLD VS THE NEW

A year of uncertainty and change in 2020 saw us turn to old favourites. In terms of drinks, this meant we polished up our mixology skills to ensure we didn't miss out on our favourite cocktails, and we settled down for nights in with a trusty bottle of Malbec or Sauvignon Blanc. For 2021, our sense of exploring the new will be refreshed with 20% of us saying we plan to continue experimenting with new drinks at home, rising to a third among 18-24 year-olds. We also expect to see a rise in popularity of lesser-known wine regions and grape varieties as well as more exotic spirits and unusual flavour combinations.

**2021 Drink Trends from
Jamie Matthewson,
Wine Buying Manager**

SHERRY

Martinis with a sherry rinse, the rise of sweet sherry and a world of food matching delights from salty cured meats to rich, indulgent desserts - sherry is seeing a steep incline in popularity. Interestingly, people seem to be rediscovering the classic or traditional styles of Manzanilla, Amontillado and Oloroso - where previously it was all about sweet cream sherries.

ENGLISH WINE

The quality of the 2019 vintage of English and Welsh wines is the best we've ever seen and this, combined with the increase in popularity of English and Welsh reds - particularly lighter styles - make a bumper year for home-grown wine. Still wines from 2019 are in stock now, while fizz will take a few more years, so keep an eye out!

LOW AND NO

18% of us plan to continue trying more low-alcohol or alcohol-free drinks or 'mocktails' to reduce alcohol consumption, rising to a third of all 18-24 year-olds. Sales at Waitrose corroborate this trend, with low and no sales up 22% year on year. New additions include a sparkling wine, IPA and stout, broadening the range of non-alcoholic versions of our favourite beverages even further.

WINTER ROSÉ

Storming sales in autumn 2020 (up 57% versus last year) prove that pink is officially for all seasons. Versatile, food friendly and with the ability to take us straight to Provence in a sip, rosé wine had its biggest year ever last year, and this will only continue to grow in 2021.

GRAPES

Spanish Albarino (or Alvarinho if from Portugal) is going from strength to strength, and will have its truly mainstream moment in 2021. Primitivo also shows no signs of slowing in its meteoric rise.

FLAVOURED VODKA

The growing trend for flavoured spirits, led by gin, has seen flavoured vodka become the latest spirit of choice. Without the heady botanicals of gin, it is amazingly versatile in a wide range of homemade cocktails. Fun flavours like fir, rhubarb and marmalade mean the possibilities are endless.

SPRITZERS

The trend for enjoying a spritzer in a highball glass is straight from the Med - think sherry or white port, served simply with tonic and ice for a refreshing, long drink.



A NATION OF RELUCTANT



The virtual get-together felt like a novelty at the start of lockdown. But it seems that the lustre wore off as the pandemic progressed. A quarter of respondents told us they took part in virtual drinks parties over the long lockdown. But of those who did, more than half - 54% - say they won't be carrying on with them post-Covid. A slightly higher proportion - 58% - say they won't continue with virtual dinner parties again once the pandemic is over. Quizzes proved equally puzzling for some. While four in ten of us took part in virtual quizzes over lockdown, over half won't be doing so again.

WITH SOME FORM OF SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS LIKELY TO BE IN PLACE FOR A WHILE, HOW WILL WE CELEBRATE SPECIAL OCCASIONS WITH LOVED ONES IN THE MONTHS AHEAD?

- 24% Send them homemade gifts and cards for that personal touch
- 20% Cook them special dishes
- 19% Have multiple small gatherings instead of one big one to get around number restrictions
- 19% Arrange restaurant deliveries
- 18% Send gift hampers
- 18% Buy gift vouchers so loved ones can spend them on what they like
- 11% Buy them a virtual experience, such as online cocktail making or cookery class

Respondents could choose more than one option