

The new normal for grocery shopping?



In a year of change owing to COVID-19, Waitrose's recently published 'Food & Drink Report 2021' demonstrates how the 'new normal' has influenced consumer habits towards food and drink. What follows are some key trends to emerge from the report, based on a survey of 2000 people, comprising both Waitrose and non-Waitrose customers.

Online shopping

One of the most reported aspects of shopping during lockdown, and a key finding of the Report, has been the increase in online shopping. A quarter of people surveyed bought food online for the first time this year, and a significant three quarters of people order at least part of their food shopping online. This extends to alternative delivery methods too – 3 million households are now able to order Waitrose products via Deliveroo, and two thirds of those who have used this service plan to continue to do so.

The outcome of consumers moving to online grocery shopping has resulted in Waitrose.com more than trebling in size. It now accounts for 20% of Waitrose's total business, up from 5% at the beginning of the pandemic.

Home cooking

As more people worked from home, cooking replaced the commute as the bridge between work and home life – 63% of those surveyed said that cooking had become more of an event. And more time at home meant more time to explore different styles of cooking too; sales of Asian cooking ingredients such as Chinese Rice Vinegar were up 194%, whilst oxtail has seen a 258% increase in popularity.



The figures suggest that a home-cooked meal has become a popular alternative to eating out, and this may be a lasting change, with 77% of those surveyed saying they will continue to sit down for a home-cooked meal with family and friends following the end of COVID-19 restrictions.

DIY Barista

Drink is not exempt to this shift in consumer habits. As it became more difficult for people to visit coffee shops, sales at John Lewis of 'bean to cup' coffee machines grew by 64%, while the sale of coffee beans at Waitrose was up by 44%.

Best of British

Finally, the focus on 'home' has potentially been the prompt for a rise in popularity for British food and drink. Searches for 'British produce' on Waitrose.com were up 160% and this figure is even greater when it comes to meat products, with an increase of 450%. Almost three quarters of those surveyed would like more food businesses to support British producers, and over two thirds said that assured farming standards were more important than price. This is encouraging for suppliers concerned about the substantial price increases predicted in areas like meat and dairy if there is no trade deal with the EU by 1 January. However, how far this sentiment translates into practice remains to be seen. The continued rise of discount retailers may indicate that price is still the key driver in consumer choice.

The 'new normal' of consumer grocery shopping has significantly altered Waitrose's practices, and the figures suggest it stands to have a significant impact on the food and drink sector as a whole. For further information or advice on matters relating to food and drink, please contact our [retail, leisure and hospitality team](#).



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