

# Attitudes towards Ready Meals and Ready-to-cook Foods – UK – June 2017

Report Price: £1995.00 | \$2693.85 | €2245.17

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## This report looks at the following areas:

- Regular innovation could help premium varieties to succeed even as incomes come under pressure
- Scope for expansion in healthier ready meals
- Ethical claims offer promising means to stand out

## Products covered in this Report

This Report examines consumers' attitudes and behaviours relating to ready meals and ready-to-cook foods. Mintel's definition includes products sold through the grocery retail channel and direct to consumers including:

**Chilled, frozen and shelf-stable ready meals**, including complete and part meals, and meal centres. This includes complete meals such as spaghetti Bolognese and curry with rice. It also includes part meals/meal centres (including burgers in a bap/bun) to which the consumer may, but need not, add items such as vegetables, pasta or rice, such as single ethnic dishes like chicken tikka.

**Ready-to-cook foods** are chilled foods specifically positioned as needing no further preparation on the part of the consumer other than opening the packet and cooking the product according to the on-pack instructions. The major grocers have developed their own specific sub-branded ranges of such foods, such as the Sainsbury's Just Cook range. It should be noted that some sectors of the trade use the terms 'part prepared' or 'partially prepared foods' – both terms are deemed to refer to ready-to-cook foods as defined for the purpose of this Report.

'Pies' that have no pastry content (for example, shepherd's pie) and, therefore, do not conform to Mintel's definition of a pie, are included as ready meals in this Report.



"That over half of ready meal/ready-to-cook eaters/buyers opt to cook from scratch more when money is tight leaves the sector vulnerable with mounting inflation is expected to put pressure on disposable household incomes. However, premium products should benefit from people choosing these as a money-saving alternative to eating out, but innovation is needed to keep shoppers engaged."

**Alice Baker, Research Analyst**  
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## ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

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- The implications
- Scope for expansion in healthier ready meals
- The facts
- The implications
- Ethical claims offer promising means to stand out
- The facts
- The implications

## THE MARKET – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Inflation expected for the market
- Government sets new salt reduction targets
- Consumer lifestyle trends could discourage sales

## MARKET DRIVERS

- Inflation expected to put pressure on producers' margins
- Prepared meals at risk if incomes come under pressure
- Opportunities remain for premium products as alternative to dining out
- Government sets targets for industry to further reduce salt
- EFSA rules make it difficult to make a low-salt claim
- Consumer lifestyle trends could discourage sales
- Potential competition from recipe box delivery services

## COMPANIES AND BRANDS – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Private label continues to dominate launches
- Little health-led innovation in 2016
- Continued growth for high-protein and gluten-free claims
- Retailers look to compete with recipe box subscription schemes
- Overall advertising spend rises in 2016
- Retailers remain dominant in advertising, with a focus on quality

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- **Conflicting consumer views on health present a challenge and an opportunity**
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- **Nielsen Ad Intel coverage**

## THE CONSUMER – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **89% eat ready meals or RTCs, a third eat chilled at least weekly**
- **Families are the key users**

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- Favourite dish is the primary deciding factor
- New twists and in-store sampling could help to expand users' limited repertoires
- Prepared meals at risk if incomes come under pressure, but premium versions could benefit
- Influence of health considerations offers opportunities for healthier variants
- Ethical claims could be a differentiator
- Low quality rating for ready meals suggests negative perceptions still linger

## USAGE OF READY MEALS AND READY-TO-COOK FOODS

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## BEHAVIOURS RELATING TO READY MEALS AND READY-TO-COOK FOODS

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- Premium products should be particularly well placed to benefit from interest in organic
- Resealable packets appeal particularly to parents

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- Consumer indifference suggests need for frozen foods to be marketed on taste grounds

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- Consumer research methodology

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