

## Prepared Meals - Ireland - November 2020

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“Prepared meals have witnessed a difficult year in 2020. Consumers working from home more often, indefinitely in some cases, coupled with lockdown, has witnessed a boost of scratch cooking and a drop in demand for prepared foods.”

– **Emma McGeown, Senior Food & Drink Analyst**

This report looks at the following areas:

- **The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour and prepared meals.**
- **Disruption to the prepared meal market caused by consumers spending greater levels of time at home.**
- **Exploring the opportunities in healthy ready meals and the demand to quantify nutrition.**
- **How prepared meals can better leverage sustainability claims.**

Prepared meals are common purchases for Irish consumers, but there remains a strong fondness for scratch cooking in Ireland which creates barriers for the category. During the pandemic as more consumers are scratch cooking, the data reveals that consumers have looked to prepared meals, to some extent, for some excitement and to try something outside their cooking comfort zones.

COVID-19 has had a somewhat negative impact on prepared meal sales in Ireland in 2020 as consumers warm towards scratch cooking; not just for financial reasons but for leisurely purposes and because they have more time on their hands.

Prepared meals are very much considered a time saver but consumers now have more time on their hands and this shift towards more time spent at home and cooking has resulted in less interest in prepared meals. Furthermore, reducing trips to the store in general means there was less opportunity for impulsive buying around dinner time – a peak time for ready meals.

With foodservice providers being forced to close in IoI for 4-6 weeks (either continuously or intermittently between October and December 2020), this is seeing more consumers looking to prepared meals to offer the out-of-home dining experience for in-home occasions with 37% of RoI and 38% of NI consumers agreeing they ate premium prepared meals as a substitute for restaurants during the lockdown. This offers significant opportunities for prepared meals to collaborate with restaurants and chefs to provide that restaurant-quality experience.

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### The Consumer – Key Takeaways

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