“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

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.

DID YOU KNOW?
This report is part of a series of reports, produced to provide you with a more holistic view of this market.
# Attitudes towards Ready Meals and Ready-to-Cook Foods - UK - June 2017

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Overall advertising spend rises in 2016
Retailers remain dominant in advertising, with a focus on quality

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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
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
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