



4 PANDEMIC EATING HABITS WE SHOULD KEEP

The pandemic changed a lot of our routines around food, but researchers have the scoop on which new habits should stick around. And no, we don't just mean sourdough!

CREATED BY THE GUELPH FAMILY HEALTH STUDY

THERE'S A LOT ABOUT life pre-COVID that we can't wait to get back to. But, after over a year of working from home, virtual school, and physical distancing, your family may have picked up some good food habits that you should keep.

Researchers from the University of Guelph have been studying how families have adapted to the pandemic when it comes to mealtimes and grocery shopping and how it might influence the foods they eat and what they throw out. Their results revealed four key eating habits your family should continue post-pandemic.

Grocery shop with a mission

Many families changed up their grocery shopping routines to make fewer trips to the store and purchased more per trip. Plan your meals, review what foods you have in the fridge and cupboards, and make a grocery list before you head to the store. This will help you to focus on what you need and reduce impulse buying. Meal planning doesn't have to be complicated—start with a few of your family's favourite dishes and work your way from there.

Plan to prepare meals that use fresh ingredients (like meats, bread or fruit) in the few days after you shop, and save the longer-lasting ingredients (like cheese, grains, or frozen/canned veggies) until later in the week.

Get kids in the kitchen

In addition to spending more time cooking meals at home, many families reported involving their kids in cooking more than before the pandemic.

Kids make excellent sous-chefs! There are plenty of age-appropriate tasks that you can delegate, like washing veggies or setting the table. Plus, research shows that kids who help prepare meals have more positive food attitudes and are more likely to try the food they helped prepare. Try having your little ones roll out dough, rip up lettuce, count out recipe measurements or choose the pasta shape.

Ditch the last-minute drive-thru

With fewer after school activities to rush off to and less commuting, families had more time to think about cooking and planning meals. The last-minute takeout that came in handy in a pinch was replaced by cooking more at home and plans to support local restaurants on scheduled days during the week. Planning meals throughout the week can help your family have healthier meals and waste less food.

Cooking more meals at home doesn't have to be stressful even when life gets busier again for everyone. Free downloadable cookbooks with quick, easy, and dietitian-approved ideas the whole family will enjoy can be found at www.guelphfamilyhealthstudy.com/cookbooks. Check out the chapter in "Rock What You've Got: Recipes for Preventing Food Waste" with 2-for-1 meals that provide dinner for your family and give leftovers a delicious make-over for the next day!

Waste not, want not

Compared to before the pandemic, families in the study wasted over one kilogram less food per week! Serving leftovers, keeping an eye on what you have in the fridge, and opting to eat all edible parts of foods—who likes peeling potatoes, anyway?—means cost savings and can reduce how much food ends up in the landfill.

Want to prolong the lifespan of foods in your fridge? Make sure you are storing your foods in the correct places. The door is the warmest spot in your fridge and the bottom shelf is the coldest. If your fridge has crisper drawers, you can adjust the humidity vents to keep your produce happy. High humidity (closed vents, less air circulation) will keep your leafy greens, carrots, cauliflower, bell peppers, and other veggies from wilting. Lower humidity (open vents, more air circulation) is best for fruits and veggies that tend to break down, like apples, grapes, mushrooms and lemons.