



# What Australia Eats

Why we care about what you eat



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**The Heart Foundation promotes heart-healthy living for all Australians. We are a purpose-driven organisation, fighting for an Australia free of heart disease. Our work in research, risk reduction, support and care values the well-established link between what we eat and heart health.**

For many of us, food is so much more than just fuel for our bodies. It can also be a way to connect with our family and friends and express ourselves and our cultures.

Heart-healthy eating plays an important role in both preventing and treating heart disease. The Heart Foundation's heart-healthy eating pattern is based around five key recommendations, which we mention throughout this report.

To support more Australians to make healthy food choices, it is important that the Heart Foundation has a clear understanding of what Australians value and what drives their decisions when it comes to preparing and eating meals.

In 2022, we surveyed more than 2,000 people from across Australia. We asked people about their views on cooking at home, accessing recipes, making healthy food choices and what is most important to them when deciding what to eat. This report captures what people told us. With these valuable insights, the Heart Foundation can continue to support all Australians to achieve good heart health and to live longer, healthier lives.



# What people told us

## A snapshot.



**Taste** is the biggest driver when choosing meals to prepare at home



**Cost** is a very important driver of meal choice for 1 in 2 people



**Most people** prefer fresh, not processed ingredients and home-cooking



**4 in 5 people** are confident in cooking or preparing meals with up to 6 ingredients



**4 in 5 people** are confident cooking and preparing a variety of vegetables & using healthy oils (e.g. olive, canola & peanut)



Only **1 in 2 people** are confident cooking with beans and other legumes (e.g. lentils, chickpeas)



**1 in 4 people** find it challenging to reduce their consumption of red meat



**4 in 5 people** are interested in recipes and meal ideas that can be read online and printed out



**1 in 5 people** are very interested in online, printable weekly dinner plans

# Taste is number one.

**Three out of four people said that when deciding what to eat, taste is the most important factor.**

People also reported having a strong preference for:

- home cooked or homemade meals
- fresh, unprocessed ingredients
- meals with healthy, balanced ingredients
- budget-friendly meals.

Simply put, you want delicious, healthy and cost-friendly meals you can make at home – and the Heart Foundation has got you covered! Taste is a top priority when we develop our recipes. They are not only tasty, but they're also heart-healthy and can be prepared on a budget. There's something for everyone in our exciting collection, from recipes inspired by tastes from around the world, to delicious breakfast ideas and mouth-watering heart-healthy desserts.

We've developed a collection of recipes designed to add flavour, entice the senses and offer inspiration to your daily cooking.

Download our free [Flavour Sensations Recipes eBook](#).

You can also browse our huge range of over 350 recipes on [our website](#).

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The Heart Foundation recommends using herbs and spices to flavour foods, instead of adding salt.

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# Cooking with confidence.

## We wanted to know how confident people are when cooking with specific ingredients.

More than four in five people told us that they are confident cooking with a variety of vegetables and with healthy oils. This is good news given we know vegetables and healthy oils, such as olive oil, play a critical role in protecting heart health.

Similarly, more than two in three people said they are confident cooking with wholegrains (e.g. oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa) and fish. Evidence shows that a diet rich in wholegrains helps to lower cholesterol and protect the heart.<sup>1</sup> While a diet rich in fish and seafood has been shown

to lower the risk of heart disease.<sup>1</sup> You can find delicious fish recipes in our [Fish Recipe eBook](#).

In contrast, fewer people are confident in cooking with beans and other legumes, like chickpeas and lentils. Legumes are a great source of protein and fibre, can be stored for a long time, and are friendly on the hip pocket. Best of all, there are some easy and yummy ways to include them in your cooking:

- Add beans to your [taco mix](#) for a protein-packed punch.
- Add lentils, chickpeas or beans to jazz up [soups](#).
- Add tinned mixed beans to give colour and texture to [salads](#).
- Snack on [hummus](#) with vegetable sticks.

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The Heart Foundation recommends including healthy fats and oils.

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# Less is more when it comes to ingredients.

**We know that meals that are simple to prepare are important to you. Most people told us that they are comfortable cooking meals with up to six ingredients but feel less confident when working with seven or more.**

Rest assured, preparing meals that are both nutritious and tasty doesn't have to be complicated. The Heart Foundation has developed a free [5 Ingredient Recipes eBook](#). Discover seven easy to follow recipes which tick all the boxes – minimal steps with maximum flavour!

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The Heart Foundation recommends eating plenty of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains.  
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# Keeping your pantry healthy on a budget.

**We wanted to understand some of the reasons why people might feel they are not eating as healthily as they would like to.**

We found:

- one in three people said they think it is expensive to eat healthy food
- around a quarter of people said they can't always eat healthily and like to treat themselves
- around a quarter of people said eating healthily is too time consuming, especially when people have busy lives.

There are ways to keep a healthy pantry without breaking the bank. Here are three top money-saving hacks:

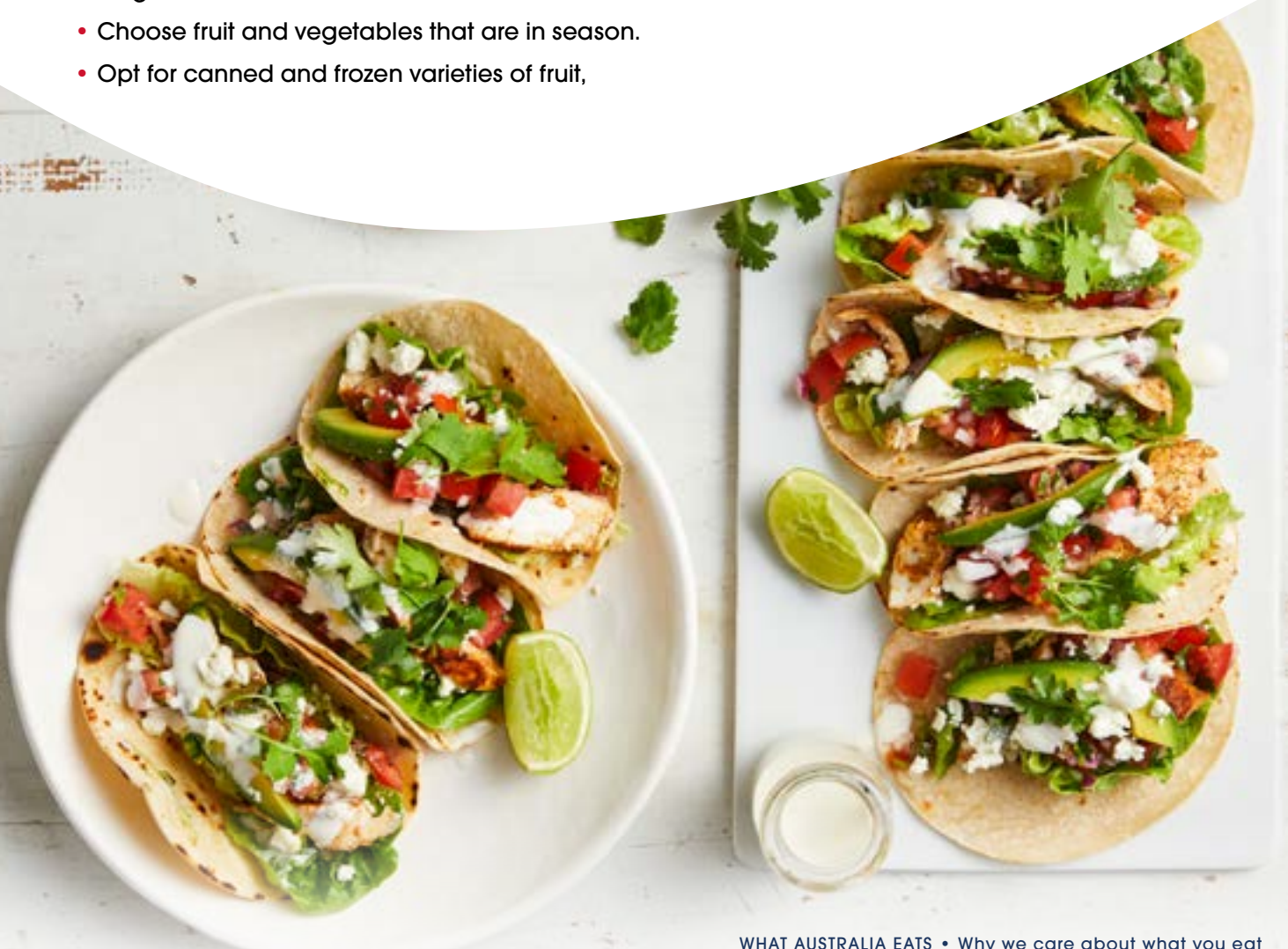
- Choose fruit and vegetables that are in season.
- Opt for canned and frozen varieties of fruit,

vegetables, fish, beans and other legumes. Canned beans are incredibly versatile ingredients that can be used in a variety of recipes. Choose a no added salt option.

- Look out for when groceries with long-shelf lives are on sale! Things like wholegrain pasta, flour and brown rice can be cheaper when you buy in bulk and can be stored for a long time.

To help you create yummy, heart-healthy meals while keeping costs down, we've developed our [Family Recipes on a Budget eBook](#).

Snacks and treats can be healthy and budget friendly too. Check out our easy and quick [banana trail mix bars](#).



# Eating more plant-based foods.

Good for you & the planet.

**We asked people how easy it is to follow healthy eating advice. Over half of people told us that it is very easy to include fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, eggs and poultry in their diet.**

Similarly, half of people also said that it is very easy to choose heart-healthy oils like olive, canola, sunflower and peanut oils.

In other good news, four in five people think it's easy to include unflavoured milk, yoghurt and cheese. These are all exciting findings, considering these foods are key parts of a heart-healthy eating pattern.

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The Heart Foundation recommends including unflavoured milk, yoghurt and cheese. Opt for reduced fat if you have high cholesterol.  
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However, a quarter of people feel it is not easy to reduce their red meat consumption to one to three serves a week.

Why is this important? While small amounts of unprocessed lean red meat (one to three serves a week) and poultry can be enjoyed as part of a heart-healthy eating pattern, research shows that eating a lot of red meat, and processed or deli meats (like ham and salami), can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke and may lead to weight gain.<sup>1</sup>

Deli meats and processed meats (sausages, bacon, and canned meats) can be high in salt too. Having more than five grams of salt

(a teaspoon) each day increases your risk of heart disease and stroke.<sup>1</sup> On average, Australians are eating nearly double the recommended amount of salt.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, the Heart Foundation recommends eating mostly plant-based foods and limiting processed meat consumption. Eating mostly plant-based foods is also **friendlier for the environment**. If you need some inspiration for delicious meat-free meals, download our free **Meat-free Recipes eBook**. For more information about plant-based foods and milks, check out our **plant-based eating webpage**.

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The Heart Foundation recommends including a variety of healthy protein-rich foods.

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# #Foodinspiration.

## Where do you get it?

**When looking for inspiration for meals to prepare at home, more than half of people said they turn to Google for ideas.**

Other popular sources of recipes include:

- friends or family
- TV cooking shows
- cookbooks
- Facebook.
- supermarket magazines

In terms of the format, most people said they are interested in accessing recipes and meal ideas by:

- reading recipes online or printing them out
- downloading recipe booklets
- watching short instructional videos.

Just over one in five people are already using the Heart Foundation website for healthy meal ideas.

Did you know you can easily print Heart Foundation recipes directly from our website?

Simply click on a recipe you fancy and hit the print button in the top right corner! You can also download or even print out our [eBooks](#) which you can file for future inspiration.

If you're someone who prefers short instructional videos such as Instagram reels, follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to stay up to date on *reely* yummy heart-healthy recipes. Be sure to share them with your family and friends.

People also told us they are interested in weekly dinner plans they can read online or print out. If this sounds like you, you'll be pleased to know the Heart Foundation has developed a four-week [heart-healthy dinner plan journey](#):

- You'll get a new recipe for each night of the week.
- Follow the simple steps to get cooking and discover helpful hints along the way.
- Get shopping lists, tips and other helpful information to make healthy eating easy.





## Want to know more?

To learn more about eating for a healthy heart, and to explore our full range of recipes and resources, visit the [Heart Foundation website](#).

## References

1. Collins C, Burrows T, Rollo M for the Sax Institute. *Dietary patterns and cardiovascular disease outcomes*. 2017. <https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/publications/evidence-check-library/dietary-patterns-cardiovascular-disease-outcomes/>
2. Land MA, Neal BC, Johnson C, Nowson CA, Margerison C, Petersen KS. Salt consumption by Australian adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Med J Aust*. 2018;208(2):75-81. doi:10.5694/mja17.00394

# Appendix

## About the survey

2,016 people aged 18 years or older completed the online survey between 17 and 31 January 2022. The sample was selected by age, gender and location and weighted to ensure it was nationally representative. Respondents were 51% female and 49% male. The survey contained a variety of questions including multiple choice and open-ended questions. On average, people took 13 minutes to complete the survey.

Area	Selected sample	Weighted sample (000s) <sup>3</sup>
New South Wales	489	6,383
Victoria	507	5,207
Queensland	419	4,012
South Australia	211	1,399
Western Australia	208	2,064
Northern Territory	26	184
Tasmania	79	428
Australian Capital Territory	77	336
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,016</b>	<b>20,013</b>

Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Regional population by age and sex*. Accessed 12 October, 2022. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release>

## About the survey respondents

**Geographic location:** Two thirds of respondents lived in a metropolitan (capital city), 28% in a regional (small town) and 6% in a rural (remote) area.

**Age:** 32% of respondents were under 40 years, 31% were aged 40-59 years and 37% were 60 years or older.

**Household:** 23% of respondents lived alone, 29% lived as a couple, 34% had children living at home and the remaining 14% were adults living with parent(s), in a group household or other household structure.

**Children:** 23% of respondents had children aged 12 years or younger living at home and 17% had children aged 13-18 years at home.

**Education level:** 36% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree (including Honours), post graduate diploma or degree, 32% had a vocational qualification (trade or apprenticeship), other TAFE or technical certificate, or diploma and 31% had achieved year 12 or below.

**Work, study, retirement and volunteering:** 33% of respondents described working full time and 16% worked part time or casually. 28% of respondents were retired. 22% were studying or training, looking for work, doing unpaid voluntary work, home duties or another activity.

**Cultural diversity:** 16% of respondents spoke a language other than English at home. Apart from identifying as Australian, people described themselves most commonly as: European, British, Indian, Chinese and Southeast Asian.

**Health conditions:** 49% of respondents indicated no mention of health conditions by their doctor, however 27% had been informed they had high cholesterol, 27% had high blood pressure, 23% reported they were overweight and 8% had a heart condition or heart attack.





## Other key findings

### **Beliefs about the benefits of eating healthily:**

Respondents reported that the top three benefits of consuming healthy meals were feeling good or healthier (55%), it's better for healthy ageing, living longer (49%) and losing or maintaining weight (39%).

**Dietary preferences:** 62% of respondents reported no dietary preferences. Other preferences included: sugar free (16%), diabetes friendly (9%), vegetarian (8%), no or low dairy or lactose free (8%), flexitarian (7%), coeliac or gluten free (6%) and another 6% described other preferences. Some respondents described more than one preference.

**Preferred terminology for less healthy foods:** 42% of respondents thought 'junk foods' best described less healthy foods we should only eat occasionally. This was followed by highly processed foods (13%), occasional foods (11%) and sometimes foods (9%).

**Shopping:** Respondents reported they mainly shop for food: instore at a supermarket (78%), use online supermarket shopping (14%), at a local grocery shop (4%), at a fresh food market (2%) or 'other' (1%). 2% of respondents reported they don't do the grocery or food shopping.

*The Heart Foundation commissioned an independent marketing and social research company to undertake the survey. Heart Foundation nutrition and evidence staff reviewed all survey methods and findings to produce this report.*

**For further information contact:**

[contactus@heartfoundation.org.au](mailto:contactus@heartfoundation.org.au)

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