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COOKING 2026: THE FUTURE OF MAKING MEALS IN THE HOME

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Chapter 1

THE GLOBALISATION OF TASTE, 2026

1. Time pressures favour speed, instant gratification and American convenience

In 2026, 30m of the 66m people in Britain will be 45 or older. ¹ They'll have a more international range of family commitments, friends and leisure pursuits than they have today. But they'll also be even busier than the over-45s of today. Many of the 18m Brits who will be 60+ in 2026 will still be working, even if they often work from home.

Along with web cameras, the rise of China, India and the rest of Asia will see to that.

In 2026, globalisation will make people travel more widely for work. It will help ensure that, as in 1986 and 2006, one in seven British workers still works shifts. ² Aided by sixth-generation mobile IT, people will still go 'eating on the hoof' and 'grazing'. ³ They will still have to prepare and get hold of food quickly.

Globalisation, in short, will drive convenience in cooking. The global pace of life in 2026 will also make mouth and stomach, like eyes and ears, demand instant gratification. The long simmering to death of vegetables, so often the habit of 20th century Britain, will finally give way to the use of steam. We will see a more widespread turn to shallow frying, as well as greater use of skillets – good for quick cooking, turning food and the emptying of oil or deglazed sauces.

Microwave ovens, food processors and blenders will do well. Delight in relatively lengthy cooking processes, in the family meal and in entertaining for friends will not have died out, and there will always be a place for the roast, the casserole, and the baking of breads, cakes, quiches, flans and tarts. But by 2026, today's teenagers will have grown up to a National Curriculum, television and books devoted to the idea that tasty can be done in 30 minutes. ⁴ Among the rich, too, more weekend dinner parties will be provided for by outside caterers.

Pasta and stir-fries look set for further popularity. So do high-speed searing on ribbed grills, the wok, and the Japanese rice-making machine.

The technologies behind and quality of convenience foods in 2026 will also be surprisingly good. Put another way, US foods will remain a major part of the global food landscape.

Protectionist trends on the world economy could well be fierce in 2026, but US multinationals will by no means have withdrawn from the EU. Perhaps Brussels will visit massive fines on McDonald's, as it does today on Microsoft; yet if America continues to accelerate European eating styles, the phenomenon won't be limited to Domino's Pizza or Starbucks coffee.

1 National Statistics, *Population Trends 123*, Spring 2006, Table 4, p16, on www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Product.asp?vlnk=6303.

2 See 'Shiftworking ticks along nicely', *IRS Employment Review*, No 845, April 2006.

3 Ron Kinton et al, *The Theory of Catering*, Hodder Arnold, 10th edition, 2003, p50.

4 In September 2006 Nigel Slater's classic *Real Fast Food: 350 Recipes Ready-to-Eat in 30 Minutes*, published by Penguin in 1993, stood within the top 1000 bestsellers at Amazon UK.

In 2005, McDonald's reported excellent results in France. In 2026, firms such as Wal-Mart in retailing, Euro-Disney in leisure and Aramark in corporate 'food service' will go on feeding millions of Europeans. In terms of speed, the Italian *espresso* will probably be even more popular – but the conveniences of US food giants will still be enormous.

Table 1
Given their size, today's US food giants will still be around in 2026 ⁵

Company	HQ	2005 revenues, \$bn	2005 assets, \$bn
Tyson Foods	Springdale, Arkansas	26	10
Sara Lee	Chicago	20	14
ConAgra Foods	Omaha	15.5	13
General Mills	Minneapolis	11	18
Kellogg	Battle Creek, Michigan	10	10.5
HJ Heinz	Pittsburgh	9	10.5
Campbell Soup	Camden, New Jersey	7.5	7
Dole Food	Westlake Village, California	6	4

⁵ Figures from 'The 500 largest US corporations', *Fortune*, 17 April 2006.

2. Europeans still take time, but go more global

Today's diplomatic spats between Europe and America may not last till 2026. Still, Europe's reaction to American lifestyles is likely to persist over the next 20 years. Thus, if the European kitchen focuses further on lemon juice, the Spanish paella and perhaps even the Swiss fondue, it will also want to pay attention to recipes from the East and the South.

While EU leaders may still squabble, Europeans may find, in cooking, a source of common identity that they like to contrast with American manners. If Europe's holidays stay long and working weeks short, its 'slow food' movement could stay the course to 2026. ⁶

So, too, could the Brussels Commission hostility to US genetically modified (GM) products. Many Europeans will never buy a GM concoction of onion and garlic, no matter how cheap or nutritious it is. Many, too, will abjure the 'fusion flavours' enjoyed by Californians, even though the restless inventiveness of the genre sometimes produces great results.

Immigration will expose us more to the cooking of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Turkish food will jostle with Polish borscht and Hungarian goulash, perhaps; but low cost air travel and airfreight, even with environmental taxes, will also help globalise taste. On high definition TV, Moroccan tagines, Chinese bamboo steamers and Indian tandoors will make food programmes more like wildlife features in their aesthetic appeal. Chinese and Indian food firms will also invest in Europe, so that they rival US food giants.

In the 20th century, globalisation brought Mediterranean cooking to the US. By 2026, it will give Eastern cuisine mass support in European kitchens. ⁷ In Britain sales of 'ethnic' cookware, at perhaps £100m and 10m items in 2026, will beat those of bakeware and microwave cookware combined. In aggregate, too, Japanese tempura or teriyaki, Korean beef and pickled chilli cabbage, Indonesian rijstafels, Malaysian curries and Vietnamese soups may overtake Thai food. Similarly, dates, cashew nuts and Lebanese baklava could edge out apple crumbles, as well as bread and butter puddings.

Ironically, slower methods of food preparation will be aided by the spread of an American speciality: dishwashers – including small versions designed for single-person households. Cooks will want new ingredients, spices, sauces, processes and cookware, but will want to wash everything up with ease. In Britain in 2026, dishwashers, long installed in middle-class households in the South East, will be the rule for most people in the UK.

In the US, more than \$150m of packaged marinades is today sold each year – three times the figure achieved in 1997. But in 2026, we can still expect millions of Europeans to savour marinades that are hand-made, with few fears about how much time it will take to clean up the debris from them.

⁶ For a brief account of the movement, which began in 1986, see Chapter 3 in Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed*, Orion, 2004.

⁷ As the US marketing guru Theodore Levitt quaintly exaggerated things many years ago, 'Chinese food, pita bread, country and western music, pizza, and jazz are everywhere... They don't deny or contradict global homogenization but confirm it'. See Levitt, 'The globalization of markets', *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1983.

Chapter 2

COOKING AS HEALTH

1. *The obsession with obesity, diets, fitness and longevity*

Today, says the World Health Organisation, more than 20m of the world's under-5s are overweight, as are more than a billion adults; at least 300m adults are clinically obese.⁸ In Britain, the Department of Health is similarly alarmed. It says that 24 per cent of English boys aged 11-15 are obese, and a further 13 per cent overweight as measured by the Body Mass Index (BMI), or the ratio of a person's weight in kilos to the square of his or her height in metres.⁹ Indeed, the Department holds that among English girls aged between 2 and 15 in 2010, nearly a million – 22 per cent – will be obese.¹⁰

Just as the low carbohydrate, high fat, high protein Atkins diet rose and fell in the short space of 2002-4, so by 2026 these scary official figures will be discredited. Even in 2006, after all, the limitations of the BMI are well known.¹¹ Similarly, though 'slimming' Japanese sushi is on the up worldwide, it is obvious that nobody will want to eat it all the time.¹²

Still, narcissistic anxiety about the body today is pretty entrenched in the West, from new diets through to increased public interest in cosmetic surgery, stress, sleep, and death.

Perhaps as society's habits change toward eating better, today's *medicalisation* of food – 'detoxification', quack remedies and all – will end. But it seems more likely that, in 2026, all the health aspects of food will remain prominent. Already ethical researchers, followed by anxious investment banks, compute the turnover Unilever and Kraft derive from foods deemed 'unhealthy'.¹³ In America, the Princeton animal liberationist Peter Singer offers 'powerful reasons for eating more conscientiously'; and when another food radical attacks Whole Foods Market, a \$5bn retailer of organic food, for not being sustainable enough, the Wharton Business School rallies to its defence. Wharton insists that Whole Foods

8 See World Health Organisation (WHO), *WHO Child Growth Standards: Methods and Development*, 27 April 2006, on www.who.int/childgrowth/publications/technical_report_pub/en/index.html, and *Obesity and overweight*, Chronic disease information sheet, on www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en

9 Department of Health, *Health Survey for England 2004*, 'Updating of trend tables to include childhood obesity data', Table 12, 21 April 2006, on www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/hsechildobesityupdate

10 Paola Zaninotto et al, 'Forecasting obesity to 2010', Table 15, Department of Health, 25 August 2006, on www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/PublicationsStatisticsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4138630&chk=XVZ/60

11 BMI can overestimate body fat among the muscular, and underestimate it among the old and others who have lost muscle mass. See National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (US), 'Aim for a healthy weight', on www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm#limitations. Note that the WHO's classifying 20-30 per cent of the world's under-5s as overweight partly relies on manipulating the mathematics of BMI around the *reclining length* of infants up to 730 days old, and the *height* of children aged 731 days or more, with the length of 1625 children aged 18-30 months being on average 0.73cm more than their height. WHO, *op cit*, pp xviii, 229. With its 'double burden of malnutrition', the WHO also seeks to merge world obesity with the much graver problem of world hunger. See WHO, *WHO Child Growth Standards and the double burden of malnutrition*, Backgrounder 4 'Launch of the WHO Child Growth Standards', 27 April 2006, on http://www.who.int/nutrition/media_page/en/index.html

12 See Table 2, below, for example Associated Press, 'Japanese fast food makers eye U.S. market. But can octopus dumplings, rice bowls really take a bite out of the Big Mac?', *msnbc*, 28 June 2006, on <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/13541858>

13 See Ethical Investment Research Services, *Obesity Concerns in the Food and Beverage Industry*, February 2006, p9, on www.eiris.org/pages/top%20menu/eiris%20publications/research%20publications.htm

operates localist buying policies, and that it is pioneering a 'nutritionally optimal future'.¹⁴

Food in 2026 will still be controversial. It will not just be a question of what to eat and how to cook it, but also of how to eat it.¹⁵ Furthermore, government intervention in fitness, longevity and sport will ensure that *when* one eats different things also comes under the spotlight.

In 2006, officialdom believes that more and more food labeling will help the world think thin.¹⁶ In May, the European Parliament strengthened the regulation of claims such as 'low fat' and 'sugar-free', as well as that of vitamin and mineral additions to food.¹⁷ But by 2026, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags may stop the confusion and derision that today attend long, microscopic lists of ingredients, additives, nutritional values and symbols. Once most foods are tagged by RFID, tag readers could display the merits of meals in large letters on screens in millions of kitchens.

Better still, consumers could buy different reader software packages, depending on their attitude to the links drawn between food and health. Some might buy *Credulous Food Worrier – the 2026 Edition*; others, *The Skeptical Epicurean Version 20.0*. Indeed, consumers could rate each meal by the latest claims about long life and slimness that are made for its particular national cuisine.

Table 2
La santé vs sushi: how recent books hint at tomorrow's food-as-health wars

Author	Book	Publisher	Date
William Clower	<i>The Fat Fallacy: Applying the French Diet to the American Lifestyle</i>	Perusal Press	2001
Mireille Guiliano	<i>French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret of Eating For Pleasure</i>	Knopf	2004
Michel Montignac	<i>The French Diet: Why French Women Don't Get Fat</i>	DK Adult	2005
Naomi Moriyama, William Doyle	<i>Japanese Women Don't Get Old or Fat: Secrets of My Mother's Tokyo Kitchen</i>	Delacorte Press	2006

14 See the blurb for Peter Singer and Jim, *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*, 2006, www.eiris.org/pages/top%20menu/eiris%20publications/research%20publications.htm, and also 'Americans, Once Again, Are Skewered for Bad Eating Habits: This Time, It's Corn', [Knowledge@wharton](http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1537&CFID=2063124&CFTOKEN=25196076), on <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1537&CFID=2063124&CFTOKEN=25196076>

15 Honoré, op cit, p57, associates rapid eating with obesity.

16 For the Food Standards Agency line, see www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels. For the European position, see European Commission, *Labelling: Competitiveness, Consumer Information and Better Regulation for the EU*, February 2006, on http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/sanco/ehf/library?l=/2006-04-05_brussels/competitiveness/ EN 1.0 &a=i

17 See European Parliament, 'Food safety: MEPs vote on health claims and additions to food', 16 May 2006, on www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/067-8214-136-05-20-911-20060512IPR08047-16-05-2006-2006-true/default_en.htm

2. *Pandemics, pesticides and paranoia*

In 2026 the quest for food as health will reinforce the attractions of fish and vegetables, as well as what are termed 'functional foods'.¹⁸ From the point of view of lowering the amount of fat in cooking, grills and methods that rely on steam look set for further take-up.

These routes to healthier food, however, will not be the only ones. Unless a sober point of view triumphs by 2026, the fear will be that globalisation causes pandemics, from avian flu to *E-coli*.

Table 3
Pandemics: a brief history of fear

1976	US government predicts a massive epidemic of influenza. Some say deaths could surpass those of 1918-1919
1989	Sponsored by the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious diseases, US virologists and specialists in tropical medicine from Rockefeller and Yale universities and the US Army hold a three-day conference at Washington to publicise the threat from pandemics
1991-2	The US National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine convenes a panel that goes on to publish <i>Emerging infections: threats to health in the US</i>
1994	New York health and science writer Laurie Garrett brings out a bestseller: <i>The coming plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance</i>
2006	In the UK, University of East Anglia Professor Paul Hunter associates global warming with an increased popular desire for barbecuing food. He warns that the failure to keep food in the fridge will lead to a dramatic increase in food poisoning. A leaked letter from chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson reveals that all schools would close in the event of a human outbreak of avian flu

At the same time, the reaction to globalisation will make the use of pesticides, and the organically grown crops that are an alternative to this, charged issues (in 2006, difficulties experienced by Coke and Pepsi in India and Pakistan already confirm this). Then there will be scares about hygiene, food that has not been cooked through, and about chemicals released in the cooking process.

18 On functional foods, see American Dietetic Association, 'Functional foods' (adopted 1994, reaffirmed in 2001), on www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy_adap1099_ENU_HTML.htm, and British Nutrition Foundation, 'Functional foods' (2004), on www.nutrition.org.uk/home.asp?siteId=43§ionId=706&parentSection=322&which=undefined. The popular discussion of functional foods in Britain first intensified with Michael Van Straten and Barbara Griggs, *Superfoods*, Dorling Kindersley, 1990, which opens by quoting Hippocrates: 'Let food be your medicine, and your medicine your food'. Recently, researchers in the US have claimed that the consumption of juices made from fruit or vegetables may allow polyphenols, the most abundant dietary antioxidants, to play an important role in delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease. See Qi Dai et al, 'Vegetable Juices and Alzheimer's Disease: The Kame Project', *The American Journal of Medicine*, Volume 119, Issue 9, September 2006, pp751-759, on www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_cdi=5195&_pubType=J&_auth=y&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=5d4b15bb211845c7e70135a311bfe527

As early as 2002, European environmentalists warned that chemical gases emitted by hand-held electric food mixers meant that 'you might unintentionally be eating your appliances'.¹⁹ Yet by 2026, new technologies will assuage the worst forms of paranoia, even if these technologies themselves will have opponents. GM crops, after all, require few pesticides for their cultivation. Real-time analysis of data on the clinical and epidemiological characteristics of each new virus will allow medical interventions to be 'tuned to match the virus'.²⁰ Already NASA has developed an electronic nose, based on 16 different conductive polymeric films, which can distinguish between Coke and Pepsi.²¹ Finally, nanomaterials may help us identify and organise against food hazards.

Even before such promises are realised, however, the trend away from plain aluminium toward the hard-anodised yet still dishwasher-proof sort will be consummated. The hygienic merits of enamel will be recognised more widely than they are today.

19 William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, North Point Press, 2002, p38.

20 Neil M Ferguson and others, 'Strategies for mitigating an influenza pandemic', *Nature*, 442, 27 July 2006, www.nature.com/nature/journal/v442/n7101/index.html

21 Science @ NASA, 'Electronic Nose', 6 October 2004, on http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2004/06oct_enose.htm

CHAPTER 3

COOKING AS MEANING

1. *More an end than a means?*

In the spring of 2005 a US city by-law was passed naming the North Carolina town of Lexington, with its pork shoulder and tomato-based sauce, the Barbecue Capital of the World.

It's a very touchy matter, that title. Indeed, 'regardless of reason', write the cookery authors Cuthbert and Wilson, 'grilling not only tears up towns, it divides friends'.²²

In 2026, we can be sure that cooking, more than ever, will not just be a means to a full stomach. Cooking has always had social dimensions to it that, though formally separate from the heating of food, are in fact quite integral to that. In moderation, raw food may have its attractions. As early as 1964, however, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss identified cooking as fundamental to human civilisation.²³

More recently, in what one critic has derided as an 'absolutely charming story', Harvard anthropology professor Richard Wrangham and others have contended not just that cooking emerged as long as 1.9 million years ago, but also that it had a dramatic effect on *evolution*. The prehistoric female need for friendly male help to protect the valuable results of cooking from unfriendly male thieves, Wrangham maintains, meant that 'cooking was responsible for the evolution of the unusual human social system in which pair bonds are embedded within multi-female, multi-male communities and supported by strong mutual and frequently conflicting sexual interest'.²⁴

Much of cooking in 20 years' time will still be about nurturing children, giving, caring and loving. There will still be an amorous element to it, too. On top of that, we have already commented on the persistence of entertaining for friends, and on the aesthetic aspects of cooking – part of which are about presentation and 'plate appeal'.²⁵

In 2026, however, all these sides of cooking, its rituals, and the sense of pride and identity around local or national dishes – all these will be more pronounced. The sense that 'my, my region's and my country's cooking are better than yours' will be even stronger.

With any luck, there will be a growing band of universalists in cooking; people who do not just coquette with different ethnic styles, but really take the trouble to understand and even occasionally transcend them. But both the process of cooking, and its finished results, will be ends in themselves, not just means; for in them, people will try to find personal and geographical identity. They will, in short, try to find *meaning* in cooking.

22 Pippa Cuthbert and Lindsay Cameron Wilson, *Barbecue!*, New Holland, 2006, p7.

23 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit (The raw and the cooked)*, Plon, 1964. No doubt Lévi-Strauss drew for inspiration upon Karl Marx, who himself remarked 'Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth'. See Marx, *Grundrisse (Outline of the Critique of Political Economy)* (1857-61), Penguin, 1973, p92 and on www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch01.htm

24 Richard W Wrangham and others, 'The Raw and the Stolen: Cooking and the Ecology of Human Origins', *Current Anthropology*, Volume 40, Number 5, December 1999, pp567-594.

25 Ron Kinton and others, *Theory of catering*, op cit, p49.

2. Hopefully, more a means than an end

The quest for meaning in food explains a phenomenon that we have already encountered – the contemporary idea that food is the health-giving elixir of life. Evidently, this view has important precedents, as Table 4 shows below.

Table 4

'You are what you eat': from Franco-German philosophy to US quackery and UK TV

1825	Two months before his death, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a French lawyer and revolutionary, publishes <i>Physiologie du goût (The Physiology of Taste)</i> . In it he declares <i>Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es</i> – 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are'
1863/4	The German thinker Ludwig Feuerbach, a ground-breaking materialist in philosophy, turns a pun in his essay 'Concerning spiritualism and materialism': <i>Der Mensch ist, was er ißt</i> – 'Man is what he eats; Man eats what he is'
1821-1897	Life of the Bavarian priest Father Sebastian Kneipp, founder of 'natural medicine'. Favours not just hydrotherapy, but also herbs, whole grains, fruit and vegetables, with limited meat
1862-1924	Life of Montana industrialist Henry Lindlahr, an early advocate of iridology and a man 'cured' of diabetes by Kneipp. The Lindlahr Sanatorium favoured strange diets, and promised 'no surgery, no drugs, no serums'. It was where the American socialist Eugene Debs died in 1926 ²⁶
1940	New York nutritionist and radio personality Victor Lindlahr, son of Henry and a partisan of vegetables as a source of vitamins and minerals, publishes <i>You are what you eat: how to win and keep health with diet</i> (National Nutrition Society). It becomes a bestseller in 1941
1968	The singer Tiny Tim, along with David Crosby, The Electric Flag, Frank Zappa, Barry McGuire and Paul Butterfield, star in Barry Feinstein's 75-minute rockumentary <i>You are what you eat</i> , confirming the popularity of the slogan – and that of macrobiotic food – during the hippie 1960s
2004	Scots nutritionist Dr Gillian McKeith starts the first of three series on primetime British TV, titled <i>You are what you eat</i>

Nevertheless, there is a novel twist to today's interpretation of the phrase 'You are what you eat'. As the Sheffield bioethics writer Stephen Bowler has put it, once the body becomes the locus of meaning in society, it is

'as if the deepest, intestinal workings of the human organism were inherently purposeful. Eating your greens is not just good for you; it makes for a good you. Value and ethical integrity reside within, in relation to organic – asocial – norms.'²⁷

26 See the invaluable memoir by Morris Fishbein, *Naturopathy and its professors*, 1932, on www.naturowatch.org/hx/fishbein.html

27 Stephen Bowler, 'Body politics: why are we obsessed with our flesh?', *spiked*, 25 August 2005, on www.spiked-online.com/Articles/0000000CAD20.htm

The frantic search for food as a fulfilling, moral, directed alternative to aimless alienation is actually new. It looks certain to give only momentary relief. At the same time, it looks rather durable. In 2006 the hunt for a kind of righteous happiness in food embraces the desire constantly to

- experiment with new ingredients and new cooking methods
- buy new, branded, or specially exotic cookware that matches the buyer's existing pots, pans, or kitchen décor
- buy cookware designs almost for their own sake.

Today's passion for cooking, then, is not just a passing fad. It has deeper roots.

In 2026, Nigella Lawson will be 66. It seems unlikely that the revival of leisured domestic values that she promotes today will, in 20 years time, have the influence that, say, Elizabeth David wielded over English middle class cooking after 1950, or that Simone Beck exerted over American middle class cooking after 1961.²⁸ Yet so long as choices around cooking continue to look more meaningful to people than choices around politics, or choices of different visions of the future, we can expect the search for meaning in food to persist for a long time.²⁹ Indeed, it can be argued that the 'right', healthy choice of foods and methods will take the place of that old, very British institution, *class*, for some years yet.³⁰

In 2026, people will still want to express themselves through vegetarianism, organic food, food that has not incurred 'food miles',³¹ food from farmers' markets, and Fair Trade food. At the same time, it's worth listening to the good sense of David Boyle, an associate of the New Economics Foundation, an environmentally-minded think-tank. In his book *Authenticity*, Boyle asks whether popular demand for the genuine article in food can really lead people to abandon the price and convenience advantages of Tesco. He continues:

'Could we really get used to having local fruit and vegetables available – and only when in season? Could we ever really organise food locally so that it is produced without chemicals, without exploitation and in a way that supports a thriving new generation of small farms?

'Despite the fact that small shops are enjoying a revival in the UK, it seems unlikely.'³²

It does indeed seem unlikely; yet if obsessions about the ethics of cooking will, in 2026, have practical limits, this may also be no bad thing.

28 For a recent, conflicted discussion of Martha Stewart and the revival of domestic values in the US, see Caitlin Flanagan, *To Hell With All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife*, Little Brown and Company, 2006.

29 See Frank Furedi, *Politics of Fear: Beyond Left and Right*, Continuum, 2005.

30 For a riposte to the doctrine of food miles and a riposte to it, see Vicky Murray and James Woudhuysen, *The food miles controversy*, 3 November 2006, on www.woudhuysen.com

31 On the middle class 'snobbery of entertaining', see Stephen Bayley, 'The great British dinner party', *Independent on Sunday*, 2 April 2006, on http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/food_and_drink/features/article354410.ece

32 David Boyle, *Authenticity: Brands, Fakes and the Lust for Real Life* (2003), Harper Perennial, 2004, p93.

For centuries, cooking styles have varied by religious preference. In 2026, however, cooking stands in some danger of becoming a religion in itself. Would that be a good thing?

There will be nothing evil about buying cookware that turns out to be used solely for display, and never for cooking. But perhaps trends like this will anyway not go too far. There will, in 2026, be a sizable portion of society that delights in and knows about food, but thinks that other things are more important in life – not least, the conversation that accompanies great food.

Ironically enough, such a turn of events may do the cause of cooking a lot of good. After all, cooking is meant to be enjoyable, not an occasion for *angst*. In 2026 as today, what will be important is eating to live, not living to eat.

Chapter 4

PATTERNS AND HABITS

1. *Hot food for the workers, outside and inside the home*

Today's whingeing about 'Work-Life Balance' may well be over by 2026. But as we saw in Chapter 1, convenience foods will still be around – both at home, and away from it.

Perhaps Britain will still be rich in jobs in 2026. Perhaps, too, many more women will have full-time jobs than do today: after all, the state pension age for women will rise from 60 to 65 by 2020. So the prevalence of *work* in 2026 may well help the spread of hot food delivered to staff on site. Canteens for quick hot meals and fast internal communications may finally triumph over the skipped, packed, or sandwich lunch taken at the desk.³³

The extension of working from home will qualify this picture. In 2026, perhaps 15 per cent of the UK labour force will be teleworkers. These will be people who work mainly in their own home or mainly in different places using home as a base, and who comprise that group of home workers who use both a phone and a PC to carry out their work at home.³⁴

Table 5
More quick weekday lunches taken at home: teleworking in the UK, 1997-2026³⁵

1997	At the start of the Internet era, 921,000 teleworkers form four per cent of the UK workforce and 40 per cent of the 2.3m people working from home
2005	With the advent of broadband telecommunications, 2.4m teleworkers form eight per cent of the UK workforce (men: 11 per cent; women: six per cent), and 77 per cent of the 3.1m people working from home. The increase in numbers is mainly among men, and especially in the building and construction trades, where 33 and 28 per cent of employees are teleworkers. The groups most likely to focus on home rather than in different places are women, mothers, administrative and secretarial staff, and people in financial services. Most teleworkers are in older age groups; 62 per cent are self-employed rather than employees, and, as is usually the case with the self-employed, most – 65 per cent – are men.
2026	The City of London maintains its worldwide hegemony in financial services. Residential construction in Britain faces major inroads because of the import of high quality homes manufactured in China. Video telephony helps transform global working processes. As a result, teleworking is a more mainstream, corporate, female, stationary and youthful affair than in 2006, and one no longer so weighted toward the southern part of the UK. In total, 5m of the UK labour force of about 33m, or 15 per cent, go teleworking.

Compared with today, then, 2026 will see millions more quick teleworking lunches at home. Indeed, such meals may also occur at weekends, so forming a modest, anytime contrast to the more familiar and more dominant pattern of leisurely weekend cooking, done at roughly fixed times.

33 For the view that providing food at work is good for alleviating stress and isolation there, see Edward Hallowell, 'Overloaded circuits: why smart people underperform', *Harvard Business Review*, January 2005.

34 The definition of teleworkers is from Yolanda Ruiz and Annette Walling, 'Home-based working using communication technologies', in National Statistics, *Labour Market Trends*, October 2005, on www.statistics.gov.uk/about/platforms/lmt/. This definition excludes what is probably a very large group of 'occasional' teleworkers – IT users who spent at least a full day working from home during a reference week.

35 Figures for 2005 from *ibid*; figure for teleworkers in 2026 extrapolated from *ibid*. Figure for the labour force in 2026 extrapolated from Vassilis Madouros, 'Projections of the UK labour force, 2006 to 2020', in National Statistics, *Labour Market Trends*, January 2006, on www.statistics.gov.uk/about/platforms/lmt/.

2. *Cooking alone*

Cooking lunch while working at home may be done for more than one person. But with teleworkers as with society as a whole, many home kitchens will be the property of one-person households.

	1991	2006	2026
Married couple	10.528	9.409	8.834
Cohabiting couple	1.161	2.161	3.358
Lone parent	0.977	1.642	1.876
Other multi-person	1.407	1.447	1.759
One person	5.094	6.825	9.886
All households	19.166	21.485	25.713
Average household size, persons	2.45	2.31	2.10

Over 2003 to 2026, English households are set to rise by about 209,000 a year. One-person households account for 150,000 of that. More than a third of such householders will be over 65, and nearly all the people who live alone will be over 35. The number of married or cohabiting couples is projected to fall from 54 per cent of all English households in 2003 to 47 in 2026.

The rest of Britain will not be too dissimilar to England. So will the UK, in 2026, be a sad place in which millions of ageing single people do no more than reach for the fridge all the time, especially if they are teleworking? A place where the absence of partners or family on site makes cooking a rare thing? A place where kitchens, made ever tinier because of builders' relentless targeting of one-person households, can accommodate few accessories, and only one large pot?

That seems unlikely. Whatever today's fixation on food, the British, and especially British men, are keener on and more knowing about cooking than ever before. A corner has been turned. Even among the solitary, philistine habits around cooking will be the exception, not the rule, in 2026.

In 2026, as today, there will indeed be a vital place for small ranges and small items of cookware. But if more liberal housing regime ever supplants Britain's fossilised 1947 Town & Country Planning Act, the millions of bigger and better houses that the country so desperately needs will be built with spacious kitchens, and cookware will benefit from this.

36 Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Table E: 2003-based household estimates/projections', *New Projections of Households for England and the Regions to 2026*, DCLG Statistical Release 2006/0042, 14 March 2006 and on www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2097

Meanwhile marriage, divorce, remarriage, cohabitation and grandparents who are more in-your-face will have their effect. They will ensure that cookware, if rarely put on wedding lists in 2026, is still bought regularly.

People will pay a premium for cookware that bears a 10-year or lifetime guarantee. In 2006, the big supermarket chains have all recognised this. By 2026, they will give over even more space to great cookware. Overall sales of cookware in the UK could easily double, surpassing £1bn by 2026.

Chapter 5

HOW WE WILL COOK

1. *Innovation in cookware: how Le Creuset shapes up*

In 2026, considerations of speed will favour cookware that is easy to clean, quickly absorbs heat, distributes heat well to the food, retains heat well and so allows direct second helpings at the table, and can act as a means of storing food in fridge or freezer.

In the case of Le Creuset, the company's classic range of enameled cast iron pots, best known for the slowish preparation of casseroles and stews, will in fact meet all of these requirements. The basic physics of cast iron won't change by 2026. Cast iron pots will always be quick to heat up, even if pre-heating them to a high temperature is always a mistake. They will still be good for quick rice, and, when roasting food in its own gravy, will leave cooks with only one pot to clean.³⁷

Won't the older population of 2026, though, feel more challenged than that of today – by the weight of Le Creuset's cast iron pots? Perhaps. But the very durability of those heavy items has long made their owners want to retain them for decades (when they are not passing them down to younger family members). Also, the ease with which this kind of cookware is used on the hob, not just in the oven, makes manipulation and oversight simpler for old and young alike. Finally, Le Creuset, based at a dedicated foundry 120 miles north east of Paris, tells me that its technologists are working hard to make its cast iron products lighter and easier.

Considerations of speed and health will also, we've said, favour grills and woks. Properly seasoned so they become non-stick, woks help food retain its nutrients, flavours, colours and textures. Their wide surface area, and the vigorous movement of the food that they encourage, mean that little oil needs to be used in them, and that its penetration of food is limited. That ought to satisfy even the nuttiest health nut in 2026.³⁸

We have argued that the search for meaning in cooking, though fruitless, will continue to embrace today's desire for cookware design almost for its own sake. By 2026, however, the long flush of designer everything over the past 25 years may give way to greater sense discernment in design.

In that respect, Le Creuset's recent departures in colour, and its decision to launch a new range of on-the-hob stainless steel cookware for the hob, rightly look more careful and prescient than hip. Many young people like stainless steel for its modern, clean and crisp looks, and the fact that it matches today's steel toasters and kettles. In its triVita range, Le Creuset has tried to reconcile that aesthetic sensibility with the need to overcome a basic defect of simple stainless steel in cooking: that unless you stir the food constantly, spots of heat develop which make the food stick and burn.

triVita saucepans and pots are made in a three-ply sandwich material with aluminium, a rapidly conducting material at its core, and 18/10 stainless steel, the best grade for cooking, either side of it (this material is 18 per cent chromium, which prevents rusting, and 10 per cent nickel, which gets rid of tarnishing). The aluminium distributes heat

³⁷ Sue Cutts, *The Cast Iron Way to Cook*, Le Creuset UK, 2005.

³⁸ Murdoch Books, *Wok it*, 2005.

quickly, not just at the base, but right up the rim as well. The 18/10 stainless steel responds well to the magnetically generated heat of on an induction hob. Result: a stainless exterior, and an agreeable performance.

The triVita range won't quite help their users find themselves a meaningful identity – we can be sure of that! But in its clever mix of form and function, triVita cookware captures a formula in design that has often had some longevity.

2. **Conclusion: cooking without fear**

In 2026, nearly 100 years will have passed since the US publication of *The Joy of Cooking*, perhaps the 20th century's most popular cookbook.³⁹ Will today's children be in any position, tomorrow, to preserve and develop that joy? Will they cook without fear?

There is no need to be too pessimistic. Take, for instance, the issue of climate change. One thing that we can be certain of about the next decade, if not 2026, is that different cooking methods come under the spotlight in terms of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) they emit. Already Britain's newly-formed Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) enjoins people to match pan sizes to ring sizes and use pans that are appropriate for the type of hob in use.⁴⁰ We can expect some debates about what cooking does to the planet.

In fact there is little to worry about here. IET figures themselves reveal that, in 1995/6 at least, cooking was only responsible for 8.1 per cent of the CO₂ emissions linked to electricity use in the home (being always on, the fridge was responsible for 18.1 per cent; by contrast, the humble kettle took 4.6 per cent).⁴¹ Of course, cooking with gas generates CO₂, but not in nearly the same proportions as cooking with electricity.

By 2026 we can hope that facts like these will win out against some of today's scare stories about cooking. Must we all prepare for pizza that is only prepared at length, in ecologically-correct wood-fire ovens? Probably not. Will cooking be fraught with health hazards? Well: so far, our cooking habits have already helped us to be healthier than we have ever been before. Will women still be slaving over a hot stove, unassisted by men? Though the convergence of the sexes around cooking may not be complete in 2026, it will certainly be further advanced than it is today.⁴²

Cooking in the UK today has entered a precocious but apprehensive adolescence. By 2026, it should be a more relaxed, confident and skilful affair.

39 Irma S Rombauer, *The Joy of Cooking: a Compilation of Reliable Recipes with a Casual Culinary Chat*. St. Louis: A C Clayton Printing Co, 1931. This book, which is still in print, has sold 15 million copies worldwide; a first edition can be bought for \$4000.

40 Institution of Electrical Engineers (one of the IEE's forebears), *Energy Efficiency in the Home: a Guide to Effective energy conservation in the home*, revised edition, June 2004, p11, and on www.iee.org/Policy/Areas/EnvEnergy/saveitnew.pdf

41 Ibid, p4.

42 For a fuller argument to back this statement up, see the discussion on women and work in James Woudhuysen, 'Computer games and sex difference', 30 March 2006, on www.woudhuysen.com/index.php/main/C12/

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