In a year of change, British consumers are looking for control when it comes to what they eat.
Today’s consumer is firmly in the driving seat. According to the latest research from Waitrose, shoppers are more single-minded and savvy than ever before. In an uncertain world, this desire to take charge is no surprise.

As consumers, we have a vast array of choice. While we are less reliant on traditional shopping trips (meaning the way they have never had such a much control over where and how they shop. Our trips to the supermarket are more frequent than they were five years ago. According to Waitrose research, two thirds of shoppers say they now visit their supermarket once a day, up 14%.

This trend is partly due to the increased popularity of contactless and click-and-collect services. Over half of us decide what we want to buy, when we want to buy it, and how we want to shop, with 2,000 people of all ages — not just Waitrose customers. This research on a wide range of topics resulted in the top food and drink trends in 2017.

**The facts & figures**

Waitrose conducted an extensive research into the top food trends and drinks in 2017. We found that consumers are looking for convenience and flexibility. Through our locations, opening hours, online ordering and delivery, we offer the convenience they need. Through our range — which is edited for our small stores, extensive or large stores — we offer our high-quality products to everyone. We provide the tools, customer take control. I believe that this is the recipe for success.

**Trends**

1. **As and when**

   Whether it’s shopping or eating, we do what we want, when we want, and how we want. According to our research, consumers have more control over their domain.

   **Food**
   - **Carbs**
     - Carbs have increased in our larger stores, extensive in our smaller stores.
   - **Fruits**
     - Fruits have become more in our larger stores, extensive in our smaller stores.
   - **Herbs**
     - Herbs are now a lot easier to add colour, freshness and a ‘cheffy’ touch to your meals.
   - **Foodservice**
     - Foodservice is on the rise.
   - **Buddha bowls**
     - Buddha bowls have become a huge trend.

   **General trends**
   - People in the East Midlands are the most likely to shop over the weekend.
   - People in the South West are the most likely to eat more healthily and in a way that’s easier for them to maintain.
   - There’s definitely a sense that people can buy whatever they want whenever they want. You might not associate that with Waitrose, but they’re having it for dinner!

   **What they’re saying**
   - ‘There’s definitely a sense that people can buy whatever they want whenever they want. We have more control over our lives, our budget and our income. It might not match associate with Waitrose but they’re having it for dinner!’
   - ‘Customers kept asking us to make breakfast food available all day long — so this is the year we’ve done it, and sales of those options are up by 50% so far.’
   - ‘The generic supermarket of yesterday is gone in terms of how customers think, eat and shop. The challenge for us is to make sure we’re selecting and curating our ranges to make life easier for our customers.’

   **Healthy eating sense rules**
   - 65% of Brits regularly or occasionally visit a supermarket more than once a day.
   - Our top five reasons are:
     1. To help with our health
     2. To prevent myself from overeating
     3. Because I think about food less
     4. Because I don’t have time to think about my food
     5. It’s more of a treat to pick
   - People are wiser than ever about what works for them — it’s about balance and common sense, which is a really positive way to make healthy choices.
   - The Waitrose Food and Drink Report 2017-18

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   - People are wiser than ever about what works for them — it’s about balance and common sense, which is a really positive way to make healthy choices.
2. Dining solo

Eating out alone is no longer anything to feel embarrassed about. Changing attitudes and more accommodating restaurants mean we’re increasingly asking for a table for one.

There was a time when eating out in a restaurant wasn’t for the solitary diner. At least, it attracted plenty of side-eyes from those present. But now we see a thing of the past. Eating out has become a norm, and we are doing it more than ever before.

Of those who expressed an opinion in our poll, there were 21% of people who agreed it was socially acceptable that it was five years ago. A third of those who have eaten out alone in the past month think it’s socially acceptable to eat alone.

While many agree that eating solo is socially taboo, we put it down to a number of factors. Almost half say that restaurants are more single-person friendly, that they are used to it, and that people are more comfortable eating alone.

A fifth of the people we surveyed say they’re less likely to think eating out is less acceptable when they eat alone in restaurants. We put it down to a number of factors, almost half say that restaurants are more single-person friendly, that they are used to it, and that people are more comfortable eating alone.

Restaurant chains are more ‘single-person-friendly’ than they used to be. This is due to a number of factors. Almost half say that restaurants are more single-person friendly, that they are used to it, and that people are more comfortable eating alone.

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There’s a trend towards people grabbing a quick bite to eat can be more usual than fine dining. We put it down to a number of factors, almost half say that restaurants are more single-person friendly, that they are used to it, and that people are more comfortable eating alone.

In terms of the type of meal we choose: be it a burger, a salad, or a curry, there is no companion to judge. A smartphone provides them with the company they’re lacking. A fifth of the people we surveyed say they’re less likely to think eating out is less acceptable when they eat alone in restaurants. We put it down to a number of factors, almost half say that restaurants are more single-person friendly, that they are used to it, and that people are more comfortable eating alone.

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4. Value hunting without compromise

When it comes to controlling our food budgets, we know our onions. But one thing is clear: we’re not making concessions on our favourites.

Britons have become a nation of agile, price-savvy value-hunters. We’re increasingly aware of the deal and how to find them. Our survey found that we’re not afraid to hunt for special offers or buy food outside the traditional supermarket hour.

Consumers are reorienting their budgets and trimming down the best deals on offer. The Waitrose Forgotten Foods Report uncovered just how much Britons are prepared to compromise on food.

We are willing to compromise on food. More than 80% of Britons are sometimes or always more likely to buy cheap food than perfect range, even as other high-end tonics and mixers-with-a-twist continue to spearhead the move towards reaction potential.

The stories behind rums and spirits are fascinating, bitter drinks. Increasingly popular as a dinner-party centrepiece, more wines are combining New World ripeness with crisp Italian flavours. A fortified aromatic base for a touch of sweetness. As our love affair with bubbles continues, we’re getting creative with a raspberry or a creative with a raspberry or a

A rum story

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Whatever next? Trends for 2018 and beyond

INDIAN STREET FOOD
Say ‘namaste’ to tapas-style Indian street food. Forget heavy sauces and chicken tikka masala, this trend is about smoked, grilled or seared dishes, such as scallops in pickled ginger. Food trucks selling curries stuffed with zingy vegetables and drizzled in chutney could become a common sight. The cuisine lends itself to hybrids, such as spiced burgers or lamb keema tacos. It’s Indian food like you’ve never seen it.

JAPANESE ‘DUDE FOOD’
The light end of the Japanese food spectrum – such as miso and noodle soup – has already had its moment in the spotlight. Now it’s the turn of the indulgent end. Gutsy sharing dishes favoured in the country’s izakaya bars are set to become a big thing. Whether it’s yakitori skewered chicken or deep-fried tofu in broth, the trend will combine the hearty ‘dude food’ of the southern US states with the unctuous, rich and surprising flavours of after-hours Tokyo.

FOURTH MEAL
Breakfast, lunch and dinner are so old hat. There is growing evidence that we are starting to squeeze a small, fourth meal into our daily routine. This is not about gluttony, rather it is about adapting our eating schedules to our busy lives. If dinner’s particularly early one evening, why not have a mini cheese on toast before you go to bed? If you’re going to the gym after work, why not have an energy-boosting salad mid-afternoon? Whether it’s a healthy snack or an indulgent treat, we expect to see more of this in the future.

TROLLEYS, DASHED
Recent years have seen a seismic shift in food shopping habits. The future of supermarkets looks likely to be an experiential retail space – immersive hubs where shopping is more than just about choosing your next meal from the shelves. After all, who’d have thought 10 years ago there’d be supper clubs – immersive hubs where shopping is more than just about choosing your next meal from the shelves. But with fewer of us doing a weekly ‘big shop’ could this mean the supersize trolley’s days are numbered? If recent trends continue then it looks likely. Just a few years ago, an average Waitrose shopper would open with around 200 big trolleys and 150 shallow ‘daily shoppers’ trolleys lined up outside. These days the tables have turned, with 250 shallow ‘daily shoppers’ and just 70 big trolleys needed.

PLANT PROTEINS
The demand for high protein foods continues, and with more of us choosing a flexitarian diet it’s no wonder there’s such a buzz around new plant-based proteins. Whether with pulses, shoots, grains, seeds, soy or even algae, everyone from tiny start-up companies to big brands is looking for clever new ways to add a protein punch.