



- It is the meal that matters**  
Governments advise households to:
- reduce meat and dairy consumption
  - consume items that are local and in season (fewer food miles)
  - adopt more energy-efficient cooking methods
  - use smaller, more efficient appliances
  - reduce household food waste

In focusing on messages like these, policy-makers overlook the critical relation between ingredients and meals

How are the ingredients of breakfast, lunch and dinner defined, produced, distributed, stored, prepared, combined and consumed? Who and what is involved, how are these processes organised, what do they mean, and what is their environmental impact? In addressing these questions it is important to consider:

1. Changing systems of provision and supply

*“Courgettes and aubergines and peppers were things ..that my mum never cooked with”.*  
(Charlie, 27, quoted in White et. al. 2011)



*“This delicatessen opened and “suddenly everybody had access to things like salami and cheeses that they hadn’t heard of before, and something called okra, which is a very weird slimy green vegetable which used to come in a huge jar. I can remember that.”*  
(Barbara, 59 quoted in White et. al. 2011)



Strategies to promote more sustainable diets have to consider the relation between consumption and production. It is not enough to focus on consumption alone.

Practices of food consumption do not exist in a vacuum. They are implicated in practices of food production, transport, storage, international trade and patterns of work. They are inscribed in the rhythms of the day through to the layout of villages, towns and cities...

When talking of food, people speak about networks and systems of practice. These systems are not random. They are organised in ways that enable and constrain the making and meaning of more or less sustainable meals. If households are to eat differently, numerous points on the network will be affected.

(Jless Paddock, 2010, social-change climate-change working party notes 2010.)

Meals combine skills, materials and meanings - all of which change.

Sam’s Pizza

**Ingredients:**  
Enriched Wheat Flour (Niacin, Iron, Riboflavin, Folic Acid), Water, Vegetable Shortening, Yeast, Salt, Sugar, Malt, Soybean Oil, calcium Propionate (to retard spoilage), L-cystien (dough conditioner); Vine Ripened Fresh Tomatoes, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Sunflower Oil, More Salt, Oregano, Seasonings, Granulated Garlic (Garlic, Soybean Oil, Olive Oil, Citric Acid), Fresh Basil Leaves, Jalapeno Peppers (contains Jalapeno Peppers, water, distilled vinegar, still more salt, calcium carbonate, 1/10 of 1% sodium benzoate), and another drop of Citric Acid.

**Instructions:**  
Using an 1100-watt oven, microwave frozen pizzas on the "High" setting for 2 minutes and 15 seconds.

[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Fast\\_Food\\_\\_TakeOut\\_g131-Pizza\\_Detail\\_p2126.html](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Fast_Food__TakeOut_g131-Pizza_Detail_p2126.html)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jellokitty/2317707846/> from the Art of French Cooking 1962 (adapted)

2. Technologies

*“The commercial space devoted to frozen foods is ten times greater than it was less than a hundred years ago.”* (p8).

*“Today’s food system is built upon refrigeration. For many foods, refrigeration is a feature of almost every stage in the supply chain.”* (p5).

Garnett, T. (2007) Food refrigeration: what is the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and how might emissions be reduced. <http://www.fcrn.org.uk/>



*“In less than forty years, freezers have become essential and not optional instruments of household management. Freezers contribute to the “construction and reproduction of ... temporal orders, systems of provision and storage, and regimes of care and convenience”* (p83).

Hand, M. and Shove, E. (2007). "Condensing Practices: Ways of living with a freezer." *Journal of Consumer Culture* .

3. Conventions and traditions

*“... a meal is something that’s got meat or fish in it”*  
(Muriel, 74, quoted in White et. al. 2011).

Meat has a large ‘eco-footprint’ because of how much land is required to grow fodder and graze animals, and because of the energy consumed in production, processing and distribution.

*“A healthy vegetarian diet could reduce the Scottish ecological diet footprint by 40% over a healthy low-meat diet.”*  
Frey, S. and Barrett, J. (2006) *The footprint of Scotland’s diet*. <http://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Future/scotland-diet.pdf>

White et. al’s interview based study, “Changing Tastes: Meat in Our Life Histories” shows that the reasons why people consume meat the way they do “extend beyond the individual to social, historical and political influences”. For some respondents the tradition of a Sunday roast was very much alive - cooking and eating meat represented status, gender, a chance to display culinary skills and an occasion to get the family together. Others described more varied repertoires of skill and experiences. They had different expectations of meals and what they should contain.

White, E., Uzzell, D., Gatersleben, B. and Räthzel, N. (2011) “Changing Tastes: Meat in Our Life Histories” RESOLVE Working Paper. University of Surrey.



From this we take two points.

- eating (and not eating) meat is inseparable from a raft of other valued social practices.
- traditions and systems of food provision co-evolve.

Sarah’s Lark Pie

**Ingredients:**  
A few thin slices of beef; a few thin slices of bacon; 9 larks; flour; 1 teacupful of bread crumbs; 1/2 teaspoonful of minced lemon-peel; 1 teaspoonful of minced parsley; 1 egg; salt and pepper to taste; teaspoonful of chopped shallot; 1/2 pint of weak stock or water; puff-paste (pastry).

**Instructions:**  
Make a stuffing of bread crumbs, minced lemon-peel, parsley, and the yolk of an egg, all of which should be well mixed together; roll the larks in flour, and stuff them. Line the bottom of a pie-dish with a few slices of beef and bacon; over these place the larks, and season with salt, pepper, minced parsley, and chopped shalot, in the above proportion. Pour in the stock or water, cover with crust, and bake for an hour in a moderate oven. During the time the pie is baking, shake it 2 or 3 times, to assist in thickening the gravy, and serve very hot.

Sufficient for 5 or 6 persons. In full season in November.

Beeton, I. (1861) *The Book of Household Management*.