

# Cooking – a dying skill

Have the British become passionate cooks? You could easily think so. TV cookery programmes, which attract millions of viewers, are broadcast at prime time. TV cooks have become stars, so-called “celebrity chefs”. But the fact that we watch something on television doesn’t mean that we actually do it. The latest statistics say that we spend twenty minutes a day making our meals. But twenty-five years ago, we spent about an hour preparing food.



One reason for this change is the growth of the chilled ready meal industry. Today, supermarket refrigerators are full of ready cooked chicken tikka masala, steak and onion pie, lasagne, and so on. Britons buy almost half of the ready meals sold in Europe. About a third of us use supermarket ready meals more than once a week. The food industry cooks our meals and the microwave heats them up.

Why are ready meals more popular here than on the Continent? One reason is that cooking has never been a central part of our culture, compared with countries like France or Italy. Secondly, the UK has more working women than most of the rest of Europe. Finally, many of us simply aren’t able to cook. At school, children do “food technology”, not cookery. They learn to design an airline meal for the economy class, but nobody teaches them how to boil an egg or roast a leg of lamb. And Cambridge University has even started cookery classes, because it’s worried that students can’t feed themselves.

Of course, we love good food. We watch all those cookery programmes and, three or four times a year, we invite friends to dinner and try out one of the recipes we’ve learned. Just for fun. We spend hours in the kitchen trying to get everything right. But cooking as an everyday skill is on the way out.

Match these headings with the four paragraphs in the text above. Write 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the correct boxes.

- ☐ **The kind of food we buy**
- ☐ **Why the British cook less**

- ☐ **We only cook on special occasions**
- ☐ **Have we become armchair cooks?**

### Useful phrases: Invitations and responses

Look at the phrases below. In each column, tick the two phrases that would be most suitable in a formal written invitation or response.

Inviting people	Responding to invitations
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Would you like to come to dinner next weekend?	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Thanks very much. I’d love to.
2 <input type="checkbox"/> We’re having a dinner party next weekend. We’d be delighted if you could come.	6 <input type="checkbox"/> Many thanks for your invitation to dinner.
3 <input type="checkbox"/> We’d like to invite you to dinner next weekend.	7 <input type="checkbox"/> We’re sorry that we can’t accept your invitation to dinner.
4 <input type="checkbox"/> Come to dinner next weekend!	8 <input type="checkbox"/> Sorry, but I’m busy next weekend.

# Eat, drink and be merry

## 1 Talk about it

When did you last invite people to dinner in your home? What did you cook? Do you think cooking is fun, or is it just a household chore? How do you usually prepare food?

### remember

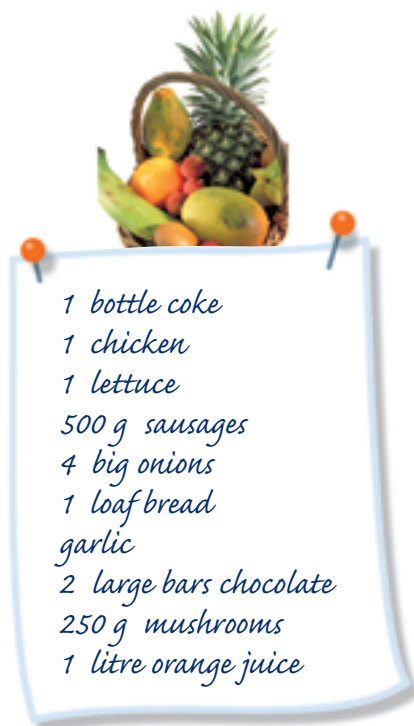
we **fry** meat in a **frying pan**  
 we **roast** meat in an **oven**  
 we **boil** water to **make** tea or coffee

## 2 Vocabulary: Food and drink

You have offered to go shopping for a friend of yours who is ill. When you see the shopping list you are shocked. You know that your friend must keep to a low fat, low sugar, low salt diet. Cross out the food you think he/she shouldn't eat. Add things that you think would be good for him. Compare your list with a partner's.

### remember

When we write about quantities of food (shopping list, recipe), we normally write *1 bottle coke*, *500g sausages*, etc. But when we speak, we say *1 bottle of coke*, *500g of sausages*, etc.



Do you think that we eat healthier food today than 50 years ago?

Which ideas do you think are more typical of the 1950s? Which are more typical of today. Write *1950s* or *Today* in the spaces. In small groups, compare your results and give reasons for your decisions.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 typical meal: meat and two vegetables ..... | 6 no tomatoes or lettuce in winter ..... |
| 2 ready meals several times a week .....      | 7 strawberries in winter .....           |
| 3 a meal in an Italian restaurant .....       | 8 tinned fruit for Sunday lunch .....    |
| 4 out of town supermarkets .....              | 9 organic peppers and aubergines .....   |
| 5 buy food at the corner shop .....           | 10 regular family meals .....            |

How have your eating habits changed in your lifetime? Did you eat things as a child that you wouldn't eat now?

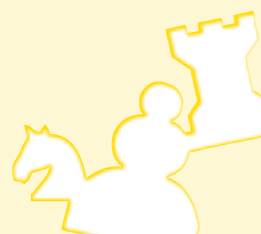
## 3 Skills focus: Listening

When you talk to native speakers of English, you may not always understand every word they say. Sometimes they speak quickly, or with a strong regional accent. But you can often get the gist of what people say if you **concentrate on key words and their intonation**.



**T4** Listen to two short statements about food. Then answer the questions.

- Did you understand every word?
- Did you understand the gist of the statements?
- What were the key words which helped you to understand?
- How did the speakers' intonation help you to understand?



4

 **T5 Listening**

**S** First look at the Skills file, p. 73:

1 Listening for gist, 2 Listening for detail

You will hear a conversation between Paul and Maria. Listen and choose the correct answer. The main topic of the conversation is

- a) ☐ family mealtimes.
- b) ☐ meal delivery services.
- c) ☐ Paul and Maria's childhood.



**T6** Listen again and put a tick in the correct box for each of the following questions.

**1 Maria phoned Don because**

- a) ☐ she wanted to have a meal with his family.
- b) ☐ she hasn't got any children of her own.
- c) ☐ she didn't want to arrive while his family was eating.

**2 When the pizza man arrived, Tristan**

- a) ☐ was standing up.
- b) ☐ stood up.
- c) ☐ switched off his computer.

**3 When Abigail came downstairs, she**

- a) ☐ didn't notice Maria.
- b) ☐ said hello to Maria.
- c) ☐ didn't say hello to Maria.

**4 When Paul was a child**

- a) ☐ his father never joined the family at mealtimes.
- b) ☐ he couldn't hold a knife and fork.
- c) ☐ his mother taught him how to behave at mealtimes.

**5 When the doorbell rang a second time,**

- a) ☐ Don asked his wife to go to the kitchen.
- b) ☐ Don asked his wife to open the door.
- c) ☐ Don's wife was embarrassed.

5

**Grammar reminder:  
The past simple and  
the past progressive**

→ G1,3, p. 93

Cross out the wrong words.

We use the **past progressive** to talk about activities that *were in progress* / *were finished* at a point of time in the past.

Complete these sentences with the verbs in brackets. Use the **past simple** or the **past progressive**.

Don's wife ..... a cookery programme when I ..... (watch, arrive)

Abigail ..... upstairs when I arrived. I don't know what she ..... (be, do)

While I ..... goodbye, the doorbell ..... (say, ring)

Work in small groups. Tell your partners about a memorable meal you had.

**remember**

*while* is followed by a verb:

**While** we were eating ...

*during* is followed by a noun:

**During** the meal ...

... and while  
we were waiting for  
the next course ...



## 6 Reading

These people are all hungry, but they don't want to cook themselves. Read about them. Then look at the restaurant reviews. Decide which restaurant would be the most suitable for them.



**Dave** likes all kinds of oriental cooking – Thai, Indian, Chinese. He considers himself an

expert on food and expects the highest quality. He's quite busy at the moment and doesn't want to spend much time eating.



**Jia Li** is a vegetarian. Like some vegetarians, she eats fish

but not meat. She likes eating in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere and hates being served by unfriendly staff.



**Thomas** is a student and hasn't got much money. He

loves Chinese and Indian food, but he also likes to try dishes from different European countries.

### Country Garden

A vegetarian restaurant in a side street near Charing Cross. Quite dark and usually full. Uses English grown organic vegetables. Excellent quality food, and not expensive. Waiters and waitresses are efficient, but are often stressed and not very polite.

### Happy Hussar

London's newest Hungarian restaurant with a lot of traditional favourites like goulash with dumplings. Also ostrich and kangaroo dishes cooked in true Hungarian style. Very reasonable prices – good if you're on a low budget. Friendly staff.

### Green Dragon

A Chinese restaurant that will take your breath away. Located on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of an office building in central London, it is bright and airy. The food is fairly standard and the service is quite slow. But the view makes it worth a visit. Quite expensive.

### Totally China

This is an up-market Chinese takeaway which specialises in dishes from different regions. Excellent cooking, but it comes at a price. Great if you're short of time. Deliveries also possible.

### Bank

A 19<sup>th</sup> century bank converted into a restaurant. Glass roof and plenty of space between the tables. The dishes are mainly Italian, and there is an imaginative vegetarian page on the menu. Prices above average.



## 7 Speaking

Work with a partner. You want to invite a friend to a meal at one of the restaurants above. Before you choose one, discuss

- how much money you're prepared to spend on the meal
- which restaurant *you'd* like to go to
- which restaurant you think your friend would like
- when to invite your friend (day, time)
- anything else you think is important

Which restaurant was the most popular choice in your class?

## 8 Writing

**S** First look at the Skills file, p. 74:  
1 Informal letters

Before you start, check the *Useful phrases* on the Preparation page.

- Write a short letter (about 40 words) inviting your friend to the meal you've just planned. Give some information about the plans.
- Find a new partner. Give him/her the letter to read. Respond (orally) to the invitation you get.
- Look at your letter again. If you were writing to your boss, would you change any phrases?

LANGUAGE TIP: *a friend of yours*

*She's a friend of mine.* (= one of my friends)

*They came to dinner with a colleague of theirs.* (= one of their colleagues)

*I've still got some cookery books of hers.* (= some of her cookery books)

## 1 Afternoon tea at the Ritz

Read the letter and decide which word or phrase, a, b or c, is missing in items 1–8. Underline the correct word or phrase.



Dear Martin,  
You'll never guess what we did on Saturday. We had afternoon tea at the Ritz! I really enjoyed it. It was worth going, just to see Jeremy wearing a jacket and tie. He had to borrow both from a friend of ...(1)...

We had tea in Palm Court, ...(2)... just looks like a Roman Garden. And ...(3)... we were eating, a harpist was playing background music. I'm sure he ...(4)... *Somewhere over the Rainbow* at least ten times.

We started with sandwiches, followed by scones with ...(5)... cream and strawberry jam, and we finished off with some absolutely delicious cakes. I nearly asked for the ...(6)...! And there were so many different kinds of tea – I had Lapsong Souchong Imperial. Mmm! They really know how to ...(7)... a good cup of tea!

Anyway, must stop now, I've got things to do. Would you like ...(8)... over for brunch on Sunday morning?

Love,  
Sandra

- 1 a) us  
b) our  
c) ours
- 2 a) who  
b) which  
c) what
- 3 a) while  
b) during  
c) since
- 4 a) has played  
b) plays  
c) played
- 5 a) a number of  
b) plenty of  
c) a lot
- 6 a) prescription  
b) recipe  
c) cookery
- 7 a) make  
b) cook  
c) boil
- 8 a) coming  
b) come  
c) to come

2  Listening

You will hear a radio report about the BBC campaign *The Big Challenge*, which hopes to encourage people to lead a healthier life. The reporter will be giving some information about the campaign and finding out if it has changed people's eating and exercise habits.

Read the statements below. Then listen and decide if they are true or false.

- 1 The TV programme *The Big Challenge* shows real people trying to change their lifestyles.
- 2 Only the viewers at home are asked to take part in each of the nine challenges.
- 3 Most of the challenges are difficult to do.
- 4 In one of the challenges people are encouraged to throw away unhealthy food and drink.
- 5 Jane Rice has started going to tango classes.
- 6 Nancy has stopped frying meat.
- 7 Nancy's husband was eating raw carrots in the kitchen.
- 8 Ben prefers walking to dancing.

T	F
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Now go to [www.englishnetworklink.com](http://www.englishnetworklink.com) and do the Internet task for this unit.

