# Changing eating habits in America: From home cooking to online grocery shopping



PITTSBURGH — The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to the eating habits of Americans, particularly in how they approached meal preparation and grocery shopping. Early in the pandemic, restaurants closed and stay-at-home orders were enacted, leading many to explore cooking at home more extensively than they had previously.

During this period, home cooking became a prevalent activity, although sourcing certain ingredients proved to be challenging due to shortages. Grocery stores adapted their operations to maintain social distancing, modifying occupancy levels and traffic patterns to keep shoppers safe. Amidst this shift, a notable surge in home baking, especially bread-making, was observed, with many sharing sourdough starters and rediscovering old kitchen appliances.

Peg Morrow from Ellwood City shared her newfound passion for baking, stating, “With COVID I was able to get that love of cooking and baking back.” Many others echoed this sentiment, including retired geologist Peter Hutchinson from Murrysville, who noted the return to bread-making after updating an old bread machine. Similarly, Mark Mastandrea from Shaler took the opportunity during the lockdown to enhance his cooking skills, evolving from a simple cook to someone who explored new and creative recipes daily.

However, as the pandemic persisted, a shift began to occur. Five years later, the landscape of cooking and eating habits has transformed once more, with consumers now returning to pre-pandemic behaviours and dining out more frequently. According to a survey conducted by the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts, Americans now spend 55.7% of their food budgets on dining and takeout, compared to only 44.3% on groceries.

In 2025, shoppers are not only shopping less frequently for groceries but are also changing how they purchase food. Data from the USDA reports that nearly 20% of shoppers across various age groups engaged in online grocery shopping at least once monthly. The transition to online grocery services was already underway prior to the pandemic, with chains like Giant Eagle and Walmart piloting online ordering as far back as 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Heather Feather, Giant Eagle’s senior director of digital and eCommerce strategy, stated that improved technology made online grocery shopping more appealing, with Walmart expanding its grocery delivery services in 2018. The onset of the pandemic accelerated these trends; demand for online shopping surged, with many retailers reporting significant increases in order volume almost overnight.

Today, Walmart offers same-day store deliveries to 93% of the U.S., while Giant Eagle has established curbside pickup at 104 locations and home delivery across its markets. According to Tim Westine, a curbside team leader at Giant Eagle, Sundays are the busiest days for online shopping, with up to 1,200 orders filled weekly by his team. During the pandemic, demand skewed towards non-perishable items, but recent trends indicate a greater focus on fresh produce, meat, and dairy.

Despite the perception that online shopping might lack a personal touch, Westine highlighted the level of interaction between team members and customers, suggesting a tailored experience when it comes to fulfilling grocery orders. Drexler noted that team members are trained to prioritise customer satisfaction, ensuring a close match to the customer’s needs.

Moreover, partnerships with delivery services like Instacart and DoorDash have further streamlined the process for online shoppers, making grocery shopping more efficient and convenient.

As consumer behaviour continues to evolve, Drexler remarked on the increasing number of individuals attracting to online grocery shopping. “It will be interesting to see how it evolves and grows over the next years,” she concluded, hinting at the ongoing transformation in how people approach food shopping and meal preparation in the post-pandemic landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8990782/> - This study supports the claim that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Americans' eating habits and behavior, with changes in meal preparation and grocery shopping patterns early in the pandemic.
* <https://www.innerbody.com/americas-eating-habits-throughout-the-pandemic> - This article discusses how the pandemic influenced consumer spending and eating habits in the U.S., including shifts in food purchases and the impact on grocery shopping.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8582896/> - This systematic review highlights changes in eating behaviors during the pandemic, including increased snacking and preference for ultra-processed foods, which aligns with the shift in cooking habits discussed in the article.
* <https://www.usda.gov/topics/organic-and-local-food> - The USDA's data on food consumption and shopping trends provide context for the changes in how Americans are purchasing groceries, including online shopping.
* <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1141316/us-online-grocery-market-share/> - Statista reports on the growth and trends in online grocery shopping, which accelerated during the pandemic, supporting the article's discussion of increased online grocery purchases.