

F&Y2 Wave 7-8 NI: Chapter 6: Eating at home

Introduction

The FSA is responsible for protecting the public from foodborne diseases. This involves working with farmers, food producers and processors, and the retail and hospitality sectors to ensure that the food people buy is safe. The FSA gives practical guidance and recommendations to consumers on [food safety and hygiene](#) in the home.

The Food and You 2 survey asks respondents about their food-related behaviours in the home, including whether specific foods are eaten, and knowledge and reported behaviour in relation to five important aspects of food safety: cleaning, cooking, chilling, avoiding cross-contamination and use-by dates. Food and You 2 also asks respondents about the frequency they prepare or consume certain types of food.

Two versions of the 'Eating at home' module have been created; a 'core' module which includes a limited number of key questions which are fielded annually, and a 'deep dive' module which includes additional questions and is fielded every 2 years. This chapter reports on questions from the core 'Eating at home' module. [\(footnote 1\)](#)

This chapter provides an overview of respondents' knowledge and reported behaviours relating to food safety and other food-related behaviours.

Cleaning

Handwashing in the home

The [FSA recommends](#) that everyone should wash their hands before they prepare, cook or eat food, after handling raw food and before preparing ready-to-eat food.

The majority (74%) of respondents who cook, reported that they always wash their hands before preparing or cooking food. However, 25% reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands before preparing or cooking food, and 1% reported never doing this. [\(footnote 2\)](#)

Most (93%) respondents who cook, reported that they always wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish. However, 6% reported that they do not always (i.e., most of the time or less often) wash their hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish, and 1% reported never doing this. [\(footnote 3\)](#)

Handwashing when eating out

Respondents were asked, how often, if at all, they washed their hands or used hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating when they ate outside of their home. 64% reported that they always or most of the time washed their hands or used hand sanitising gel or wipes when they ate outside of their home, 26% did this less often (i.e. about half of the time or less often), and 10% never did this. [\(footnote 4\)](#)

Chilling

The [FSA provides guidance](#) on how to chill food properly to help stop harmful bacteria growing. When asked what temperature the inside of a fridge should be, 65% correctly answered between 0-5°C, while 16% incorrectly answered that the temperature should be above 5°C, 4% answered less than 0°C, and 15% said they did not know. [\(footnote 5\)](#)

If and how respondents check fridge temperature

60% of respondents who had a fridge reported that they monitored the temperature, either manually (50%) or via an internal temperature alarm (10%). [\(footnote 6\)](#) Of the respondents who manually check the temperature of their fridge, 45% reported that they check the temperature of their fridge at least once a week, [as recommended by the FSA](#). [\(footnote 7\)](#)

Cooking

The [FSA recommends](#) cooking food at the correct temperature for the correct length of time to ensure that harmful bacteria are killed. When cooking pork, poultry, and minced meat products the FSA recommends that the meat is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, that none of the meat is pink and that any juices run clear.

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through. The majority (82%) of respondents who cook reported that they always cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through, while 18% reported that they do not always do this. [\(footnote 8\)](#)

When respondents were asked to indicate how often they eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink juices [\(footnote 9\)](#), the majority (93%) reported that they never did this. However, 6% reported that they did this at least occasionally. [\(footnote 10\)](#)

Reheating

The [FSA recommends](#) reheating food thoroughly and only ever reheating leftovers once, because repeatedly changing temperatures provides more chances for bacteria to grow and cause food poisoning.

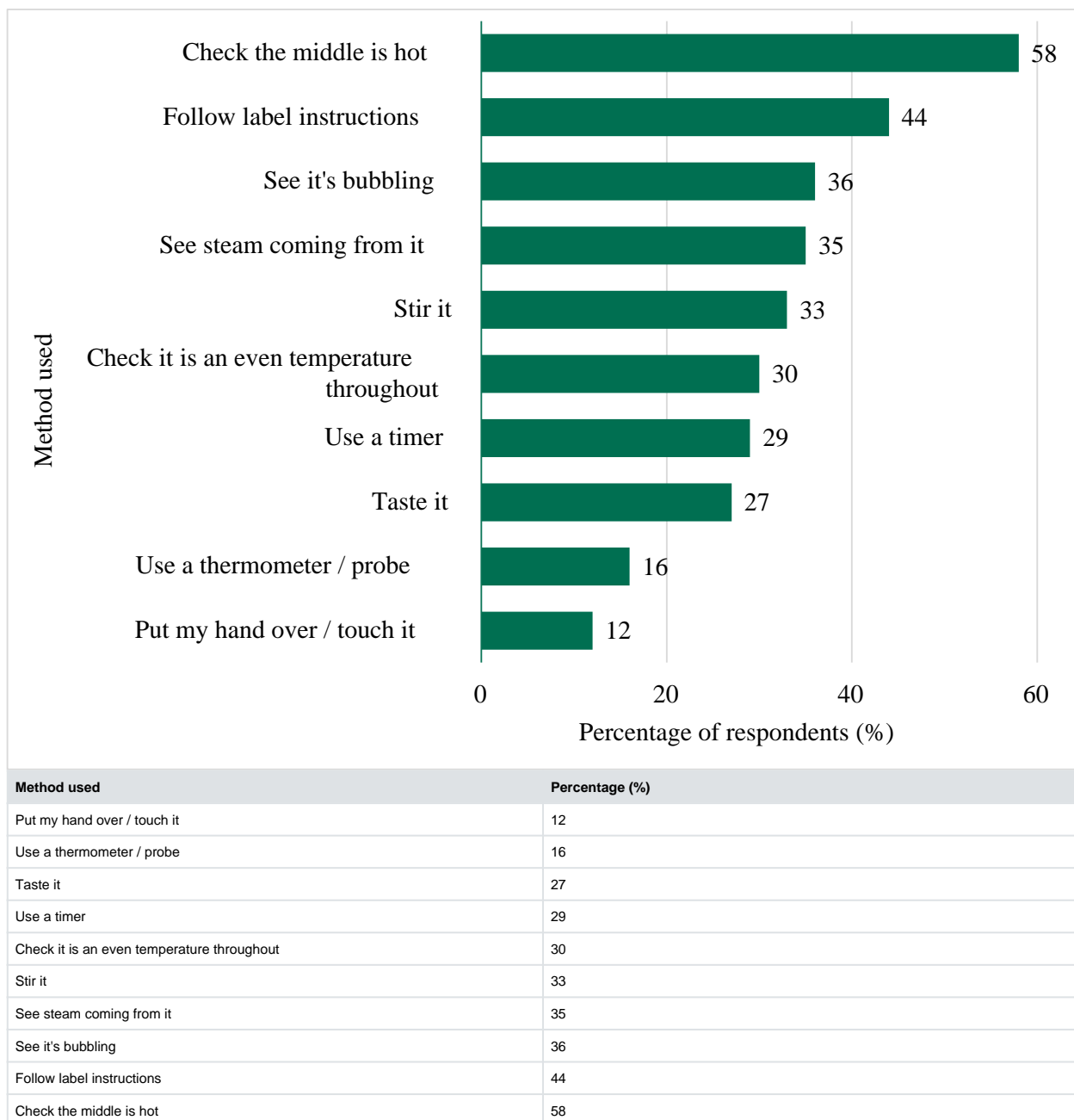
Respondents were asked to indicate how they check food is ready to eat when they reheat it. The most common method was to check if the middle was hot (58%) followed by following the instructions on the label (44%) (Figure 15). [\(footnote 11\)](#)

When respondents were asked how many times they would consider reheating food after it was cooked for the first time, the majority reported that they would only reheat food once (87%), 7% twice, and 2% more than twice. [\(footnote 12\)](#)

Figure 15. Methods used when reheating food to check it's ready to eat.

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Change to chart view



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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 8

Leftovers

Respondents were asked how long they would keep leftovers in the fridge before eating them. 72% reported they would eat leftovers within 2 days, 21% within 3-5 days, and 1% after 5 days or longer. [\(footnote 13\)](#)

Avoiding cross-contamination

The FSA provides guidelines on [how to avoid cross-contamination](#). The FSA recommends that people do not wash raw meat because doing so can splash harmful bacteria onto hands, work

surfaces, ready-to-eat foods and cooking equipment, which could then cause food poisoning.”

Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents reported that they never wash raw chicken, whilst 32% of respondents reported washing raw chicken at least occasionally (i.e. occasionally or more often). [\(footnote 14\)](#)

How and where respondents store raw meat and poultry in the fridge

[The FSA recommends](#) that refrigerated raw meat and poultry is kept covered, separately from ready-to-eat foods and stored at the bottom of the fridge to avoid cross-contamination.

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a range of responses, how they store meat and poultry in the fridge. Respondents were most likely to report storing raw meat and poultry in its original packaging (66%) and/or away from cooked foods (60%).

Over a third of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry in a sealed container (40%), with a lower proportion covering it with film/foil (33%), and/or storing it on a plate (14%). [\(footnote 15\)](#)

Over two-thirds (71%) of respondents reported only storing raw meat and poultry at the bottom of the fridge, as recommended by the FSA. However, 13% of respondents reported storing raw meat and poultry wherever there is space in the fridge, 11% in the middle of the fridge, and 5% at the top of the fridge. [\(footnote 16\)](#)

Use-by and best before dates

Respondents were asked about their understanding of the different types of [date labels](#) and instructions on food packaging, as storing food for too long or at the wrong temperature can cause food poisoning. Use-by dates relate to food safety, whereas best before (BBE) dates relate to food quality.

Over two-thirds (70%) of respondents correctly identified the use-by date as the information which shows that food is no longer safe to eat. However, 10% of respondents incorrectly identified the best before date as the date which shows food is no longer safe to eat. [\(footnote 17\)](#)

Around three-quarters (77%) of respondents reported that they always check use-by dates before they cook or prepare food, while 21% reported doing this at least sometimes (i.e. occasionally or more often, but not always), and 1% reported never checking use-by dates. [\(footnote 18\)](#)

The proportion of people who reported ‘always’ checking the use-by date varied by demographic:

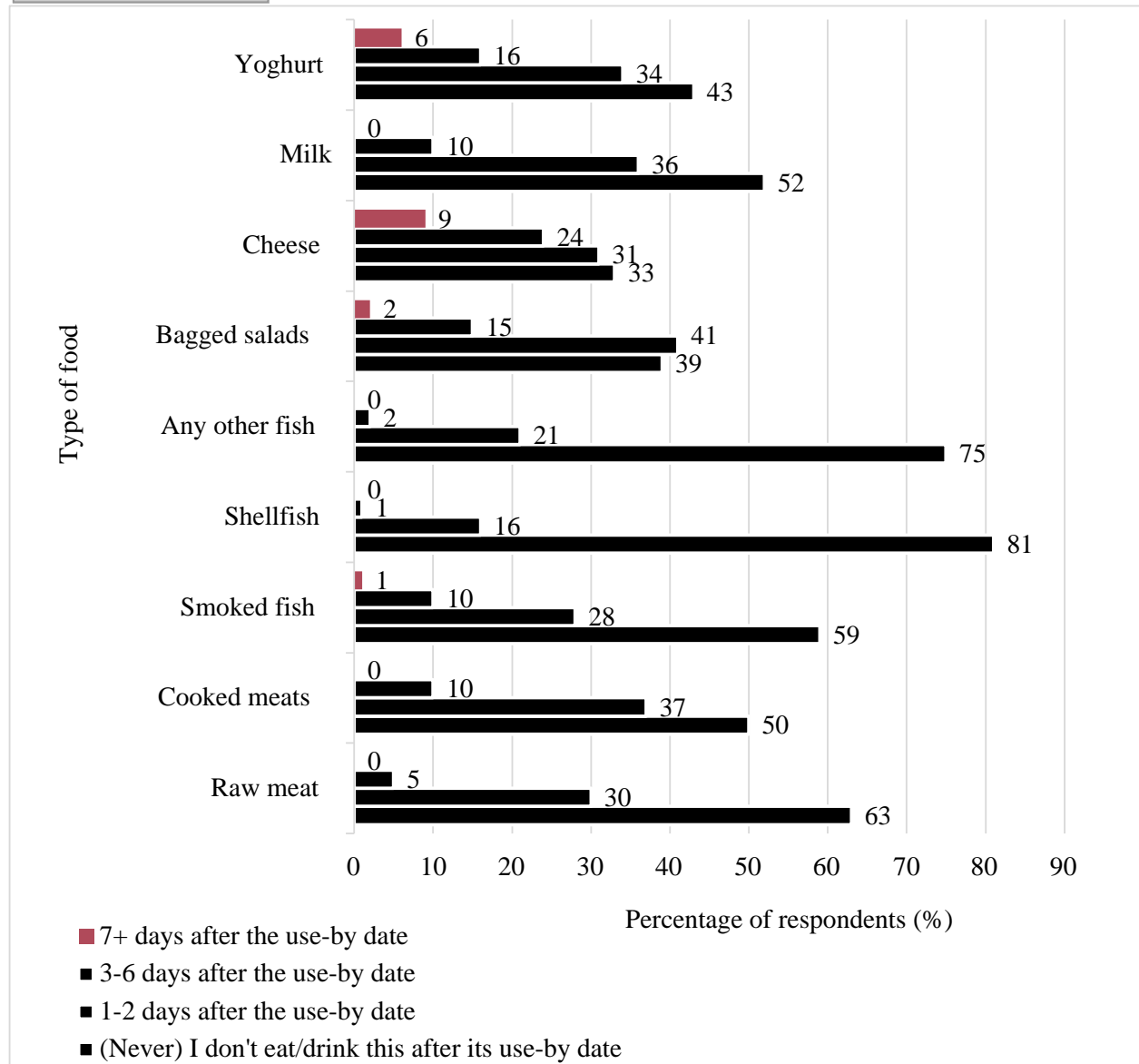
- Gender: women (82%) were more likely to report always checking the use-by date than men (71%)
- Age: those aged 55-64 (84%) were more likely to always check the use-by date than those aged 65-74 (72%) and those aged 45-54 (73%).
- Household size: households of 1, 3 or 4 people (83%, 82% and 81%) were more likely to always check use-by dates than households of 5 or more people (68%).

Respondents were asked the latest they would consume different types of food after its use-by date. Most respondents reported that they would not consume shellfish (81%) or any other fish (75%) after its use-by date, while over half reported that they would not consume raw meat (63%) or smoked fish (59%) after its use-by date. Meanwhile more than half of respondents reported that they would consume cheese (64%), bagged salad (58%), and yoghurt (56%) after its use-by date (Figure 16). [\(footnote 19\)](#)

Figure 16. The latest respondents would consume types of food after their use-by date

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Food item	(Never) I don't eat/drink this after its use-by date	1-2 days after the use-by date	3-6 days after the use-by date	7+ days after the use-by date
Raw meat	63	30	5	0
Cooked meats	50	37	10	0
Smoked fish	59	28	10	1
Shellfish	81	16	1	0
Any other fish	75	21	2	0
Bagged salads	39	41	15	2
Cheese	33	31	24	9
Milk	52	36	10	0
Yoghurt	43	34	16	6

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Source: Food & You 2: Wave 8

1. The full 'Eating at home' module was last reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 5 Key Findings report](#). The brief module was last reported in the [Food and You 2: Wave 6 Key Findings report](#).
2. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands before starting to prepare or cook food? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, I don't cook, Don't know. Base = 1,146, all respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
3. Question: When you are at home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands do you wash your hands immediately after handling raw meat, poultry or fish? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base = 1,118, all respondents who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household excluding 'I don't cook meat, poultry or fish' and 'not stated', in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
4. Question: When eating outside of the home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising gel or wipes before eating? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base = 1,304, all online respondents and those answering the Eating Out postal questionnaire in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
5. Question: What do you think the temperature inside your fridge should be? Responses: Less than 0 degrees C (less than 32 degrees F), Between 0 and 5 degrees C (32 to 41 degrees F), More than 5 but less than 8 degrees C (42 to 46 degrees F), 8 to 10 degrees C (47 to 50 degrees F) (2%), More than 10 degrees C (over 50 degrees F), Other, Don't know. Base = 1,241, all online respondents and all those who completed the Eating at Home postal questionnaire excluding those who answered, 'I don't have a fridge', in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
6. Question: Do you, or anyone else in your household, ever check your fridge temperature? Responses: Yes, No, I don't need to - it has an alarm if it is too hot or cold, Don't know. Base = 1,240, all online respondents, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, excluding those who don't have a fridge, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
7. Question: How often, if at all, do you or someone else in your household check the temperature of the fridge? Responses: At least daily, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week but more than once a month, Once a month, four times a year, once or twice a year, Never, Don't know. Base = 635, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire where someone in the household checks the fridge temperature, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
8. Question: How often, if at all, do you cook food until it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base= 1,146, all online respondents, and all those who completed the

'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.

9. Data on the consumption of red meat, duck, beefburgers, sausages and pork when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices is available from [Food and You 2: Wave 5](#).
10. Question: How often, if at all, do you eat chicken or turkey when the meat is pink or has pink or red juices? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base = 1,166, all online respondents, and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, who are not vegan, pescatarian or vegetarian, and who do eat chicken/turkey, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
11. Question: When reheating food, how do you know when it is ready to eat? Select all that apply. Responses: I check the middle is hot, I follow the instructions on the label, I can see it's bubbling, I use a timer to ensure it has been cooked for a certain amount of time, I check it's an even temperature throughout, I can see steam coming from it, I can see steam coming from it, I taste it, I stir it, I put my hand over it/touch it, I use a thermometer/probe, None of the above, I don't check. Base = 1,088, all online respondents, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' questionnaire, who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, excluding 'I don't reheat food', in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
12. Question: How many times would you consider reheating food after it was cooked for the first time? Responses: Not at all, Once, Twice, More than twice, Don't know. Base = 1,096, all online respondents and those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire who reheat food using one of the methods in the previous question, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
13. Question: When is the latest you would consume any leftovers stored in the fridge? Responses: The same day, Within 1-2 days, Within 3-5 days, More than 5 days later, It varies too much, Don't know. Base = 1,243, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
14. Question: How often, if at all, do you wash raw chicken? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, Don't know. Base = 1,139, all online respondents and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal paper questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
15. Question: How do you store raw meat and poultry in the fridge? Please select all that apply. Responses: Away from cooked foods, Covered with film/foil, In a sealed container, In its original packaging, On a plate. Base = 1,170, all online respondents, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't store raw meat/poultry in the fridge, don't have a fridge or don't know, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.
16. Question: Where in the fridge do you store raw meat and poultry? Responses: Wherever there is space, At the top of the fridge, In the middle of the fridge, At the bottom of the fridge. Base = 1,151, all online respondents, and all those who completed the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, except those who don't buy/store meat/poultry, don't store raw

meat/poultry in the fridge, don't have a fridge or don't know, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.

17. Question: Which of these shows when food is no longer safe to eat? Responses: Use-by date, Best before date, Sell by date, Display until date, All of these, It depends, None of these, Don't know. Base = 1,243, all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating at Home' postal questionnaire, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.

18. Question: How often, if at all, do you check use-by dates when you are about to cook or prepare food? Responses: Always, Most of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Never, It varies too much, Don't know. Base = 1,146, online respondents and those who completed the Eating at Home postal questionnaire who ever do some food preparation or cooking for their household, in Northern Ireland. Wave 8.

19. Question: When, if at all, is the latest you would eat or drink the following items after their use-by date? A = Raw meat such as beef, lamb or pork or raw poultry; B = Cooked meats; C = Smoked fish; D = Shellfish; E = Any other fish; F = Bagged salads; G = Cheese; H = Milk; I = Yoghurt. Responses: 1-2 days after the use-by date; 3-4 days after the use-by date; 5-6 days after the use-by date; 1-2 weeks after the use-by date; More than 2 weeks after the use-by date; I don't eat/drink this after its use-by date; Don't know / I don't ever check the use-by date of this. Base A = 1,132, B = 1,155, C = 865, D = 724, E = 949, F = 1,116, G = 1,168, H = 1,181, I = 1,143. Northern Ireland, Wave 8. Please note: base description varies by food type and further information is available in the data tables.