

## EATING PRACTICES IN BRAZILIAN HOUSEHOLDS

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**Abstract:** The act of cooking can be the most decisive decision to benefit a family's health and well-being. Currently, it is difficult to have just one person in charge of taking care of a household's food, from shopping to preparing meals. The objective of this work is to verify how food is in households in the context of eating practices and the act of cooking. For the study, exploratory field research was carried out. A questionnaire was created using the *online* research platform *Google Forms* <sup>®</sup> consisting of sixteen questions. The questionnaire was disseminated via social networks: *WhatsApp* <sup>®</sup>, *Facebook* <sup>®</sup> and *Instagram* <sup>®</sup> and the results were analyzed in graphs and tables. The survey was answered by 426 people. Of this total, 91.8% are women, 39% are between 20 and 29 years old, 35.7% have postgraduate degrees, 30.5% live with three other people and 75.6% live in the state of São Paulo. Of those interviewed, 60.1% shop for food, 71.1% cook and 68.2% determine the home menu. Regarding culinary preparations, 71.8% use family recipes and 59.6% consult the internet. For 85.2% of participants, dinner is the meal where the family is together and 66.2% watch culinary programs and *reality shows* on television. In conclusion, the act of cooking, more than guaranteeing a meal, gives autonomy to make better food choices, brings people together, brings back family memories, provides satisfaction for those who are doing it and can even alleviate stress.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy; To cook; Television.

## INTRODUCTION

The act of cooking can be the most decisive decision to benefit the health and well-being of a family, in addition to establishing bonds and strengthening relationships between parents, children and other members. <sup>1</sup> The act of eating is not just physiology, but also involves affective and sociocultural aspects where individuals relate to each other. <sup>two</sup>

Currently, it is difficult to have just one person in charge of taking care of the entire family's nutrition, from shopping to preparing meals. The reality of modern society involves a woman who often works outside the home all day and has to rely on the collaboration of other family members for household chores. <sup>3,4</sup> The woman, who has always been the main buyer of food, today shares the role with her husband and other members such as children, for example, as children and teenagers spend more and more on food. <sup>5</sup>

According to data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), women in 2016 spent an average of 20.9 hours/week on household chores. Among employed women, that is, those who work, the time spent was 18.1 hours/week. According to the Gender Statistics survey, women represent more than half of the Brazilian workforce (51.7%) but are still a minority in the highest positions, even with higher levels of education than Brazilian men. <sup>6</sup>

Research shows that within a global trend, people are cooking less and less and in a shorter time, which seems counterintuitive, given the increasing number of people cooking on television. Gastronomy and cooking are on the rise, professional chefs are often celebrities. The fact is that more time is spent watching cooking shows than actually cooking. <sup>1</sup>

In Brazil, according to a survey carried out

in 2017 by Kantar IBOPE Media, interest in gastronomy in the last five years has grown by 15% among men aged 18 to 34, 2% among women in the same age group and 46% of respondents, agree with the phrase “cooking fascinates me”. Cooking programs that have existed since the 1950s, the beginning of television in Brazil, have grown considerably. Between January and July 2017, 47 different *reality programs* culinary *shows* were broadcast on open and pay TV in Brazil. <sup>7</sup>

Around 39 million individuals, 56% of the population that has a TV at home consumed at least 1 minute of this content. With so many audiences and people interested in cooking, the purchase of advertising space by advertisers in culinary programs and *reality shows* of the genre generated the equivalent of R\$839 million in the 1st half of 2017, an increase of 17% compared to the same period of the year previous, considering open, paid television and *merchandising*. <sup>7</sup>

One of the main obstacles in modern life is the time available to prepare and eat meals. Lack of time can contribute to inappropriate eating practices such as eating in the car and, often, people opt for ready-made and quick foods such as ultra-processed foods and fast *food*. <sup>2</sup> These foods are generally designed to be eaten anywhere, and some do not require cutlery, plates or tables, causing people to eat without paying attention and end up consuming more calories than they really need. <sup>3</sup>

The industry, with all the technology, has increased practicality, reduced preparation time and improved quality products, but, at the same time, it has been developing a greater quantity of ultra-processed foods full of flavor, but with many additives, preservatives, sugar and fat, with nutritional value often questionable. <sup>4</sup> The media also corroborates consumption patterns as it popularizes “tasty” foods, especially among children and

adolescents. <sup>two</sup>

According to the Brazilian Food Industry Association (ABIA), the sector’s revenue in 2018 was R\$656 billion. Of the products exported, the food industry represents 50.3% of the Brazilian trade balance, which in numbers is R\$58.7 billion. <sup>8</sup>

The industry uses the media as its vehicle for promoting brands and products. The media, in turn, in addition to advertising that promotes an increase in the consumption of ready-to-eat foods, contributing to the increase in obesity and chronic diseases, also encourages a culture of thinness, supporting beliefs and myths about food, nutrients and nutrition as a whole. The internet has increased nutritional terrorism because, through “pseudoscience” foods have become good or bad, and everyone has an opinion in the era of “nutritionism”. <sup>2,4</sup>

Due to the reduction in time spent on household chores, including meal preparation, the large supply of ready-to-eat foods and beliefs and myths about food, it is justified to carry out research in homes evaluating eating practices, habits, behaviors and the act of cooking. of Brazilians.

## METHODS

For the present study, exploratory field research was carried out with quantitative and qualitative data treatment. The sample was defined randomly, but the research time was determined.

A questionnaire was prepared with open and closed questions consisting of sixteen questions that covered the socioeconomic profile of the interviewees: gender, age group, level of education, number of residents in the residence and location; who purchases food, defines the menu and prepares meals at home; which meals were eaten inside and outside the home; frequency of food *delivery* service and whether they watched culinary programs or reality shows.

online research platform *Google Forms*® and applied to anyone via one of the following social networks: *WhatsApp*®, *Facebook*® and *Instagram*®. The questionnaire was online and available to anyone who wanted to participate between August 23 and September 9, 2019, that is, a period of 18 days.

Before answering the questionnaire, the participant was instructed objectively and clearly with the most important information about the research protocol, including the possible risks and benefits. The first step was to sign an Informed Consent Form (TCLE). Upon accepting the ICF, the participant was able to proceed and answer the questionnaire.

The project was also submitted to Plataforma Brasil and the Ethics and Research Committee, CEP-CONEP, under number XXXXXXXXXX which analyzes the ethics of research projects involving human beings in Brazil.

A bibliographical research was carried out, based on the use of theoretical references such as books and a search for articles and scientific works in databases, including Google Scholar, the Latin American and Caribbean Center for Health Sciences Information (Bireme), PUBMED (Medline) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (Scielo). For this search, the use of work carried out in the last five years, starting in 2014, was established and the descriptors that will be used are: “gastronomy”; “nutrition”; “to cook”; “television”.

A database was created with the collected variables where they were organized into graphs and tables and statistical analyzes were carried out. Regarding sociodemographic data, frequency of meals eaten outside the home and use of delivery services, absolute and relative distribution in percentages were used to evaluate the responses. The location of households was analyzed in the form of a graphic map.

Regarding who cooks, determines the

menu, meals eaten at home and with all family members, tables were used but the percentage distribution was based on the number of respondents and not in relation to the number of responses.

## RESULTS

The survey was answered by 426 people. The sociodemographic profile of the participants is described in table 1.

Survey participants were asked which state they resided in. Of the total of 426 people, 75.6% (n=322) live in the state of São Paulo (SP) and 24.4% (n=104) live in other locations (graph 1).

When asked who did the food shopping at home, respondents were able to choose more than one answer: 60.1% (n=256) stated that they were responsible for the task; 29.6% (n=126) husband/wife; 28.4% (n=121) mother/father; 10.6% (n=45) all residents; 2.1% (n=9) are employees and for 0.7% (n=3) their children are responsible for shopping.

Regarding the act of cooking, 96% (n=409) of participants responded that someone cooks in their home and 4% (n=17) that no one in their home cooks.

The 409 participants who stated that someone cooks were questioned and were able to give more than one answer about who cooks and who determines the menu (table 2).

For the question about which recipes are used in culinary preparations, 71.8% (n=306) use family recipes; 59.6% (n=254) use the internet; 25.6% (n=109) recipe books; 14.8% (n=63) consult a nutritionist; 6.6% (n=28) the domestic worker; 4.5% (n=19) own revenues; 2.3% (n=10) do not use prescriptions; 1.2% (n=5) make recipes with what is available at home; 0.5% (n=2) uses revenue from television programs.

All participants were asked which meals most residents ate at home and which meals they ate together, represented in table 3.

Table 4 details the frequency of meals eaten outside the home and the use of food delivery services.

In relation to culinary programs and *reality shows* on television, 66.2% (n=282) of participants responded that they watch these programs and 33.8% (n=144) do not watch them.

## DISCUSSION

As the study was carried out on social networks, starting with the contact network of the researcher who lives in São Paulo, the vast majority of research participants, 75.6% (n=322) live in the state of SP, which could be a bias in the study.

Regarding food purchases, 60.1% (n=256) of respondents reported that they are responsible for purchases. When crossing this data with the gender of the survey respondents, where 91.8% (n=391) are women, it was observed that 72.4% (n=283) of women are responsible for purchasing food at home and 27.6% (n=108) reported that another person is in charge of the task.

Of the women who reported that they do not shop for food, 45.4% (n=49) stated that their mother or father carries out the activity and 54.6% (n=59) stated that their husband does the shopping. It is important to highlight that the women who stated that their parents do the grocery shopping, 83.7% (n=41) are between 20 and 29 years old, 12.2% (n=6) are up to 19 years old and the another 4.1% (n=2) are between 30 and 39 years old. Younger women who do not buy food may possibly still live with their parents and the mother may be responsible for the task.

The woman, who has always been the main food buyer for a family, now shares this task with other family members, especially her husbands. <sup>5</sup> With women increasingly entering the job market, men are increasingly participating in domestic work, including

purchasing food. <sup>4,9</sup>

According to research by Target Group Index, a study by Kantar Ibope Media, in the last 5 years, 38% of women consider their work more than a simple job, seeing the profession as a career and 66% of Brazilian respondents consider themselves independent, 19% more than in 2014. This change in society means that the family as a whole has to participate in domestic activities. <sup>10</sup>

The vast majority of respondents are responsible for cooking (71.1%) and determine the home menu (68.2%). Regarding the recipes used in culinary preparations, 71.8% (n=306) of those interviewed use family recipes and 59.6% (n=254) consult the internet before cooking.

According to the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population, culinary preparations are fundamental to identifying and affirming the cultural characteristics of a society. <sup>3</sup> Family recipes are culinary records and traditions generally expressed in a notebook and, more than just a preparation, they demonstrate a way of life and the memory of grandparents and other family members. Currently, the internet and social networks are also relevant in food preparation. With just one click, recipes, ingredients and preparation videos are available to anyone and, just as mothers and grandmothers did, they also encourage the act of cooking. <sup>11,12</sup>

In relation to meals that are eaten at home by most family members, 85.2% (n=363) stated that it is dinner and 76.5% (n=326) reported that it is breakfast. When asked which meals are eaten at home with all family members together, 57.7% (n=246) mentioned dinner and 49.8% (n=212) mentioned meals on weekends.

Changes in the meal profile are directly linked to changes in individuals' lifestyles. In large cities, there is now a greater distance between where you live and where you work.

The rigidity of meal times does not allow for long trips and the habit of eating outside the home, in places such as restaurants and cafeterias, has become a necessity.<sup>13,14</sup>

With women in the job market, with the challenges of big cities such as traffic and distances and with the large number of daily activities that not only adults perform, but children and teenagers as well, it is increasingly difficult to do things home meals. Therefore, meals at the beginning and end of the day end up being the most common meals to eat at home.<sup>13,14</sup>

Commensality is an expression of the moment of being at the table sharing the meal with other people. It is a ritual of conviviality, much more than the act of eating, it has a collective, social aspect and is a dimension of hospitality. The table also represents a place for sharing, party or celebration.<sup>15</sup> Meals eaten in company and with family help to establish bonds, deepen and develop social relationships, and acquire good habits such as eating regular, leisurely meals.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding meals outside the home and food *delivery services*, responses varied in terms of frequency. An interesting fact is that the interviewees who answered that no one cooks at home 4% (n=17), 76.5% (n=13) eat outside the home every day, 64.7% (n=11) order *delivery* 5 to 6 times a week and 58.8% (n=10) live alone and are men.

Food consumption habits have changed in recent years as a result of modern and mainly urban life. The practice of eating meals outside the home has increased considerably due to the adversities of modern life: traffic, commuting, lack of time, increased working hours, among others.<sup>16</sup> According to the Brazilian Food Industry Association (ABIA), the *food service market*, that is, food away from home, grew 246.2% in the last 10 years, an average of 13.2% per year. Brazilians' expenditure on this type of food, which in 2004 was 25.4% of

their total budget, rose to 31.2% in 2010 and in 2017 already represented 34.5% of financial expenses.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, 66.2% (n=282) of participants responded that they watch culinary programs and *reality shows* on television. According to Kantar Social TV Ratings, between January and August 2019, tweets related to monitored cooking competition shows were viewed approximately 371 million times by Twitter® users, particularly women. Posts made on Facebook® and Instagram®, on the programs' official pages, reached 397 million people, generating 8.8 million reactions and increasing the number of followers by 8%.<sup>18</sup>

Cooking shows are not new on television and have existed since the 1950s, however, in the past this type of entertainment was very segmented and focused on housewives. Currently, there are a variety of formats for different audiences and their audience is growing along with the population's interest in nutrition and food.<sup>19</sup> For Pollan<sup>1</sup>, it is curious that Americans spend an average of 27 minutes a day cooking and an episode of the reality show *MasterChef* takes almost twice that time.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The majority of interviewees are women, aged between 20 and 29, have a postgraduate degree and live in SP. It was observed in this population that they are cooking in some way, consult family recipes and the internet to define culinary preparations and watch culinary programs and reality shows.

Regarding meals, most people manage to make breakfast and dinner at home, but not always with everyone together, which is a reflection of today's society and the problems of big cities. This is corroborated by the increase in travel time, traffic, a large number of activities at work, women fully inserted in the job market, children and young people

with a large number of activities, among other variables.

Those interviewed who do not cook and who have no one to do so at home are actually those who eat most meals outside the home every day, order food *delivery, live alone and are men.*

In conclusion, the act of cooking, more than guaranteeing a meal, gives autonomy to make better food choices, brings people together, brings back family memories, provides satisfaction for those who are doing it and can even alleviate stress. With a little planning, cooperation and organization, it is possible to eat in a healthy and enjoyable way on a daily basis, strengthening emotional bonds and involving the whole family in the division of tasks.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	N	%
<b>Gender</b>	Feminine	391	91.8
	Masculine	35	8.2
<b>Age</b>	Up to 19 years old	13	3.1
	Between 20 and 29 years old	166	39.0
	Between 30 and 39 years old	115	27.0
	Between 40 and 49 years old	76	17.8
	Between 50 and 59 years old	44	10.3
	Over 60 years old	12	2.8
<b>Education</b>	Incomplete high school	3	0.7
	Complete high school	42	9.9
	Technician	1	0.2
	Incomplete higher	96	22.5
	Graduated	127	29.8
	Postgraduate	152	35.7
	Master’s degree	4	0.9
	Doctorate degree	1	0.2



	Lives alone	29	6.8
	2 people	100	23.5
	3 people	125	29.3
	4 people	130	30.5
<b>Home</b>	5 people	35	8.2
	6 peoples	5	1.2
	7 people	1	0.2
	8 people	1	0.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 1:** Absolute and relative distribution in percentage of the sociodemographic profile of study participants. São Paulo, 2019.



**Note:** São Paulo with 75.6% (n=322); Federal District with 3.8% (n=16); Rio de Janeiro with 3.1% (n=13); Minas Gerais with 2.8% (n=12); Rio Grande do Norte with 2.3% (n=10); Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina with 1.6% (n=7) each; Paraná with 1.4% (n=6); Bahia with 1.2% (n=5); Goiás and Paraíba with 0.9% (n=4) each; Pará, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo, Mato Grosso do Sul and Ceará with 0.7% (n=3) each; Sergipe with 0.5% (n=2); Amazonas, Tocantins and Maranhão with 0.2% (n=1) each.

**Graph 1:** Relative distribution in percentages based on the state where the interviewees reside. São Paulo, 2019.

ANSWERS	WHO COOKS		WHO DETERMINES THE MENU	
	%	N	%	N
The interviewee himself	71.1	291	68.2	279
Mother father	32.5	133	29.8	122
Husband wife	19.6	80	18.1	74
Employee	14.2	58	4.2	17
All residents	9.0	37	9.5	39
Brothers)	2.0	8	0.2	1
Grandparents	0.5	two	0.2	1
Uncle(s)	0.2	1	0.0	0
Nutritionist	AT	AT	2.9	12

\* Not applicable

**Note:** Question of multiple choice, participants were able to choose more than one answer. The percentages described in the table are in relation to the number of respondents (n=409).

**Table 2:** Absolute and relative distribution in percentages of who cooks and who determines the menu in the respondents' homes. São Paulo, 2019.

Answers	Meals at home		Meals all together	
	N	%	N	%
To have lunch	363	85.2	246	57.7
Breakfast	326	76.5	212	26.1
Meals on weekends	237	55.6	115	49.8
Lunch	231	54.2	111	20.9
Special celebrations	127	29.8	89	27.0
Snack	127	29.8	48	7.0
No meal	3	0.7	30	11.3
Supper	1	0.2	11	0.2
Lives alone	AT	AT	1	2.6

\* Not applicable

**Note:** Question of multiple choice, participants were able to choose more than one answer. The percentages described in the table are in relation to the number of respondents (n=426).

**Table 3:** Relative distribution in percentage of which meals are eaten at home by most family members and how many of these meals are eaten with all members together. São Paulo, 2019.

ANSWERS	MEALS			
	DELIVERY		OUT OF HOME	
	N	%	N	%
Rarely	117	27.5	87	20.4
1 time per month	46	10.8	24	5.6
Every 15 days	84	19.7	59	13.8
1 to 2 times a week	132	31.0	119	27.9
3 to 4 times a week	27	6.3	36	8.5
5 to 6 times a week	20	4.7	33	7.8
Every day	0	0.0	68	16.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4:** Absolute and relative distribution in percentages of *delivery* and meals eaten outside the home. São Paulo, 2019.