

MLA Healthy Meals

Nutrition Communication Insights



HEALTHY MEALS

A relevant and engaging topic for most Australians



POPULAR MEALS

An easy way to enjoy variety and balance



TYPICAL PRACTICES

A user-friendly way to explain portion size

Introduction

Why?

This report shares insights from research funded by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). These insights inform our nutrition communications, designed to make it easier for Australians to enjoy red meat in a healthy diet in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

What?

The data and insights for nutrition communications were derived by MLA's Senior Food and Nutrition Manager, Veronique Droulez, using findings from MLA's investments in research and in consultation with the researchers and key stakeholders. As a dietitian with a background in public health and marketing, the findings challenged my assumptions about what Australians need to follow a healthy diet.

The research includes:

- Popular meals and typical practices in the Australian diet.
- Popular sources of food and nutrition information in Australia.
- Qualitative testing of MLA's nutrition education resources.

The report explains the implications of the data and insights for communications about healthy eating and, in the conclusion, outlines ways to provide guidance on red meat consumption in a healthy diet.

Who?

The report provides background information for health professionals who use MLA's nutrition resources to provide their clients with practical guidance on healthy eating.

The nutrition communication insights provide industry stakeholders with a better understanding of how to promote consumption of red meat in healthy, balanced meals. Within this context, red meat includes beef, lamb, veal and goat meat.

For information about MLA funded research,
visit [MLAhealthymeals.com.au/research](https://mlahealthymeals.com.au/research)

Key insights



HEALTHY MEALS

A relevant and engaging topic for most Australians

- Home-prepared meals feature five to six days a week in the Australian repertoire.
- Meals are everyday activities for most Australians: and when most look for information about food and nutrition.
- Value-for-money is the main context for making food choices.



POPULAR MEALS

An easy way to enjoy variety and balance

- Australians enjoy having a variety of meals, particularly for dinner.
- Meal variety comes from using different amounts and combinations of popular ingredients.
- Portion size varies by type of meal – there is no one-size-fits-all.



TYPICAL PRACTICES

A user-friendly way to explain portion size

- Meal planning starts with protein variety.
- Meals are planned for leftovers with typically one serving per occasion.
- Meals are often made from memory using readily available ingredients.



HEALTHY MEALS

Home prepared meals feature five to six days a week in the Australian repertoire

Prevalence and frequency of home-prepared meals in the Australian repertoire



SINKS/DINKS (single/double income, no kids),
HHI (household income)

Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=1399)

Q: In a typical week, out of 7 days, how many times do you eat a home-prepared dinner/lunch?

SO WHAT?

“What’s for dinner?” is when most Australians think about healthy eating.



HEALTHY MEALS

Meals are everyday activities for most Australians

Frequency of food and nutrition-related activities

(At least once a week)



Source: Kantar 2019, Quantitative online interview (n=2001)

Q: How frequently do you undertake the following activities?

SO WHAT?

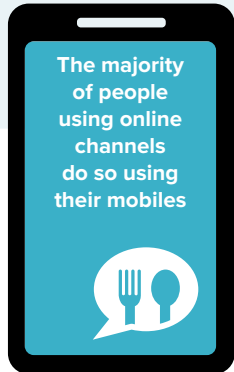
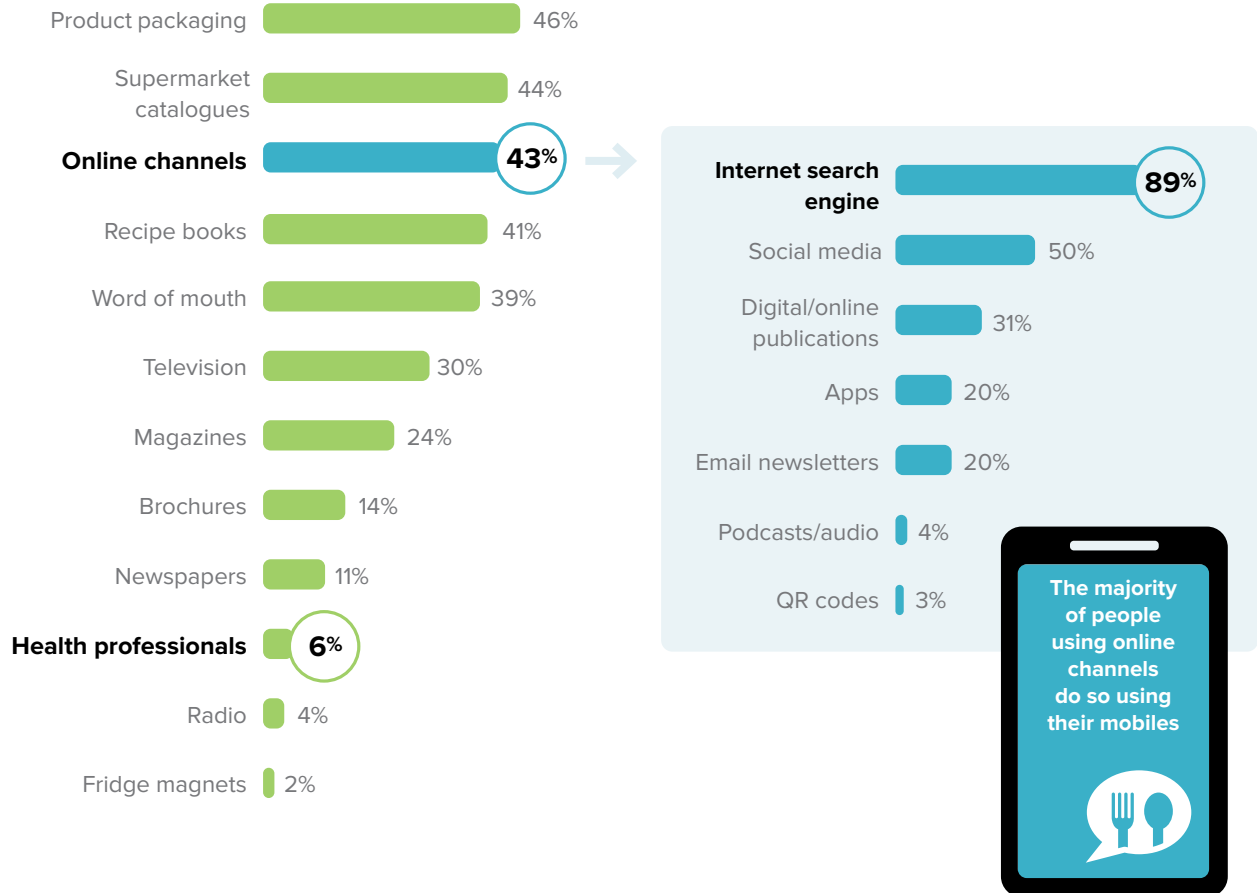
Many Australians are looking for easy ways to make their everyday meals healthier. They need accessible meal ideas and practical tips that are available in everyday places.



HEALTHY MEALS

Meals are when most Australians find information about food and nutrition

Popular sources of food and nutrition information



Source: Kantar 2019, Quantitative online interview (n=2001 Total, n=864 Online)

Q: Which of the following channels have you used in the last 6 months to access information on food?

SO WHAT?

Different sources of information are used for different activities. Most Australians find general information about food and nutrition at the point of purchase but are more likely to consult health professionals for specific information to manage a health condition or meet personal goals.



HEALTHY MEALS

Value-for-money is the context for food choices

Popular food and nutrition topics of interest



Source: Kantar 2019, Quantitative Online interview (n=2001)

Q: How important are the following pieces of information about food when you undertake popular food and nutrition-related activities?

SO WHAT?

General information and singular messages make it easier for Australians to decide how the information is relevant in their everyday life.

Relative interest in product vs nutrition information



Source: Colmar Brunton 2018, Quantitative online survey (n=1000)

Q: How important is it to know each of the following when purchasing these types of foods from the supermarket?

SO WHAT?

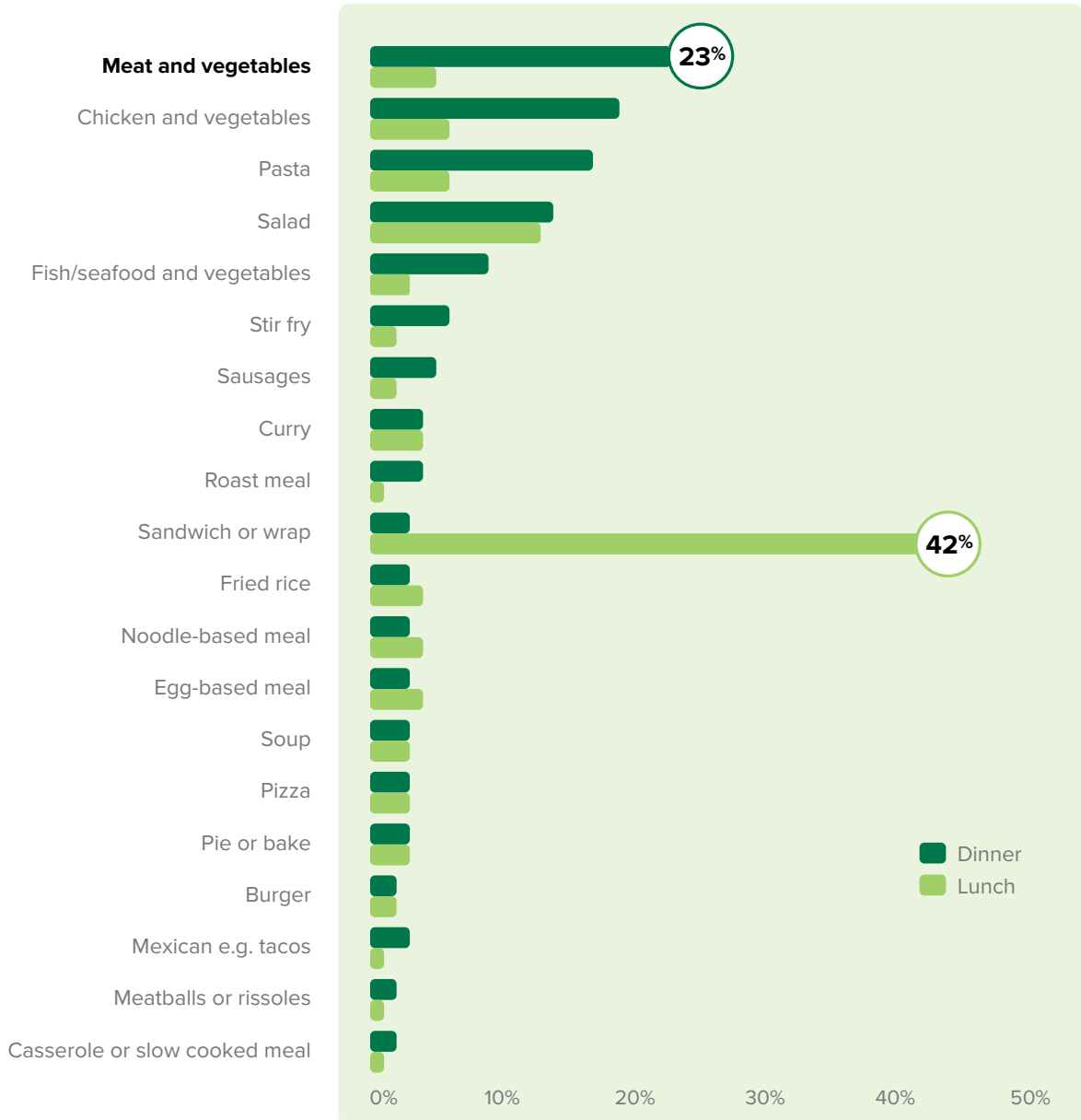
Providing nutrition information about a product within the context of variety, balance and enjoyment makes it easier for Australians to make value-for-money decisions, an important driver of choice.



POPULAR MEALS

Australians enjoy having a variety of meals, particularly for dinner

Popular types of home-prepared meals



Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=1399)

Q: What was the meal you had for dinner? Q: What was the meal you had for lunch?

SO WHAT?

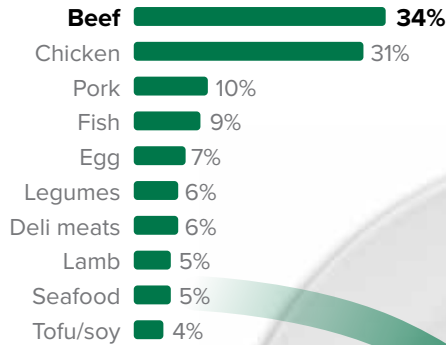
Australians find it easier to follow Australian Dietary Guidelines if they can continue to enjoy everyday meals in their repertoire by making simple swaps and subtle changes.



POPULAR MEALS

Meal variety comes from using different amounts and combinations of popular ingredients

Popular protein foods

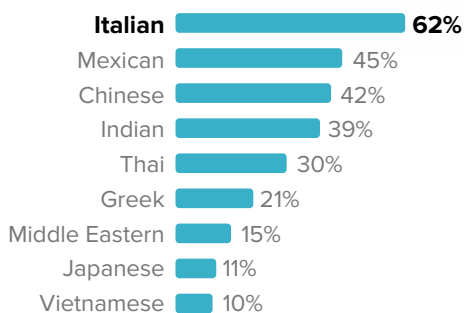


Vegetables

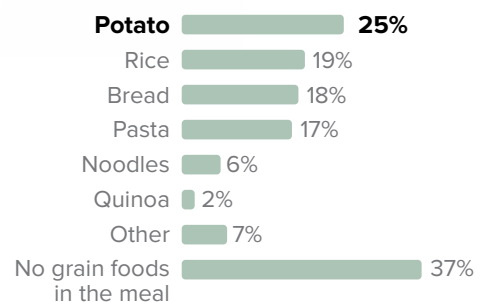
- Nine out of 10 Australians use vegetables to make the evening meal.
- On average, meals contain three types of vegetables.
- Australians are keen to have a wider variety of vegetables in their meals.

MAIN MEAL

Popular cuisines



Popular carbohydrate foods



Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=1399)

Q: What was the protein/main vegetables/carbohydrates you had in your meal?

Q: Which type of cuisines or flavour profiles do you tend to cook at home for dinner?

SO WHAT?

Australians, irrespective of age, gender, socio-economic or cultural backgrounds, use similar ingredients to make similar types of meals. The amounts and combinations chosen differs between individuals and by occasion. Flexible meal ideas and practical tips allow people to adapt popular meals according to their personal values, beliefs and preferences.



POPULAR MEALS

Portion size varies by type of meal – there is no one-size-fits-all

Portion sizes of popular meals

Lunch

Sandwich



56g	71g	56g
Vegies	Grains	Canned fish

Chicken and vegetables



75g	96g	134g
Vegies	Starchy veg	Chicken

Burger



84g	110g	74g	75g
Vegies	Grains	Starchy veg	Beef

Dinner

Meat and vegetables



122g	165g	137g
Vegies	Starchy veg	Lamb

Curry



47g	148g	134g
Vegies	Grains	Chicken

Pasta



112g	312g	70g
Vegies	Grains	Beef

Source: Sui Z et al, 2017

DOI: 10.1017/S1368980017000982

SO WHAT?

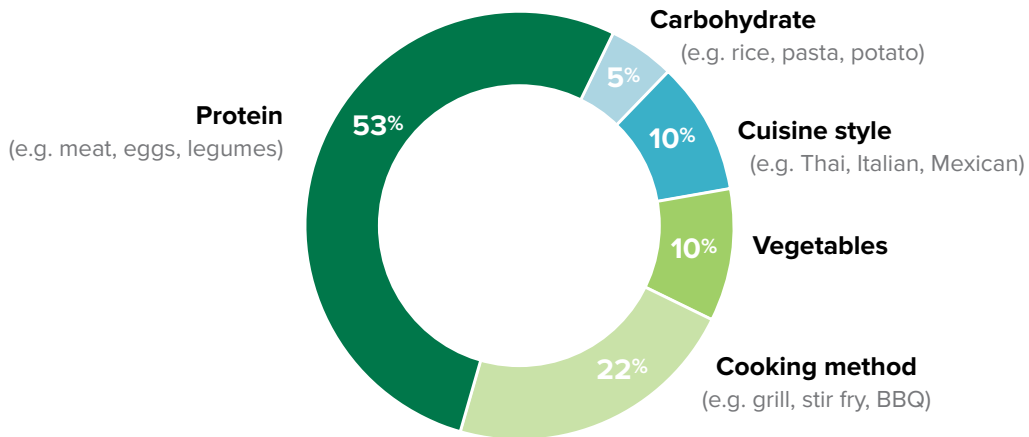
The portion size of each core food in a meal is relative to the type of meal. Showing typical amounts used in popular meals to provide guidance on portion sizes will make it easier for Australians to understand how to enjoy core foods in amounts recommended in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.



TYPICAL PRACTICES

Meal planning starts with protein variety

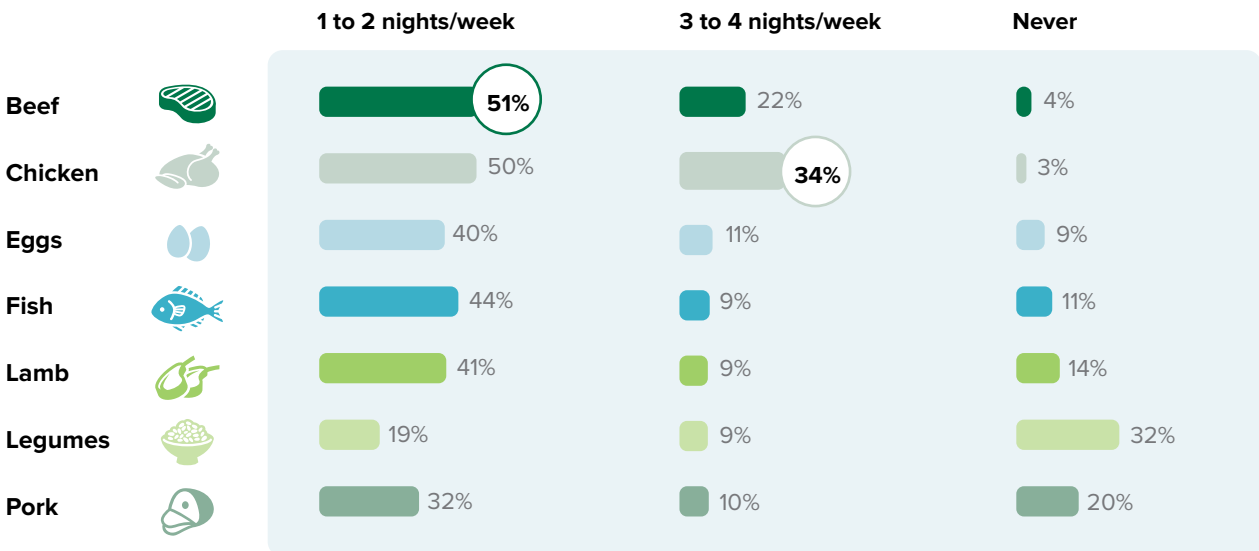
Foundation for meal planning



Source: The Clever Stuff 2010, Quantitative online survey (n=928)

Q: When choosing what to make for the main meal, which foundation do you typically start with?

Popular protein choices in the Australian repertoire



Source: The Clever Stuff 2012, Quantitative online survey (n=1023)

Q: How often would you base your evening meal around the following ingredients?

SO WHAT?

Communications around variety have strong appeal for Australians, irrespective of demographic and lifestyle profile. They want variety to make choices for enjoyment and to get essential nutrients for good health. Consequently, MLA's *So What's for Dinner?* resource provides guidance on protein and vegetable variety in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and within the context of meal planning.



TYPICAL PRACTICES

Meals are planned for leftovers with typically one serving per occasion

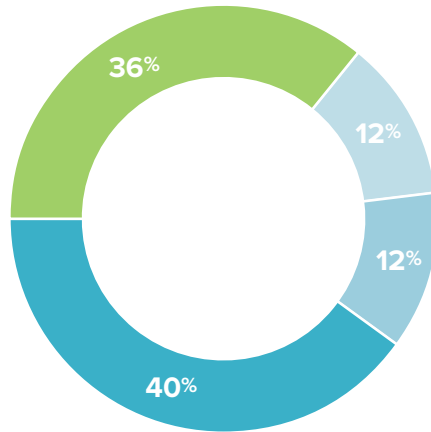
Cooking habits

36%

Prepared just enough food for a single meal

64%

Cooked for more than one occasion



- Prepared enough food for a single meal
- Prepared enough food for the meal and a lunch meal
- Prepared enough food for the meal and a dinner meal
- Prepared enough food for the meal and froze the rest for later

Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=913)

Q: Which of the following best describes your typical cooking habits?

Amount eaten per meal occasion



81%

Ate just one serving

Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=1399)

Q: How much did you eat?

SO WHAT?

MLA's *So What's for Dinner?* resource expresses portion size by number of meals because this is how Australians tend to think about portion size when purchasing protein foods. Guidance on smaller and larger portion sizes are provided for protein foods reflecting typical portion sizes in popular types of meals.

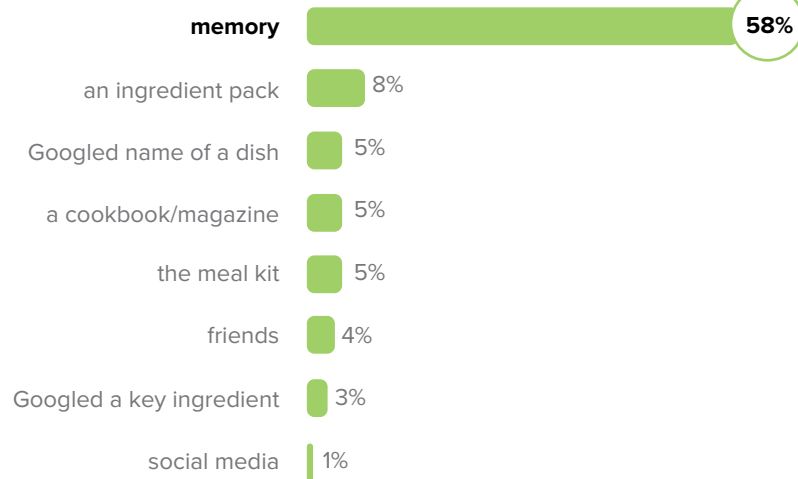


TYPICAL PRACTICES

Meals are often made from memory using readily available ingredients

How last night's dinner was prepared

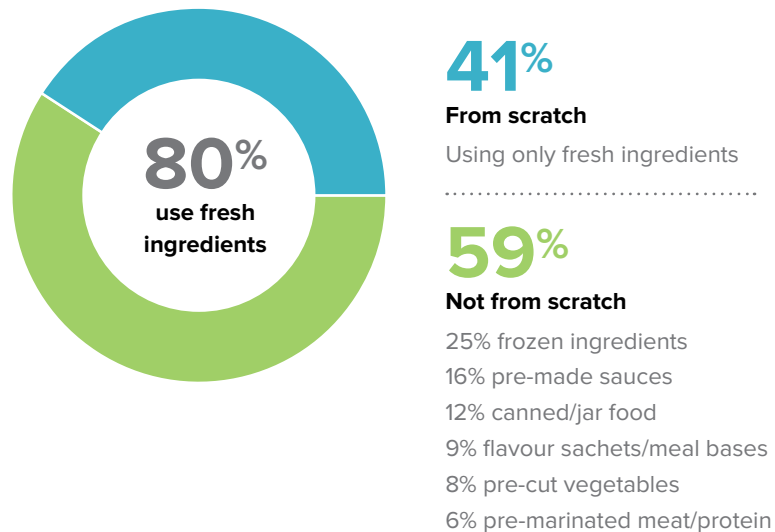
Followed a recipe from...



Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=913)

Q: How did you make the meal?

How last night's dinner was cooked



Source: Ipsos 2019, Quantitative online survey (n=913)

Q: Which of the following ingredients did you use to make the meal?

SO WHAT?

Qualitative descriptors that are easily identifiable and do not rely on scales or household measures make it easier to provide guidance on portion size. MLA's *So What's for Dinner?* resource describes vegetables as halves, quarters, handfuls, slices etc and these amounts are approximately equivalent to the recommended 75g serve, with the exception of lighter, leafy vegetables.

Conclusion

The findings highlight the type of information Australians need to feel confident enjoying recommended amounts of red meat in a healthy diet in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

They suggest popular meals are the best way to provide guidance on portion size and the need for product information in key settings.

Communications by Health Professionals

When seeking advice for a specific dietary need, Australians need information about red meat within the context of protein variety and healthy, balanced meals.





Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend 65g per day of lean and cooked red meat because red meat is a popular protein source of iron and zinc recommended for good health. Intakes are limited to 455g per week, cooked weight, to allow for variety of different protein choices and to prevent chronic diseases associated with overconsumption.

Within the context of the typical Australian repertoire, a variety of three to four red meat meals a week, alternating between meals with smaller and larger portion sizes (approximately 100g and 160g, cooked weight, respectively) is consistent with Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Accordingly, MLA's [nutrition resources](#) provide popular meal ideas and practical tips based around the Australian meal repertoire.

RED MEAT IN A HEALTHY DIET

An easy way to enjoy recommended* amounts is to have 3 to 4 red meat meals a week, alternating between smaller and larger portion sizes.

			
↓	↓	↓	↓
500g strips makes 4 meals	1 medium steak makes 2 meals	500g mince makes 4 meals	1kg diced meat makes 5 meals

(Amounts refer to raw weight)

***Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend 455g per week lean and cooked red meat, equivalent to approx. 650g per week, raw weight.**

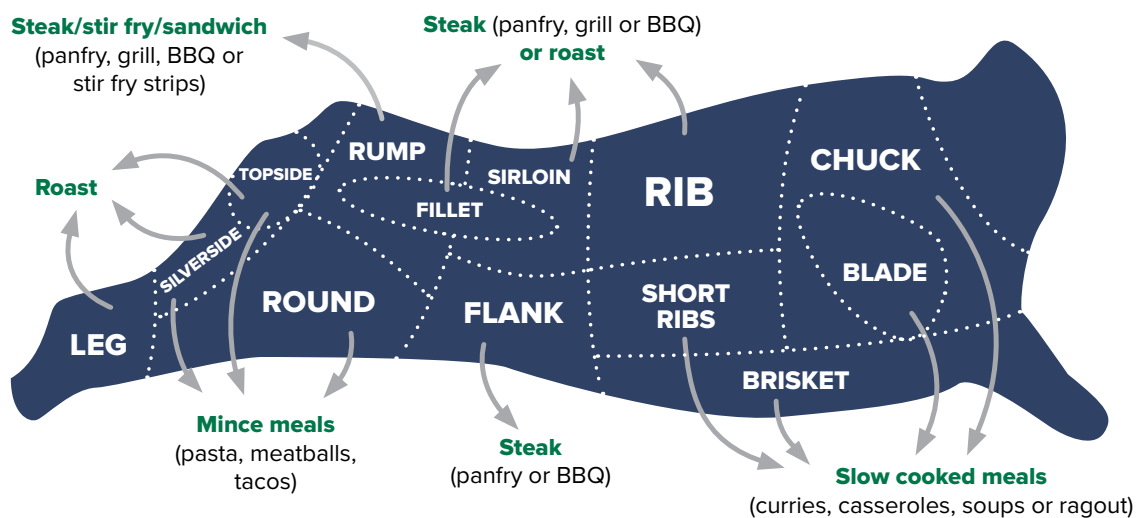
Communications by MLA Trade Marketing

When thinking about what's for dinner five to six days a week, MLA's [resources](#) provide Australians with inspiration and confidence to enjoy red meat in a variety of healthy, balanced meals.

Australians are most interested in receiving practical product information to make value-for-money decisions, including:

- Guidance on portion size: "How many meals can I get from this amount of meat?"
- Visual cues and guidance on lean cuts.
- Meal variety: Ideas, practical tips, swaps.
- 'How to' cooking and storage tips.

Through our information and resources, MLA works with key stakeholders to make it easy for Australians to enjoy red meat in healthy meals.



To review and order MLA's nutrition resources, visit [MLAhealthymeals.com.au/resources](https://mlahealthymeals.com.au/resources)



Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
ABN 39 081 678 364

Level 1, 40 Mount Street
North Sydney NSW 2060

Phone: 02 9463 9333
Fax: 02 9463 9393
Website: www.mla.com.au