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Prospectives: Home Cooking
A taste of tech

PROLOGUE

Deloitte's Prospectives help business leaders re-imagine everyday experiences through the lens of the future, empowering bold thinking to stay ahead of the pace of change, boost resiliency, and reduce risk.

To this end, we've taken a multidimensional approach to mapping the past, present, and potential futures of home cooking, exploring beliefs and behaviors, economic trends, emerging technologies, and everything in between.

Over the course of our research, a few themes rose to the top, including changes in consumer behavior (for example, a preference for locally grown ingredients and sustainable foods), improvements in kitchen technology geared towards creating a seamless user experience, and ultimately, a resurgence of cooking as a source of meaning in people's lives. We hope you enjoy our work.



PAST

Timeline of milestones

Questions to consider:

- What one food can you not live without?
- What is its history—how did it arrive in your hands?
- Why are certain foods popular?
- Where did modern methods of preparing food originate?

TIMELINE

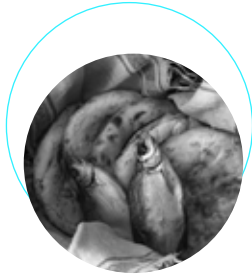
PREHISTORY

PALEOLITHIC | PRIMAL KITCHEN

Fire-cooking emerges as a process to reduce the mechanical challenges of eating and to preserve food.

NEOLITHIC | DIVISION OF LABOR

In traditional Neolithic societies, women take on the task of daily food preparation. Pottery is also introduced and used in cooking during this time.



1400 - 1600 | THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN

The Columbian Exchange moves corn, potatoes, tomatoes, cacao and vanilla from the Americas to the rest of the world. Eurasia and Africa supply citrus fruit, wheat, rice, sugar and coffee.



4 BCE | THE FIRST COOKBOOK

Archestratus writes the first cookbook, Hedypathia, or Pleasant Living.

901 TO 1000 CE | REGION, CLASS, UTENSILS

Forks are commonplace for wealthy families in the Middle East and Byzantine Empire regions. Knives and spoons emerge as the common utensils in other European areas.

1300s | MEAT FOR ME, NOT FOR THEE

In medieval England, grains provide 65-70% of calories. The rich eat wheat and meat, while peasants eat cabbage, beets, onions, carrots, and other vegetables.

1735 | THAT STOVE IS LIT

French designer Francois de Cuvilliés designs the stew stove, the earliest recorded wood-burning kitchen stove.

1770s | STAR-SPANGLED TOFU

Ben Franklin pens a letter from London to a friend in America describing tofu—this missive is the earliest known documentation of the Chinese food product in America.

1795 | LET THEM INNOVATE FOOD

French leaders offer a 12,000-franc prize through the Society for the Encouragement of Industry for a breakthrough in the preservation of food.

TIMELINE

1906 | FULL METAL LUNCHBOX

Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, exposed the unsanitary health practices of the U.S. meat industry and contributes to the passage of the U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act that helped establish the FDA.

1914-1918 | HOW THE SAUSAGE IS MADE

American soldiers get a taste for international foods while fighting WWI and bring new ingredients and techniques home. The Great War also drives innovation in food preparation that ports over to peacetime.



1967 | TIME TO NUKE DINNER

The first domestic countertop microwave is released.

1970s | BUY LOCAL, EAT LOCAL

Farmers markets regain popularity as households return to simple, fresh, local ingredients.

1971 | FARM TO TABLE

Alice Waters opens the iconic Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California.



1834 | COOKING WITH GAS

The first commercially produced gas stove, designed by Englishman James Sharp, hits the market and quickly gains popularity.

1890s | IS YOUR ICE BOX RUNNING?

The introduction of the icebox allows American households to store perishable food preserved for leftovers.

1916 | BIRTH OF THE SUPERMARKET

Piggly Wiggly is a hit in Memphis, Tennessee! The first-of-its-kind grocery store arranges their products by category and offers markdowns reflecting low overhead costs.

1931 | A COMPILATION OF RELIABLE RECIPES

The First Edition of *The Joy of Cooking*, America's most popular cookbook, is published.

1950s | PICKET FENCE KITCHEN

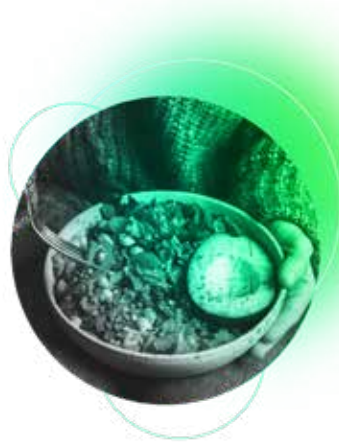
In the era of space-age romanticism, a different kind of processing—using refined sugars, additives, dyes, and preservatives—emerges. New, modern kitchens in post-war suburban America become increasingly organized and clean, and a source of pride.



2007 | KNOCK KNOCK, YOUR DINNER IS HERE

The first meal kit company, Middagsfrid, is introduced in Sweden and quickly spreads to other regions.

PRESENT-DAY TRENDS



FLEXITARIANISM

Diets are ever-changing. Today, the nexus of sustainability and health consciousness is driving the popularity of vegan, keto, and plant-based diets.



VIRAL RECIPES

You've tried that salmon recipe that blew up social media, right? What about cowboy caviar? More and more often, recipes are going viral on social media.



CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS FOOD

Climate change is impacting ingredient availability and driving sustainable innovations in the food space. Food suppliers and home cooks alike are looking for zero-waste and carbon-neutral options.



TOOLS & TECH IN THE KITCHEN

The evolution of kitchen appliances is far from over. From the stovetop to the air fryer, food tech innovation is an enduring trend.



RECLAIMING FOOD PROCESSING IN THE HOME

Many people are reverting to at-home food processing due to a distrust in large-scale processors, with health-conscious households pumping out homemade kombucha, yogurt, and fermented veggies.

FUTURE

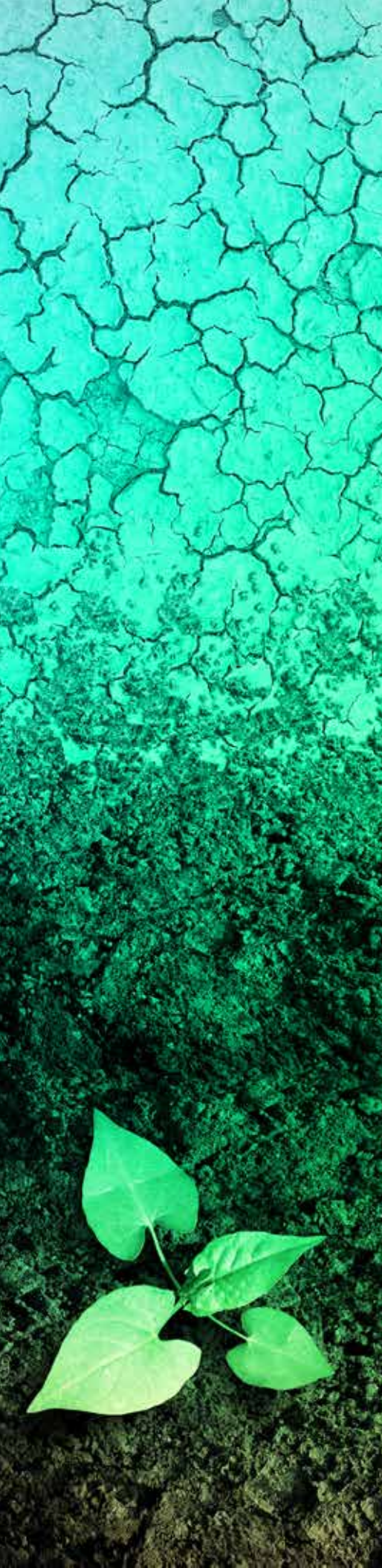
Where do we go next?

What are the future possibilities?

Rather than anchor on a single prediction, we explored different ways the future might unfold.

We identified five potential futures for home cooking:

- Modern hunting & gathering
- Dietary habits lost & found
- Sustainable cooking practices
- The kitchen reimaged
- Meals as a medium for experience



FUTURES

Modern hunting & gatherering

Parallel crises in global supply chains and climate change accelerated in 2022. Consequent inflation and shortages of everyday food have created an environment that sparks urgency in consumers to adopt new behaviors, such as how to purchase and source meals for their families.

Modern hunting & gathering



A RETURN TO FORAGING

As the pandemic continues to threaten the global supply chain, inflate food prices, and drive fears of food scarcity, home cooks' interest in wild and urban foraging increases. Gathering local ingredients directly as opposed to patronizing a market offers home cooks agency over their meals, education in local offerings, a sense of adventure, improved connection with food sources, and ultimately, free food.

DISAPPEARANCE OF COMMON INGREDIENTS

Increasing globalization and climate change accelerate the rate of already existing fungal blights, water shortages, armed conflict, and more, thereby driving certain common products like the Cavendish banana, avocados, and almonds to the brink of extinction as a result of blight or drought.

COMMUNAL COOKING (AND LIVING)

Untethered from desk jobs and seeking connection and meaning, more people make the switch to communal living, in many cases growing their own crops, keeping their own livestock like chickens and goats, and, in most cases, cooking and sharing meals together.

Modern hunting & gathering



SELF-ORGANIZED SOURCING NETWORKS

With rising costs and supply chain uncertainty, consumers find it more challenging, exhausting, and expensive to source food ingredients to feed themselves and their families—something that elderly people and those living in food deserts have faced for years. Experiencing a common problem, neighborhoods coordinate novel food sourcing services, for instance, placing bulk orders at a wholesale grocer and distributing food to people across a geography, or renting space in a central area to create a communal pantry of local ingredients.

'IN-HOME' FARM TO TABLE

As people begin living more communally, in many cases they grow their own crops, keep their own livestock (such as chickens and goats), and cook and share meals together.



FUTURES

Dietary habits lost & found

The pandemic pushed consumers to rethink the role of diet—going beyond weight loss goals—to create an optimal body and mind for whatever comes next.

As mental models around what constitutes optimal health change, certain dietary elements become more popular (such as comprehensive micronutrient consumption and ethically-produced protein) while others fall out of favor.

Dietary habits lost & found



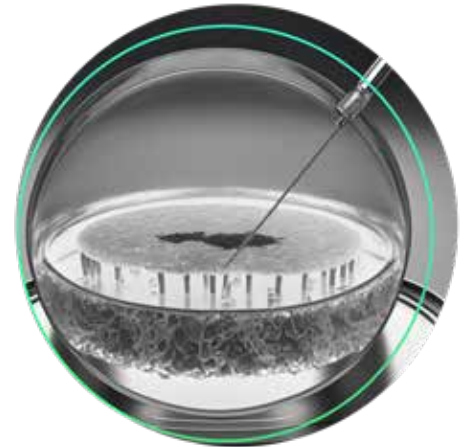
NUTRITION TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH

Growing openness around discussing topics such as depression, anxiety, and memory loss, as well as newfound appreciation for the role of the body (e.g., gut bacteria) in nurturing a healthy mind leads home chefs to explore new functional foods and nutrients that support mental health. Such approaches include cooking with adaptogens (e.g., ginseng and ashwagandha) and incorporating specific strains of probiotics, such as those found in fermented foods, for bodily balance.



PICK YOUR OWN INFUSION

In the same way that grocers responded to a desire for freshness by offering experiences like grinding peanut butter in the store, increasingly, they meet the desire for ingredient personalization by selling products that you can infuse with a desired dose of specific chemicals (e.g., caffeine, CBD, etc.) on the spot.



PROTEIN MARKET FRAGMENTATION

As the price to produce cell-cultured proteins falls and negative sentiment towards factory farming becomes more pronounced, lab-grown meat appears in select grocery stores and becomes increasingly mainstream. Meat raised using traditional methods fills progressively niche market roles, eventually commanding a price premium.

Dietary habits lost & found



OMNIVOROUS EATING FOR IMMUNE SUPPORT

Increased awareness of immune response and preparedness as a result of the pandemic drives consumers away from 'restrictive diets' (for example, those that exclude major food groups and/or macronutrients, which can jeopardize immune health for the sake of weight reduction). They instead turn toward omnivorous diets that contain a wide array of foods that support immune health.



SNACKIFICATION

The increasing walkability of cities following pandemic-driven urban design changes (for example, the restriction of certain roads and boulevards to pedestrian use) compels consumers to walk or bike to grocery stores, buy only what they can carry, and make smaller, more frequent meals, exacerbating an underlying trend towards grazing—that is, consuming small, frequent meals.



MICRONUTRIENTS RISE AND FALL

Micronutrients get their turn in the societal spotlight, driven in part by new technologies that enable and, in some cases, gamify the tracking of micronutrient consumption. They will eventually be displaced by the next dietary fad, as we've seen with the cyclical rise and fall in popularity of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.



FUTURES

Sustainable cooking practices

Home cooking is an intimate activity that can help us express our values. Increasingly, as climate change touches our lives, sustainability in cooking will become more important and have an impact on the foods we cultivate, how we transport and store them, and ultimately, how we cook them.

Sustainable cooking practices



LOW-CARBON COOKING

Home chefs embrace plant-based cooking practices, which are less carbon-intensive than meat- and dairy-based ones. Induction cooktops proliferate in the kitchen as electrification displaces gas-powered products. Offsets and insets drive the adoption of lower-carbon ingredients into recipes; for instance, substituting crickets for animal protein or incorporating seaweed into recipes due to its fast-growing carbon-capturing prowess.



EXPANSION OF REDUCETARIANISM

Reducetarianism—which traditionally focuses on eating fewer animal products to benefit health, the environment, and animals—expands to include zero-waste cooking, a reduction of food delivery services (with an emphasis on local growing), and the elimination of single-use non-biodegradable food packaging.



COOKING WITH CLIMATE-RESILIENT CROPS

Climate change drives the adoption of crops that can withstand not only gradual changes to the climate but also the extreme swings in weather that accompany a more carbon-laden atmosphere. Mushrooms, pomegranates, sweet potatoes, and okra are some of the ingredients that increase in popularity, while new crops like sea beans—a salty vegetable that tastes like cucumbers—enter the market.

Sustainable cooking practices



SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION

To feed a couple of billion extra mouths without expanding arable land use, humans get creative, popularizing innovative practices such as mariculture—cultivating marine organisms in enclosed portions of the open ocean; micro-dosing fertilizer when a new seed is planted, which can increase yields by 30-100 percent; and low-impact farming, which emphasizes ecosystem-based natural approaches rather than those based on chemicals, pesticides, monoculture crops, and other standard farming techniques.



HUNTER AS PRESERVATIONIST

Wildlife surveillance technologies that identify and assign specific animals and fish to hunters and fishers help create more sustainable hunting practices, and hunters increasingly become preservationists. Borrowing from practices used by some fisheries, they pay subscription fees to access designated natural areas for hunting, even investing in tagged and tracked wild animals, allowing them to grow larger over the years before trading them at higher prices.



LEFTOVER RECIPES AND PERPETUAL FOODS

In response to system pressures on road access, supply chain shortages, rising costs, and a desire to reduce food waste, consumers begin to take on a more holistic approach to cooking for themselves and their families that focuses on making different meals with the same ingredients and parlaying the best elements of one meal into another. Examples include so-called perpetual stews and cooking with leftovers.



FUTURES

The kitchen reimagined

Humans are natural innovators. In few domains have we been innovating for longer than cooking. Consider the invention of fire, pottery, and knives, to name just a few, and their influence on cooking.

Given the marginal returns of improving cooking efficiency, cooking tech innovations increasingly focus on fungibility, reliability, and seamless user experience to satisfy the consumer.

The kitchen reimagined



SHADOW KITCHENS

Improvements in cooking technology continue to focus on heating efficiency (for example, induction stovetops). Increasing urbanization and a consumer desire for simplicity drives cookware innovation towards modularity, multipurpose function, and odor and noise reduction (for example, dishes that clean themselves). An apartment kitchen can disappear into the shadows when not in use.

DIGITAL SOUS CHEF

Kitchen technology increasingly takes on the role of sous chef, responding to voice and gesture commands to read out recipes, preheat surfaces, run appliances, and more, creating a premium at-home cooking experience that makes it faster and easier to prepare delicious dishes.

The kitchen reimagined



JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

The desire for simplicity and speed drives the creation of more multipurpose cooking tools—in particular, those that are easy to use, clean, and in some cases, recycle. Consumers prize simplicity of form and modularity of function.

ASSISTED FOOD PREP AND COOKING

For some households, work or other obligations take priority over cooking, and the disappearance of skills and/or time to prepare quality meals creates demand for food prep and cooking as a service. For example, the family dinner is made either in the home or at a ghost kitchen or other nearby site by someone else and transported a short distance to one or multiple households in a community. Post-meal cleaning emerges as a complementary service.



FUTURES

Meals as a medium for experience

As more people become comfortable and confident cooking, the act itself becomes viewed increasingly as a means rather than an end.

Products like meal kits and services like cooking classes evolve to incorporate behaviors like meditation and self-expression and values such as community and mental well-being.

Meals as a medium for experience



BORDERLESS HYPER-REGIONAL CUISINE

As ethnic diversity and access to global ingredients continue to increase, home chefs embrace multi-ethnic identities to create unique 'borderless' cuisines. In a movement away from 'fusion cuisine,' home chefs explore cultural recipes and ingredients with an emphasis on regional distinctions. The new approach to exploratory flavors popularizes global ingredients (like turmeric and kimchi in the early 2020s), while educating global audiences about the diverse cultural origins of ingredients and recipes.



EMPHASIZED CULINARY ENTERTAINMENT

Cooking shows, already mainstream entertainment in the early 2020s, become increasingly niche, while chefs become increasingly focused on food preparation techniques that perform well on social media platforms. At the same time, entertainer chefs rise from the ranks of everyday people, amassing huge followings on these same social platforms.



FAMILIAL BONDING THROUGH FOOD

Families spend more time cooking meals together, and home chefs look for opportunities to expand not only their weekly menus but also their skill sets. More family time in the kitchen and enthusiasm for cooking lead to higher demand for inclusive at-home cooking experiences, such as meal delivery kits with defined roles so the whole family can learn new cooking skills and recipes and become more knowledgeable about the history of food.

Meals as a medium for experience



COOKING EDUCATION AS A SUBSCRIPTION

Following the rise of meal kits and the popularity of cooking shows and classes, companies begin to offer cooking education as a subscription, wherein a user pays to receive not only ingredients but also specialized equipment and augmented reality lessons, all in the comfort of their own home.

COOKING MEANS MORE

Cooking first emerged as a method to remove toxins and preserve perishables. Gradually, that process evolved to incorporate a higher-level pursuit: experimentation with flavor. Increasingly, cooking focuses on a new wave of experimentation: the communication of values through the inclusion of certain beliefs, ingredients, techniques, etc.

Meals as a medium for experience



COOKING TO LEARN

While some consumers want to know where their food comes from because they are sustainability-conscious, other consumers are interested in the same question from a learning perspective. From streaming documentaries on food to complex home-cooked meals during the pandemic, people want to learn more about what they are eating. Consumers look for at-home cooking experiences that allow them to immerse themselves in recipes, meals, and ingredients in a way that increases their knowledge of the food and the world around them.

RESURGENCE OF THE DINNER PARTY

Unlike the traditional dinner parties that were often used to display wealth and class status, a post-pandemic resurgence of the dinner party has been motivated by a desire for social connection, displaying recent home remodels, and demonstrating newfound cooking skills. Furthermore, these get-togethers tend to be smaller due to the housing constraints faced by younger people, who often live in apartments and other small spaces. Event-themed dinner parties—which rack up likes on social media—cater to evolving tastes and often feature potlucks, exploratory menus, or DIY experiences such as taco bars.

CONCLUSION

In our future of home cooking report, we examined the evolving landscape of cooking through various factors, such as beliefs, behaviors, economic trends, and emerging technologies.

Key themes that will shape home cooking include consumer preferences for local and sustainable ingredients, advancements in user-friendly kitchen technology, and the increasing significance of cooking in people's lives. These factors will lead to simplified cooking experiences, greater adoption of eco-friendly practices, and stronger connections with loved ones through cooking.

To stay competitive, the food industry must embrace emerging technologies, sustainability, and changing consumer preferences, ultimately fostering a more enjoyable and meaningful future for home cooking.

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