In previous generations, the kitchen was separate from the main entertaining areas. It was utilitarian in purpose – used exclusively for cooking and closed off to guests. Now, however, the kitchen is the centre of the home for many Australian families, serving as a hub for not only meals but also conversations, special moments and traditions.

Mitsubishi Electric has been an integral part of Australian kitchens for more than 30 years, providing high-quality, innovative appliances that serve as fixtures in this important space. We pride ourselves on understanding the Australian household and delivering products tailored to meet their needs. With this in mind, we engaged McCrindle Research to help us explore the latest trends in home cooking and eating habits.

We discovered that while the preferences and needs of Australian families are diverse and constantly evolving, positive changes are also brewing.

While families are busier than ever, the research suggests they are also prioritising quality time as well as quality ingredients and meals. With the help of new cooking and kitchen innovations, we may be returning to a simpler time – a time where new technology helped unite families instead of isolate them.

Australians are using the kitchen to set a better foundation for health, as well as stronger, more connected families.

Mitsubishi Electric is looking forward to playing its part in helping Australian families create healthier, happier starts – for another 30 years and beyond.
Our food is more than just three square meals a day. It initiates connections, nurtures relationships and inspires creativity. It impacts how we enjoy other’s company, our relationships with family and friends as well as our health and longevity. By understanding more about how and what we eat, we can gain a deeper understanding of how we live.

In exploring Australia’s latest cooking and eating habits, this report delves into three key issues uncovered by the research:

1. **Cooking and the Modern Man**: Traditional gender roles are blurring thanks to men’s increasing interest in preparing meals at home and entertaining guests. The result is greater equality in the kitchen than in previous generations.

2. **Generation Y Leading the Home Cooking Revolution**: Generation Y is among the nation’s biggest cooking show fans, which may be impacting the generation’s evolving cooking values and habits.

3. **Desire for Healthier, Family-Centric Homes**: Australian families show a propensity for traditional, family-centric values with a growing preference for fresh, home cooked meals and the desire to know more about their food.

“By understanding more about how and what we eat, we can gain a deeper understanding of how we live.”
Canvassing 2,000 household grocery buyers across Australia, the survey reveals new information about how modern families are cooking and eating. The national online survey was conducted between 21 and 27 August 2014, and this report highlights the key outcomes and analysis of the results.

The survey suggests change is stirring in Australian kitchens, offering new insight into the frequency with which families are cooking and entertaining at home, as well as their evolving priorities and values when it comes to filling up their grocery carts. It demonstrates a shift in everything from how often Australians cook at home and who they cook for and why, to how often they read ingredient labels, order takeaway and buy ready-made foods.

Many factors influence our food purchasing and cooking decisions including price, quality, taste, health, family traditions and culture. Today, cooking is not just about food provision but also social connection, nutrition and self-expression.
This is reflected in the report, which demonstrates a growing interest among Australians to learn about the foods of foreign cultures. When asked the cooking styles and cuisines about which they were most interested in learning, Australians indicated a variety of cultures and countries – from Chinese, Thai and Indian to Italian, French and Mexican. This mirrors Australia’s increasingly multicultural society as families continue to embrace the idea that diversity in food can enrich our day to day lives.

The survey also uncovered another possible influence on today’s cooking and eating habits – food and cooking shows. This includes TV shows that involve cooking demonstrations, competitions as well as cooking demonstrations on YouTube.

More than half of Australians (51%) report watching these shows regularly – at least once a fortnight. Additionally, 2 in 5 main grocery buyers say they either very much enjoy or extremely enjoy watching them.

The survey found significant differences in food habits between those who enjoy cooking shows and those who do not. Cooking show fans entertain more guests at social parties and holidays, focus on fresh ingredients and buy more fruits and vegetables and enjoy planning meals ahead of time and cooking in bulk. They are also more innovative in trying not only new recipes and exploring different culinary cuisines but even in using new equipment and appliances.

This research explores how the popularity of this TV genre may be related to other changes in cooking trends – including which demographics are cooking and innovating the most.

With this report, we evaluate how a variety of factors converge to influence how we decide what to place in our carts and how to prepare it. By understanding these relationships, we can develop a deeper appreciation for the role that food plays in our daily lives.

“Today, cooking is not just about food provision but social connection, nutrition and expression.”
The hustle and bustle of our day to day lives makes many of us creatures of habit in the kitchen – cooking the same few dishes over and over again.

What I found most interesting about this research, however, was that some of today’s most popular TV programs – food and cooking shows – may be sparking a renewed interest in cooking innovation and experimentation.

It found that those who watch cooking shows at least once a fortnight are more likely to prefer fresh ingredients, enjoy planning meals ahead of time and cook in bulk more than those who do not watch cooking shows. They are also more innovative in trying new recipes and cuisines and are more likely to use new equipment and appliances.
When comparing Australians who love cooking shows with those who are passive towards them, there is a vast difference in what they buy, how they prepare meals and how much they innovate in the kitchen. While nearly everyone has to cook, it looks like those who love cooking shows do it with more passion, flair and enthusiasm. Whether you prefer a BBQ, casual get-together with friends or visits from family, it’s clear that there is a variety of influences on today’s cooking habits. This research suggests that Aussie families are becoming increasingly committed to exploring new ways of cooking the food they love, broadening their tastes and putting their health at the forefront – which is great news for the future of Australian households in years to come.

“How often do you watch cooking and food shows on television or online?”

- 35% Once a week or more
- 16% At least once a fortnight
- 12% Once a month
- 20% Less than once a month
- 17% Never

“How much do you enjoy cooking and food shows?”

- 26% Extremely enjoy
- 16% Very much enjoy
- 26% Somewhat enjoy
- 17% Slightly enjoy
- 15% Do not enjoy

“Some of today’s most popular TV programs – food and cooking shows, may be sparking a renewed interest in cooking innovation and experimentation.”

Ed Halmagyi
Chef and brand ambassador for Mitsubishi Electric Australia
The traditional gender roles of the kitchen are a thing of the past, particularly when it comes to the idea that it is solely the woman’s domain. Forty-two percent of men have increased the frequency with which they cook at home over the last two years. While women also reported an increase in home cooking, the survey found that men now entertain guests as frequently as women (41%).

Men are also taking time to prepare lunches at home more frequently and buying ready-made convenience meals less often. While they still may not be cooking more than women, the research suggests a positive shift in men’s attitude toward preparing meals. This may be related to a wider change in the perception of men’s and women’s household roles, particularly as more women maintain regular workplace careers and more men choose to stay at home to raise children.

This may be a sign that men are striving to meet the demands of the “modern man” – a man who is not only competent at work and at play, but also in domestic duties.

“Men enjoy being seen as competent and able and this is no different for new household-related roles. Entertaining at home gives men an opportunity to demonstrate their ability in front of peers – a successful dinner party could be a new type of status and success symbol for men,” said Jessica Millard, Marketing & Communications Manager, Mitsubishi Electric Australia.

In addition to the potential impact of evolving gender perceptions, the survey reveals that men’s growing interest in cooking may be related to the rising popularity of food and cooking TV shows.

The research suggests that men now take pride in not only cooking and preparing meals but also using meals to entertain their friends. The survey found that men more commonly cook for social dinner parties (35% compared to 32% for women). Women, on the other hand, are more likely to cook for family gatherings and special celebrations.
Men watch food and cooking shows nearly as frequently as women (50% of men versus 52% of women), which may correlate with the change in cooking behaviour. Nearly half of the men surveyed had tried a new recipe they learned from a cooking show, suggesting that the shows are inspiring viewers to experiment in the kitchen.

The movement toward greater experimentation and innovation is further supported by results showing that 66% of men said they have either regularly or sometimes cooked with new recipes in the last two years. Similarly, 62% of men say they are more inclined to add new ingredients to old recipes, and 58% are more likely to try new ways of cooking foods that are regularly bought.

“Cooking shows are a source of new ideas, making cooking at home more enjoyable and less challenging. This is particularly true as the trends in men’s behaviour mirror those of women, who are also cooking at home and innovating more often than in previous years,” said Millard.

One significant difference between men and women are the values they prioritise while grocery shopping. While both rank buying on discount as an important value, women place stronger emphasis on buying fresh, local, organic foods as well as based on brand and nutritional value. Men, however, are more likely to buy on price. This suggests women may be more health conscious. Eighty-one percent of women cite buying fresh ingredients as very or extremely important to them, compared to 68% of men.

"Cooking shows are a source of new ideas, making cooking at home more enjoyable and less challenging.”

Jessica Millard
Marketing & Communications Manager,
Mitsubishi Electric Australia
66% of men report regularly or sometimes cooked with new recipes in the last two years

32% of men have decreased the frequency with which they buy ready-made convenience meals

42% of men have increased the frequency with which they cook at home in the last two years

28% of men have increased the frequency of preparing lunches at home

32% of men have tried new recipes from a cooking or food show in the last two years

41% males and females entertain guests at least once per month

52% of men and 50% of women have watched cooking shows at least once a fortnight

45% of men have tried new recipes from a cooking or food show in the last two years
Gen Y, which for the purposes of this report includes respondents between the ages of 20 and 34 years old, is leading the way when it comes to home cooking in Australia. This group was the most likely to indicate they have increased the frequency of their home cooking in the past two years (54%), compared with the older demographics.

“The younger members of this group may see the development of their cooking ability as a way to showcase their maturity, particularly as they enter new phases in life such as living independently or buying a home,” said Millard.

In addition to cooking for themselves more frequently, Gen Ys are also by far the most frequent entertainers. Fifty-four percent prepare home-cooked meals for guests at least once per month compared to 36% of Gen X, 37% of Baby Boomers and 32% of Builders. They are also the most likely to have increased the frequency in which they entertain at home over the last two years.

While older generations are more likely to cook for family gatherings, members of Gen Y prefer cooking for social dinner parties with friends. This may be because many Gen Ys have not yet started their own families. It may also be part of an effort to display newly acquired cooking ability and domestication skills to their peers.

“It’s easy to see why the idea of hosting dinner parties is enticing to the younger generations. They’re enjoying the process of cooking for others – many for the first time – and sharing food with friends,” said Millard.

Another aspect of living independently is purchasing grocery items. Interestingly, members of Gen Y are less likely to visit the grocery store two or more times per week but tend to cook more for a time ahead, compared with older generations.

While the research showed a greater affinity for buying organic among Gen Ys compared to older demographics, younger consumers are more likely to buy on price, placing less emphasis on buying local products and fresh ingredients. This suggests that younger consumers may be looking for ways to stretch their dollar while shopping.
“Gen Y consumers are going through a period of significant change. They’re may be relatively new to living on their own, just starting their own family or focused on saving for major purchases, such as a first home. It is understandable that they might prioritise price more highly compared to older, more established households,” said Millard.

As the millennial generation, Gen Ys are most influenced by others in their food and shopping behaviours than any other generation. This generation, linked up and logged on, is more connected and engaged with the world around them than any previous generation of grocery buyers.

Health organisations, professional chefs and friends’ social media posts were identified as the top three influencers in food purchasing decisions and cooking habits.

The survey also suggests, however, that cooking shows may also directly influence Gen Y’s cooking behaviours. As the country’s most frequent watchers of cooking shows, 61% of Gen Ys say they have tried new recipes after seeing them on a show.

The group is also the most likely to innovate in the kitchen and explore new cuisines or flavours. Seventy-nine percent of Gen Ys have used new recipes in the last two years, compared with 71% of Gen X and Boomers and 65% of Builders, and the group is the most likely to look for innovations in cooking tools.

There are more influencers acting upon younger consumers than ever before. As our world becomes increasingly connected, we may see even greater diversity in our cooking and eating habits in the future. The ability to learn from the world’s top chefs and interact with people from different cultures will continue to encourage a new generation of ‘home celebrity chefs.’

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**Generation Y:** 20-34 year olds  
**Generation X:** 35-49 year olds  
**Baby Boomers:** 50-68 year olds  
**Builders:** 69+ year olds
43% have increased the frequency in which they prepare lunch at home

68% have explored new cuisines or flavours in the last two years

79% have cooked with new recipes in the last two years

54% always cook in bulk ahead of time

22% indicate buying organic is “extremely” or “very important”

41% have looked for innovations in cooking tools

54% have cooked meals for guests

46% have cooked for a social dinner party

31% of Gen Y have increased the frequency with which they entertain at home
Australian families are increasingly prioritising healthy meals at home with their loved ones. More than half of shoppers are cooking at home more often and eating out at restaurants less often, citing better health, caring for themselves and their families, and eating more fresh and clean ingredients as the driving factors in their desire to do so.

When it comes to the grocery aisle, the research demonstrated shoppers are prioritising fresh food, above all else, superseding the value placed on both discount and price. In fact, 97% of shoppers said buying fresh is important to them on some level.

Australians are also empowering themselves in the grocery store, taking more time to read and understand labels and ingredient/additives lists than ever before. Today’s shoppers are 5.7 times more likely to have increased the time they spend reading labels over the last two years.

The people who influence Australians’ shopping trends are not necessarily their friends, popular social media personalities or even mainstream media celebrities. The research finds that health organisations are most important when it comes to influencing food behaviour. Fifty-three percent of consumers feel health organisations are at least somewhat influential in shaping their shopping choices and cooking behaviour.

“All of this research suggests an overall desire to be healthier across society. While this desire may not always align with reality, consumers know more about their foods, are more conscious of their decisions and have the intention to eat better,” said Millard.

In addition to the desire for better health, Aussie families may also be using home cooked meals as a way to ensure quality family time. Fifty-one percent of shoppers cook at home more now and eat out less compared to previous years, and when cooking for guests, the survey found that family gatherings are the most common occasion (59%).

Similarly, when asked what the single most influential factor in activating their desire to cook, a number of Australians indicate that it was their family.
“The kitchen is the heart of the household. It is where everyone meets and intersects. Focusing on home-cooked meals with family reflects the desire to create real and substantial interactions with our loved ones – a way to bring the family together, if only for meals,” said Millard.

The decision to cook at home more often may also be an economic one. Shoppers report that it is substantially cheaper than eating out. Although buying fresh food was cited as a top shopping value, consumers named price as the most important factor when deciding on which products and ingredients to purchase. Three in four Australians indicated that price was either extremely or very important to them.

“Whether it's due to budget constraints, a rising cost of living or saving money, cost-cutting is front of mind for main grocery buyers and a key determinant in moving towards preparing more meals at home. Interestingly, the freshness of ingredients was close second as a top decision-making factor. This suggests that while we are interested in making the process cheaper and easier, we still want to feel like we are doing the right thing,” said Millard.

Consumers are also using their time at home to innovate and experiment. Three in four grocery buyers (72%) have cooked with new recipes in the last two years, and two in three (66%) have added new ingredients to old recipes. Additionally, 63% have tried new ways of cooking foods they regularly buy and 60% have explored new cuisines and flavours.
have increased the time spent reading labels by 40%. The average shopping basket comprises of 36% fresh fruit and vegetables.

1 in 3 have decreased the frequency with which they buy ready-made meals. 44% have decreased the frequency with which they buy takeaway meals. 59% say family gatherings are the most common occasion for cooking at home.

72% of grocery buyers have tried new recipes. 66% have added new ingredients to old recipes. 60% have explored new cuisines and flavours. 40% have increased the time spent reading labels.

The average shopping basket comprises of 36% fresh fruit and vegetables.
Other Key Findings

When comparing those who watch cooking shows at least once a fortnight with those who don’t, cooking show enthusiasts are:

5.3x more likely to try new ways of cooking and recipes they’ve seen on television.

4.5x more likely to cook for a religious or ethnic holiday.

2.4x more likely to entertain guests with a home-cooked meal at least once per month.

2.1x more likely to cook for a social dinner party.

1.7x more likely to try new ways of cooking and recipes they’ve seen on television.
The shopping baskets of those who watch cooking shows contains:

- More fruits & vegetables: 9%

Grocery buyers in New South Wales and Victoria are:

- The most frequent watchers of cooking shows: 53%

Queenslanders are bargain hunters:

- Indicating buying on discount as extremely or very important to them: 71%

Victorians tend to entertain the most compared to other states:

- Entertain at least once per month: 45%

Those in capital cities are more likely to have increased the frequency of preparing lunches at home:

- Capital cities: 32%
- Major cities: 27%
- Regional cities: 29%
- Remote areas: 23%

What cuisine, cooking style, or dish are people most interested in learning to cook?

50% of Australians visit the grocery store once a week.

Those whose family ancestry is from South-East Asia are more frequent entertainers. % that entertain at least once a month:

- South-East Asia Ancestry: 55%
- All Other Ancestry: 41%
Australia’s Kitchen Revolution
March 2015

About McCrindle Research

As Australia’s social researchers, McCrindle takes the pulse of the nation. Commissioned by governments, leading brands and some of Australia’s largest organisations, McCrindle is renowned for conducting world-class research and communicating the insights in innovative ways.

The McCrindle expertise is analysing findings and effectively communicating insights and strategies. Their skills are in designing and deploying world-class social and market research. Their goal is to advise organisations to respond strategically to the trends and so remain ever-relevant in changing times, helping organisations, brands, and communities know the times.

www.mccrindle.com.au

Methodology

This new research was conducted via a national online survey, between 21 and 27 August 2014. A total of 2,027 completed responses were collected from main household grocery buyers across Australia.

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Mitsubishi Electric Australia has provided high-quality electrical and electronic products for the home, business and industry in Australia for over 40 years, actively working with local partners in the development and delivery of equipment for satellite communications, railway rolling stock, and power transmission, distribution and switchgear systems.

Australian’s have experienced Mitsubishi Electric products even if they did not know it. The stadium screens of Melbourne and Sydney Cricket Grounds, Parramatta and Townsville Stadiums all have had Diamond Vision screens showing the action. Our factory automation products power Australia’s manufacturing and industrial systems. Mitsubishi Electric supplies equipment for many of the NSW passenger trains including Tangara and OSCar trains.

For over 30 years, Mitsubishi Electric Australia has delivered the latest technological advances in refrigerators and air conditioning.