

# Should we eat ultra-processed food?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

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**Phil**

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Phil.

**Pippa**

And I'm Pippa.

**Phil**

If you've eaten anything today, then it's likely that some of your food was ultra-processed – food containing artificial ingredients like additives and sweeteners. Ultra-processed foods are everywhere, from sliced bread to chocolate biscuits and crisps.

**Pippa**

They might taste good, but the bad news is that ultra-processed foods have been linked to poor health. They often contain lots of sugar and salt and have been linked to problems like obesity and diabetes. So, how can we tell what food is ultra-processed and what's not? Here's health reporter Annabel Rackham on BBC World Service programme What in the World?

**Annabel Rackham**

Ultra-processed foods are things that contain five or more ingredients, and things that you wouldn't find in your average kitchen. It's going to have things on there, like emulsifiers, preservatives, additives, dyes and sweeteners.

**Phil**

Annabel describes ultra-processed foods as things containing ingredients you wouldn't find in your kitchen. Do you eat much ultra-processed food, Pippa, or do you try to avoid it?

**Pippa**

I used to eat a lot of ultra-processed foods, and now I try to cook everything myself and not eat things like chocolate and snacks all day. How about you?

**Phil**

I think the same. I try to cook things using just normal ingredients, just so you know what's gone into it.

**Pippa**

In this episode, we'll be discussing ultra-processed food as well as learning some useful new vocabulary. And remember, there's also a quiz and worksheet available on our website, [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Phil**

But now I have a question for you, Pippa. Fizzy drinks, like cola and lemonade, are another example of popular ultra-processed foods, but when were fizzy drinks invented? Was it:

- a) 1772,
- b) 1872, or
- c) 1972?

**Pippa**

Well, I think it was before 1972, but 1772 sounds like too early, so I'm going to say b) 1872.

**Phil**

We'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. One reason for the popularity of ultra-processed food is convenience. Let's hear more from health reporter Annabel, who talks here with Hannah Gelbart, presenter of BBC World Service's What in the World.

**Annabel Rackham**

So, I do think convenience – it is the main issue there. And again, with a **ready meal**, you put it in the microwave for a couple of minutes. It's done. It's hot. It serves you. Whereas, you know, sometimes cooking a fresh meal **from scratch** – that can take a really long time.

**Hannah Gelbart**

What's your ultra-processed guilty food?

### **Annabel Rackham**

I'm a chocolate girl. A packet of biscuits – something like that. A cake. That is my... that's my **guilty pleasure**.

### **Pippa**

Ultra-processed foods like **ready meals** are convenient. A **ready meal** is a meal from a supermarket that has already been prepared and can be heated up quickly in a microwave. That's a lot quicker and easier than cooking **from scratch** – an idiom meaning to do something from the very beginning without using anything that's already been made.

### **Phil**

Even though ultra-processed foods are often unhealthy, they taste good. That's why Annabel calls chocolate her **guilty pleasure**. A **guilty pleasure** is something you enjoy but think you shouldn't and feel a little embarrassed about.

### **Pippa**

Ultra-processed food is a tricky topic. We know these foods have been linked to poor health, but at the same time they're cheap, convenient and taste good. So, what should we do? Here's Hannah and Annabel discussing this for BBC programme What in the World:

### **Hannah Gelbart**

Is it OK for me to have a packet of crisps **once in a while**? Should we be cutting ultra-processed foods out of our diets completely, or is there a way for us to still enjoy them **from time to time**?

### **Annabel Rackham**

I think the best thing to do is just not to panic. **Everything** is fine **in moderation**.

### **Phil**

Hannah asks if it's OK to eat ultra-processed foods **once in a while**, or **from time to time**. The phrases **once in a while** and **from time to time** mean occasionally – sometimes, but not very often.

### **Pippa**

Annabel replies using the phrase **everything in moderation**, which advises us that it's best to avoid too much of anything.

**Phil**

That sounds sensible to me, and it also means I won't feel bad about eating chocolate now and then. OK. Pippa, it's time to reveal the answer to my question. Now, I asked you when fizzy drinks were invented. You said 1872. I'm afraid the correct answer was 1772. Apparently carbonated water was used to try to prevent scurvy on sea voyages.

**Pippa**

Wow, that is amazing. I wouldn't have thought it was that long ago.

**Phil**

Right. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **ready meal** – a meal from a supermarket that has already been prepared so you can heat it up quickly.

**Pippa**

If you do something **from scratch**, you do it from the very beginning, without using anything that's already been made.

**Phil**

A **guilty pleasure** is something you enjoy but feel guilty or embarrassed about because you think you shouldn't do it.

**Pippa**

The phrases **once in a while** and **from time to time** mean occasionally, not very often.

**Phil**

And finally, the phrase **everything in moderation** is used to advise someone that it's best to avoid too much of anything. Once again, our six minutes are up, but if you're hungry for more, head over to our website, [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com), for more tasty topics and useful vocabulary. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye.

**Pippa**

Bye!

## VOCABULARY

### **ready meal**

meal from a supermarket that has already been prepared and can be heated up and eaten later

### **from scratch**

(idiom) from the very beginning, without using anything that has already been made

### **guilty pleasure**

something you enjoy but feel embarrassed about, or think you should not do

### **once in a while**

occasionally, not very often

### **from time to time**

occasionally, not very often

### **everything in moderation**

(idiom) saying advising that it's best to avoid too much of anything