

Bags of Taste Mentored Course Evaluation



Summary document

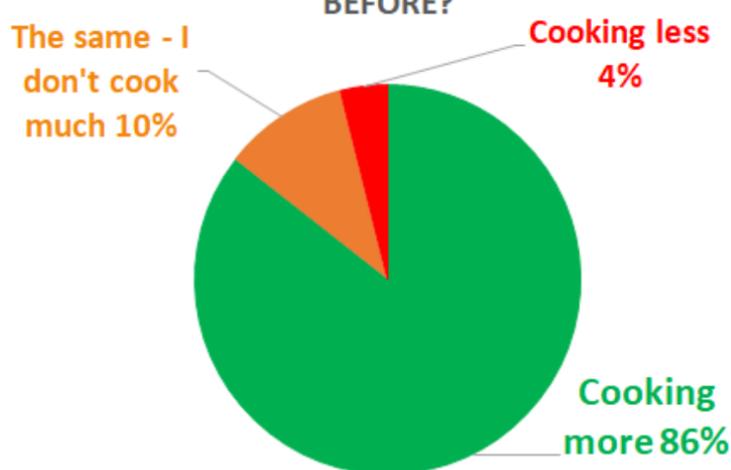
Bags of Taste is a non-profit organisation who tackle food poverty at source helping people to cook for themselves on a very low budget of below £1 a portion, whilst addressing the complex economic, psychological, practical and structural barriers to healthy eating that many people in poverty face. In March 2020, COVID-19 lockdown restrictions meant that Bags of Taste had to suspend delivery of their face-to-face courses and began running mentored home cooking courses.

Below is a summary of data collected from phone interviews with 60 participants, who completed the course in May/June 2020. Participants were interviewed 6 months after completing the mentored course. They reported on the impact of the course on their cooking and eating habits, their finances and their health.

- Participants reported that they were cooking more from scratch, trying new cooking methods and learning new recipes. Many said the course allowed them to become more experimental with their cooking, and they enjoyed trying new cuisines.
- There was a significant increase in healthy eating such as an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, along with other positive dietary changes.
- Many participants saved money as a result of the mentored course. A number felt they became savvier when shopping by using the shopping tips provided on the course and began to plan ahead. However, a small number of participants felt that their shopping habits had not changed.
- The benefits to health participants conveyed were wide ranging which included physical, social and emotional benefits. Some reported improvements in pre-existing health conditions, mental health or self-confidence. Many participants enjoyed interacting with others through the mentored course, which was particularly valuable during lockdown where many felt socially isolated.
- The majority of participants were cooking with more herbs and spices, increasing the flavour and improving the taste of their food.

Cooking more frequently

ARE PARTICIPANTS COOKING MORE FREQUENTLY 6 MONTHS AFTER BOT'S MENTORED COURSE THAN BEFORE?

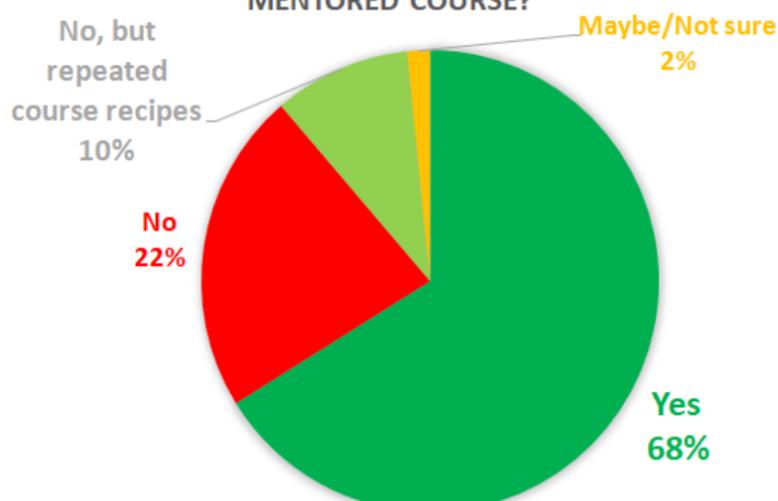


- Excluding those that already cooked regularly, the vast majority of participants, (86%) were cooking more 6 months after the course.
- Only 2 participants reported cooking less, which could be due to a number of factors.

15 participants said they cooked regularly and so were not able to increase the amount they cooked, and are excluded from this data

Learning new recipes

DID PARTICIPANTS COOK FOLLOW ON RECIPES SINCE BOT'S MENTORED COURSE?



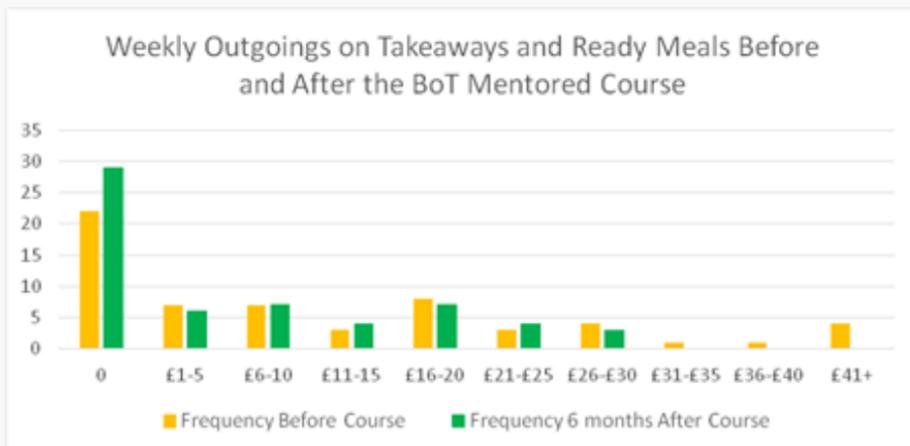
- The majority, 68% of participants used Bags of Taste's 'follow on' recipes
- 10% of participants said they hadn't used the follow-on recipes but were repeating the recipes they learnt on the course.
- Out of the 14 people (22%) that had not cooked Bags of Taste's follow-on recipes, some people mentioned barriers they still faced (such as lack of time, or losing the recipe card), whilst others reported they had built the confidence to use recipes from other sources).

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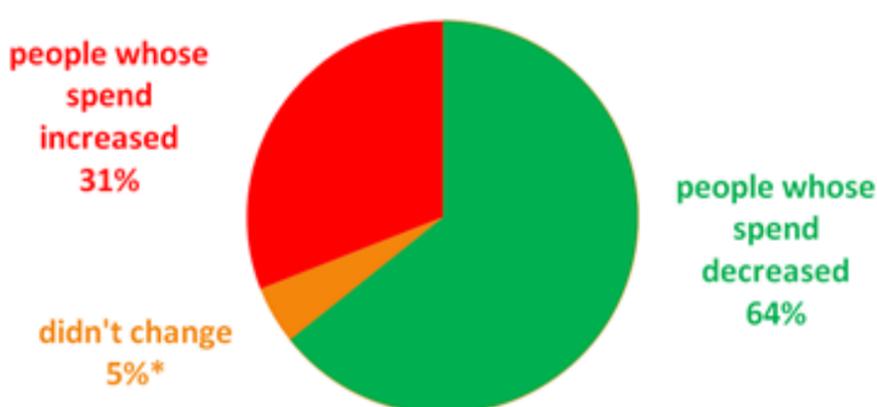
Reduction in Takeaways



- Results showed that 45% of participants saved money after the course by buying less takeaways and ready meals. Of those who saved money, the average weekly saving was £15.44, or £802.88 per annum.
- The participant with the maximum reduction in outgoings saved £45 per week.

Financial Savings

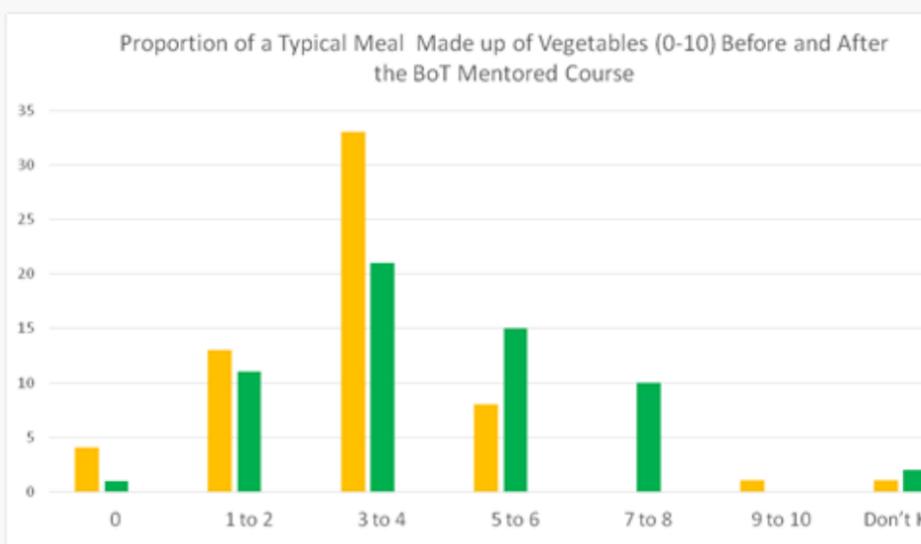
CHANGES TO WEEKLY OUTGOINGS ON TAKEAWAYS AND READY MEALS AFTER THE BAGS OF TASTE COURSE



Of the 20 participants whose outgoings remained the same, 17 already spent £0, so are excluded from this data

- The average change to spending on takeaways and ready meals was £5.40 a week (after deducting for the participants that spent £0.00).
- The greatest changes were seen in the high spending categories. Before the course, 6 participants spent more than £30 weekly on takeaways and ready meals, and after the course no participants spent more than £30.

Vegetable consumption



- The average amount of vegetables in participant's meals increased by 10% following the mentored course.
- Prior to the course, 4 participants reported they didn't usually eat any vegetables at all, following the course only one person reported not usually eating any vegetables
- The greatest differences were seen in the higher categories.

Health

- Many participants noted a range of improvements in their physical health. Changes included improvements to pre-existing health conditions such as arthritis and diabetes. Some said the course helped them to lose weight and this increased their energy
- Some participants mentioned that they had seen emotional changes such as increased confidence and becoming more adventurous with their cooking and being proud of what they had cooked.
- Overall, the main theme was that participant felt generally healthier and better 'from within themselves'.

Participants were asked eight questions which centered around evaluating the impact of the mentored course on participants' cooking and eating habits, their finances and their health. Quantitative analysis was conducted on answers for certain questions, and a thematic analysis was conducted of the entire data set.

Thank you to the authors for supporting Bags of Taste with this research

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