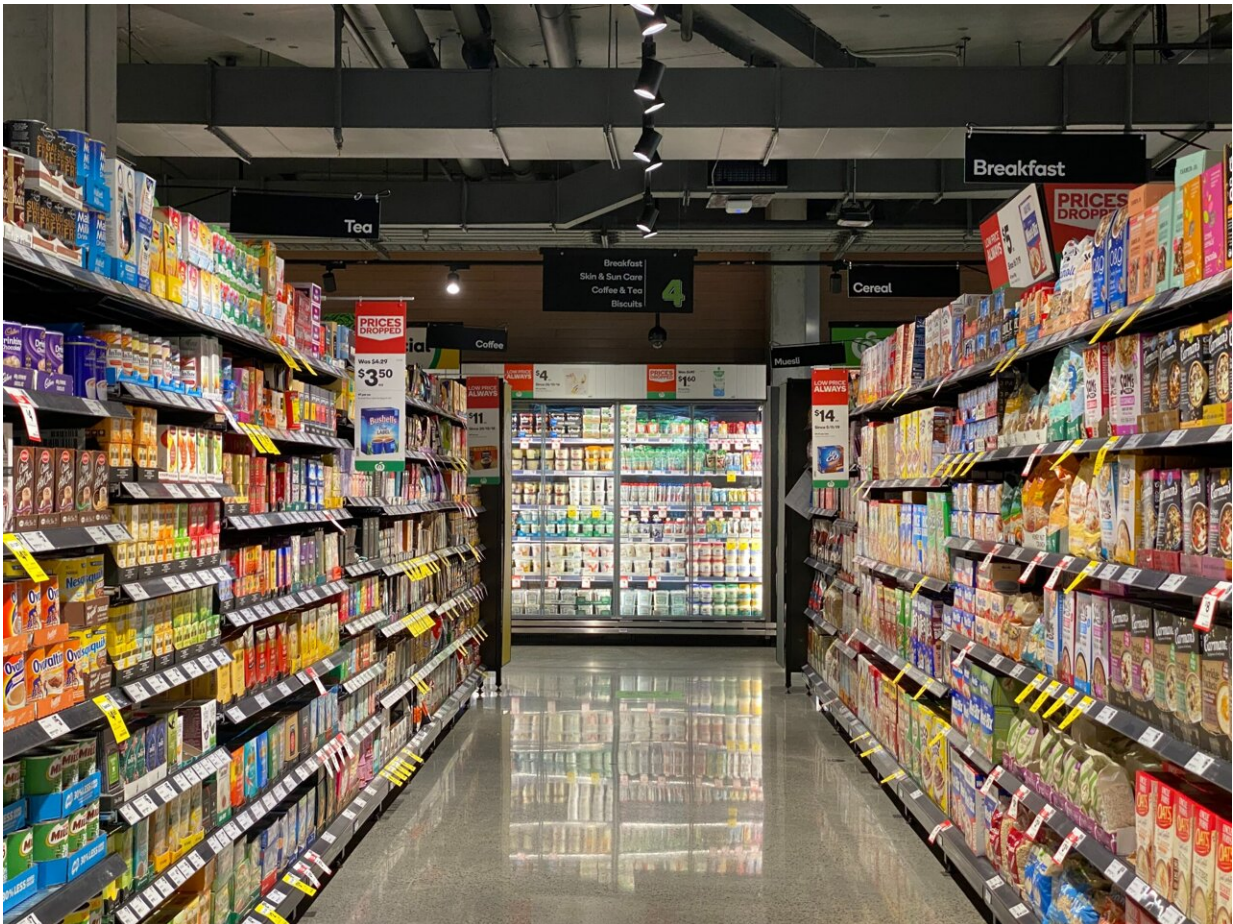


# Quick and easy ready meals not the best for us—or the planet

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A new study from the University of Aberdeen Rowett Institute has

found that ready meals are not only not as nutritious as home cooked meals, but also have a higher carbon footprint.

Scientists compared nutritional quality, [greenhouse gas emissions](#) and cost of 54 chilled or frozen ready [meals](#), and equivalent home-cooked meals, enabling them to compare animal versus plant-based meals, and assess the effects of various cooking methods on greenhouse gas emissions.

The average level of free sugars (those that are added to food) in ready meals was significantly higher than in equivalent home-cooked meals.

Ready meals also had significantly higher greenhouse gas emissions than equivalent home-cooked meals.

Magaly Aceves Martins, a research fellow at the Rowett Institute, said, "Animal-based ready meals have a much higher [carbon footprint](#) than equivalent home-cooked meals."

"Emissions are nearly 40% higher for animal-based ready meals than equivalent home-cooked meals. Plant-based ready meals and equivalent home-cooked meals had comparable greenhouse gas emissions."

"Cooking ready meals or equivalent home-cooked meals add further emissions—we found oven cooking added up to 20% to greenhouse gas emissions, whereas stove and microwave cooking added only up to 4% or less than 1% to greenhouse gas emissions, respectively."

Professor Baukje de Roos added, "Ready meals are very popular, due to lack of time for cooking, varying mealtimes, and sometimes a lack of cooking skills."

"The ready meal market has a UK market value of over £3.9 billion. It is

estimated that 90% of the UK population eat ready meals, with two out of five eating them once a week. However, [recipes](#) for [ready meals](#) vary considerably, thus there is significant scope for the [food industry](#) to improve their nutritional quality and reduce their carbon footprint."

The study was published in *Public Health Nutrition*.

**More information:** Magaly Aceves-Martins et al, Ready meals, especially those that are animal-based and cooked in an oven, have lower nutritional quality and higher greenhouse gas emissions and are more expensive than equivalent home-cooked meals, *Public Health Nutrition* (2023). [DOI: 10.1017/S1368980023000034](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980023000034)

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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