



Encouraging More Preparation of Evening Meals at Home

An In-Home Family
Partial-Ethnographic
Study

November 2010

Key research objectives

We talked to lower income families with school age children, where evening meals are prepared infrequently in home:

- Identifying the staple foods of the sample
- Determining the barriers and facilitators of preparing evening meals at home
- Identifying how the sample's attitudes to specific home-prepared evening meal options compared with their attitudes to takeaway meals in general
- Understanding how amenable, or not, people in the sample are to preparing the specific evening meal options that have been presented for this research

We spoke with:

- 🍴 10 families/households in Auckland
- 🍴 4 Maori, 4 Pacific, 2 Pakeha families
- 🍴 Primary food decision-maker of the household
- 🍴 A parent or caregiver of one or more primary or secondary school-aged children
 - Also with a household income \$40,000 pa or less (approx. the lower 40% of households)
 - And, in a household/family situation where takeaways are bought two or more nights out of the five weekday evenings

The study involved:

- 🍴 A brief background interview at the time of recruitment by telephone
- 🍴 A home/kitchen visit with 90 minute discussion interview
- 🍴 Preparing a meal
 - prepared by the participants
 - ingredients supplied and delivered to door via Foodtown Online
- 🍴 Completing a questionnaire about that meal – done by the meal-preparer and also by household members



CONTEXT OF THE FAMILY MEAL



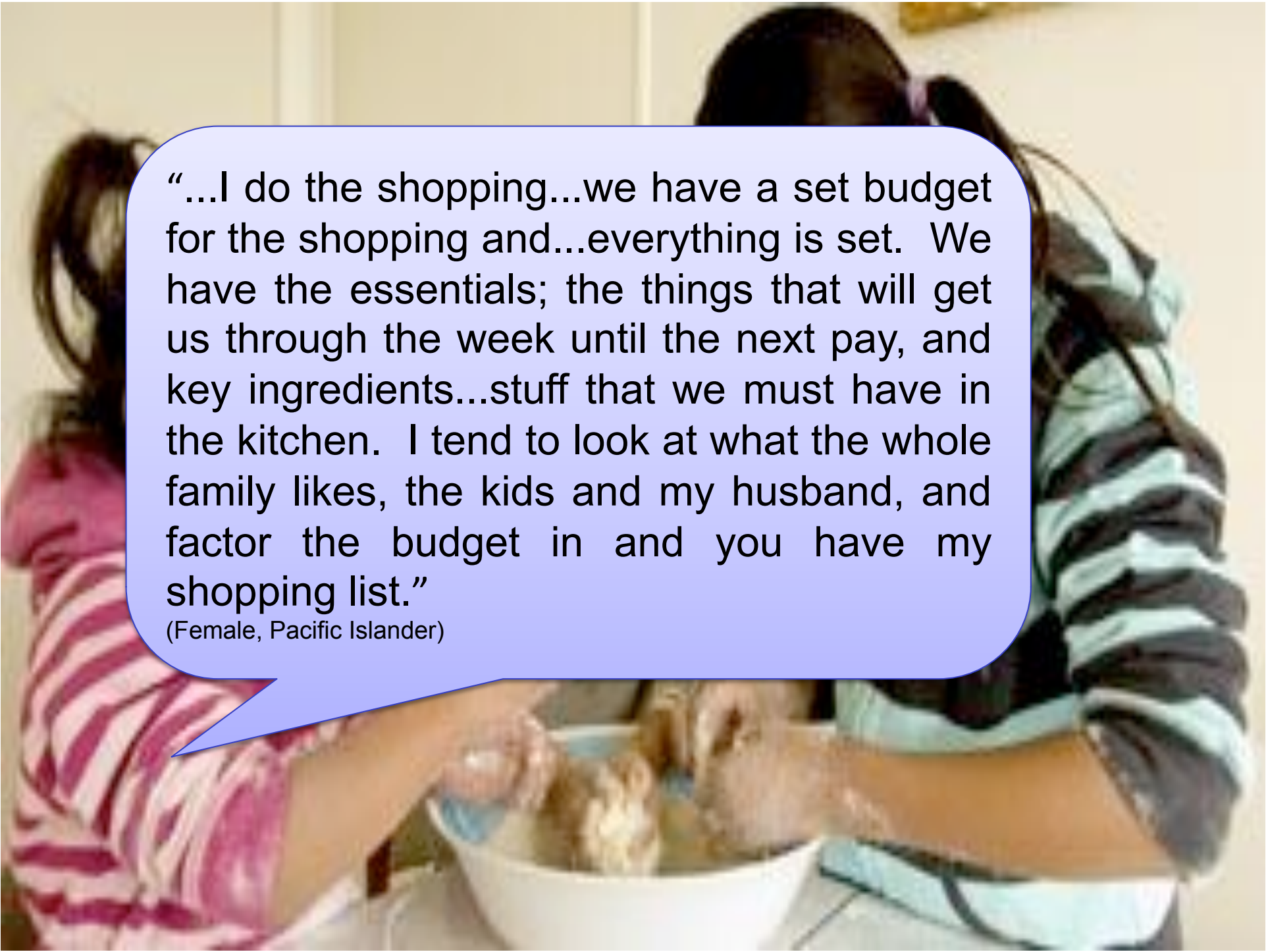
Food is a constant concern

- 🍴 Meal preparers feel they are doing well with supplying meals to their family with what they have, but they know they can do better
- 🍴 Family comes first
 - Tend to cook what children and husband likes
 - Mother puts herself last
 - Smallest portions, least attractive portion (nothing is wasted)
- 🍴 All are very competent (or confident) in kitchen
 - Some baking bread themselves
 - Willing to experiment with new things, as budget/time allows
 - Proud of their cooking abilities
 - Can feel stuck in a rut with meal options

Food is a constant concern

- 🍴 They are very proud of how well they organise their family meals with what little time and money they have
 - Would love to provide their family with:
 - More food options every day
 - More variety in their meals on a weekly basis (not the routine – mince on Monday, beans on Tuesday, past on Wednesday and so on)
 - More nutritious and fresher food options
 - Find it challenging to make a little food feed the whole family

“Getting the right food that’s economical and can be prepared in less time – not time consuming.” (Female, European)



“...I do the shopping...we have a set budget for the shopping and...everything is set. We have the essentials; the things that will get us through the week until the next pay, and key ingredients...stuff that we must have in the kitchen. I tend to look at what the whole family likes, the kids and my husband, and factor the budget in and you have my shopping list.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)

Kitchens are well stocked

🍴 Kitchens are well-equipped with basics

- Fridges, freezers, stoves, ovens, toasters, microwaves, utensils, pots/pans
- Space may be at a premium for some families
- (Slow cookers, blenders, food processors, dishwasher are much less common)
- Broad range of staples
 - Freezer, pantry used to provide options
 - Flavour is important – sauces, spices, seasonings, condiments, and herbs available
- Luxuries are sparse
 - Cheese is rare
 - Convenience foods too pricey, such as ready-to-eat or heat-and-eat meals

🍴 Kitchen is still considered the domain of the female

- (unless there are no females in the household)

Shopping involves organisation

🍴 Usually done on or after payday

- (typically Wednesday or Thursday)

🍴 Main shop done once a week only

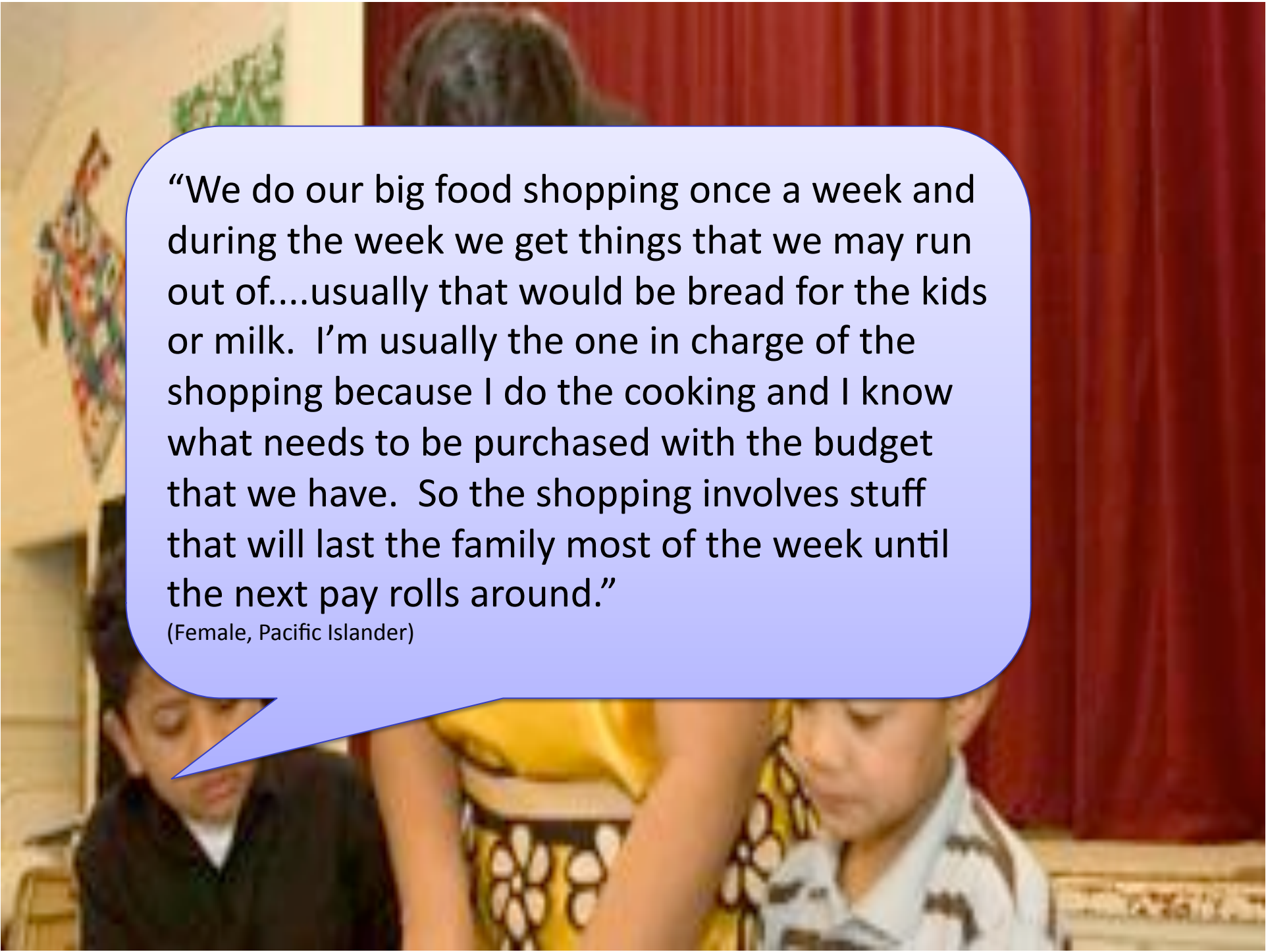
- Reduces chances of impulse buying
- Use an established and set shopping list – week after week
- Avoid wasting time and petrol

🍴 Involves pre-planning of meals, shopping lists

- Plan for first few meals of the week successfully
- Later in week becomes more challenging
 - Fewer fresh ingredients
 - Staples dwindling
 - Money supply tapering off
 - Household members eating food designated for meals later in week

Shopping involves organisation

- 🍴 Top-up shopping done at local veggie shop or dairy
- 🍴 Key ingredients are costly, not as much as the staples
 - Buying one key ingredient for one meal is more of a risk than buying those staples that will be used over and over again
 - Key ingredients are more special in the household and may be consumed before being used for that planned meal
 - Key ingredients are usually fresh foods that can spoil
 - Key ingredients can't always be used for more than one menu option in their repertoire without having to purchase more ingredients
- 🍴 Need to be creative with what's left in the pantry at the end of the week, especially when no fresh ingredients left
- 🍴 Meals are planned but supplies dwindle at the end of the week (usually just after the weekend)
 - Takeaways slip in here to supplement the meal
- 🍴 Usually buying generic/no name/supermarket brands
 - Not always shopping at a major supermarket for main shop



“We do our big food shopping once a week and during the week we get things that we may run out of....usually that would be bread for the kids or milk. I’m usually the one in charge of the shopping because I do the cooking and I know what needs to be purchased with the budget that we have. So the shopping involves stuff that will last the family most of the week until the next pay rolls around.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)

Meal preparers are looking for meals that are:

- 🍴 Economical, cheap
- 🍴 Prepared in as little time as possible
- 🍴 Fresh, less processed
- 🍴 Tasty - the kids like it
- 🍴 Filling
- 🍴 Healthy (10 mentions in comments) and Nutritious (2 mentions in comments)
- 🍴 Require minimal organisation
- 🍴 Do not waste time, money, or food

These families are money poor and time poor



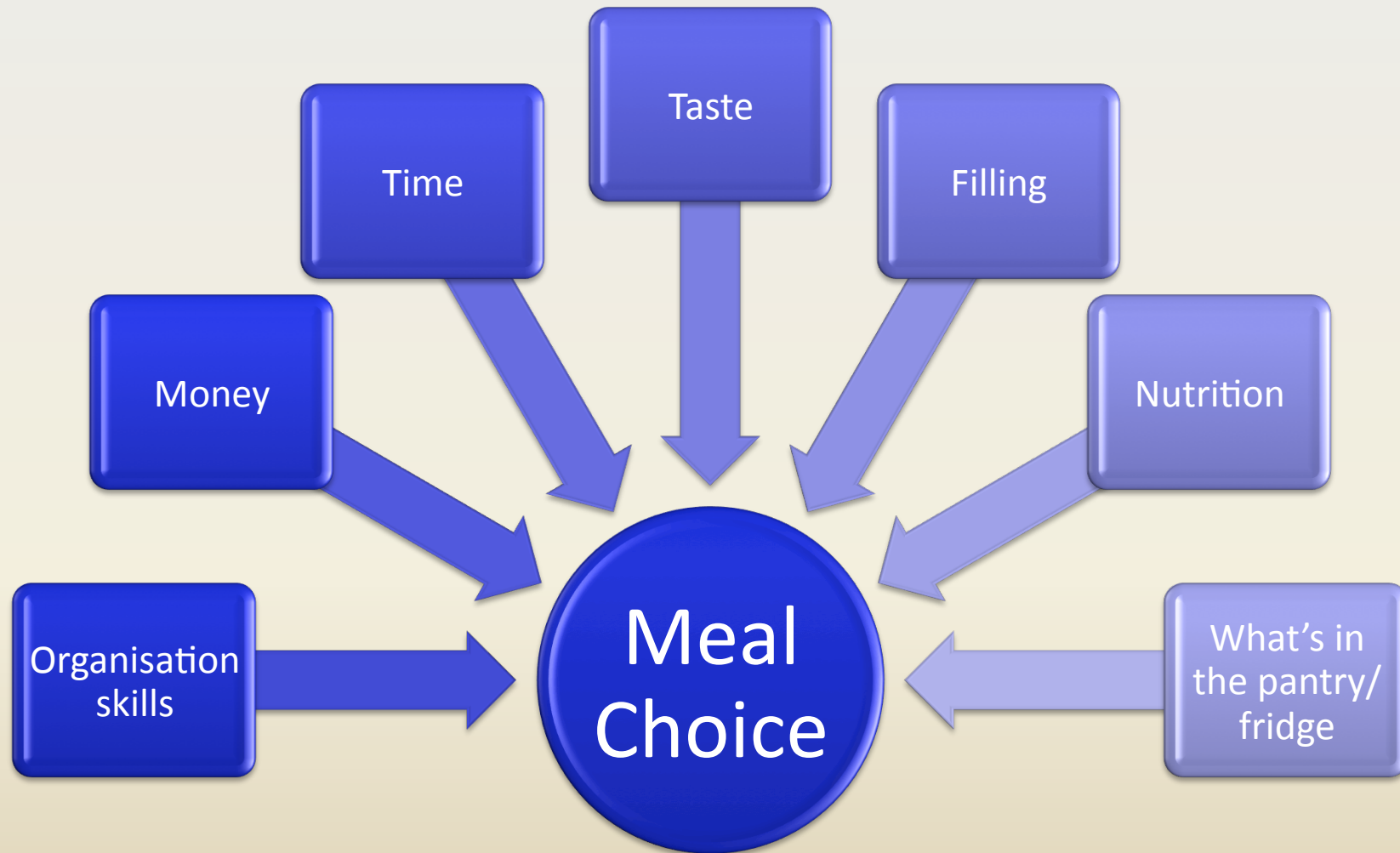
ATTITUDES TO MEAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION



The objective of meal preparation for these families:

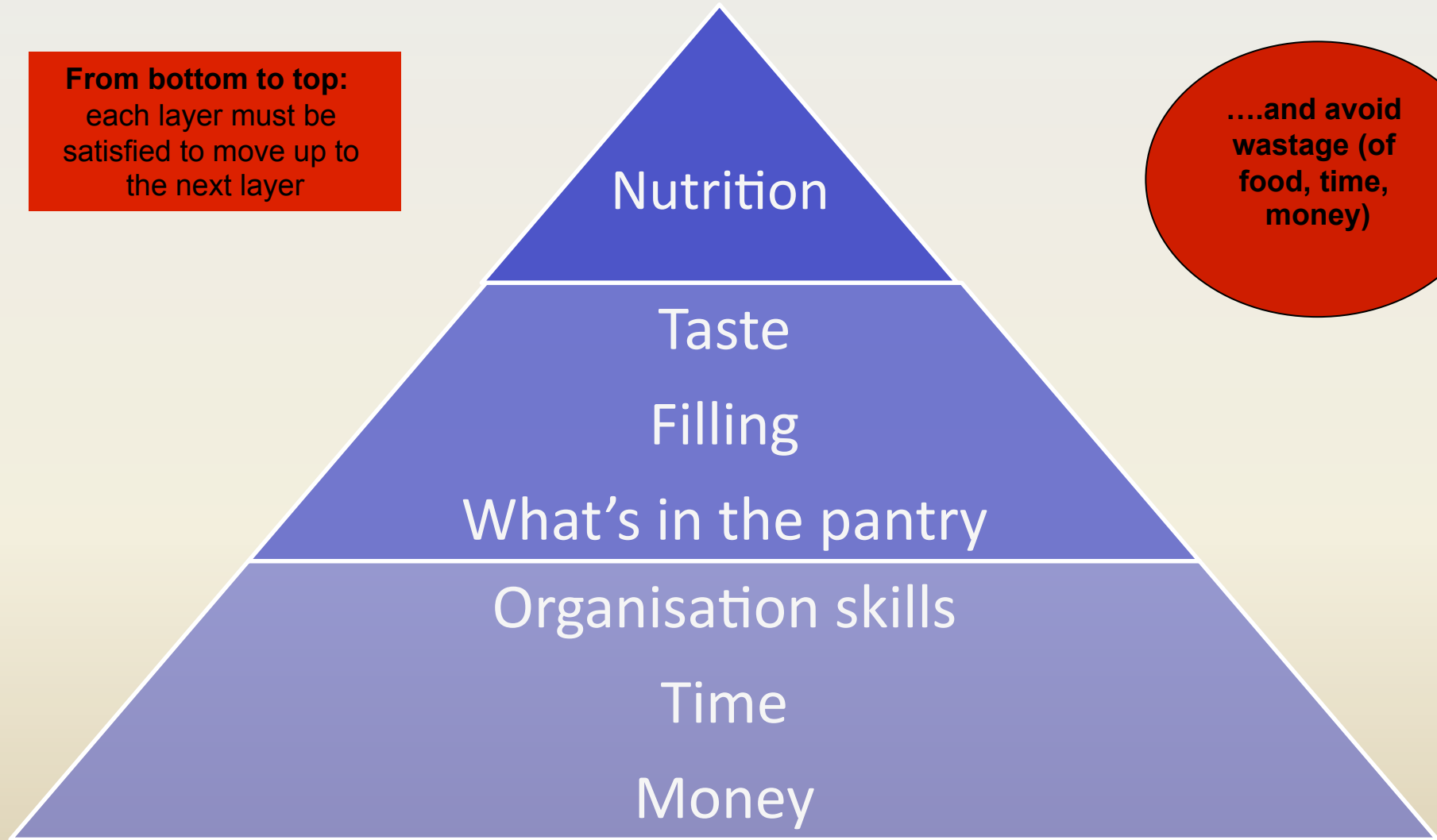
To make the best meal that most will eat with the money and time you have

Key considerations in meal choice



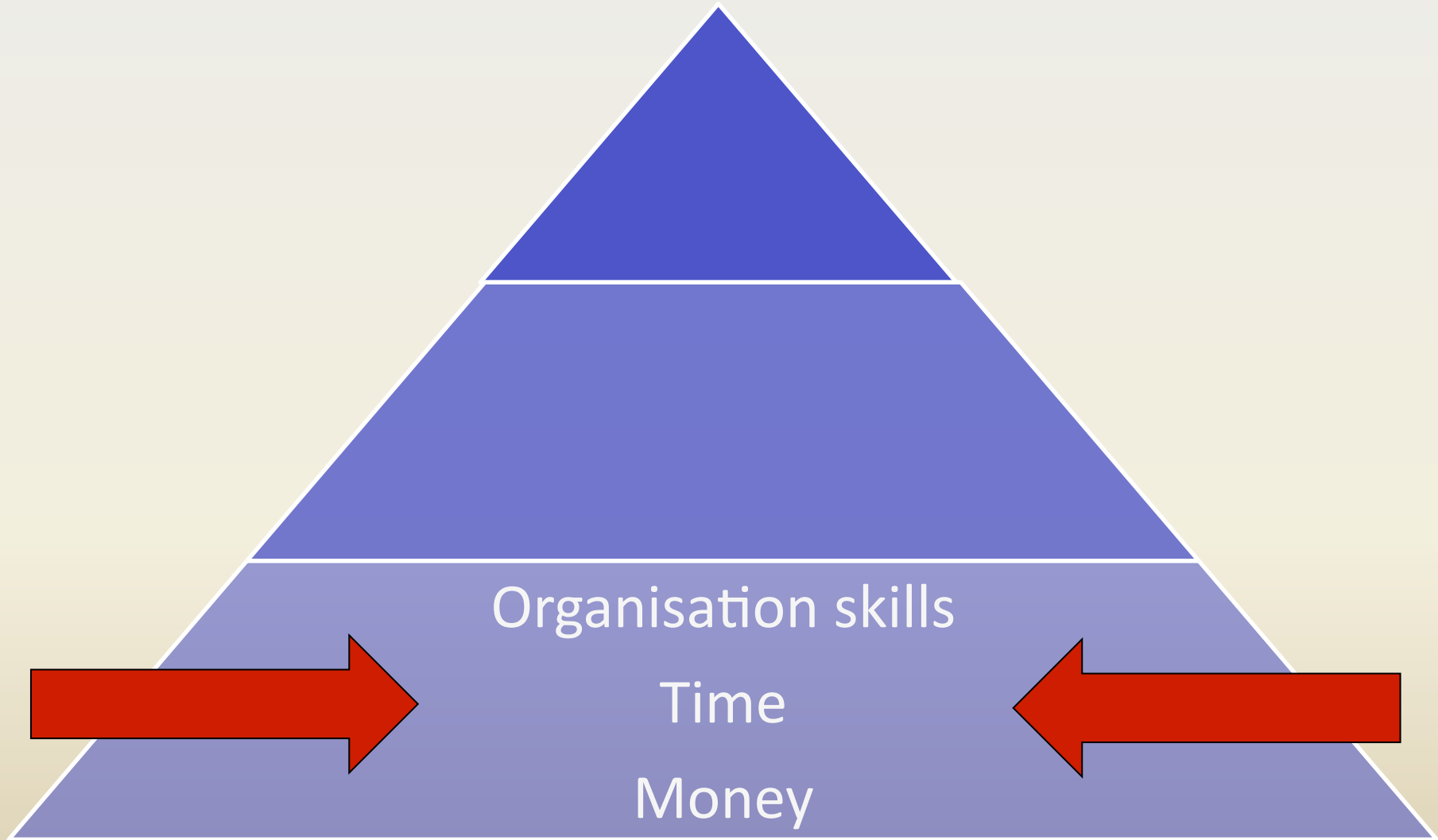
Priorities in meal choice

From bottom to top:
each layer must be
satisfied to move up to
the next layer

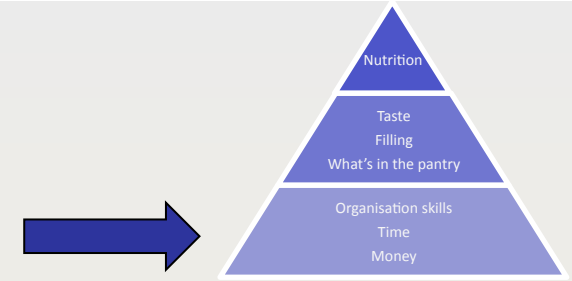


....and avoid
wastage (of
food, time,
money)

Fundamental elements

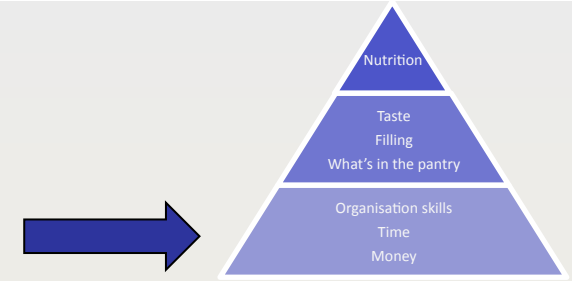


Money



- ☉ No money = no food
- ☉ Making the best meal you can with the resources you have is challenging
- ☉ Stretching the food further or making foods/ staples more useable and more palatable is very attractive
- ☉ Little money at the end of the week means few resources left
 - \$5 buys 4kg of potatoes that need to be considered, prepared, cooked, and cleaned up after **VERSUS** \$5 buys a big scoop of chips that only needs to be picked up and added to the plates.
- ☉ Budgets are followed
- ☉ Any extra money may be spent on takeaways to give Mum a break

Money

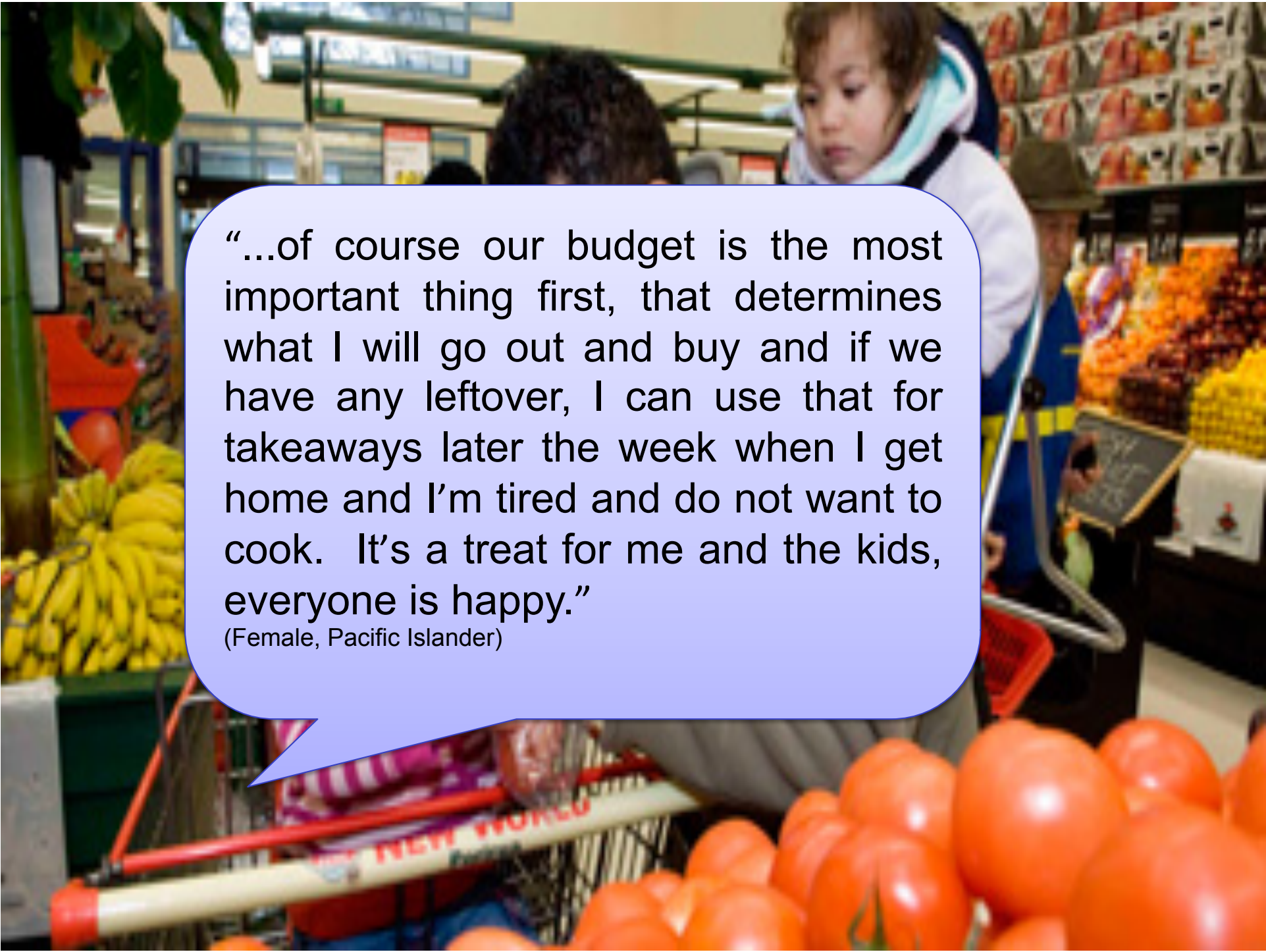


☺ More money = more takeaways

- Extra money is not likely to be spent on healthier or fresher foods
- More likely to be spent on luxuries than on basics
- However, a long term increase in disposable income may result in an upgrade in food standards

☺ If they stock up on extra supplies, things may get eaten before being used for a meal

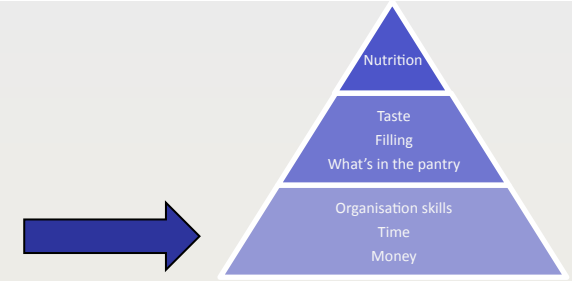
- Not always enough money to spend on things that won't be used right away

A photograph of a woman and a young child in a grocery store. The woman is in the foreground, looking down, and the child is standing next to her, looking at the produce. The store is filled with various fruits and vegetables, including bananas, tomatoes, and oranges. A shopping cart is visible in the foreground. A speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing a quote.

“...of course our budget is the most important thing first, that determines what I will go out and buy and if we have any leftover, I can use that for takeaways later the week when I get home and I’m tired and do not want to cook. It’s a treat for me and the kids, everyone is happy.”

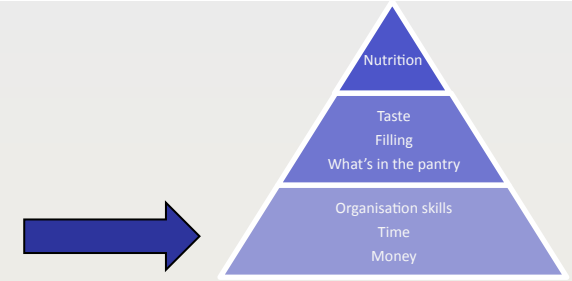
(Female, Pacific Islander)

Time



- 🕒 Little time may mean takeaways, lots of time may mean a more extensive home prepared meal (depending on other factors)
- 🕒 Lack of time reduces meal options
- 🕒 Having food ready in a hurry for hungry kids is important
 - After sports
 - After work
 - After activities
 - Before bed

Organisation skills



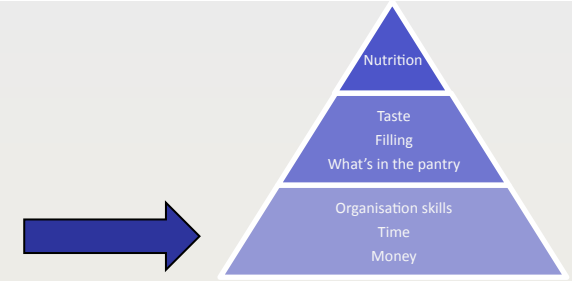
🍴 Having time and money but no ability to organise also limits the range of meal options

- Limited repertoire of recipes/cooking abilities
- Too many distractions to do more than a basic meal (nothing complicated or fancy)
- Not a lack of structure or planning, just a finite amount of resources and energy to organise a meal

🍴 They need to be able to:

- Pre-plan meals to account for time, activities, everyone's schedule
- Generate ideas for meals
- Ensure ingredients are there (not eaten, not rotten)
- Organise meal preparation, shopping, cooking around other household needs

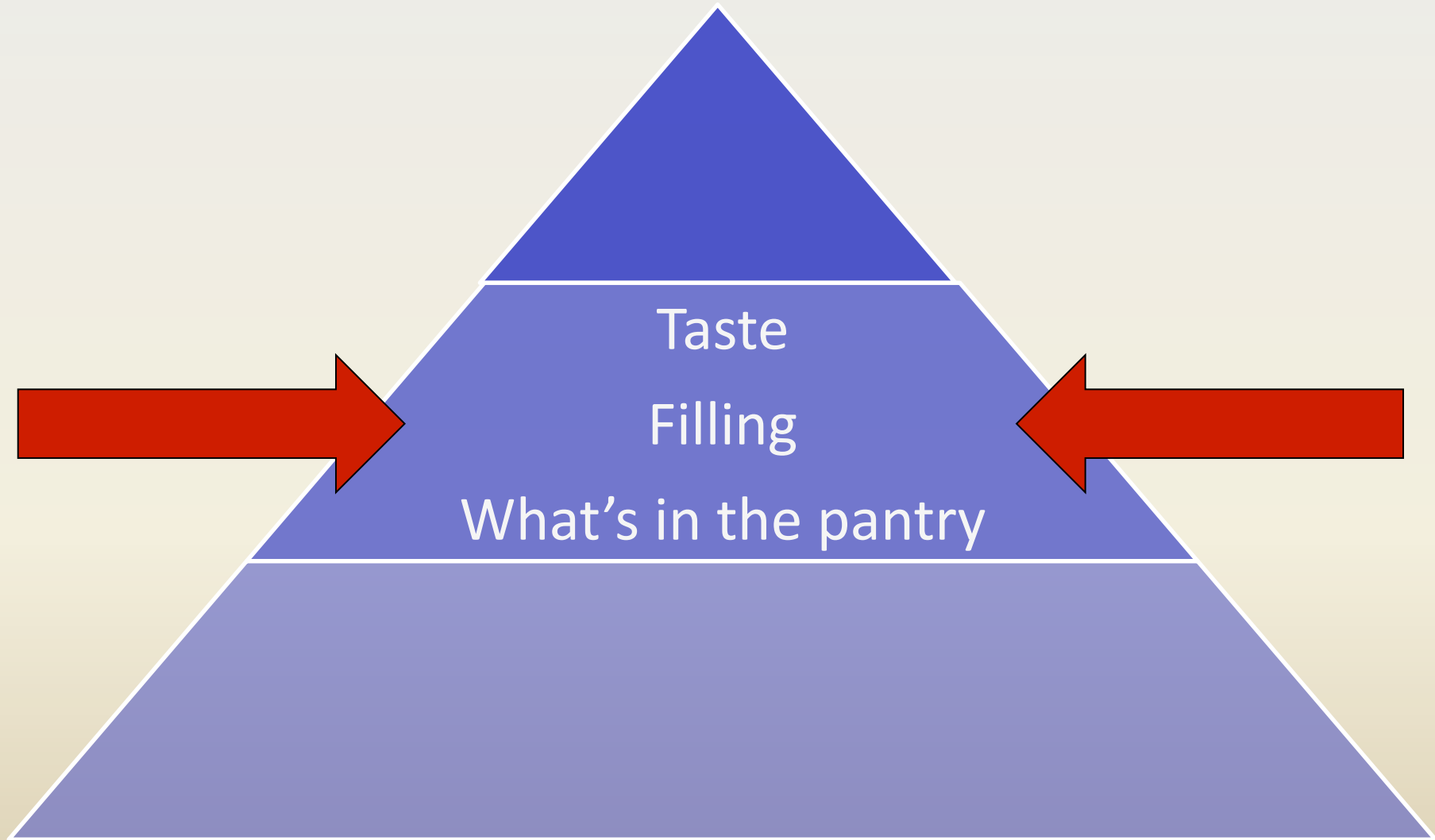
Organisation skills



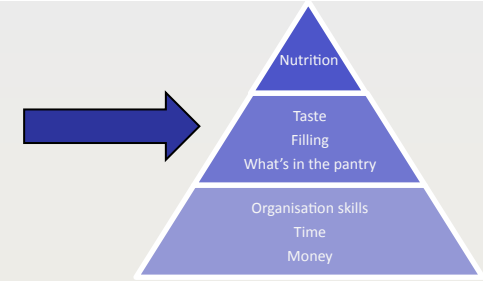
- Well-organised people are able to plan more healthy cooking options for preparing meals, such as
 - Using oven timers
 - Using slow cookers
 - Pre-preparing ingredients (such as stir fry vegetables chopped the night before)
- Picking up takeaways takes the least organisation

“...was too lazy to cook after a day's work. Hadn't taken anything out of the freezer and people were hungry. [Buying takeaways] was the easiest thing to do and get it over and done with” (Female, Maori)

Secondary elements



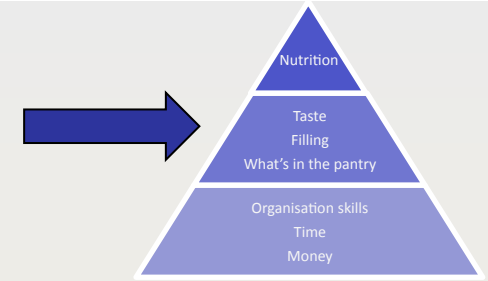
What's in the pantry/fridge



- ☉ Because of money and/or time issues what is available in the fridge/pantry changes over the week
 - Lots of choice after pay day
 - Scraping together meals at the end of the pay week
 - Running out of ideas, money, time, and ingredients at the end of the week
- ☉ With takeaways, no need to consider what food is in the pantry

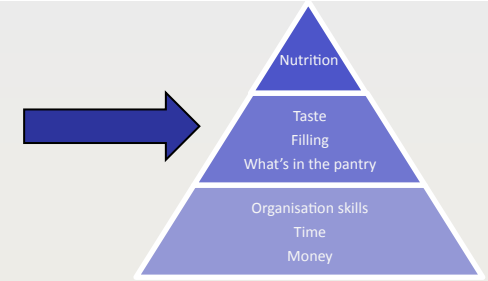
“...we're all hungry when I get home, so I need to come up with something that's quick and simple but also yummy for all, but having said that, everything is dictated with what we have in the pantry.”
(Female, Pacific Islander)

Filling




- 🍴 Important for emotional and physical satisfaction
- 🍴 Is it filling enough to keep the kids and father quiet and happy?
 - Ensure that no one goes to bed hungry
- 🍴 Dad will be the key determiner for the substantiality of the meal (“A real meal” – a proper dinner)

Taste/Flavour



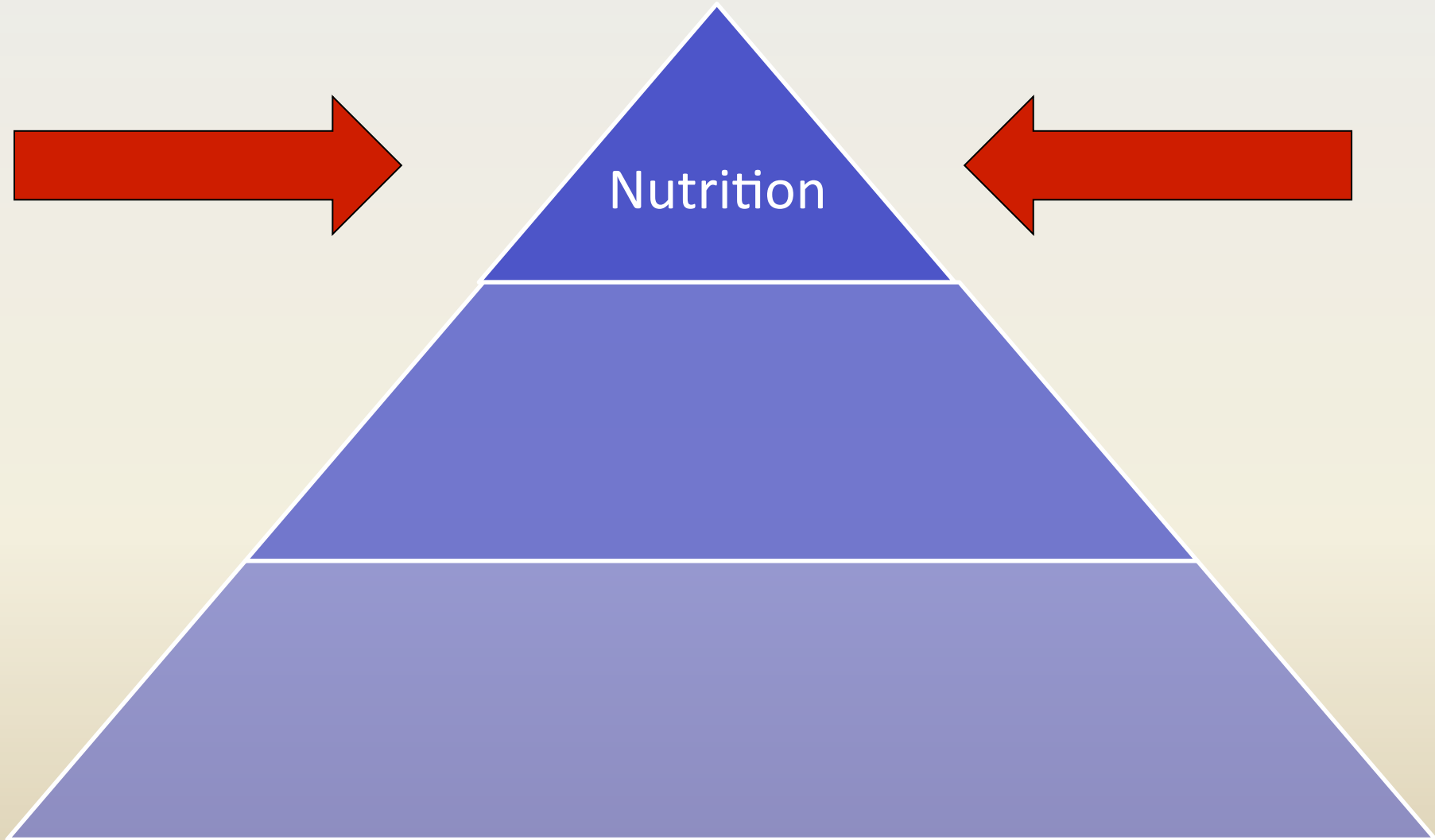
- ☉ Taste is less important than time and money but important to get everyone fed happily
- ☉ Taste is the overarching key determiner for whether or not kids will eat the meal
 - Taste is most important to the kids
 - Meal times and meal contents are framed around children's needs
 - No point making a meal if whole family will not eat it
- ☉ Takeaways are not always the preference of everyone in the family



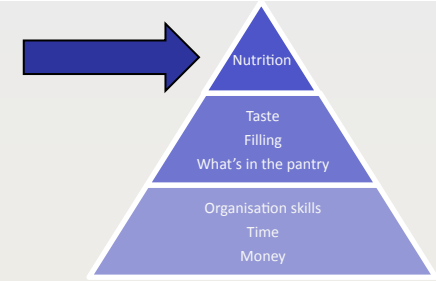
“...for me, the food I put on the table are things that my family find yummy. I cook things which I know that the family will eat. I try to make our meals as healthy as possible also and of course they should make everyone full. That’s very important.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)


Tertiary element



Nutrition



- ☉ At a tertiary level of priority to the other considerations
 - Everything else in the pyramid needs to be satisfied before this is a valid consideration
- ☉ Meal preparers are generally well aware of what is and what isn't healthy
 - e.g., types of foods, ways of cooking (frying), treats
 - There is a level of guilt when providing takeaways (for some meal preparers)
- ☉ Nutrition is a major consideration but is the lowest of all these considerations
- ☉ An increase in disposable income increases the options for quality/ healthier food
 - e.g. Burger Fuel vs. local takeaways
- ☉ It's not just about healthy food but about **“healthy food that my kids will eat”**

A photograph of three children sitting at a table. In the foreground, a boy with dark skin and short hair is looking down. Next to him, a boy with light skin and curly hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, a girl with dark skin and pigtails is partially visible. The table is set with plates of food, including a large bowl of sliced carrots and broccoli. There are also glasses of water and other dishes on the table.

“...because some of the kids play a sport I have to watch what I cook, make sure that its healthy enough and will provide the nutrition needed. Yes, they should be tasty and filling but should also be healthy, with what we have. An important combination.” (Female, Pacific Islander)

“... food should be delicious and filling for everyone, but they should always, also be healthy as much as possible. Preparation is important to ensure that, I don't like frying things too much, so I do worry about that too.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)



MEAL PLANNING AND PREPARATION



Meal planning starts from a set of menus


- 🍽️ Households usually have a set repertoire of meals
 - Interested in improving/altering these tastes
 - Recipes are adapted to their family's tastes and preferences
 - Everyone in the household is considered

Meal planning starts from a set of menus

🍴 Always keen to increase/improve on this repertoire but the new recipes...

- Must be to everyone's tastes
- Must fit budget
- Must not take MORE time to prepare or organise than current recipes
- Must be easy/quick/simple
- Must NOT be any less healthy
- Must be seen as being a meal – filling; a real dinner
- Must NOT need to purchase a large range of new foods (beyond their normal staples or usual key ingredients)

“...would love to have more ideas because at the moment my ideas a little limited.” (Female, Pacific Islander)

A photograph of a busy grocery store aisle. In the foreground, a young boy is looking at a shopping list. In the background, a woman is talking on a mobile phone. The shelves are stocked with various fresh produce, including bananas, carrots, and leafy greens. A speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing a quote from a female Pacific Islander.

“...I would just like to be creative and interesting with what we have in our pantry and fridge. If I can come up with different ways where our bag of mince can make a grand entry, that would be great. The cooking shows, like Jamie Oliver and others are excellent but I can’t get the ingredients they have and most of what they have are things I do not have. I want to make what I have work with minimal additions of effort and ingredients as possible.” (Female, Pacific Islander)

Meal preparation participants

- 🍴 For Pacific and Maori families: kids are more likely to help with the meal preparation
- 🍴 For European families: kids are less likely to help out with meal preparation
- 🍴 Mother is most likely to plan, shop, select, and oversee meal preparations
 - Father/children may assist as a secondary role
- 🍴 Mother less likely to clean up after the meal, more likely to prepare meal
 - Depends on family dynamics – ages, culture

“...we have a rule in the house that the kids look after the dishes, but sometimes I jump in when I know that they have homework to finish.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)

Looking for affordable meal inspiration

- 🍴 Looking for inspiration to complete the dinner routine
- 🍴 Interested in trying new things to put more “fun” in their meals
 - Reducing meal boredom without takeaways or extra expense or extra time, etc
- 🍴 Watching cooking channels and cooking shows for ideas
 - Jamie Oliver, Food in a Minute
 - Can't afford those ingredients
 - Can I adapt those recipes to my budget?
 - Experimentation within an affordable range
- 🍴 Thinking about the cost of key ingredients, not the staples
 - Getting creative with what's left in the pantry at the end of the week, especially when no fresh ingredients left

Looking for affordable meal inspiration

🍴 Deciding what to cook is even more difficult:

- on a tight budget
- with an empty pantry
- with physically active jobs
- with hungry, whining kids
- ...and ensuring no one goes to bed hungry

🍴 Avoiding waste

- Food (uneaten or unused ingredients)
- Time
- Money

Meals are important family time

🍴 Dining table always in the house

- Not always used
- Not always accessible, but always there

🍴 Some families eat in front of the TV

- Still involves interaction
- Considered to be “family time”

🍴 Meals are eaten together whenever possible

- Weekend meals more special than weekdays due to busy schedules (and more time to prepare food)

🍴 Food brings everyone together

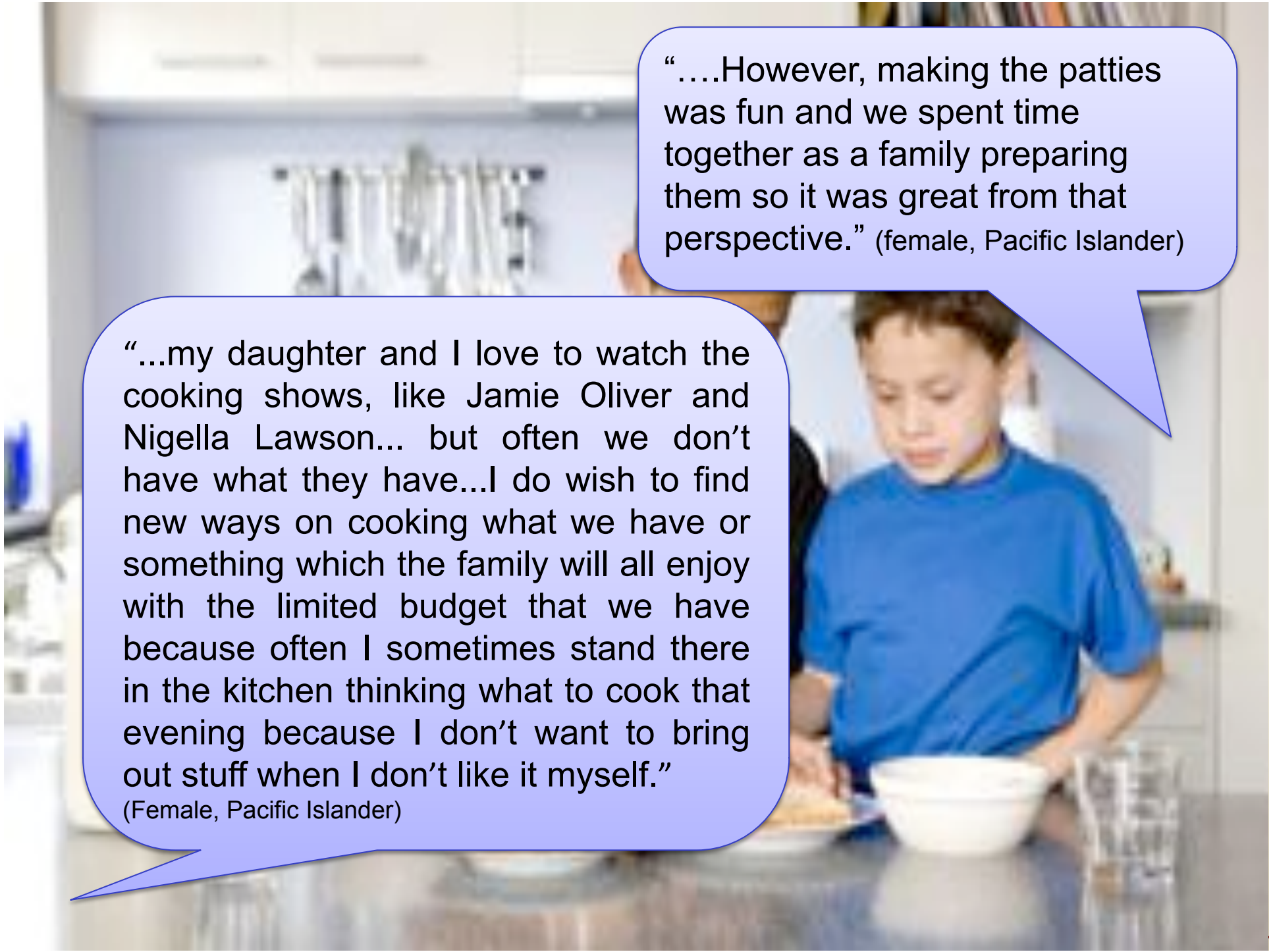
- Important to prepare something good and tasty for the family
- Pressure to produce a good meal and please everyone
- Food = love (in many cultures)

Meals are important family time

🍴 3 of 4 Pacific families:

- have Sunday Roasts every so often (with extended family)
- Leftovers consumed for next few days or recycled in other meals (nothing is wasted)

“...we often visit nana’s house on Sunday for Sunday lunch. We often bring food home after the visit and usually I find that the leftovers last our Monday too since they always load us up with lots of food.”
(Female, Pacific Islander)



“....However, making the patties was fun and we spent time together as a family preparing them so it was great from that perspective.” (female, Pacific Islander)

“...my daughter and I love to watch the cooking shows, like Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson... but often we don't have what they have...I do wish to find new ways on cooking what we have or something which the family will all enjoy with the limited budget that we have because often I sometimes stand there in the kitchen thinking what to cook that evening because I don't want to bring out stuff when I don't like it myself.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)

Attitude to meal preparations

- ☉ It's "gotta be done"
- ☉ It's a chore or duty that **MUST** be performed **EVERY** day
 - Able to delay the ironing and washing, but **not** the meals
- ☉ The last thing that **MUST** be done every day
 - When tired
 - When hungry
- ☉ Despite the meal preparations being a duty or chore, there is a lot of pride in how well they feed their family

Attitude to meal preparations

- 🍴 For Maori/Pacific: view meal preparation as “pressure” or “duty”
- 🍴 For European: view meal preparation as a “chore”

“...I enjoy cooking for my family,
but ...I would like to know other
things to cook for them.”

(Female, Pacific Islander)

Perceived problems with meal preparation

- 🍴 Pressure to produce a healthy meal that is liked by everyone, on a limited budget, with limited time
- 🍴 Multi-tasking
 - There is usually a range of other activities being performed alongside meal preparation, eg, homework, child-minding, laundry, interruptions, etc.
- 🍴 It's a chore or duty that **MUST** be performed **EVERY** day
- 🍴 It's at the end of the day when **EVERYONE** is tired
- 🍴 Wasting food, time, or money

If there were no kids in the household there would be...

- 🍴 Less effort put into organising meals
- 🍴 More takeaways purchased
- 🍴 Fewer home cooked meals prepared
- 🍴 Less healthy meals overall
 - Less concern over what you eat than what your children eat
- 🍴 Less focus on importance of food as a priority in the household overall



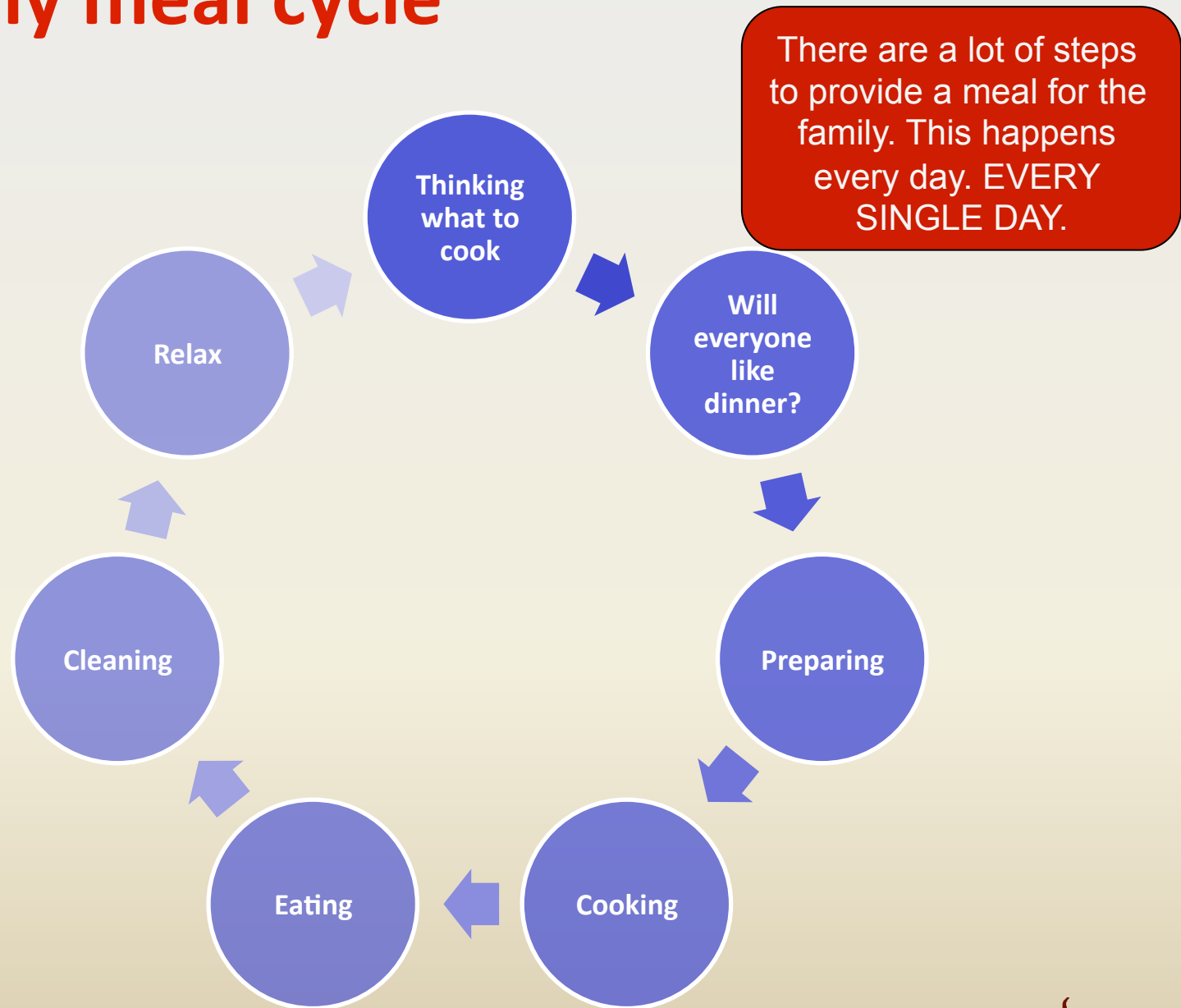
THE ROLE OF TAKEAWAYS IN THESE HOUSEHOLDS



Takeaways are...

- 🍴 Easy
- 🍴 Quick
- 🍴 Tasty
- 🍴 Filling
- 🍴 For the kids
- 🍴 Locally bought
- 🍴 Supplemental to the meal

The daily meal cycle



Takeaways are supplemental to a meal

Takeaways

- Give mum a break
- Add fun to the meal for kids
- Fill tummies when the pantry is empty
- Are very quick and simple and easy
- Are usually chips or fried rice
- Are not usually the main part of the meal but a side dish
- Would be eaten more often if there was more money
- Are not perceived to be that unhealthy (vegetables in fried rice)

Takeaways are easy

- ☉ Having takeaways usually means supplementing meals with part takeaway, part home-prepared food
 - Chips, fried rice, etc
- ☉ Takeaways are a convenience
 - Feed kids quickly (and happily!)
 - Adults eat later and/or differently – not everyone always eating them
- ☉ Most consider takeaways no more or less healthy than what would be prepared at home
 - Chinese food has vegetables
 - Potatoes are a vegetable (chips)

Takeaways are easy

- 🍴 If there was more money available, more takeaways would be purchased
 - An entire takeaway meal for the whole family is real **TREAT**
 - **Or** better/healthier takeaways are possible, such as Burger Fuel vs local takeaway burgers (fresher ingredients, real meat, etc.)

“A
necessity” (Female,
Pacific Islander)

“I don’t like dishes so takeaways are ideal. Screw up the paper and throw it in the rubbish.” (female Maori)

“Thank god for
takeaways!” (Female,
Maori)

Takeaways are usually locally sourced

☪ Serve a function

- Remove kids/husband from the home
- Convenient, easy, relaxing option for mother

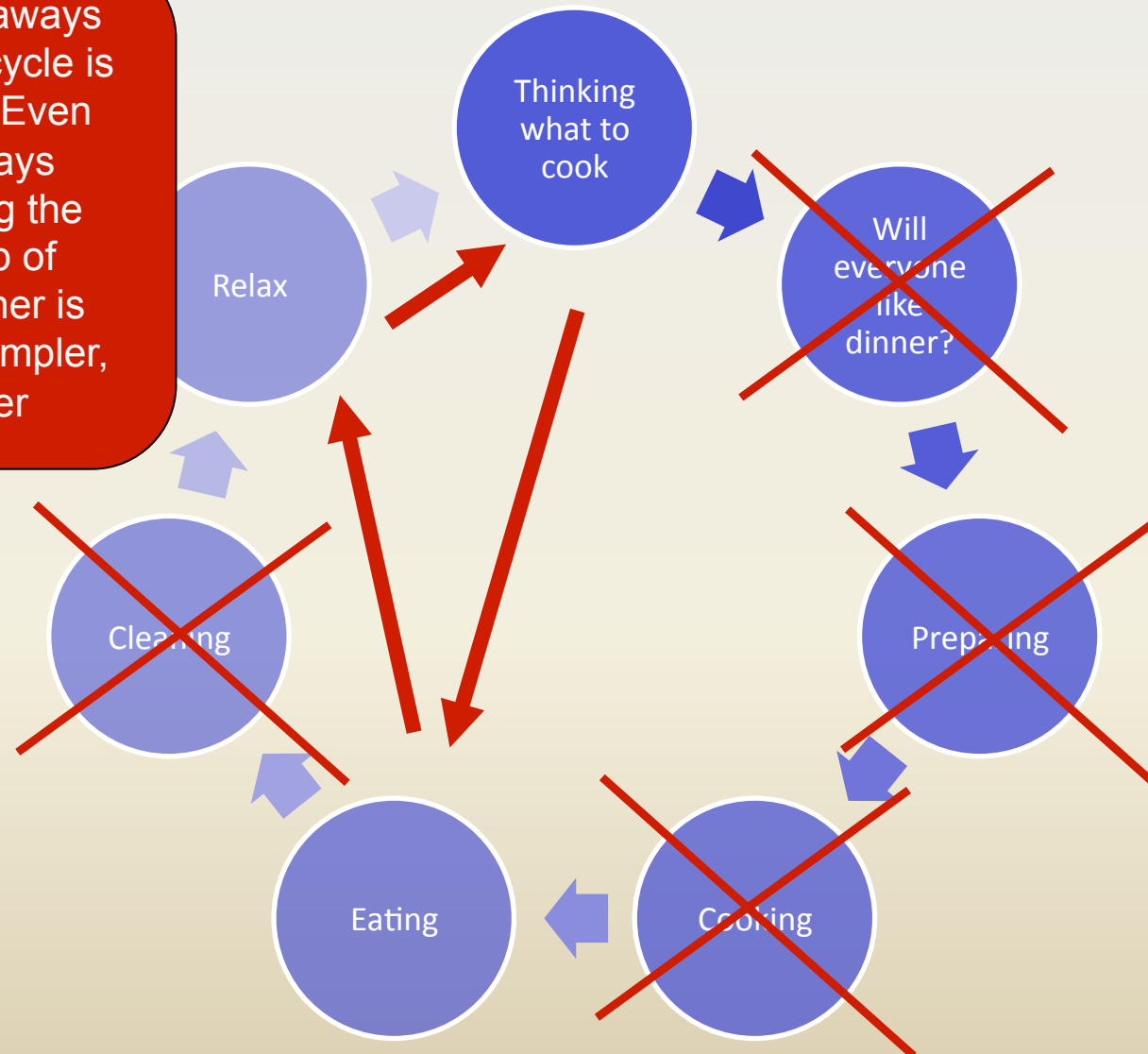
☪ Are usually from local shops

- Not from fast-food chains (too expensive, too far)
- Not usually driving, often walking (minimise driving time and cost)
- Kids can walk to pick up
 - Gets kids out of the house to stop complaining about being hungry
 - Contributing to the meal preparation
 - Helping Mum/Dad get dinner ready

“We never have takeaways delivered. It costs too much.” (Female, Maori)

The daily meal cycle with takeaways

...so with takeaways the daily meal cycle is much shorter. Even with takeaways supplementing the meal, the job of preparing dinner is made lighter, simpler, and quicker



Perceived problems with takeaways

🍴 Expensive

🍴 Not entirely healthy

- One mother felt guilty because of the fat (European)
- Hygiene issues – whose hands made that pattie?

🍴 No leftovers

- Not ordering more food than needed (cost)

“Knowing what the kids are eating is one plus about having a home cooked meal. At least I know it’s not full of preservatives.” (Female, Maori)



STAPLES AND LUXURY FOODS



Defining staple versus luxury foods

Staples

- Used for more than one meal
- Appear in at least a few meals every week
- Different for every family
- Vary with disposable income
- Can be a condiment, starch, canned, frozen
- Maximise the usability and stretchability of the more costly key ingredients

Luxuries

- Not regularly affordable
- Maybe purchased for a special occasion
- Considered if any money leftover at the end of the shopping trip
- Can include items such as cheese, yoghurt, milk, muesli, some spreads.

Staples are diverse

- ☉ Pantries offer variety – not just essentials, not always quantity
 - Herbs and spices, onions and garlic
 - Potatoes, dried pastas, rice, noodles, 2 minute noodles, cereals
 - Frozen and tinned foods
 - Sauces and condiments
 - Baking ingredients
- ☉ Not many convenience foods stocked, such as ready-to-eat and heat-and-eat meals (expensive!)
- ☉ Range of good, solid basics stocked
 - Quantities vary
 - Increases to include more “luxury” items when disposable income increases (not occasional money, but long term income increases)

Staples used over and over again

🍴 Carbohydrates prevalent

- Rice, Weetbix, Ricies, pasta, oats, potatoes, kumara

🍴 Set range of food options to make meals from the pantry or freezer contents

🍴 Food stocks are planned to minimise waste

🍴 Looking for better options for food options, which can get dull week after week

- Inspiration using what they have without adding too many extra ingredients (cost)
- Avoid wasting lesser used ingredients

Luxuries are too costly

🍴 Cheese is a luxury

- A block of cheese is unaffordable
- More likely to purchase a bag of grated cheese for a meal
 - Small quantity – enough for one meal
 - No leftovers, unfortunately

🍴 Brand name foods

- McCains, Eta, Maggi all too expensive
- Buy no-name brands
 - Instant noodles with no flavour sachets – no-name brands
- They perceive themselves as having high awareness of food costs

🍴 A luxury becomes a staple when there is more income coming into the house for the long term

- One-off cash opportunities do not change the weekly grocery list

RECIPE REACTIONS



I have enclose that meal that I have
prepare for my family, and thanks for Jo
and Tina for supporting my self has to do
the HOME PREPARED MEALS.

Thanks

Pre-trial comments on recipes

🍴 Enjoyed looking at the options

- Studied ingredients
- Excited about trying new things
- Not all recipes appropriate to family tastes and appetite sizes
 - Kids do not like sweet and sour sauce
- Recipes looked quick and easy to prepare

🍴 Recipes easy to follow

- Language used is appropriate
- Clear and simple instructions

🍴 Branding the ingredients intimidates/turns off

- Not something they can afford
- Only afford generic brands

Pre-trial comments on recipes

🍴 Some recipes rejected immediately:

- Kids won't eat
- Takes too long to prepare/cook
- Can't afford ingredients
- Cheaper to buy at takeaway
- ...And so on

🍴 One family had burgers previous night but still chose burgers for their meal

- Knew everyone would eat them
- Too risky to try something too different that they may not eat/like

Pre-trial comments on recipes

🍴 Pacific: All recipes looked really appealing but what could they cook for everyone?

- Not enough food
- Not suited to everyone's tastes
- Need to add more bits to make a complete meal

Post-trial comments on recipes

- ☉ Most participants surprised how filling meals were
 - What were thought to be small portions were more filling than expected
 - Considered to be more filling than takeaways!
- ☉ The delight and enjoyment of most family members in the meal was clear in the comments
- ☉ Kids loved the freshness and the colours of the food
- ☉ Only 3 of 51 people in the research said they liked the takeaways better than the prepared meals
- ☉ The recipes, however, were thought to need more pre-planning for shopping day than their usual meal options
(this may come with more practice or experience with those recipes)

Foods kids (generally) like include:

🍴 Fish and chips

🍴 Burgers

🍴 Kebabs

🍴 Pies

- Bacon and egg
- Meat

🍴 Pizza

🍴 Noodles

Foods kids (generally) do not like include:

- 🍴 Cucumber, olives, beetroot
- 🍴 Sweet and sour sauce
- 🍴 Wraps
- 🍴 Spicy foods

“It was nicer than any takeaway meal. Not all greasy and limp.”

“I just prefer home cooked meals.”

“I like it because it was delicious and yummy”

“It was cheaper, nicer, fresher, and healthier”

“I liked it how I only needed one burger to feel full.”

SPECIFIC RECIPE COMMENTS

“Everything was very easy when you have instructions.”

“The different and colourful ingredients that went into the meal. Have never had or cooked a meat pattie with breadcrumbs and chili sauce so it was nice to try a pattie that was different and tasty.”

Chicken Chop Suey



Ingredients

- 🕒 700 grams chicken, chopped
- 🕒 1 tablespoon oil
- 🕒 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- 🕒 4 tablespoons water
- 🕒 1 tablespoon crushed garlic
- 🕒 1 tablespoon crushed ginger
- 🕒 1 bag frozen stir fry veggie mix
- 🕒 3 packets instant noodles

Chicken Chop Suey

Likes

- 🍴 A favourite Pacific dish
- 🍴 Everyone has their own recipe for this
- 🍴 All kids love noodles

Dislikes

- 🍴 Maori: Photo did not **look** nice
 - Swimming in soy sauce
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Portions too small
 - Snack or lunch, not dinner
 - Side dish only for dinner
- 🍴 Pacific: use vermicelli to prepare normally, not instant noodles
- 🍴 Need to add rice/taro/potato/meat

Easy Cheesy Burgers



Ingredients

- 750 grams lean mince
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup breadcrumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweet chilli sauce
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 bag green salad mix
- 1 tin sliced beetroot, drained
- 3 carrots, grated
- 4 tomatoes, sliced
- 8 hamburger buns
- 2 bags oven fries

Easy Cheesy Burgers

Likes

- 🍴 Whole family loves burgers
- 🍴 Can tailor to individual tastes – customise-able
 - Omit beetroot, cheese, etc
- 🍴 Largest meal size – most food – looks enough to feed family
- 🍴 Summer BBQ treat
- 🍴 MEATIER (MEATIEST of the options)
- 🍴 Like the look of the burgers

Dislikes

- 🍴 Not practical – need to be filled out to feed the family
 - Too expensive!!
- 🍴 Can't cook all the burgers at once in one pan
- 🍴 Usually for family occasions – BBQs
- 🍴 Too much time for preparation, although simple to prepare

Mexican Wraps



Ingredients

- ☉ 600 grams lean mince
- ☉ 1 tablespoon oil
- ☉ 1 can chilli beans
- ☉ 1 can Mexican tomatoes
- ☉ 1 can whole kernel corn, drained
- ☉ 1 bag green salad mix
- ☉ 2 carrots, grated
- ☉ 2 tomatoes, chopped
- ☉ 1 small pottle light sour cream
- ☉ 6 tortilla wraps

Mexican Wraps

Likes

- 🍴 Something different
- 🍴 Cheaper than kebabs (\$11 each for kebabs!)

Dislikes

- 🍴 Maori: Did not **look** nice
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: portion too small
- 🍴 Kids will not eat spicy tomatoes
- 🍴 Kids probably will not eat even with normal tomatoes – not worth the risk trying (waste!)
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Portions too small
 - Snack or lunch, not dinner
 - Side dish only for dinner
- 🍴 Portions in photo too small
- 🍴 Too messy for kids

Mexican Pizza



Ingredients

- ❶ 2 pizza bases
- ❷ 1 cup pasta sauce
- ❸ 1 onion, sliced
- ❹ 1 can chilli beans
- ❺ 1 cup frozen corn
- ❻ 1 green pepper, sliced
- ❼ 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- ❽ 1 ½ cups grated cheese
- ❾ Green salad mix
- ❿ 1 tomato, chopped

Mexican Pizza

Likes

🍴 none

Dislikes

- 🍴 Not a dinner meal
- 🍴 Difficult to make for different tastes in the household (not customisable)
 - Some don't like olives, pineapples, etc
- 🍴 Need to make more than one
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Portions too small
 - Snack or lunch, not dinner
 - Side dish only for dinner
- 🍴 Limited oven space
- 🍴 Not interested
- 🍴 Didn't look appetising from photo
- 🍴 Fiddly to make to suit everyone

Fish and Wedges



Ingredients

- 🕒 2 boxes crumbed Hoki fish
- 🕒 8 potatoes, scrubbed
- 🕒 2 tablespoons oil
- 🕒 1 tablespoon crushed garlic
- 🕒 black pepper
- 🕒 1 bag green salad mix
- 🕒 1 tomato, chopped

Fish and Wedges

Likes

- 🍴 Everyone enjoys fish and chips from the takeaway

Dislikes

- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Portions too small
 - Snack or lunch, not dinner
 - Side dish only for dinner
- 🍴 Too expensive
 - Cheaper to buy from takeaway shop
 - Bigger portions for less at takeaway shop
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Concern about freshness of frozen fish
 - Suspicious if old or blended fish
- 🍴 European: Not a healthy meal
- 🍴 Would serve up only if kids eating (no adults eating)

Sweet and sour pork



Ingredients

- 🕒 600 grams lean pork
- 🕒 1 tablespoon oil
- 🕒 1 onion, sliced
- 🕒 1 bag frozen stir fry veggie mix
- 🕒 1 jar sweet and sour sauce
- 🕒 ½ cup water
- 🕒 1 can pineapple pieces, drained
- 🕒 3 cups rice

Sweet and sour pork

Likes

- 🍴 A favourite Pacific dish

Dislikes

- 🍴 Kids do not like sweet and sour
- 🍴 Maori: did not like the look in the photo
- 🍴 Not enough food
 - Needs rice/taro/potato
- 🍴 Pacific/Maori: Portions too small
 - Snack or lunch, not dinner
 - Side dish only for dinner



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Who are these families?

🍴 These families generally....

- Prefer home cooked meals
- Enjoy trying new recipes (within their family's taste spectrum)
- Are concerned about the health of their children (more than themselves)
- Are proud of how well they provide for their family with their limited resources
- Are time and money poor
- Only have one adult in paid work
- Have more resource issues as the number of people in the household increases
 - 1 adult and 2 kids on \$40,000 versus 2 adults and 5 kids on \$40,000

Objective of meal preparation for these families:

To make the best meal that
most will eat with the
money and time you have

Focus on extending pantry supplies

- 🍴 Understand that the real challenge for these cooks is to get creative with what's left in the pantry
 - at the end of the week, especially when no fresh ingredients are left
- 🍴 Challenge their usual (tired) recipes
 - Comparing and tweaking their recipes
 - Looking for easier, quicker, healthier, tastier, cheaper, more filling
- 🍴 Inspire their creativity for the end of the pay week
- 🍴 Stretch their food dollar
- 🍴 Present alternatives within recipes with what may be in their pantry
 - Instead of chips, make X
 - Instead of fresh X, use frozen X

Minimise key ingredients

- 🍴 Offer them that **one magic ingredient** to add to their pantry that will improve their menu offerings
 - They can afford to make that one or two changes but cannot afford to add a whole list of ingredients, especially perishables, to their shopping list
 - No foods can be wasted, unused or disliked
- 🍴 Minimise the number of key ingredients in recipes
 - Key ingredients are often costly
- 🍴 Offer customise-able options to suit everyone's individual tastes in the family
- 🍴 Provide opportunities to “steal ideas” for their own recipes
 - Rather than aiming to rewrite their entire recipe book

Present the entire meal

🍴 Reassure meal preparers about the meal

- Will not risk trying new recipes if they have any doubt whether everyone will like it or eat it
- Will not risk wasting food or time or money
- Don't move too far from familiar foods, or takeaway offerings (nothing too exotic)
- Will there be enough for everyone? (mother will usually go hungry if not)

🍴 Ensure kid's tastes and preferences are the priority

🍴 Offer healthier options:

- they are more likely to accept healthier mixed meals (takeaways + home-cooked) than to drop takeaways altogether
- Progressively move away from takeaways (replace chips with X)
- Offer: **Healthier recipe options that your kids will like as much as takeaways!**

Use someone like them to convey the message

🍴 Establish trust for any new recipes (or the source of the recipes)

- Reluctant to risk ruining a meal through experimentation
 - Family goes hungry
 - Food and money and time is wasted
- Which recipes are going to work out (and not let me down)?
- Who do I trust to be honest with me about food?
- One bad experience and they may not try another recipe (from that source)

🍴 Channel trust: they trust...

- A mother or older female
- Someone in their position/ like them
- Not Jamie Oliver
- Not Nigella Lawson

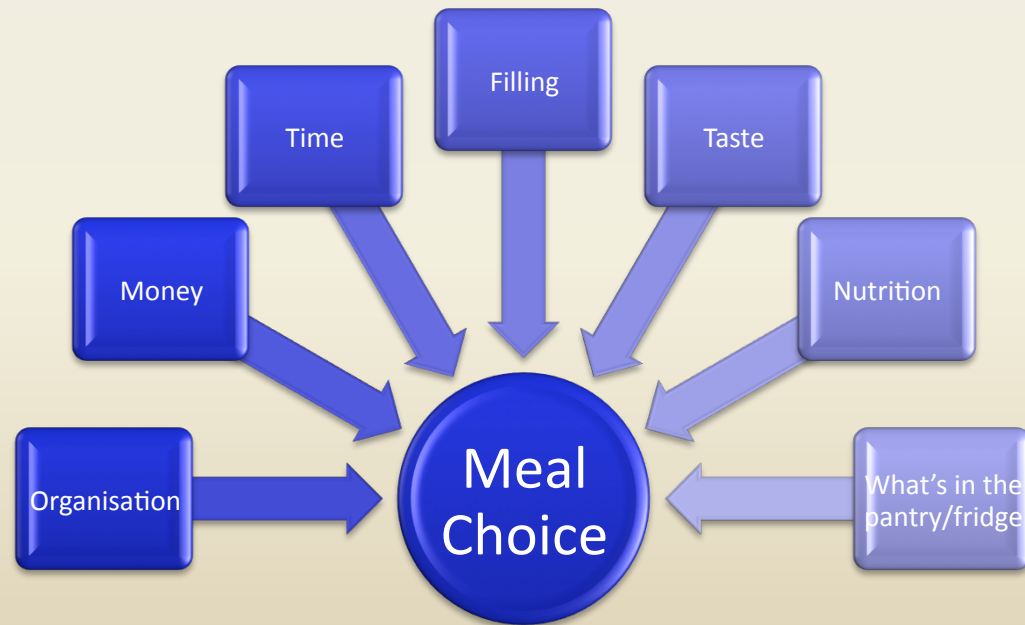
Use someone like them to convey the message

- 🍴 Offer easy to access media for these messages:
 - TV/ TV ads (eg “food in a minute” style ads)
 - Friends and family
 - Face to face
 - Experiencing the meal first hand
 - Photos showing appetising and full-sized meals
 - (not online)
- 🍴 Educate on how filling that fresh, unprocessed food can be for the whole family
 - Compared with takeaways
- 🍴 Acknowledge where their resources are lacking
 - And how to increase those resources (e.g. getting kids to chop vege)
- 🍴 Compliment them on what a great job they are doing with what they have
 - Do not admonish them for using takeaways

Show recipes that make meal time easier/ cheaper/ faster

🍴 Recipes need to fulfill similar criteria to takeaways to replace takeaways in these households:

- Quick
- Easy
- Tasty
- Filling
- Appealing to the kids



Overall recommendations:

1. Focus on extending their pantry supplies
2. Minimise key ingredients in recipes
3. Present the entire (appetising) meal (in photos, etc.)
4. Praise how well they are meeting the challenge of feeding their family (do not punish)
5. Use “someone like them” as a vehicle for the recipes/messages
6. Educate on how filling fresh food can be versus takeaways
7. Understand that to make a complete and healthy meal you need at least time, money, and organisational skills. They are lacking at least two of these (in most cases)



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Partial-Ethnographic
Study

November 2010



Appendix

Recipe feedback

Burger - Maori Family A

- 🕒 30 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 All liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
- 🕒 Will switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All liked the look a lot
- 🕒 All liked the flavour a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 3 adults
- 🕒 3 children (10-14 years)
- 🕒 Maori
- 🕒 Male: administrator
- 🕒 Female: unpaid worker

Burger Comments – Maori Family A

“Very easy to prepare.” (female adult)

“The cost of eating healthy is expensive. [would like] advice of where/how to cook cheap healthy meals” (female adult)

“It tastes nicer and is easy to prepare” (female adult)

“It was tasty” (female 10-14 years old)

“The meat pattie was very tasty and was almost a meal in itself. Consistency of meat pattie great. Lots of veges and the egg – beautiful! Very filling and nutritious meal.” (female adult)

“The burger was fresh, tasty, and I was able to see what was on the burger. Ability to make my own if I wanted. Could have the quantity of dressing desired. Not greasy or fatty. Nice and hot.” (female adult)

“Tasted awesome, cost, freshness” (male adult)

“It was cheaper, nicer, fresher, and healthier” (male adult)

“Yummy” (female 10-14 years old)

Mexican Wrap - Maori Family B

- 🕒 20 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 All liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
- 🕒 Might switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All liked the look a lot
- 🕒 All liked the flavour a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 1 adult
- 🕒 1 child (5-9 years)
- 🕒 Maori
- 🕒 No male in household
- 🕒 Female unemployed (clinical depression)

Mexican Wrap Comments – Maori Family B

“Quick and easy to make. Tasted great and has vegetables all in one meal.” (female adult)

“[child] loved the tomato and meat and making lettuce wraps and showing her mother how to make lettuce wraps.” (female adult)

🗣️ But...

“The tortillas fell apart. Didn’t like the purple lettuce [in the salad]” (female adult)

“I think pita pockets would be easier for [child] to hold and eat” (female adult)

“Have to wash dishes after the meal” (female adult)

“Easier to just get takeaways and throw away the package. No washing up: Lazy option.” (female adult)

“Comes down to whether or not I have the energy to cook or not.” (female adult)

Chicken Chop Suey - Maori Family C

- 🕒 35 Minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 3=right serving size
1=too little
- 🕒 2 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
1 = liked takeaways a BIT more, 1 liked takeaways a LOT more
- 🕒 3 = looked OK – not great
1= liked the look a lot
- 🕒 3 = tasted OK – not great 1=
liked the taste a lot
- 🕒 2 = ingredients OK – not great
1= liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 4 adults
- 🕒 4 children (2 at 6-14 years; 2 at 15-24 years)
- 🕒 Maori
- 🕒 Male: unemployed
- 🕒 Female: breadwinner

Chicken Chop Suey Comments - Maori Family C

"The chicken was well cooked and tasty." (female adult)

"At least the vegetables were fresh." (female adult)

"I liked the fact it was quick and easy" (female child 15-24 years old)

"I liked the flavour of the ginger and garlic and the quantity of veges in the dish." (male adult)

"I just prefer home cooked meals." (male adult)

"I liked the fact there were a lot of vegies in the meal." (female 15-24 years old)

"I like fresh food (veg). The texture is just much nicer." (female 15-24 years old)

But...

"The vegetables were soft and mushy. Noodles had gone soft and mushy as well" (female adult)

"Takeaways are easy for me and suit my lifestyle better" (female child 15-24 years old)

"I don't like the taste of frozen vege. I think fresh veges would have tasted better." (female child 15-24 years old)

"The veges and noodles were a little mushy." (male adult)

"The look of the meal could have been better." (female 15-24 years old)

"I did add the flavour sachets from the noodles because I did not want to waste them." (female adult)

Burger - Maori Family D

- 🕒 45 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 2 = about right serving size
2 = too big
- 🕒 2 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
2 = liked a BIT more than takeaways
- 🕒 Might switch to more home meals
- 🕒 3 = liked the look a lot
1 = OK – not great
- 🕒 2 = liked the flavour a lot
2 = OK – not great
- 🕒 2 = liked the ingredients a lot
2 = OK – not great
- 🕒 2 adults
- 🕒 5 children (0-5 years, 2 at 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and 15-24 years)
- 🕒 Maori
- 🕒 Male: unemployed
- 🕒 Female: Council employee

Burger Comments – Maori Family D

“Taste of the patties was mean. Easy to make. I liked that I could leave out the ingredients I didn’t like.” (male adult)

“It was very nice and easy to prepare.” (male adult)

“I’ve always like homemade meals over takeaways. The meal we had was much healthier than takeaways and the burger I had was made to my liking so was nicer than any takeaway burger I’ve had.” (male adult)

“Patties were big and tasty. Burgers are yummy!” (male 5 – 9 years old)

“More tastier, yummy burgers.” (male 5 – 9 years old)

“Patty tasted different.” (male 10-14 years old)

“I like the beetroot” (male 5-9 years olds)

“Because I get sick of takeaways.” (male adult)

“Evenings where we would have takeaways is usually when we are out most of the night at kid’s or adult’s sports.” (female adult)

“Because I like burgers.” (male 5-9 years olds)

“Everything was very easy when you have instructions.” (female adult)

But...

“I didn’t have any salads on my burger. Don’t like them.” (male 5 – 9 years old)

“I don’t really like the onions in the patty.” (male 10-14 years old)

“[it would be easier and more attractive to prepare meals like this at home] knowing that you already have ingredients in the cupboard without having to leave the house.” (female adult)

Burger - Pacific Family A

- 🕒 40-55 Minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 1 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
2 = liked a BIT more than takeaways
- 🕒 Might switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All liked the look a lot
- 🕒 All liked the taste a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 2 adults
- 🕒 2 children (15-24 and 10-14 years)
- 🕒 Pacific Islander

Burger Comments – Pacific Family A

“The different and colourful ingredients that went into the meal. Have never had or cooked a meat pattie with breadcrumbs and chili sauce so it was nice to try a pattie that was different and tasty.” (female adult)

“Enjoy home prepared meals better...you can vary ingredients ...you know how fresh the products are. ..to buy healthy takeaways is much more expensive than the fast food places which can be greasy and not as tasty.” (male adult)

“[liked] the fries.” (female child 10-14 years old)

“The salad, meat and fries in one meal is a great balance.” (female child 15-24 years old)

“It was so fresh, tasty and more healthy. I like takeaways but this meal was a much better version from the one you can buy at a takeaway.” (female adult)

“Nothing difficult..had to allow more time...I normally just use mince and seasoning.” (female adult)

“Having the base ingredients would always make it easier and...having additional colourful vegetables and herbs, eg, capsicum, basil, etc. would make it look very attractive.” (female adult)

“...takeaways is always a last resort...” (female adult)

 But...

“Have had a nicer mayonnaise” (male adult)

“Beetroot and a bit too much salad” (female child 10-14 years old)

“ I don’t like beetroot or mayonnaise” (female child 15-24 years old)

Burger - Pacific Family B

- 🕒 60 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 1 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
1 = liked a BIT more than takeaways
1 = liked takeaways MUCH more
- 🕒 Might switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All said look is OK, not great
- 🕒 All liked the taste a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 3 adults
- 🕒 1 child (15-24 years)
- 🕒 Pacific Islander

Burger Comments – Pacific Family B

“Because I like [the takeaways] better.” (female child 15 to 24 years old)

“It was very filling and could only eat one burger. Normally I would eat two burgers. That was great.” (male adult)

“Homemade not as greasy as takeaway and sometimes takeaways don’t fill you up, you’re still hungry after an hour. It’s nice to have homemade when we have time to cook it.” (male adult)

“It was easy to cook, quick and easy to prepare, tasty and filling and the kids couldn’t eat it all. It filled them up. (female adult)

But...

[wanted more chips]

“[Difficult] To make sure we have the right ingredients at the time to make these meals.” (female adult)

“Because our household is very sporty with trainings and game nights on different days that determines which days and how many days we actually cook at home.” (female adult)

Fish and Wedges - Pacific Family C

- 🕒 45 minutes to prepare
 - 🕒 Very easy to prepare
 - 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
 - 🕒 About right serving size
 - 🕒 All liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
 - 🕒 Will switch to more home meals
 - 🕒 All liked the look a lot
 - 🕒 All liked the flavour a lot
 - 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 2 adults
 - 🕒 4 children (5-9 year old, 2 at 10-14 year olds , 15-24 year old)
 - 🕒 Pacific Islander

Fish and Wedges - Pacific Family C

“Because I cook at home and I know it’s safe for my family to eat, unlike takeaways – I don’t know who is touching it.” (female adult)

“I like it because it was delicious and yummy” (female adult)

“Because it is not expensive. So quick and easy to cook and prepare for my family’s dinner, and my family so happy while they eat the meal.” (female adult)

Burgers - Pacific Family D

- 🕒 30 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 All liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
- 🕒 Will switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All liked the look a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 1 adult
- 🕒 2 children (both 15-24 years)
- 🕒 Pacific Islander
- 🕒 Female works
- 🕒 No male in household (solo mother)

Burgers - Pacific Family D

“The oven chips complemented the meal well. The wholemeal buns were great.” (female adult)

“Preparing the meal together with the kids was great. Cheaper (significantly). More attractive presentation. I can control the amount of oil used.” (female adult)

BUT...

“We felt that making the patties from scratch was inconvenient (minor). Usually we buy the pre-cooked patties and grill these in the oven instead of frying in oil.” (female adult)

“[Would be easier if] pre-cooked patties or already prepared patties [were used]. However, making the patties was fun and we spent time together as a family preparing them so it was great from that perspective.” (female adult)

Burger - European Family A

- 🕒 70 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 2 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
1 = liked a BIT more than takeaways
- 🕒 Will switch to more home meals
- 🕒 3 = look is OK, not great
1=liked a lot
- 🕒 All liked the taste a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 2 adults
- 🕒 2 children (5-9 years each)
- 🕒 European

Burger meal order – European Family A

“[liked] The colours.” (female 5-9 years old)

“It was just perfect. Nice combination of fresh, crisp ingredients. I really enjoyed the meal.” (female adult)

“It was nicer than any takeaway meal. Not all greasy and limp.” (female adult)

“Yummy” (male 5-9 years old)

“It was healthy and yummy” (male 5-9 years old)

“Far more healthy – fresh ingredients – able to make and use ingredients you like for taste and look – better value for money.” (male adult)

But...

“[Takeaways are] faster.” (female 5-9 years old)

“[Difficult] ...Balancing the ingredients on the buns...they were pretty big burgers.” (male adult)

“I would make the meat patties less thick which was my fault.” (male adult)

Burger - European Family B

- 🕒 60 minutes to prepare
- 🕒 Easy to prepare
- 🕒 Very easy to follow instructions
- 🕒 About right serving size
- 🕒 2 = liked MUCH MORE than takeaways
1 = liked a BIT more than takeaways
2 = liked the same as takeaways
- 🕒 Might switch to more home meals
- 🕒 All liked the look a lot
- 🕒 All liked the taste a lot
- 🕒 All liked the ingredients a lot
- 🕒 2 adults
- 🕒 4 children (2 at 10-14 and 2 at 15-24 years)
- 🕒 European

Burger meal order – European Family B

“Great! Enjoyed doing it – make them again. Time factor.” (female adult)

“The hamburger buns were tasteful and fresh along with the meat patties also were very tasty which blended well with the lettuce, tomato, carrot, cheese and beetroot.” (male adult)

“...It’s less fatty, more filling, much more nutritious.” (male adult)

“It tastes great” (female 15 – 24 years old)

“It tastes better and healthy [than a takeaway]” (male 10-14 years old)

“I liked it how I only needed one burger to feel full.” (male 15-24 years old)

“It was different to any other takeaway burgers.” (male 15-24 years old)

“Meals you prepare at home are a lot fresher and healthy and much more filling and you know what goes into your food, plus you know that when preparing meals at home your hygiene is good.” (female adult)

But...

“They both [the meal and a takeaway] taste the same.” (female 15 – 24 years old)

“Cheese and carrots could have been bagged up like grated cheese...would have been less time making this.” (female adult)



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