

The Family Meal Model

Understanding the meal modes

Please Note: Materials and ideas contained in this report remain the intellectual property of the BC Dairy Foundation and Concerto Marketing Group Inc. and may not be reproduced, republished, distributed, displayed, broadcast or otherwise exploited in any manner without express prior permission. The morphological psychology needs and motivations model is the intellectual property of Concerto Marketing's strategic partner, IFM In-depth Research and Strategies Pty Ltd., used under license. The Better Together trademark is the property of BC Dairy Foundation.



Understanding the meal modes

Our Better Together research uncovered 17 psychological meal modes.

What is a psychological meal mode?

- A meal mode is best defined as a style of meal.
- It is important to note that a mode is not just a description of an observed behaviour or conscious act, it also describes underlying often unconscious motivations.
- Meal modes help people manage or mediate their psychological tensions with regards to meals and family life (imagine them like mental hotspots emerging in the model).

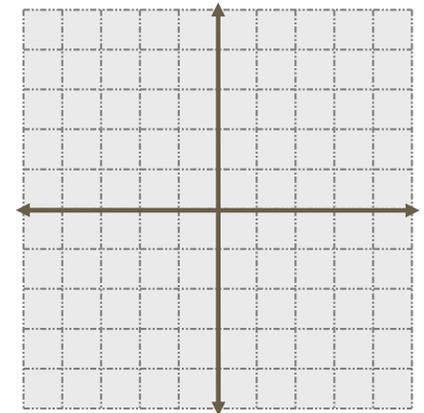
Can you have more than one mode?

- Over time, people can experience a wide range of meal modes, indeed most people will have a repertoire of meal modes.

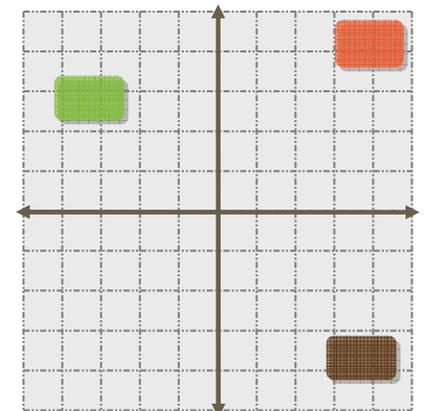
What are the good and bad meal modes?

- There are no such things as **good** or **bad** modes, all meal modes can have positive and negative consequences.
- Only by understanding all modes individually and holistically can we begin to properly understand family meal behaviour.

Psychological model



Psychological modes



Family Meal Mode:	Definition:	Likelihood of eating together:	Self assessment:
Familiar celebrations	<p>Familiar celebrations involves traditional family gatherings like weddings, Thanksgiving, birthdays or anniversaries. These meals tend to be less frequent and involve extended planning and effort.</p> <p>Example: <i>“I love to have family dinners. As the years go on, if anything ever happened to my husband, I know my sons would be there for me – being close and loving...Another part of these family dinners is to bring the brothers and their wives together. I hope that I’m a friend to them. Carrying that feeling on in the family is very important.”</i> - Mother</p>	High	Do you often have formal or celebratory meals with extended family?
Faith-full replication	<p>Faith-full replication involves incorporating religious, spiritual or symbolic traditions into meal preparation and consumption. Beyond faith, this mode also involves a consistent and sometimes strict replication of meal traditions.</p> <p>Example: <i>“Everyone wishes everyone good Sabbath, there are hugs and kisses, blessings over the wine and bread, everyone has a sip of wine from the wine glass, and there are three courses...It’s all about tradition and family dynamics.”</i> - Grandmother</p>	High	Do you often include religious traditions, or other family traditions in your meals? (For Example: Glass salutes, Sabbath candles, prayer, table settings)
All consuming memories	<p>All consuming memories are meals that are designed to evoke memories of shared moments or loved ones. They generally involve replicating meals or dishes linked to past loved ones, family history or culture.</p> <p>Example: <i>“Food is a link to the people we care about. Growing up we always got one sort of cookie from our grandmother. That cookie helps us remember her, it reminds us of those times.”</i> - Mother</p>	High	Do you often prepare meals that remind you of your loved ones, or family history?
Familiar bonding	<p>Familiar bonding is the meal mode most closely associated with the process of eating together as a family unit. The meal is connected with team building and the sharing of dishes reflects a process of family unity.</p> <p>Example: <i>“That’s an old traditional Chinese thing...When you’re served the meal, you’re told how much attention is in it. It was a warm soup with warm feelings in it. Love was in it.”</i> - Mother</p>	High	Do you often have a team routine for preparing and eating meals?
First taste of respons-ability	<p>First taste of respons-ability involves family members learning how to prepare meals together. The process of tasting and enjoying the outcomes of your actions is the strongest reward for creating a meal, helping to build meal responsibility and overcome issues like ‘fussy eating’.</p> <p>Example: <i>“I cook when I have my kids over. It’s something we can do together; they get excited about it and it makes me feel good...It’s a feeling of empowerment...Anytime you learn something new it’s a good feeling.”</i> - Father</p>	High	Do you often involve your children or family in the process of meal preparation?

Family Meal Mode:	Definition:	Likelihood of eating together:	Self assessment:
Home sweet home	<p>Home sweet home involves meals with desserts, sweets and baked products. The creation and consumption of these meals is often used to mark 'homecoming' and create positive memories and associations within family environments.</p> <p>Example: <i>"My grandparents never hurt me, she [grandmother] taught me to bake...Each time I came back to her home she'd bake with me...She made me feel like I was wanted. They were the only ones who made me feel like I was wanted."</i> - Mother</p>	High	Do you often bake or prepare desserts together as part of a meal?
M-eating together	<p>M-eating together involves an informal, egalitarian and fun approach to group meal preparation and consumption. This can often involve barbecuing, tapas or pot-luck style meals, that reduce complexity in meal preparation as well as social risk and individual effort.</p> <p>Example: <i>"There's a Dutch word 'gezellig' which means warm intimate thing. It's a couple or three people in a warm setting having deep meaningful conversation. The ambience of the room, the people you're with, the snacks you're eating. Nobody is in a rush and we're talking about things that matter."</i> - Father</p>	High	Do you often have barbecues, share tapas or have pot-luck style meals?
Adaptation & adoption	<p>Adaptation & adoption involves augmenting and adopting new meals in order to meet the constantly changing demands of life and family members. Examples could include adopting meals like bacon sushi, or adapting traditional meals like vegetarian lasagna.</p> <p>Example: <i>"Usually when my parents come over, it's because we're making sushi together. It's a well loved meal in my house, but we have to be creative with it. We don't just use the same fish things, you've got to think out of the box. It's a learning process combining different flavours."</i> - Mother</p>	High	Do you often prepare new types of meals, or mix old and new meals together?
Out-sourced eating	<p>Out-sourced eating involves consuming a take-away or restaurant meal. This meal be positive if it helps introduce new tastes and social interactions, but it can become a trap if people are using it to overcome cooking limitations and personal demands, or even as a substitute for emotion.</p> <p>Example: <i>"My daughter married an American who died from diabetes...He'd take his insulin once in a while, but was always eating candy and drinking soda. He was a real workaholic too...with such long hours they'd just grab anything to eat. They ate out at least four nights a week."</i> – Grandmother</p>	Medium	Do you often eat at restaurants or consume take-away meals?

Family Meal Mode:	Definition:	Likelihood of eating together:	Self assessment:
Plates of least resistance	<p>Plates of least resistance involves a compromise in family eating. In an attempt to appease the individual demands of all family members and maintain harmony, everyone is served an individual meal. This places a heavy burden on the cook, requiring additional time and effort.</p> <p>Example: <i>“When you’re cooking for other people, you have to cook for them the way they want it. It becomes a chore. If you give them something they don’t like, they won’t eat it. It’s hard to please everyone, so I end up cooking different food for everyone.”</i> - Mother</p>	Medium	Do you often prepare more than one meal for your family? (For Example: Different dishes for each person in the house)
Creating healthy tension	<p>Creating healthy tension involves demands for healthy food and living in family meals. Healthy food can represent a shift from traditional eating patterns, and can initially lack emotional associations. Healthy meals can also create tension; taking longer to prepare and often being met with hostility when served to the family.</p> <p>Example: <i>“It was a pleasure before all this started. I loved cooking and baking. It played a huge role in my self-esteem but all that changed when healthy food was introduced...I believe no matter what you eat, it’s memories, associations, an emotional thing. Now six or seven serving of veggies is a totally different eating style...It’s like having an accident and having to learn something new.”</i> - Grandmother</p>	Medium	Do you often prepare healthy meals, or follow strict nutritional rules when eating?
Routine consistency	<p>Routine consistency involves a structured and disciplined approach to family meals; with meal times and types mandated amongst participants. Common amongst people with rigid eating habits and larger families, this mode maintains control, but can often lead to individual meal rebellion.</p> <p>Example: <i>“We went to the strengthening families program and they said having meals would strengthen us. Now we feel more close at the dinner table. We put the food on the table and that’s what they eat, with much less complaints...My husband makes up a menu every month and we get stocked up...He likes eating the same sort of stuff.”</i> - Mother</p>	Medium	Do you often have strict routines with meals or have a set rotation of meals that you prepare?
A-voiding emotions	<p>A-voiding emotions involves covering-up or suppressing feelings of isolation associated with eating a meal alone. This may involve avoiding or substituting meals with other ‘important’ activities, or eating meals in conjunction with sources of distraction like television, radio or computers.</p> <p>Example: <i>“Focusing on food when I’m alone is like drinking alone. I’d be concerned about becoming as big as a house if I focus on food when I’m alone...I try not to do it too much, I mean it’s never been a routine. I’m more likely to just get lost on the internet or stay up too late.”</i> - Father</p>	Low	Do you often consume meals in front of the television, computer or some other entertainment device?

Family Meal Mode:	Definition:	Likelihood of eating together:	Self assessment:
Make-believe meals	<p>Make-believe meals involves an unrealistic expectation to create a perfect meal. This can often involve the use of frozen or semi-processed foods that promise people family harmony through a perfect looking meal.</p> <p>Example: <i>“I’m not a cook, so I need food that is fast and immediate...My son loves chicken cordon bleu, but there’s no way you’d catch me making it!...It takes so much time out of my schedule and then it’s gone in 10 minutes. If I spend time on something I want it to last.”</i> - Mother</p>	Low	Do you often eat frozen or semi-processed meals?
Jungle rules	<p>Jungle rules involves family members using food to assert dominance over each other in direct competition. Individuals will often have their own ‘stashes’ of food, meals are often eaten in secret, and family bonds can be affected as food is partitioned or ‘raided’ from other family members.</p> <p>Example: <i>“Some nights mom would call it fend for yourself night. You had to learn to make food or you’d end up eating toast.”</i> - Mother</p>	Low	Do you often argue over food, or divide food amongst family members? (For Example: Each person with their own items or personal sections in the fridge or pantry?)
Sustaining activity	<p>Sustaining activity involves quick functional meals or snacks consumed in-between activities or tasks. The role for this meal is to sustain physical activity until the next major meal.</p> <p>Example: <i>“I usually eat my lunch alone in front of the computer. It’s more of a sustenance thing really. If I think it’s just me, I tend to make something different. I might just microwave something.”</i> - Mother</p>	Low	Do you often eat meals around or during activities? (For Example: Work, Sports or Entertainment)
Challenging conventions	<p>Challenging conventions involves meals that challenge conventional eating patterns. Meals can be used by individuals as a way to rebel against the traditions of family or society, they could be a deliberate rebellion or they could be a clash of tradition or culture.</p> <p>Example: <i>“I tried fresh egg in orange juice: I took a raw egg, put berries in it, then tea, then ginger, vanilla, juice and ice cubes. It tasted all right...I give them different food. My husband only eats more traditional Indian meals. The kids will eat the stuff that comes out of the freezer.”</i> - Mother</p>	Low	Do you often have individual family members choosing not to eat a meal, or preferring to eat their own foods?

The Family Meal Model

Understanding the meal modes

Please Note: Materials and ideas contained in this report remain the intellectual property of the BC Dairy Foundation and Concerto Marketing Group Inc. and may not be reproduced, republished, distributed, displayed, broadcast or otherwise exploited in any manner without express prior permission. The morphological psychology needs and motivations model is the intellectual property of Concerto Marketing's strategic partner, IFM In-depth Research and Strategies Pty Ltd., used under license. The Better Together trademark is the property of BC Dairy Foundation.

