

Frequency of use of convenience cooking product is associated with cooking confidence and creativity and markers of vegetable intake

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Vegetables, important in a healthy balanced diet, require cooking skills to facilitate consumption and palatability.⁽¹⁾ Low levels of cooking skills and confidence may reduce consumption and encourage intake of high-energy convenience foods.⁽²⁾ Convenience cooking products may facilitate meal preparation and vegetable consumption through suggested recipes to create a meal. It is possible that through the inclusion of back-of-pack recipes these products may have a positive impact on nutritional intakes and cooking skills. Previously, through convenience sampling, we showed that those who report using convenience cooking products have cooking confidence and cooking creativity,⁽³⁾ and also typically have lower vegetable intakes.⁽⁴⁾ This study presents a representative sample of Australian who were self-reported consumers of convenience cooking and assesses how cooking confidence and creativity and markers of vegetable intake relate to frequency of use. A demographically balanced panel of Australian adults were surveyed ($n = 1034$; Qualtrics panel) on their frequency of use of convenience cooking products, cooking confidence (7-item scale) and creativity (6-item scale), and their typical vegetable intake (serves/day) and their vegetable variety (14-item scale). The internal reliability of the cooking confidence and creativity scales was high (Cronbach's alpha 0.88–0.90). Mean cooking confidence scores (possible range 7–35) were 25.1 (+ 5.6). Mean cooking creativity scores (possible range 6–30) were 18.5 (+ 4.9). Cooking confidence scores were higher in those who used meal and recipe bases ($p < 0.0001$), simmer sauces ($p = 0.001$) and pasta sauces ($p < 0.0001$) more regularly compared to those who used them less frequently. 5.4% of the sample reported consuming five or more serves of vegetables per day. Frequency of use of meal and recipe bases ($p = 0.7$), simmer sauces ($p = 0.7$) nor pasta sauces ($p = 0.8$) were not associated with differences in the proportion of participants eating at least five serves of vegetables per day. Vegetable variety scores were associated with frequency of use, with vegetable variety scores decreasing by ~ 1 with frequency of use in all product categories, meal, and recipe bases ($p < 0.0001$), simmer sauces ($p < 0.0001$) nor pasta sauces ($p < 0.0001$). Therefore, frequent use of these products is associated with higher cooking confidence and creativity but a decrease in vegetable consumption and variety. Suggesting that frequent users of these products have the skills and confidence to prepare meals with a variety of vegetables included in them, however pack-of pack recipes may lack adequate serves and varieties of vegetables to facilitate increase consumption relative to less frequent users. The findings presented here justify further research into potential adjustments to convenience cooking products back-of pack recipes.

References

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