

Your balanced diet

Get portion wise!

The right types of foods and drinks in the right amounts for you!

Full portion size list.



Co-funded by the
European Union



Contents

Why think about portion size?	1
Getting portion size right for you	1
A balanced diet across the day	2
Measuring portion size	3
Starchy foods	4
Protein foods	6
Dairy and alternatives	9
Fruit and vegetables	10
Unsaturated oils and spreads	11
Treats	11
Meals and dishes	12
FAQs	12

Why think about portion size?

Most of us probably don't think about portion size when we eat – it depends on what we would usually have, how hungry we feel and how much is in a pack or on a plate. But having a healthy, balanced diet is about getting the **right types** of foods and drinks in the **right amounts**. This guide aims to help you find the right balance for you – it's not only about how much you eat, it's also about eating differently! The information in this booklet has been developed by the [British Nutrition Foundation](#). The portion sizes given are not Government recommendations but suggestions of practical portion sizes for healthy adults for a range of foods and drinks. These can be used to complement the [Government's Eatwell Guide](#), which provides guidance on the proportions of the food groups that make up a healthy, balanced diet.



Getting portion size right for you

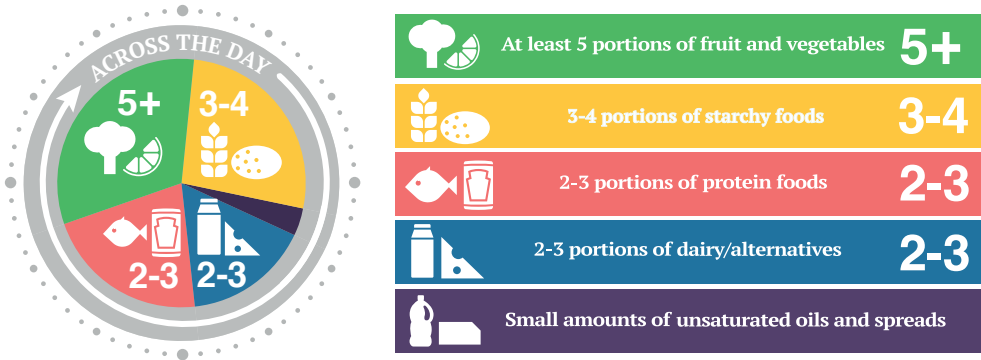
We're all individuals with different needs. For healthy adults the types of different foods and drinks we need are pretty much the same for all of us. But, the amount of food we need varies from person to person.

The portion sizes we give in this booklet are averages for healthy adults, based on a daily calorie need of 2000kcal – the amount estimated for an average, adult woman. If you're tall or very active you may need more. If you're a small person or are trying to lose weight, you may need smaller portions. If you use the hand measures we give, portion sizes will vary with the size of your hands and so, generally, bigger people will get bigger portions and smaller people will get smaller portions.

There are lots of different ways to eat a healthy, balanced diet and you can use this guidance to fit in with your preferences and beliefs – from a flexitarian (plenty of plant-based foods with some animal foods), to a vegetarian or vegan diet. It's about balancing the food groups and finding the portion sizes that are right for you.

A balanced diet across the day

This image shows how many portions to aim for from each of the main food groups each day for a healthy, balanced diet.



Putting into practice – an example day

Meal	Foods included	Fruit & Vegetables	Starchy Foods	Protein Foods	Dairy/Alternatives
Breakfast	Wholegrain cereal and milk		✓		✓
	A banana	✓			
	Small glass of orange juice	✓			
Morning snack	An apple	✓			
Lunch	Tuna and sweetcorn sandwich		✓	✓	
	Carrot sticks	✓			
	2 satsumas	✓			
Afternoon snack	Cheese and oatcakes		✓		✓
Evening meal	Spaghetti bolognese	✓	✓	✓	
	Broccoli	✓			
	Small pot of fruit yogurt				✓
TOTAL PORTIONS PER DAY		7	4	2	3

Measuring portion size

In the next pages you will find suggested portion sizes for healthy adults for a range of foods and drinks from each of the main food groups.

These portion sizes are based on an analysis of how the portions of foods and drinks we consume can fit into a healthy, balanced diet. They aim to give you an idea of sensible portion sizes but you will find that the portions available in shops, cafes, restaurants and takeaways will vary.

For each portion size we have given the weight in grams, the calorie content and a practical way of measuring it, unless it is something that comes ready portioned like a bagel, a sausage or a can of tuna. The calorie values are based on average data and so you may see different values on food packs. If you want to be accurate, then weighing your food is the best way to measure out portion sizes, but using the measuring ideas will help you get portion sizes about right.

Note that where we have used 'tablespoons', this refers to a 10ml spoon that would be used to eat soup or pudding, rather than a larger serving spoon.

The portions given are per person.

Hand measures



A palm



Half a hand lengthways



A fist



Finger and thumb
(A hole the size of a £1 coin)



Two thumbs



Starchy foods: 3-4 a day

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy foods

Choose 3-4 portions of starchy foods a day – you could have one with each meal and could also include snack-sized portions. Those that are 200kcal or more tend to be the things you would have as a main meal, and those that are less than 200kcal for lighter meals or breakfast.

It's a good idea to include wholegrains like wholemeal breads, brown pasta and wholegrain cereals, and potatoes with skins regularly as they are important sources of fibre. If you're having more than one food from this group in a meal, then portion sizes can be smaller, for example if having rice and naan bread with a curry. For foods like pasta or rice, both cooked and uncooked portion sizes are included – these gain weight when they are cooked as they absorb water. Unless it says otherwise, the information provided here is based on the food alone without additions, for example bread without spread, cereal without milk.

Less than 200 kcal – for lighter meals and breakfast

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
Baguette – ½ small baguette	70g	184 kcal	Ready portioned
Bagel thins	50g	130 kcal	Ready portioned
1 small chapatti	45g	148 kcal	Ready portioned
Flaked breakfast cereals	40g	130-150 kcal	About 3 handfuls
Garlic bread (¼ small baguette)	50g	174 kcal	Ready portioned
Muesli	50g	183 kcal	About 3 handfuls
Multigrain hoops	40g	147 kcal	About 3 handfuls
Pitta bread	60g	153 kcal	Ready portioned
Plain microwave rice	125g	190 kcal	Half a 250g pack
Porridge (dry weight)	45g	171 kcal	About 1 and a half handfuls
Potatoes – mashed with spread	80g	184 kcal	About 4 tablespoons
Potatoes – new potatoes cooked	175g	119 kcal	About 6 small potatoes
Sandwich thins	40g	98 kcal	Ready portioned
2 shredded wheat-type cereal biscuits	45g	150 kcal	Ready portioned
2 weetabix-type cereal biscuits	40g	133 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholegrain malted wheat cereal	40g	136 kcal	About 3 handfuls
Wholemeal bread – 2 slices of medium-sliced	80g	174 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholemeal bread roll – medium	60g	146 kcal	Ready portioned
Wrap	65g	183 kcal	Ready portioned

More than 200 kcal – mostly for main meals

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
Boiled yam	180g	212 kcal	About 4 tablespoons
Couscous – dried	90g	–	About 2 handfuls
Couscous – cooked	150g	267 kcal	About the amount that would fit in 2 hands cupped together
Egg noodles – dried	65g	–	Usually ready portioned
Egg noodles – cooked	175g	253 kcal	Usually ready portioned
Fufu (made with cassava, yam or other starchy vegetables)	180g	279 kcal	About 4 tablespoons
Oven chips	165g	257kcal	About 2 handfuls
Plain pasta – dried	75g	–	2 handfuls. For spaghetti: use your finger and thumb to measure a bunch the size of a £1 coin
Plain pasta – cooked	180g	270 kcal	About the amount that would fit in 2 hands cupped together
½ plain naan bread	70g	200 kcal	Ready portioned
Baked potato	220g	213 kcal	About the size of your fist
Potatoes – roasted	200g	322 kcal	About 4 small potatoes
Rice – dried	65g	–	About 2 handfuls
Rice – cooked	180g	236 kcal	About the amount that would fit in 2 hands cupped together
Scone – large	70g	242 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholemeal bread – 2 slices thick-sliced	94g	204 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholemeal bread roll – large	90g	220 kcal	Ready portioned

Snacks (less than 150 kcal)

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
3 cream crackers	24g	107 kcal	Ready portioned
Crumpet	50g	104 kcal	Ready portioned
Fruit scone – small	40g	135 kcal	Ready portioned
Malt loaf (2 slices of sliced loaf)	43g	129 kcal	Ready portioned
Mini pitta (2 small, 1 medium)	45g	109 kcal	Ready portioned
Mini wrap	30g	90 kcal	Ready portioned
2 oat-cakes	24g	109 kcal	Ready portioned
Plain popcorn	20g	94 kcal	About 3 handfuls
3 plain rice cakes	21g	81 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholemeal bread – 1 slice of medium-sliced	40g	87 kcal	Ready portioned
Wholemeal bread roll – small	35g	85 kcal	Ready portioned



Protein foods: 2-3 a day

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein

Apart from oily fish like salmon and mackerel, for most people it's a good idea not to have the 200kcal or more options in this food group too often and to go for those less than 200kcal most of the time. You can also include protein foods as snacks – they can provide a range of nutrients and may offer a healthier alternative to some sweet snacks.

Protein in a healthy, sustainable diet

For a diet that benefits our health and the planet, we need to shift towards having more plant-based sources of protein. You don't have to exclude animal foods completely, but try to swap some for beans, peas and lentils, nuts and seeds as well as plant-based meat alternatives (check nutrition labels to choose those lower in saturates and salt).

It's recommended that we have two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily (note that there are some restrictions on fish consumption for women and girls – [see NHS pages on fish](#)). Look out for fish labelled as sustainably sourced.

The Government advises that if you eat more than 90g of red and processed meat a day (see foods with a *), you should cut down to 70g - see NHS pages on meat [see NHS pages on meat](#) for more information. If you're including more than one food from this group in a meal, for example mince and beans in a chilli, then portion sizes can be smaller – in this case you could use about half the portions that are suggested below.

For foods like meat and fish, we have included both cooked and raw portion sizes – these foods lose weight when cooked as they lose water. We've generally suggested grilling, stewing and baking. Cooking methods that use more oil, such as roasting or frying, will increase the calorie content.

Less than 200 kcal – for lighter meals and breakfast

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
*Bacon (2 slices) – grilled	50g	144 kcal	Ready portioned
Baked beans	200g	162 kcal	Half a standard 400g can
Canned tuna	120g	131 kcal	A whole medium-sized can (about 160g net weight)
Chicken – roasted	100g	153 kcal	About 2 and a half slices (calories given for white meat)
Chicken breast – raw	160g	–	About the size of your whole hand
Chicken breast – grilled	120g	178 kcal	About the size of your whole hand
Cod loin – raw	140-195g	–	About the size of your palm
Cod loin - grilled	100-140g	106-148 kcal	About the size of your palm
Dried lentils	50g	149 kcal	About 2 handfulls
2 eggs	120g	172 kcal	Ready portioned
3 fish fingers	90g	164 kcal	Ready portioned
Fresh tuna steak – raw	125-175g	–	About the size of your palm
Fresh tuna steak – baked	100-140g	136-190 kcal	About the size of your palm

Less than 200 kcal – for lighter meals and breakfast

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
*Lean beef mince – raw	125g	–	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean beef mince – cooked	100g	157 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean beef stewing steak – raw	125g	–	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean beef stewing steak – cooked	100g	185 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean diced stewing pork – raw	150g	–	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean diced stewing pork – cooked	100g	169 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Lentils, beans and other pulses	120g	120-140 kcal	About 6 tablespoons
Plant-based steak alternative	100g	170-200 kcal	1 small steak
Quorn mince	100g	103 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Soya mince	100g	110 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Tofu	80g	58 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Vegetarian chicken-style fillets/pieces – cooked	120g	100 kcal	About 3 small fillets
2 vegetarian sausages	80g	114-154 kcal	Ready portioned
1 veggie burger	49-108g	78-147 kcal	Ready portioned
White fish fillet (not battered or breaded) – raw	140-195g	–	About the size of your whole hand
White fish fillet (not battered or breaded) – cooked	100-140g	106-148 kcal	About the size of your whole hand

*Red or processed meats – these should be limited to an average of 70g of cooked meat per day (about 500g per week).

More than 200 kcal – mostly for main meals

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
*Beef burger – raw	120-150g	–	Ready portioned
*Beef burger – grilled	80-100g	261-326 kcal	Ready portioned
3 breaded chicken goujons	75g	208 kcal	Ready portioned
Breaded frozen white fish fillet	125g	234 kcal	Ready portioned
*Lamb mince – raw	160g	–	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lamb mince – cooked	100g	208 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean rump steak – raw	175g	–	About the size of your palm
*Lean rump steak – grilled	130g	310 kcal	About the size of your palm
*Lean stewing lamb – raw	140g	–	Use the size of pack as a guide
*Lean stewing lamb – cooked	100g	240 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Mackerel fillet – raw	125-175g	–	About half the size of your hand lengthways
Mackerel fillet – grilled	100-140g	283-396 kcal	About half the size of your hand lengthways

More than 200 kcal – mostly for main meals

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
*Meat sausages (2 standard size) – raw (uncooked)	114g	–	Ready portioned
*Meat sausages (2 standard size) – grilled	90g	–	Ready portioned
Salmon fillet – raw	120-165g	–	About half the size of your hand lengthways
Salmon fillet – grilled	100-140g	239-335 kcal	About half the size of your hand lengthways

Snacks (less than 150 kcal)

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
1 boiled egg	60g	86 kcal	Ready portioned
Canned tuna	60g	65 kcal	Half a medium can (about 160g net weight)
*4 cocktail sausages – raw	45g	–	Ready portioned
*4 cocktail sausages – cooked	35g	100 kcal	Ready portioned
*2 slices of ham	30g	32 kcal	Ready portioned
*Liver pate (about 1/5 of a 200g pack)	40g	99 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Peanut butter	20g	121 kcal	About 1 tablespoon
Prawns	80g	54 kcal	About 4 tablespoons
2 ready-made falafel	40g	113 kcal	Ready portioned
Reduced fat houmous	55g	103 kcal	About 2 tablespoons or about ¼ of a standard pack
Smoked mackerel pate (about half a 100g pack)	50g	119 kcal	Use the size of pack as a guide
Unsalted nuts and seeds	20g	113-137 kcal	About the amount that fits in your palm
Vegan sliced meat alternative	30g	30-64 kcal	About 2 slices

*Red or processed meats- these should be limited to an average of 70g of cooked meat per day (about 500g per week).



Dairy and alternatives: 2-3 a day

It's a good idea to go for lower fat options most of the time. Check food labels and go for those with less saturates, salt and sugars. If you are having plant-based, non-dairy alternatives, try to choose those that are low in sugars and fortified with calcium, and ideally other nutrients.

Lower fat options (low or medium (green or amber) for fat on food labels)

Food	Portion size (g/ml)	Calories	How to measure
Cottage cheese	100g	103 kcal	About 3 tablespoons
Milk on cereal (skimmed)	125ml	42 kcal	About half a glass
Milk as a drink (skimmed)	200ml	68 kcal	One glass
Milk on cereal (semi-skimmed)	125ml	58 kcal	About half a glass
Milk as a drink (semi-skimmed)	200ml	92 kcal	One glass
Milk on cereal (whole)	125ml	79 kcal	About half a glass
Milk as a drink (whole)	200ml	126 kcal	One glass
Plant-based yogurt alternative (fruit)	125g	94kcal	One individual pot or about 4 tablespoons
Plant-based milk alternative on cereal	125ml	23-55 kcal	About half a glass
Plant plant-based milk alternative as a drink	200ml	36-88 kcal	One glass
1 small pot of low fat, fruit yogurt	125-150g	98-117 kcal	Ready portioned
Soft cheese (spreadable, low fat)	30g	46 kcal	About 3 teaspoons
Yogurt, plain, low fat	120g	68 kcal	About 4 tablespoons

Higher fat option (high (red) for fat on food labels)

Food	Portion size (g)	Calories	How to measure
Brie-type cheese	30g	103 kcal	About the size of two thumbs
Full fat soft cheese	30g	76 kcal	About 3 teaspoons
Hard cheese (e.g. cheddar)	30g	125 kcal	About the size of two thumbs
Reduced fat hard cheese	30g	94 kcal	About the size of two thumbs
Stilton-type cheese	30g	123kcal	About the size of two thumbs
Vegan hard cheese	30g	89 kcal	About the size of two thumbs
Vegan cream cheese	30g	76 kcal	About 3 teaspoons

Fruit and vegetables: 5+ a day

For most fruit and vegetables one portion is 80g. For dried fruit a portion is about 30g. For fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies a portion is 150ml (limit to a combined total of 150ml a day).

The more variety the better – try to include a range of colours and types. These portion sizes are only a guide and can be larger – as long as they are not served with added sugar or fat, you can eat big portions of most fruit and vegetables for relatively few calories. You can combine more than one type to make up your portions, for example in a fruit salad or by adding different types of vegetables in a soup or stew. Fresh, frozen, dried and canned fruit and vegetables can all count. If choosing canned fruit or vegetables, go for those in water or fruit juice without added sugars or salt.

Dried fruit can count towards your 5 A DAY but it's best to keep this to mealtimes as it's high in sugars and can stick to teeth.

Portion size examples	
Fruit – Small	Two plums, two satsumas, two kiwi fruit, three apricots, six lychees, seven strawberries or 14 cherries.
Fruit – Medium	One apple, banana, pear, orange or nectarine.
Fruit – Large	Half a grapefruit, one slice of papaya, one slice of melon (5cm slice), one large slice of pineapple or two slices of mango (5cm slices).
Dried fruit	About one heaped serving spoon of raisins, currants or sultanas, one serving spoon of mixed fruit, two figs, three prunes or one handful of dried banana chips.
Vegetables – green	Two large broccoli spears (or 8 small florets) or four heaped serving spoons of cooked kale, spinach, spring greens or green beans.
Vegetables – cooked	Three heaped serving spoons of vegetables, such as carrots, peas or sweetcorn, karela (bitter gourd), okra, aubergine, sweet potato, pepper or eight cauliflower florets.
Vegetables – salad	Three sticks of celery, a 5cm piece of cucumber, one medium tomato or seven cherry tomatoes.
Pulses	Three heaped serving spoons of pulses like beans, lentils or chickpeas counts as one of your 5 A DAY (maximum).
Fruit juice and Smoothies	One small glass is about 150ml – this can count as one of your 5 A DAY



Unsaturated oils and spreads:

Include in small amounts

Unsaturated oils and spreads are healthier fats and provide essential fatty acids and fat soluble vitamins.

Foods like butter, coconut oil and cream are not included in this group as they are high in saturates – these are included in the foods high in fat, salt and sugars group.

Spread thinly on bread and use in small amounts when cooking. All oils and spreads are high in calories.

Portion size examples

1 tablespoon olive/vegetable oil – 99 kcal

1 tablespoon salad dressing made with oil – 82 kcal

1 teaspoon olive/vegetable oil – 27 kcal

Low fat spread, spread thinly on 1 slice of bread – 18 kcal

Standard spread, spread thinly on 1 slice of bread – 31 kcal



Treats:

Foods high in fat, salt or sugars and sugary drinks

Everyone knows that these are the foods we are supposed to eat less of! Treats are not needed in the diet and, if you do include them, it's best to keep the portion sizes small so they provide about 100-150kcal and not have them too often.

You can look at traffic light labels on the front of packs and go for those with less fat, saturates, salt and sugars. Look out for foods and drinks with fewer red traffic lights and more ambers and greens.

Sugary drinks are included in this group – these can contribute a lot of sugar and calories so it's best to choose drinks that don't contain added sugars.

Portion size examples

2 small biscuits

4 small squares of chocolate (20g)

A mini muffin

A small chocolate biscuit bar

A small chocolate mousse

A small multipack bag of crisps

Meals and dishes

Meals and dishes often have foods from more than one food group. For example a spaghetti bolognese dish includes starchy foods (the pasta), minced meat or a vegetarian alternative from the protein foods group, vegetables in the tomato-based sauce and, if served with cheese, would also include a dairy food.

If you are choosing ready-made versions, for example ready meals or pizzas, then calorie content is the best way to select an appropriate portion size. You can also check front of pack labels for fat, saturates, sugars and salt.

Government guidance suggests aiming for about 400 calories for breakfast and 600 calories for a main meal, based on an average calorie need of 2000 calories a day. You can use this as a rule of thumb when choosing foods and drinks. These figures are for the whole meal including drinks and sides.

For dishes you make at home, it would be very difficult to calculate the calories you're eating but you can use the portion sizes provided for each of the food groups as a guide. For more information on putting meals and dishes together, [see our Putting it into practice booklet](#).

FAQ

How do I know which portion sizes to choose for me?

Everyone has their own individual requirements. Usually, bigger, more active people can eat more calories without gaining weight. If you are smaller and less active you will need fewer calories to maintain your weight.

If your calorie needs are lower, for example if you're a smaller person with lower activity levels, you can go for more of the lighter and snack options shown in this guide and only have the higher calorie options occasionally.

If you use hands to measure out portions then, generally, bigger people will get bigger portions and smaller people smaller ones. You can also go for the lower frequency suggestion for the food groups – for example 2 rather than 3 protein foods per day. If you have higher requirements, for example if you are tall and active, you could have the higher calorie options more frequently and go for the higher frequency for the food groups, for example 4 portions of starchy carbohydrates a day.

Can I use this guide for children and when we are eating as a family?

This guidance is specifically for adults and does not include portion sizes for children. If you are eating as a family, smaller children (toddlers and primary school children) should have smaller portions – if in doubt you could start off small and they can ask for more if they are still hungry. Teenagers have similar requirements to adults so the portion sizes provided here could be used as a guide.

[See our preschool portion size guide](#) for more information on portion sizes for young children.

Is alcohol included in the guide?

This guidance doesn't include alcohol but it's important to be aware that alcoholic drinks add calories. Including these will add to your total calorie intake and could mean you consume too much. For more information see [NHS pages on calories in alcohol](#). It's also important for both men and women not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis – [see here for more information about alcohol units](#).

What about drinks?

Drinks can be part of different food groups, for example, juices from fruit and vegetables, milk in dairy and alternatives. Portion sizes and UK healthy eating advice for these are given in this guide. It is important to drink plenty of fluids – about 6-8 glasses/cups a day. Plain water is a good choice as it provides us with fluid without any sugar or acids that can harm teeth. It is best to limit sugary drinks like sugary fizzy drinks and swap these for water (or sugar-free versions). [For more information about healthy drinks see our healthy hydration guide](#).

What about portion sizes when I'm eating out?

If you are eating out, it is a good idea to look at calorie labelling if it is available. Supermarkets, some cafes, coffee shops and restaurants provide information on the calories in meals, snacks and drinks.

Be aware that if you are including sides and drinks these can add up and will contribute to your total calorie intake. It can be more difficult when calorie information isn't provided, but if you are given large portion sizes when eating out, see if you can take some home for another time. If you know that the takeaway or restaurant you're going to serves big portions you could try sharing dishes or going for starters or side dishes rather than main courses. [For more information about healthy eating outside the home see here](#).

Can I use this guide to help me lose weight?

This guidance has not been designed as a weight loss plan. Controlling portion size is an important part of reducing your calorie intake to lose weight. If you'd like to lose weight it is a good idea to visit your GP to see what services are available in your area and there are also resources available online, such as this free [NHS weight loss programme](#).



These guides were originally developed by the British Nutrition Foundation, with guidance from a panel of expert scientists and financial support from: Alpro, Asda, Associated British Foods, Mars, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Tetrapak and Waitrose & Partners.

Subsequent evaluation and revision has been funded by EIT Food, the world's largest food innovation ecosystem, supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the EU.

© British Nutrition Foundation www.nutrition.org.uk. November 2021.

