



UCD launches national food survey in response to COVID-19 crisis

Online-only study will gather data on changes to eating habits in adults across Ireland

Dublin, 20 April 2020 – The UCD Institute of Food and Health has today launched the National COVID-19 Food Study, in collaboration with Dublin City University. Using an online-only survey in accordance with social distancing, the study will gather information on changes in food and drink behaviours among adults in Ireland since the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions.

“Modern day Ireland has never experienced such a shock to how we live and how we manage our daily food intake,” says Dr Celine Murrin, assistant professor in public health nutrition at UCD and one of the researchers leading the study. “Capturing the changes that people have made to their food habits is important for researchers and policy makers to understand so that we can be more prepared for any future shocks to our society.”

The study will take the form of an anonymous online survey at covidfood.ie, which is open to anyone over the age of 18 living on the island of Ireland. It is also possible to do the survey over the phone and anyone with a landline can avail of this option by emailing foodandhealth@ucd.ie.

“We want to reach out to everyone in Ireland – old or young – to see just what is happening around their kitchen table,” says Dr Sharleen O’Reilly, assistant professor in food science and nutrition at UCD. “The National COVID-19 Food Study will give a unique snapshot of what different people do with food during a pandemic and how we cope with those changes. We want to understand the food differences for someone living on a farm in Fermoy compared to someone living in a bedsit in Baldoyle.”

“Food is such a central part to our culture and family life, and is important for both physical and mental wellness,” says Dr Eileen Gibney, deputy director of the UCD Institute of Food and Health and an associate professor in nutrition. “This is a very simple survey, which should take only 10-15 minutes to complete, but the information gathered is hugely important for future research and policy in the area of food and health,”

“It has never been so vital to understand community health and the multiple factors that play a role in ensuring healthy populations,” says Dr Claire Timon, research fellow at the School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health in DCU. “We are delighted to partner with UCD on this national study to gain valuable insights into dietary changes during a crisis like this, so that we can better protect our communities now and into the future.”

All participants are eligible to enter a draw to win a €50 One4All voucher, and there is also the option to contribute further by taking shorter surveys at regular intervals over the coming months. For more see covidfood.ie, follow us on Facebook [@covidfoodUCD](https://www.facebook.com/covidfoodUCD) or email foodandhealth@ucd.ie.

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Note to editors: the following researchers are available for comment / interview:

- Dr Eileen Gibney (UCD)
- Dr Sharleen O’Reilly (UCD)
- Dr Aifric O’Sullivan (UCD)
- Dr Claire Timon (DCU)
- Dr Celine Murrin (UCD)
- Dr Emma Feeney (UCD)