

Your guide to
understanding the
Carbon Footprint
in food.



The Carbon Footprint of Food

What is a Carbon Footprint?

A carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide) produced by certain activities. These can be anything from driving a car, heating a building or producing food. Every food item on a menu has a carbon footprint, which is calculated

Why does food have a Carbon Footprint?

Here are some of the reasons why food impacts the environment:

- **Production and farming:** Different types of food require different resources. For example, animal products like beef and lamb have a larger footprint because of the land, water and feed needed for the livestock.
- **Processing and packaging:** Highly processed foods use more energy and resources, adding to the carbon footprint.
- **Transportation:** The distance food travels also impacts its footprint. For example, if we import avocados from overseas, that adds emissions from the transportation.
- **Waste:** Waste has a significant environmental impact. Food waste generates methane as it decomposes, which is even more potent than carbon dioxide.

Designing menus to minimise our Carbon Footprint

At Royal Holloway, we're increasingly designing the menus in our catering outlets to take our carbon footprint into consideration. We do this by:

- **Sourcing locally and seasonally** to reduce transportation emissions.
- **Offering plant-based options** which are typically low-carbon emission options
- **Minimising waste** through careful planning and using the whole ingredients.

How you can make a difference

By choosing lower-carbon options, you help reduce overall emissions. Even small shifts, like choosing a veggie meal over a high-impact meat dish, add up over time. When choosing what to eat, consider:

- Choosing plant-based options more often.
- Eating seasonal and local foods.
- Reducing food waste by only taking what you can finish.

Our commitment and your role

Our goal is to reduce our catering department's environmental impact. By understanding and choosing low-carbon options, you are not just eating a meal – you are contributing to a sustainable future. We are here to support these choices by providing information, and if you have questions or ideas, please let us know: catering@rhul.ac.uk

Calculating the Carbon Footprint

Understanding Carbon Footprint readings

On our catering portal, we measure the carbon footprint of each menu item in grams. Here's what that means and how you can interpret these readings to make environmentally friendly choices.

What does a reading in grams mean?

Each reading represents the number of grams of carbon dioxide (CO₂) or equivalent greenhouse gases that were emitted during the production, transport and preparation of that menu item. If a menu item has a reading of *200g of CO₂*, it means that producing, transporting and preparing it led to the release of 200g of greenhouse gases.

Understanding low, medium and high readings

- **Low** readings are usually below *100g*. Examples might include a serving of fresh, local fruits or vegetables.
- **Medium** readings range from *100 - 400g*. Dishes such as chicken or some grains may fall into this category.
- **High** readings are above *400-500g*, often representing foods that are resource-intensive to produce, such as beef or lamb. For context, a high reading can be roughly equivalent to driving a medium car several miles. So, choosing menu items with lower readings can be a way to reduce your environmental impact.

Our catering portal

Scan the QR code to visit our catering portal. Click on the menu of your choice, followed by the dish of your choice to find the nutritional and carbon footprint information.



Roasted Mushroom Soup

Each Ptn contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
502kJ 120kcal (6%)	6.0g 7.11%	1.2g 6.15%	6.8g 7.59%	0.56g 9.33%

of an adult's reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 202kJ / 48kcal

Nutritional Information			
TYPICAL VALUES	Per 100g	Per Ptn	% RI* Per Ptn
Energy	202kJ 48kcal	502kJ 120kcal	6%
Fat	2.0g	5.0g	7.11%
of which Saturates	0.5g	1.2g	6.15%
Carbohydrate	6g	16g	6.05%
of which Sugars	2.8g	6.8g	7.59%
Fibre	1g	3g	10.96%
Protein	2g	4g	8.32%
Salt	0.23g	0.56g	9.33%

* Reference Intake of an average adult (8400kJ / 2000kcal)

Carbon Footprint

130g CO₂

The equivalent of driving a medium sized car (petrol) for 0.3 miles

? May Contain Celery
✓ Contains Milk