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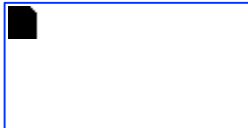
# Streaky bacon is a flash in the pan

By Richard Alleyne

## External Links

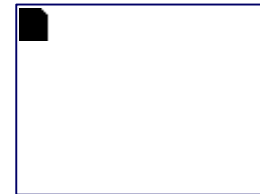
[Retail Price Index](#)

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STREAKY bacon, that traditional breakfast fare, is out of favour in the nation's "shopping basket", it was confirmed yesterday.

So are jars of salad cream, jigsaw puzzles and women's ski pants. All have fallen foul of Britain's changing consumer tastes to such an extent that they have been dropped from the list of goods in a monthly shopping basket used to calculate inflation.



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In their place are a number of must-have goods and services that reflect the growing fascination with diet, leisure and technology. The list of 650 items, the cost of which are used to calculate the Retail Price Index, now includes organic food, mayonnaise, mini-disc players and health club membership.

Their price will be used today for the first time to calculate the change in the cost of living.

A spokesman for the the Office for National Statistics, which compiles the data, said: "Changes in consumer tastes mean that prices for a number of goods and services will no longer be sampled every month. A simple way to understand the nature of the index is to think of it as a very large shopping basket made up of all the different kinds of goods and services bought by a typical household in the course of a year.

"To keep the index basket representative of spending patterns, it is important to keep under review the actual items priced. All these changes form part of the annual review of the 'basket' of 650 goods and services that are sampled every month to see how prices are changing.

"Fresh items are added to the basket to represent new or increasing spending while other items are deleted as spending on them falls. We put a lot of effort into ensuring the index is up to date and representative of consumer spending patterns."

Britain's increasing obsession with do-it-yourself is reflected by the inclusion of laminate flooring and home removal costs. Gardening is covered by inclusion of the lawn edge strimmer.

Home entertainment has been subject to a revolution too. Jigsaw puzzles have been ousted by mini-disc players, DVDs and personal computers, although the soft toy remains a favourite.

The ever-increasing desire to travel is reflected by the appearance of sunscreen lotion and foreign exchange commission for the first time in the list's 54-year history. As well as membership of the gym, health consciousness is demonstrated by inclusion of fizzy energy drinks, organic fruit and vegetables, cereal snacks and herbal tea bags.

Rainbow trout is rejected in favour of salmon fillets while a Continental touch comes from the baguette. Changes in fashion which saw the demise of ski pants have seen the inclusion of women's vests and strappy tops as well as more expensive evening dresses.

But all this change in consumer costs has come at a cost: bank overdraft charges are counted for the first time as part of household costs. For more than half a century, the index has been calculated from post-war rationing to the takeaway.

During that time prices have risen more than 20-fold, although that has been more than offset by a 50-fold rise in average earnings. In 1947, a typical shopping basket of bread, milk, beef, eggs, sugar and butter cost just 27p compared with more than £6 today.

In 1947, 200 items were included in the list, compared with 650 today. Many items have come and gone during the years. The 1950s saw the introduction of canned fruit and motor cars, the swinging Sixties saw sliced bread, jeans and fish fingers for the first time.

It was not until the 1990s that satellite dishes, foreign holidays, computer games and replica football kits were included in calculations.

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