

Cooking up a storm: SA food media thrives under lockdown

By [Brent Smith](#), issued by [New Media](#)

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Trends show that food and recipe content is hotter than ever, with South Africans finding their flavour in Woolworths TASTE and Food24, says New Media.

The data is in, and it's safe to say that South Africans are in the kitchen and looking to cooking and food-related media for inspiration. South Africa's leading content marketing agency, New Media, continues to earn big points in this category. Both *Taste*, the brand they produce for Woolworths, and its own brand *Food24* have enjoyed increased engagement since lockdown began.

This follows local and global trends, where isolation and social distancing have both necessitated far more home cooking and given people time to learn and experiment. Many South Africans are also seeking to recreate the magic of eating out at home. SimilarWeb shows that visits to the top 100 cooking and recipes websites worldwide have increased by 33% from February 2020 to April 2020. In terms of the South African audience, total visits for this category increased by a massive 86%, understandably, given the lack of food delivery options under Level 5 of lockdown.

Woolworths *Taste* and *Food24* have matched and even surpassed these increases, with a huge 181% and 78% surge in website users respectively over the past three months. Both brands have experienced a massive increase in their overall audiences as a result.

Woolworths Taste



A crowd-pleasing Woolworths Taste recipe

Taste, the food authority brand-extension that New Media produces for Woolworths, has been a particularly stellar performer. *Taste* already had a loyal, engaged following, as one of the best-performing consumer titles over the past few years. Bucking the downward trend in the magazine industry, it routinely enjoys sell-through rates of more than 85%. The 'made at home' May 2020 issue was designed to support those looking for home-cooking inspiration and has inspired an extraordinary amount of letters from readers, sharing their lockdown cooking experiences with *Taste*.

New Media repurposes the print content and produces additional content for taste.co.za as well as *Taste* and Woolworths' social media channels, reaching a much bigger audience. The total *Taste* digital footprint for April reached an unprecedented 952 938, which is up 64% on March and 97% year on year. The website attracted 586 861 unique browsers (up 145% on March and 252% year on year).

For Woolworths, *Taste* plays an instrumental role in positioning the retailer as a food authority and recognising the opportunity to make an impact and help consumers at this time, they increased media budget to *Taste*'s social content in April as well as their own. This resulted in an exponential rise in *Taste*'s Facebook numbers, with 34.7 million people reached and over two million video views.

"These numbers present advertisers with an incredible opportunity, not only to reach a much larger audience but also to position their own brands alongside one that is providing a real service to consumers at a historic moment in time," says Kelly Cloete, group account director of *Taste* at New Media.

Kate Wilson, editor-in-chief of the *Taste* brand, adds: “The engagement we are seeing with this audience is so authentic and that is hugely rewarding for us, as content creators. Sharing recipes and cooking tips from home has become a way for people to connect. This content can provide comfort and warmth despite our isolation. That is very powerful.”

Food24

New Media's own brand *Food24* has a searchable database of over 20,000 recipes, which is proving to be incredibly valuable to South Africans during the lockdown.

Food24's April web traffic increased by 81.6% month on month, with a reach of 1,308,407 – largely due to Easter. The brand's total digital audience grew to 1,824,626, a year-on-year increase of 36.9% and a month-on-month increase of 48.5%. In fact, nearly all the key metrics were up in April due to a significant increase in mobile users. Organic search, which went up by 406,049 users, and direct traffic, which went up by 130,114 users, accounts for most of this growth.



A delicious Food24 dessert

Together with tech partner Swipe iX, New Media is finalising a brand-new site for *Food24*. This site will feature a host of new functionality, making it even more user-friendly, and introduce some innovative features.

Food24 head of content Tessa Purdon says: “I'm thrilled about this new chapter in *Food24*'s journey. From its early beginnings as a magazine recipe subscription site to currently boasting the largest online food audience in Africa, it continues to serve up content that is relevant, inspiring and accessible. We are committed to making this experience even better and hope that our loyal community joins us as we take this next exciting step.”

ABOUT BRENT SMITH

I am the Head of Brand Communication for South Africa's leading content marketing agency, New Media, and its in-house dev agency, Swipe iX.

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