

# Russians Show That They Are What They Eat

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The contents of Russians' refrigerators are of interest not only to food producers. They also reveal changes taking place in society.

For example, statistics on food consumption by different social groups show that poorer Russians have started eating far better over the past 10 years, leaping forward in the quality of their diets. But the rich have shown little change in their eating habits. By nutritional standards, their diet was miserable in the past and continues to be so. If you compare the diets of the poor and rich by their actual content, not according to the price of their food, then the eating habits of the two groups vary little. This proves that personal income is not the only factor influencing what people eat.

Food consumption among the poorest Russians will soon reach the level of those who are better off, with the "poorest" defined as those earning from \$2 to \$10 per day, according to Svetlana Misikhina, co-author of the report "Farewell to Poverty,". In 2000, people in that

group consumed an average of 1,525 calories per day. They now ingest 2,100 calories. The wide gap that once existed between poor and rich Russians in the consumption of protein, vegetables, fruits and berries has been rapidly shrinking over the past 10 years.

And what about wealthy citizens? They continue to eat bread and fried potatoes now just as they have been doing for the past 10 years. Their eating habits have not changed, according to the State Statistics Service. Both the poorest and the richest Russians have started eating more unhealthy fats and carbohydrates in equal proportions, and both groups still fail to eat enough protein, fruit and berries. The only differences between the groups are in the price and quality of the food they buy and the amount of their income spent on food. The poorest spend 46 percent of their earnings to feed themselves, while the richest spend only 18 percent.

It turns out that the unhealthy diet of many Russians has less to do with a shortage of cash and much more to do with a shortage of knowledge on nutrition. A similar study conducted in Germany in 2010 found that families with low incomes but high levels of education ate much better than wealthy families that were less educated.

This comment appeared as an editorial in Vedomosti.

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