

ARTICLE

# Chasing the COVID Winter Blues Away

How lockdowns are changing where we go and what we consume

Even in a good year, winter can be long, dark and cold, but this year comes with a particular set of challenges. Countries, states, counties and cities are locking down again as COVID cases rise. While we try to be grateful for the good in our lives, it can be downright depressing reading the headlines, feeling trapped in our own homes, and worried about our distant loved ones. This article in our “Investigations of Life” series looks at ways people have spent their time in their homes during the pandemic so far, in the hopes of inspiring readers to branch out into new winter pursuits.

## The Internet of Things

Stuck at home, many of us have experienced a significant uptick in “screen time.” We were curious to see how internet usage and media consumption has changed during the pandemic, based on how people were allocating their screen time. The table below indicates how respondents to a survey were using the internet during the early months of the pandemic, broken down between two geographies and across four generations.

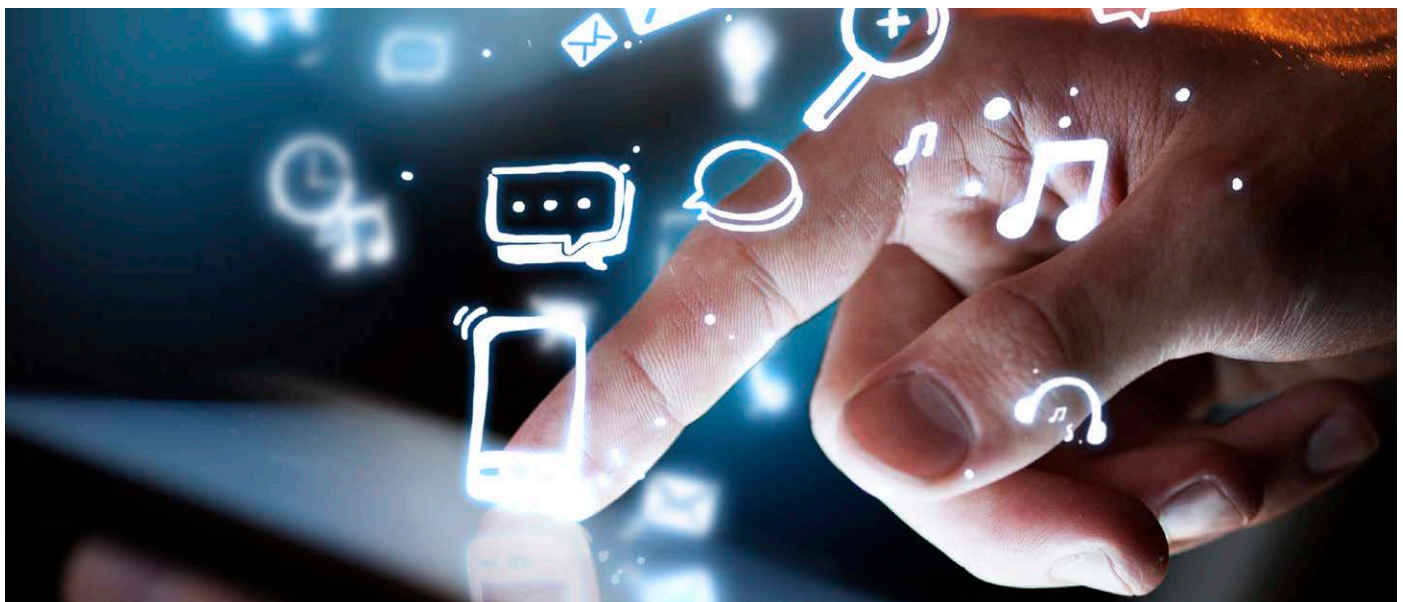
Not surprisingly, searching for COVID updates was at the top of the list in almost every category in both the U.S. and UK, and across all generations. Listening to music and watching movies/shows were a close second and third. Few respondents (less than 10% in each generation) appeared to be interested in staying off the internet.

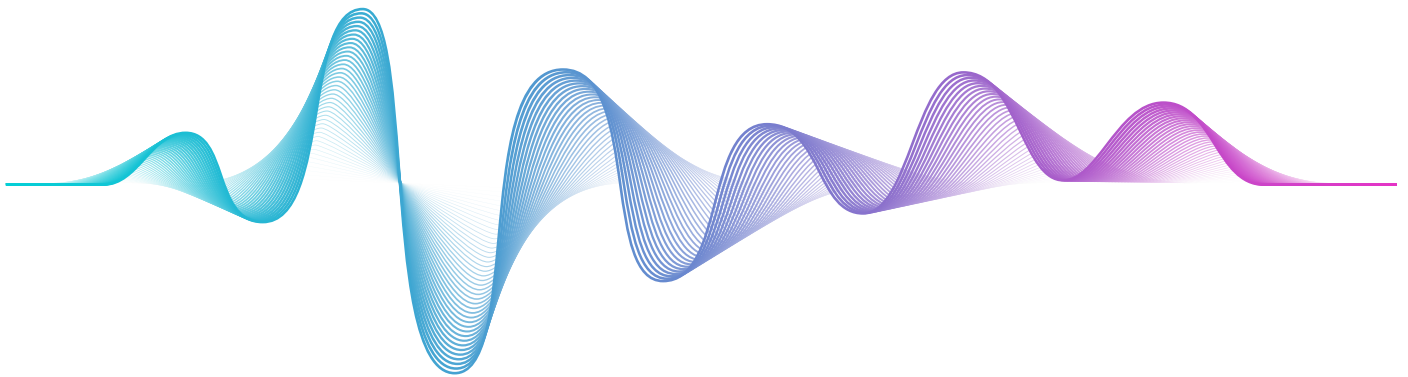
### Percent of Respondents Who Say They're Doing the Following on the Internet Today

	All	U.S.	UK	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Searching for coronavirus / COVID-19 updates	68	68	63	67	71	69	54
Listening to music	58	59	51	71	62	54	38
Watching movies / shows	49	50	43	51	52	51	34
Watching funny videos	42	42	40	52	44	39	27
Playing games on mobile	40	41	36	47	45	36	34
Looking at memes	32	33	26	54	41	21	9
Playing games on PC / laptop	29	30	26	29	36	25	25
Searching for cooking recipes	28	29	24	21	35	29	21
Reading business & finance articles / news	27	28	21	14	35	28	21
Searching for discounts from brands	24	25	22	22	28	23	23
Reading healthy eating articles	24	26	14	19	31	22	16
Reading sports news	23	24	19	16	32	19	24
Reading celebrity news	22	22	19	25	25	19	15
Listening to podcasts	18	19	14	16	26	16	7
Watching fitness videos	18	18	14	18	24	17	3
Searching for fashion trends / discounts	16	17	13	14	23	13	7
Reading live blogs	15	16	12	12	22	13	9
Watching esports videos / livestreams	12	13	7	14	20	9	2
Searching for vacations	12	12	9	11	18	9	3
Watching webinars	11	11	7	9	16	9	6
I'm trying to stay off the internet	5	5	8	5	4	6	8

This chart shows the percent of respondents who say they're doing the specified activity on the internet today. Respondents were asked: "Which of the following, if any, are you doing while on the internet today? Please select all that apply." The data was collected by GlobalWebIndex from 3/25/2020 through 3/30/2020 in the U.S. and UK.

Source: GlobalWebIndex

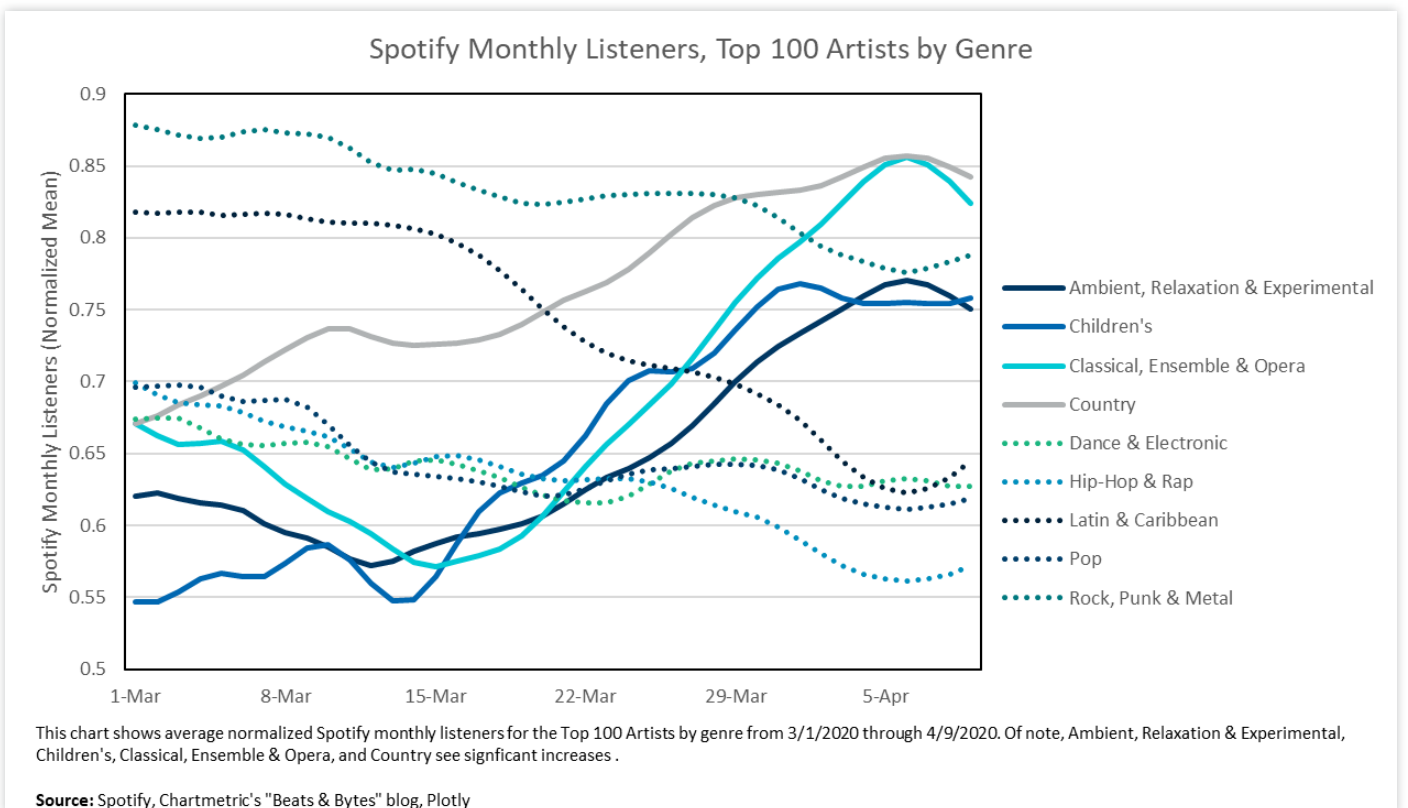




## Don't Stop the Music

We were curious about what kind of music people were listening to and if there had been any changes in their habits. Certain Spotify streaming data is available to the public via Spotify's Web API. One of the primary metrics used by Spotify is "Monthly Listeners," which is defined as unique listeners who played a certain genre of music during a 28-day period. Monthly Listener data was normalized (i.e., adjusting values measured on different scales to a notionally common scale) and used to illustrate changes in music preferences pre- and post- lockdowns last March and April. In the chart below, the dotted lines indicate genres of

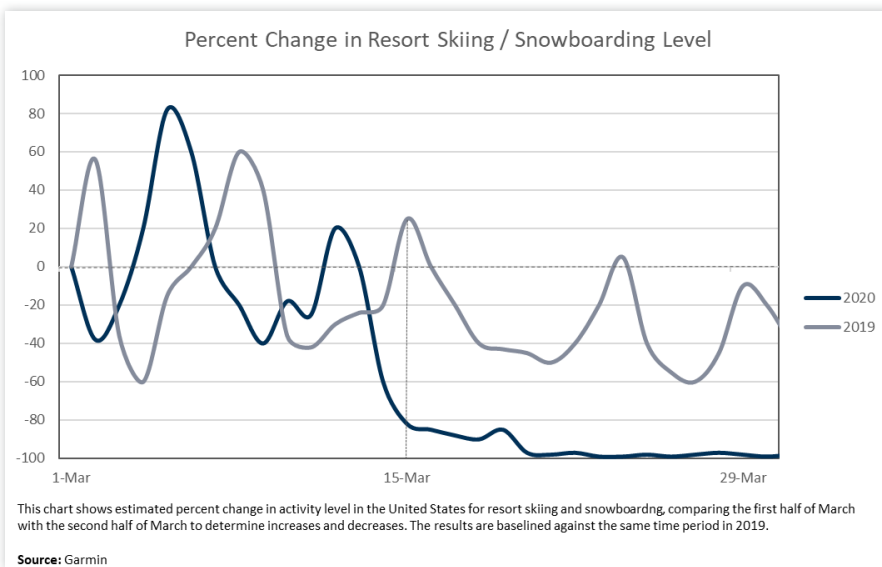
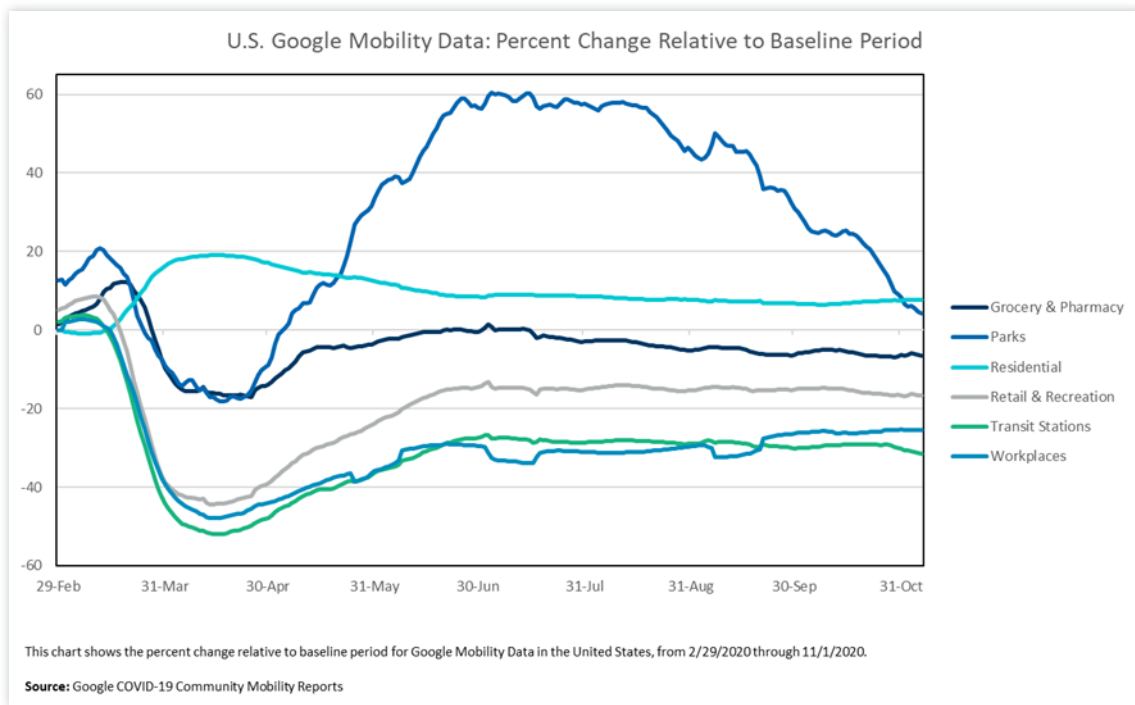
music which experienced a plateau or decrease in listeners over the relevant time period, while the solid lines indicate genres of music that experienced an uptick in listeners. Classical/ensemble/opera (as one category) had the largest increase in late March, followed by children's music and ambient/relaxation/experimental music. Latin/Caribbean and hip hop/rap appeared to have the largest declines. It appears that people needed to fill the silence of their own homes with music to work to, or alternatively, music to entertain the kids with while they attempted to work.





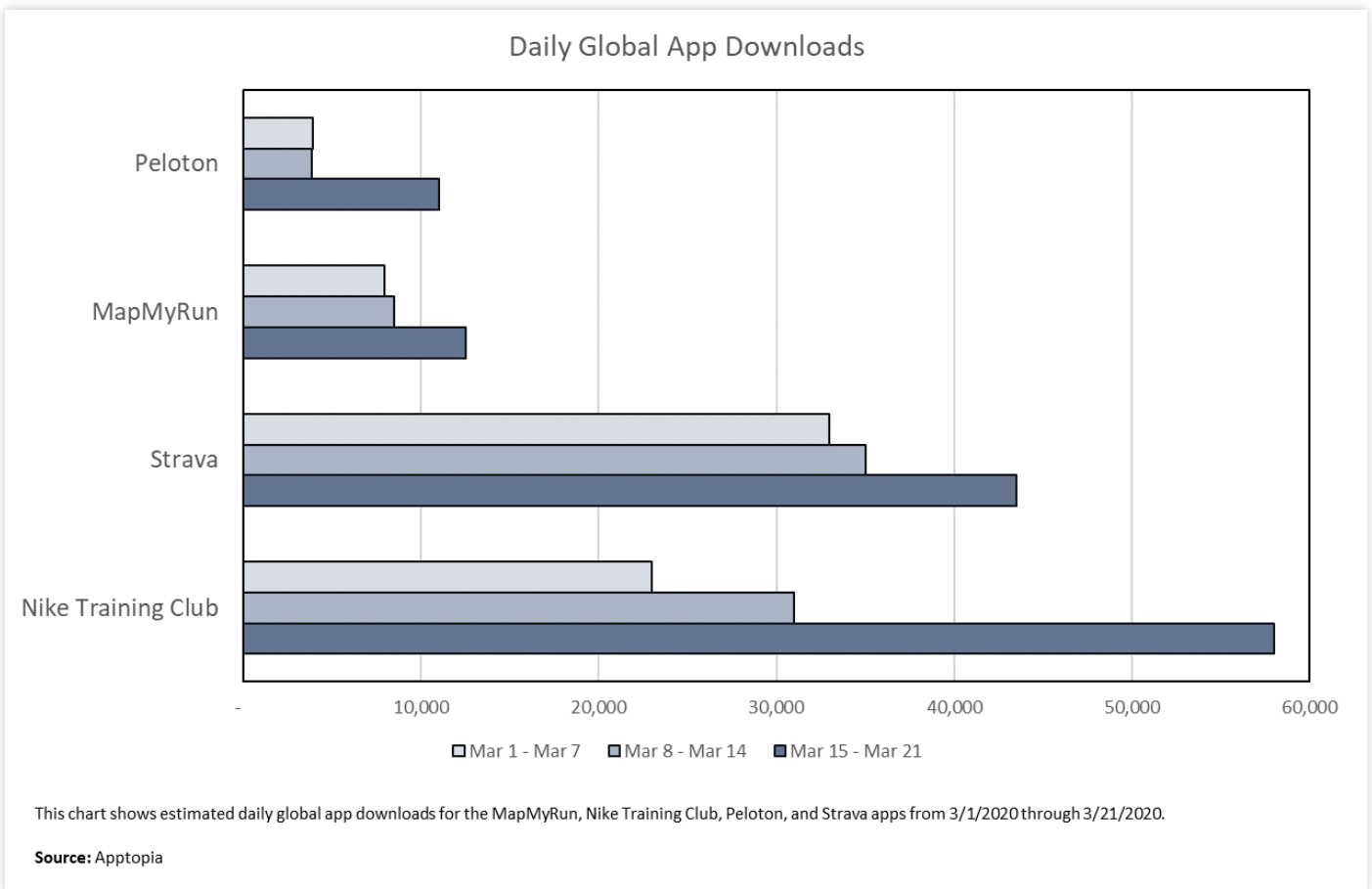
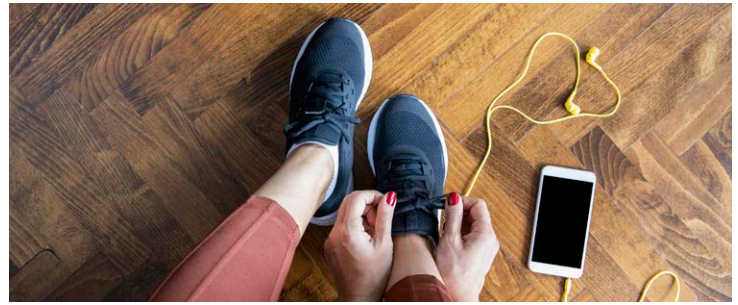
## Getting Out and About

Knowing from our own experience that ‘working from home’ was morphing into ‘living at work,’ we speculated that people would take advantage of opportunities to escape. We reviewed data from Google Mobility to determine popular destinations in the U.S. The biggest uptick in the graph below is in excursions to parks; not surprising during the summer months. The sharp dip in travel to workplaces and transit stations was also expected, given that many people were working from home over this period.



We speculate that there may be an uptick in ski resorts this winter; skiing could be perceived as a relatively “safe” pursuit, given that it’s an outdoor activity that can be performed with a mask, and generally skiers are more than six feet away from each other. As you can see from the chart below, there was a steep, cliff-like drop-off in the 2020 season as resorts shut down at the beginning of the pandemic. This trend may reverse if ski slopes can stay open and people flock to the activity as a way to get out of the house.

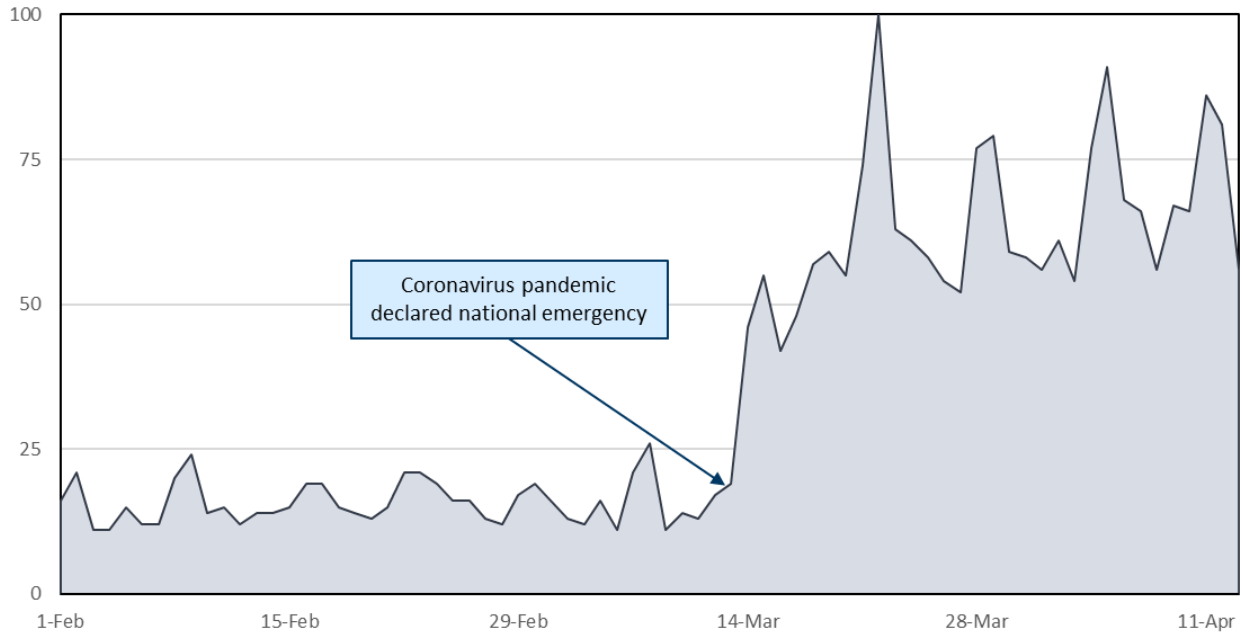
Alternatively, people may try to keep active through other athletic pursuits. Apps such as Peloton, MapMyRun, Strava and Nike Training Club all had significant increases in downloads during the month of March. This may be a better gauge of how initially motivated people were to get fit, given that it's sometimes tough to stick to the fitness routines themselves, and much more fun to bake bread.



## The Comfort of Carbs

Our research also indicated a large uptick in the making of carbohydrate-based food early on in the pandemic, as evidenced by a spike in the Google Search “How to Make Bread.” Similarly, Chicory, a recipe site, reported their four top recipes in the first weeks of the pandemic included Basic Homemade Bread, Banana Bread, Homemade Tortillas, Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookies, and Classic Lasagna. It’s no surprise that we have a tendency to crave comfort food in times of stress and, now that we have more time at home, we are looking for ways to entertain ourselves by making our own.

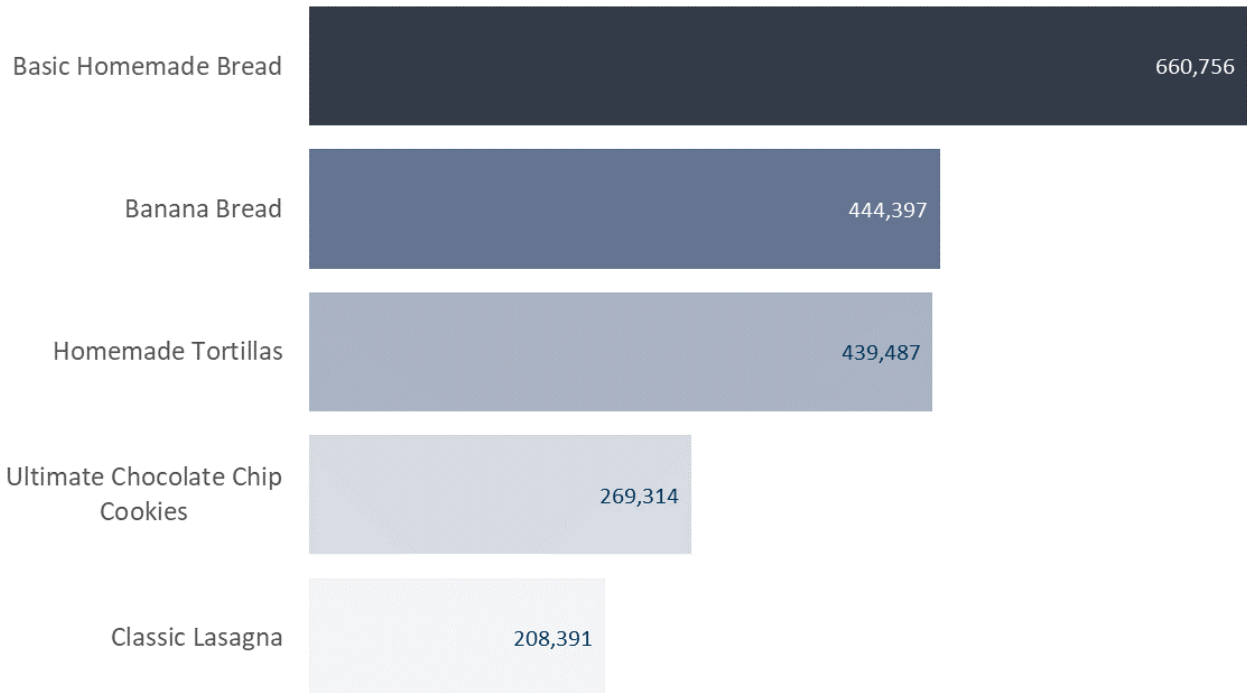
### Google Search Interest: "How to Make Bread"



This chart shows trends in Google searches for "How to Bake Bread" in the United States from 2/1/2020 through 4/13/2020. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.

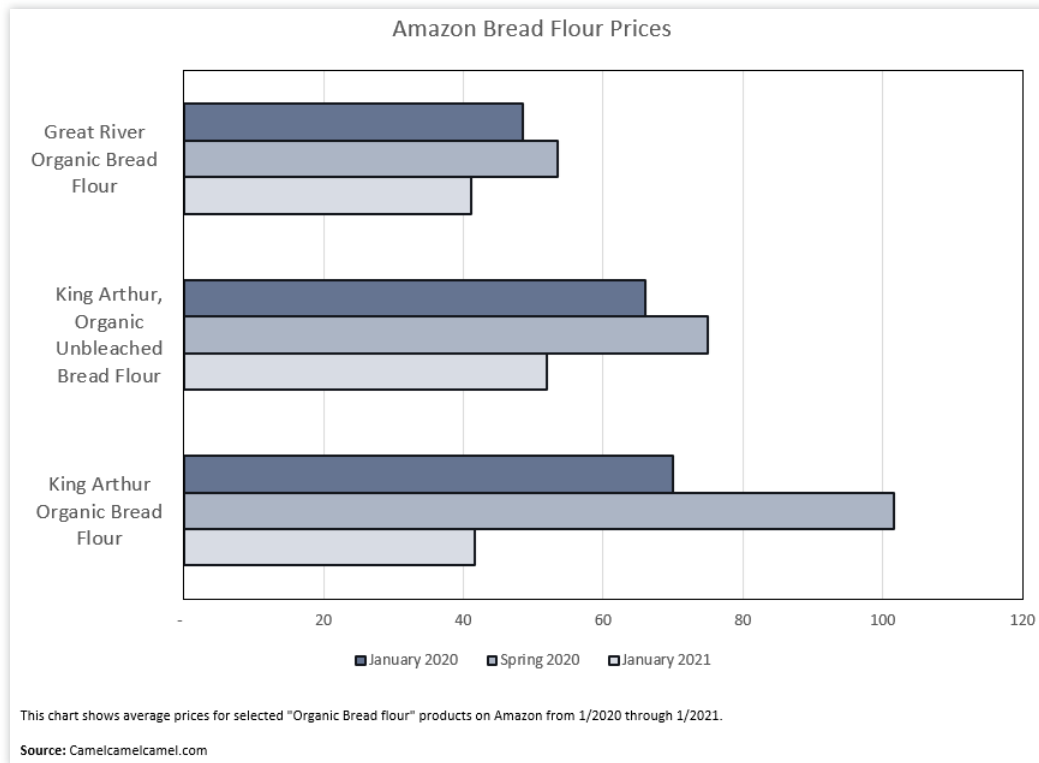
Source: Google

### Chicory's Most Viewed Recipes: March 29 - April 4, 2020



This chart shows recipe views on chicory.co from 3/29/2020 through 4/4/2020. Chicory is an NYC-based digital shopper marketing platform and an expert in content-to-commerce for grocery.

Source: Chicory - "Why Is The Coronavirus Pandemic Making Everyone Bake Bread?"



Sudden interest in homemade baked goods during the pandemic was so overwhelming, it actually led to a flour shortage! When looking at historical prices for the top three bread flour products on Amazon, we noticed a spike during the spring of 2020 when lockdowns were implemented, reflecting the high demand. But when looking at pre- and post-lockdown prices, we noticed that bread flour prices are cheaper now by about 26% compared to what they were before the pandemic. Catching up with popular demand, suppliers are making it even more attractive to make your own dough. Let’s get cookin’ and bakin’!

### Conclusion

No matter your taste in music, your exercise preference or your perfect comfort food, there is something out there for you to help get you through this season. So how are you going to occupy your winter?

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