



What can we learn from the older generation about rationing?

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Those over 80 were children in the 1940s: they may remember air raids, evacuation, sudden trauma and loss. They said 'keep calm and carry on', and they learned what it means to know God's presence 'in the valley of the shadow of death'.

Those aged over 70 were children in the post-war years of rationing. Anyone older than 74 will remember strict rationing, when the National Food Survey records people eating suet puddings, liver and potatoes for lunch, and wholemeal bread and dripping, pilchards and tomatoes in the evening. Bacon, white bread and fresh eggs came later. Food was healthy, and grown at home where possible.

Two weeks ago was the age of 'buy one get one free'. Right now the supermarket shelves are empty in many places. Tesco, Sainsburys and others are enforcing their own rationing, limiting multiple purchases and removing items from online baskets before they're delivered. 'Elderly opening hours' help in some places, but do little to mitigate the effect that panic buying has had on supply chains, with older people the first to suffer if they are without transport or the internet.

Now, half of the UK's food is imported from other countries. But those over 70 grew up with a diet on which the young millennial vegans (or current monastic communities) would be proud: simple and thankful. This is what food author Judith Wills (born in 1949) said about it a few years ago:

We ate to live but, because we were properly hungry by the time a meal time came around, we DID enjoy our breakfasts, our lunches, our teas, our suppers. And we appreciated the rare treats all the more. Our family, like many others I suspect, continued with many of its 'ration' habits even when rationing ended, and it wasn't until the late Fifties that we would even consider the very occasional treat. (Read the full [article here](#)).

We see in the Bible some beautiful examples of thankfulness for simple food: Jesus 'took the five loaves and two fish and, looking up to heaven, he blessed them (Luke 9:16). At the last supper, Jesus 'took some bread and blessed it (Luke 24:30).

Jesus always blessed the bread.



The Psalmist in Psalm 104 says “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.”

The Church of England has chosen Ruth Valerio’s book ‘Saying Yes to Life’ for Lent readings. In her reflections on the creation story she encourages Christians:

“We need to buy and use less in order to take better care of the natural world for its own and for God’s sake, and to free up resources for those who truly need them. Ask yourself all the time: Do I need this? Can I do without it?”

(Ruth Valerio p.146 of ‘Say Yes to Life’– and you can sign up to the daily readings [here](#))

Older people can help us with this. Many of them have done it before. Will one of the lasting legacies of this time be a forced return to simplicity and thankfulness with our food?