The Guardian

one stop english

Google AI summaries are ruining the livelihoods of recipe writers: 'It's an extinction event'

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Read the situation and answer the questions.

Imagine the situation. You need to cook something for dinner, so you open the fridge, but you can't think of what you can cook with what you have.

1. How do you find a recipe?

   a. Look through recipe books for relevant recipes.

   b. Search online for recipes from cooking sites.

   c. Prompt AI to create a recipe for you.

2. How common do you think it is for people to use AI to create recipes?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using AI that way?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

knowhow	interpretation	overloaded	rolling out
acknowledges	crawler	uncluttered	slop
conflate	Frankensteined	revenue	
extinction	generate	trustworthy	

1. put too much of something into or onto something _____

2. very low-quality content _____

3. able to be trusted _____

4. the money a business earns _____

5. introducing something new to the public _____

6. accepts or says that something is true or that someone has done something

   _____

7. to mix two things together and treat them as if they are the same _____

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Level 2: Intermediate

8. a computer program that searches the internet and collects information

_____

9. the situation when something (typically a plant or animal) stops existing

_____

10. made by combining parts from different things in an unusual way _____

11. to produce or create something _____

12. the way someone understands or explains something _____

13. practical knowledge and skills about how to do something _____

14. clean and tidy, without too many things _____

b. **Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of some words.**

1. Why do you like that video channel? It has nothing but _____.

2. Can you recommend some _____ recipe websites? I really need this dinner to be good.

3. After tasting the soup, the chef had to _____ that it needed more salt.

4. The program was a(n) _____, and they used it to search the internet for recipes.

5. Some people's food traditions are close to _____ because of new cooking habits.

6. It was a weird _____ recipe, made by mixing Italian bread with Indian spices.

7. Her new job needed him to _____ cooking content for social media.

8. He has a different _____ of the recipe, and he adds less sugar.

9. The first thing he learned as a chef was to have a tidy, _____ cooking area.

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10. If you _____ the pan with vegetables, they will not cook properly.

11. The company's _____ increased after it started delivering food.

12. She is a great chef with incredible taste and amazing technical _____.

13. People often _____ the books of these cooking writers because they have a similar style.

14. The café wanted to _____ a new breakfast menu last month.

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AI Mode is mangling recipes by merging instructions from multiple creators – and causing them huge dips in ad traffic

Aimee Levitt
15 December, 2025

1 This past March, when Google began rolling out its AI Mode search capability, it began offering AI-generated recipes. The AI had taken elements of similar recipes from multiple creators and Frankensteined them into something barely recognizable. In one memorable case, the Google AI advised users to cook with non-toxic glue.

2 Over the past few years, bloggers have seen their carefully developed and tested recipes show up in ChatGPT replies. But now they fear that casual users who rely on search engines or social media to find a recipe for dinner will conflate their work with AI slop and stop trusting online recipe sites altogether.

3 Matt Rodbard, the founder and editor-in-chief of the website Taste, is even more pessimistic. "For websites that depend on the advertising model," he says, "I think this is an extinction event in many ways."

4 Others, like Karen Tedesco, the author of the blog Familystyle Food, say their numbers, and ad revenue, have remained steady so far. Tedesco's strategy has been to create recipes that rely on her experience and technical knowhow. Her Italian meatball recipe, for example, based on her mother's, includes advice and a dozen process photos and a video.

5 But she is still worried. When she recently did a Google search for "Italian meatballs", Familystyle Food appeared as the top result. Then she switched to AI Mode. There, she found the recipe had been Frankensteined into a new recipe with nine other sources. The AI-generated recipe was little more than a list of ingredients and six basic steps with none of the details that make Tedesco's recipe unique.

6 Adam Gallagher, who runs Inspired Taste with his wife, Joanne, has noticed that while the number of times viewers saw links to the site on Google has increased, the number of actual site visitors has decreased. This indicates, to him, that users are satisfied with the search engine's AI interpretation of Inspired Taste's recipes.

7 After the Gallaghers posted about the discrepancy, a number of readers replied to say they had not realized there was a difference between the recipes on the blog and the version in Google searches. Perhaps they had also appreciated the convenience of not having to click on another website, especially when Google's page design was so clean and uncluttered.

8 Rodbard acknowledges that many food blogs have gotten ugly and overloaded with ads. According to Tom Critchlow, the EVP of audience growth at Raptive, a media company that works with many food bloggers to find advertisers, it isn't ads that are driving viewers away. It's Google itself, with its changes to the algorithm and now with AI Mode, that's making the sites harder to find.

9 There is some hope though: a survey of 3,000 US adults commissioned by Raptive showed that nearly half the respondents rated AI content less trustworthy than content made by a human.

10 But unless the public rebels against AI Mode, there is only so much bloggers can do. They can block OpenAI's training crawler, which gathers information that ChatGPT uses to create content, including its own recipe generator, but they are not necessarily willing to make themselves invisible to web searches; as Delmage says: "You can't bite the hand that feeds you."

11 Rodbard suggests that the analog version of the recipe blog, the cookbook, might be due for a comeback. Cookbooks, after all, offer the same experience of spending time and learning from a trusted source. According to the market research firm Circana (formerly BookScan), sales of baking cookbooks are up 80 per cent this year, but other areas have been relatively flat.

12 As more people become aware of the amount of AI slop on the internet and how to identify it, Critchlow believes they will develop a greater appreciation for content produced by humans.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 15/12/2025

3   Comprehension check

a.   Answer the questions using information from the article.

1.   What made it possible to get AI generated recipes from Google in March?

2.   Why did one AI-generated recipe become infamously memorable?

3.   Why are recipes not typically protected by copyright?

4.   How do food bloggers make money if they offer their recipes for free?

5.   What do bloggers fear will happen if users mix up their content and AI content?

6.   What kind of websites are in danger of 'extinction'?

7.   How does Karen Tedesco try to make her recipes different from others?

8.   According to Adam Gallagher, what was increasing and what was decreasing?

9.   Why do some users prefer reading AI recipes directly on Google instead of visiting food blogs?

10.   What makes some of the experts believe that users may prefer human-made content to AI content?

4   Key language

a.   Match the reported speech to the examples of direct speech from the article and complete the rules.

_____ 1.   'I think this is an extinction event in many ways.'

_____ 2.   'You can't bite the hand that feeds you.'

a.   He said that you couldn't bite the hand that fed you.

b.   He said that he thought it was an extinction event in many ways.

When you change from direct speech to reported speech …

… you move the tense of the verbs back, e.g. *can't* changes to [1]_____ and *feeds* changes to [2]_____.

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Level 2: Intermediate

… you change the pronoun of the person speaking from first person (e.g. *I*) to third person (e.g. [3]_____).

… you change specific references (e.g. *today* or *this*) to general references (e.g. *that day* or [4]_____)

b. **Change the direct speech to reported speech and the reported speech to direct speech.**

   Direct speech

   1. 'I love the taste of this chocolate cake,' said Maria.

   _____

   2. 'We will prepare the pasta tomorrow morning,' said Luca.

   _____

   3. This recipe is my grandmother's secret,' said John.

   _____

   Reported speech

   4. Emma said that she had baked a lemon tart for the party.

   _____

   5. Carlos said that the soup needed a bit more pepper.

   _____

   6. Mia said that she was trying a sugar-free recipe for the first time.

   _____

5 Discussion

a. **Discuss these statements.**

   •   It is better to use an easy-to-read recipe from AI than a detailed recipe by a food writer.

   •   The way people get their recipes always changes over time; this is just another change.

   •   The effect that AI has on food writing has no implication for other professions.

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6 In your own words

a. **Read the argument (A1–A6) against the use of AI for recipes and write the paragraph number (P1–P12) of the article where this argument is referred to.**

Argument against AI recipes	Paragraph
A1: AI recipes can be inaccurate or include dangerous ingredients.	_____
A2: AI recipes don't include process photos or personal experience.	_____
A3: The use of AI could destroy food sites dependent on ad money.	_____
A4: AI content is seen as less trustworthy than human content.	_____
A5: Food writers can't avoid AI if blocking crawlers also blocks searches.	_____
A6: Trust is reduced when people confuse AI recipes with those of food writers.	_____

b. **In groups, read the counterarguments in favour of AI and match them to short summaries.**

1.	AI offers things that human writers are not able to, e.g. interactive meal planning and grocery lists. _____	a.	Building audiences
2.	By listing the source of the content, AI can introduce users to food writers they didn't know before. _____	b.	Removing mistakes
3.	AI tools can help food writers by giving them analysis tools and, the opportunity to adapt recipes and build their audience. _____	c.	Beyond recipes
4.	AI can reduce human error by cross-checking thousands of recipes for proportions, ingredient combinations and cooking times. _____	d.	Helping content creators
5.	The basic, text-only style of AI offers a simple starting point for people learning how to cook. _____	e.	Introducing food writers
6.	AI can increase traffic to food sites by linking back to sources. _____	f.	Great start

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c. In groups, prepare arguments for or against the use of AI for finding recipes and get ready to have a debate.

d. Debate the use of AI for finding recipes. Report what the opposing group say and use reported speech.