



[/SORTEDfood](#)

From humble beginnings around a pub table, SORTEDfood have created a global cooking community united by a passion for food, and they're still growing every day.

Goals

- Encourage people to get cooking and eating together
- Build the world's best community of food lovers
- Grow views, subscribers and watch time

Approach

- Utilise the power of food trends
- Collaborate well and collaborate widely
- Prioritise talking to fans

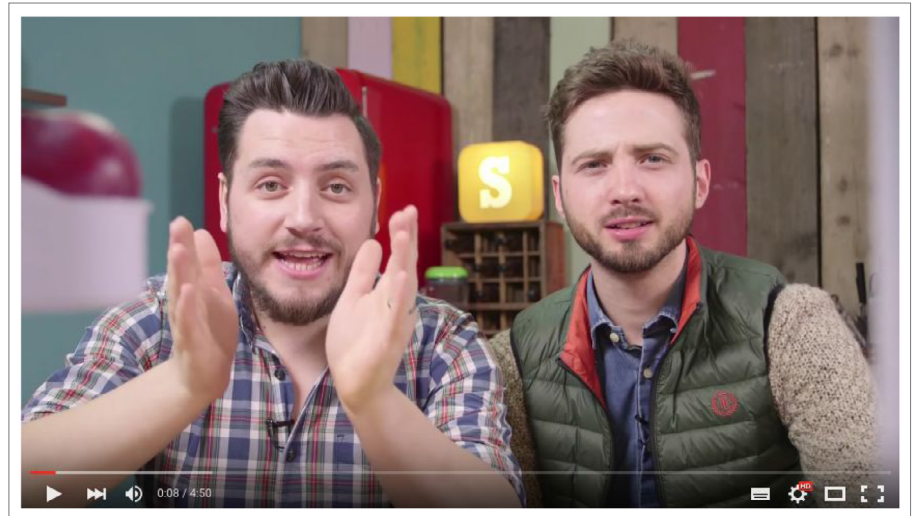
Results

- 1.29 million subscribers
- 21.0 million minutes watched per month (6 month average)
- 5.5 million views per month (6 month average)

SORTEDfood are four school friends from the UK, and they have been bringing recipes and food chat to YouTube since 2010. Now in its fifth year, the channel has grown to become the one of the biggest food communities in the world, with over 1,000 recipes published across YouTube and two books, their own social platform built around food for web and mobile, a cookware range, and a satellite presence in Brazil. Here we look at four strategies that have driven the channel's success.

#1: Community first

SORTEDfood is first and foremost a food community, and it's been this community which has driven the direction of the channel since its inception. It has long been underpinned by a weekly format, Fridge Cam, where the team talk directly to their audience through a fridge - asking them questions, taking their suggestions and, in their own words, "exploring food from the funniest point of view possible".



Still from FridgeCam featuring Jamie and Barry.

"With only one chef in the team (me) I was fearful of running out of recipes. Then we realised, actually, everything is shaped by the community - recipes, tips, tricks, everything. I don't think we're ever going to run out of recipes because we have over a million people contributing to make the next one."

— Ben Ebbrell - the Sorted chef

The team are in a constant dialogue with their fans on and off-YouTube and create everything - from their day-to-day recipes through to international food trips - based on what they hear from them.

An average Sorted fan will not just watch a video, but will watch a video, research and cook the recipe, take photos and then post back into one of the Sorted communities, giving recipe feedback and tweaks to the team.

It's this sense of community which retains new audience members - once a viewer discovers the channel, they tend to stick. Their returning audience figures are incredibly high, with their subscriber base currently accounting for 2/3 of their viewership.

"The balance is important. We always know, the hook will often be the sweet stuff. But the actual backbone is always going to be some integral recipes."
— Ben Ebbrell

#2: Understand which content appeals to which viewers

Food trends have long had the power to capture the attention of audiences online, and the team have learned how to best exploit these trends to drive growth on their channel. There is a huge appetite on YouTube for sweet treats in particular, and this shows in their most viewed content - with **15 out of the top 20 most viewed Sorted recipe videos** about cakes or desserts.



Still from [How to make Cronuts](#) - a major success for the SORTEDfood channel, released at the height of the Cronut craze. The video accounted for a subscriber increase nearly 20x higher than for a regular Sorted recipe video.

Occasionally releasing sugary-treat videos gives Sorted a subscriber and viewership boost from new audiences - they are compelled to watch when they see the thumbnails and titles while browsing YouTube (the majority of the traffic on these videos arrives through YouTube suggested video placement). It's the YouTube equivalent of putting glazed pastries in the bakery window.

By contrast, the returning Sorted community appreciate a far wider set of food videos. They'll consume video on everyday meals, health kicks and quick weeknight ideas in addition to the sweet treats. This is borne out in their 'regular recipe video' traffic sources - where the majority of the views arrive from subscribers and returning viewers. So, while the sweets and desserts get their audience through the door - viewers stay for the breadth of content.

#3: Collaborate well and widely

Collaboration has been a key part of the SORTEDfood story since the very beginning. It is a strategy which, done in the right way, can really drive audience growth, views and watch time through introducing a channel into other established networks and communities on YouTube.

Sorted's first collaboration was with UK vlogger, [charlieissocoollike](#), when the channel was just six months old, which quadrupled their audience overnight. Even though their viewership is much larger nowadays, they've continued to collaborate on a regular basis

Some of their most successful collaborations have been from outside of the UK and outside of the food area too, especially those with [Grace Helbig](#) and [Rhett & Link on Good Mythical Morning](#). Introducing themselves to large potential new audiences like this has delivered great results, with big spikes in subscriber growth.

© 2015 Google Inc. All rights reserved. Google and the Google logo are trademarks of Google Inc. All other company and product names may be trademarks of the respective companies with which they are associated.

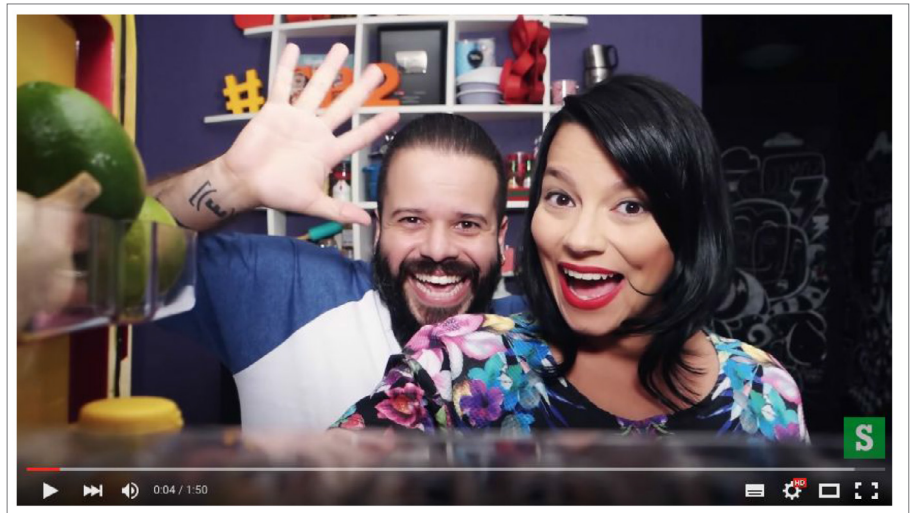


Graph showing subscriber growth from Sorted's launch (March 2010) to present (September 2015)

#4: Create a strong brand which can scale

SORTEDfood exists on many different platforms and did not begin life as the YouTube-centric community it has become. Having presences on many different platforms (on- and offline - with everything from videos and photos to books to cookware to apps) meant that the team spent a long time developing the brand entity away from their own personalities.

This means that they are now able to develop the brand on YouTube and scale it into new markets without being personally involved. Their first foray into this - [SORTEDfood Brasil](#) - launched with a Brazilian channel [Cozinha para 2](#) in April 2015.



Carol and Duca of Cozinha para 2 launch Sorted Food Brasil with their first FridgeCam.

The team chose Brazil as their first port of call following previous collaborations where they'd seen a strong Brazilian audience, particularly around their [SORTED eats Brazil](#) series. This together with the strong food culture in Brazil, and the interest in the country due to the World Cup and Olympics, meant it felt like the perfect place to extend the brand.

Working with a local channel in a new territory has meant that the team can introduce a new audience with a different language, culture and - most importantly - food, to the SORTEDfood community, while still keeping the same brand consistency. Sorted's existing fanbase can also join in, with all videos translated from Portuguese into English. And, of course, the format that is so key to the Sorted community, FridgeCam, is an anchor on SORTEDfood Brasil channel too.

Conclusion

SORTEDfood have grown a formidable presence on YouTube by focusing on the power of food lovers from around the world and providing a place for them to come together to share recipe ideas and talk about cooking together. Through keeping a finger on the pulse of global food trends and building great relationships within the YouTube community, they've built a million-strong army of foodies who return to their channel week after week, month after month.