

CONSUMERS REPORT WHEN THEY EAT OUT, AND WHY

Revealing insights into dining attitudes, behaviors, and trends, *Restaurants & Institutions* (January) published the results of their *New American Diner Study*, which surveyed nearly 2,200 U.S. consumers. Away-from-home dining and snacking remains popular; the average adult purchases a meal or food item 3.72 times a week. However, what consumers want, and why, largely depends on when and why they are purchasing their food.

Primary Source for Foods Consumed At Home But Not Prepared There

Source: Food Marketing Institute's U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends, 2008

| | % of Shoppers |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Non Fast-Food Takeout or Delivery* | 38% |
| Fast-Food Restaurant | 25% |
| Supermarket | 14% |
| Full-Service Restaurant | 10% |
| Gourmet or Specialty Store | 2% |

* Ex. pizza, chinese

Workweek Findings

During the workweek, almost a third (31.9%) purchase lunch daily or almost daily from a foodservice operation, whereas 20.2% always or nearly always frequent restaurants for breakfast and 16.9% do so for dinner. Many consumers purchase food away from home during the week due to time constraints; nearly half (46.2%) of breakfast buyers cite lack of time as the reason. Also, many (80%) take convenience into account, and location was cited as important by 47%. Almost half (47.2%) of dinner patrons order something they would not typically make for themselves, but price is a factor. About 60% are on the lookout for lower prices. Of all meals purchased, breakfast is most likely to be eaten in the car (about 23%).

Weekend Findings

Consumers are more likely to eat out on the weekend than during the week. About a third (33.7%) eat breakfast outside of the home, 32.8% go out for lunch and 35.4% eat dinner at a restaurant. Almost half (44.3%) report that restaurant dinners are "as much about the experience as about the food." The same amount (44.3%) are more likely to try a new restaurant.

General Restaurant Behaviors

Price plays a role in where consumers choose to dine; almost a third strongly agreed that price was a main consideration. More consumers than ever (32.9%) report liking nutritional information listed on menus, up from 21.3% last year; women and Hispanics are most interested in this information. Instead of an entree, women, more than other consumers, prefer the option to order multiple appetizers as a meal. Almost half (43.5%) of all consumers prefer menus that feature both familiar and untraditional dishes. A famous restaurant owner impresses just 9.3% of diners. Regardless of the time, 73% of consumers agree that the most important factors taken into consideration are that the restaurant is close to home, the experience is quick, and that free parking is plentiful.