

Five Things to Know About Consumer Attitudes Toward Grab-and-Go Foods

CHICAGO — Consumers increasingly want food that is fresh and convenient to their lifestyles, but capitalizing on this opportunity requires foodservice operators to have a plan.

Culinary Visions' new Fresh Perspectives Study identifies five things operators should know about consumers' cravings for fresh, convenient food they can eat on the go.

"Modern consumers' lives are getting faster, and they expect their fuel to be able to keep up," said Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions. "We found that many consumers are struggling to strike a balance between fresh versus fast, healthful versus convenient and global versus local. Fortunately, the food industry has picked up their pace, meaning consumers won't have to compromise-or slow down."

Five key findings from the study include:

- 1) Younger consumers lead the way.** The study found that they show the most interest in grab-and-go foods and consistently express the most interest in concepts across the convenience, deli, prepared foods and foodservice markets. Sixty-eight percent of consumers ages 18-34 said that they were likely to purchase grab-and-go sandwiches from a deli vs. 57 percent of consumers ages 35-54 and 44 percent of those ages 55 and older. The division between age groups is even wider when it comes to convenience stores. Fifty-two percent of those ages 18-34 say they enjoy eating food from c-stores vs. 40 percent of those ages 35-54 and 20 percent of those ages 55 and up.
- 2) Fresh amps up the appeal of healthful and indulgent offerings.** A whopping 85 percent of consumers say that transparent packaging is important when it comes to defining fresh food. However, the healthfulness of ingredients might not matter as much as the fact that food inside the packaging is fresh. Consumers were split when choosing between healthfulness and indulgence, as 48 percent agree that they do not care about healthfulness when it comes to snacking on the go. Fresh is important, but consumers do not necessarily view fresh and healthfulness as one and the same, according to the Culinary Visions.
- 3) When grab-and-go beats delivery.** Food delivery apps have grown very popular in recent years, but when it comes to freshness, grab and go wins. Fifty-eight percent of consumers between the ages of 18 and 34 agree that delivered food is rarely fresh, while 64 percent say that refrigerated prepared foods do taste fresh.
- 4) Loving local while relying on favorite brands.** Consumers consider locally sourced ingredients to be one of the top indicators of freshness, with 84 percent agreeing that locally sourced food is the freshest food. Despite this, trusted brands continue to appeal to consumers. Brand loyalty might play an even bigger role in evaluating freshness, as 88 percent of consumers agree that there are certain brands they trust to be fresh.
- 5) More fresh produce, please.** Fresh produce is one of the most highly desired grab-and-go concepts, as 75 percent of consumers say they would be likely to purchase raw fruits and vegetables they can eat on the go and 75 percent say they would be likely to purchase fresh food from a salad bar. Still, 66 percent agree that it is difficult to find fresh snacks on the go, which suggests that plenty of opportunities remain for prepared fruits, vegetable and salad options to grow, the firm noted.

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