

The Foodie Phenomenon

The ever-escalating foodie movement is continuing to blur the lines between specialty and mainstream foods. Three-quarters (76%) of U.S. adults enjoy talking about new/interesting foods; 70% consider themselves knowledgeable about food; and 53% regularly watch cooking shows, according to the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade's (NASFT) *Specialty Food Consumers 2012*.

Two-thirds (68%) of adults now purchase specialty foods for

upscale presentation.

Not surprisingly, a new, more sophisticated culinary "savoring" food experience—defined by freshness, distinctive flavors, and storytelling about food—is moving center stage. One-third of all adult snacking, 29% of kids' eating occasions, and 34% of adult alone eating occasions fall into this new upscale "savoring" category, according to Hartman Group data.

Foodies are not a homogeneous group and selectively over index for a number of food behav-

new recipes, according to Packaged Facts. Eight in 10 (79%) of specialty food buyers like to experiment with new recipes, reports NASFT.

According to *Mintel's Cooking Enthusiasts—U.S.*, a 2011 report, 33% of consumers like cooking and 23% love cooking. Among these enthusiastic chefs, 92% like to experiment, 63% try to replicate restaurant meals, and 41% regularly spend more than three hours preparing a meal at least once a week.

Seven in 10 specialty food

In terms of claims, specialty food consumers are most likely to buy foods that are all natural (63%), organic (57%), locally sourced (48%), eco-friendly (35%), artisanal (27%), sustainable (25%), and Fair Trade (24%), according to NASFT.

Specialty food manufacturers believe that all natural, local, and sustainable are the claims that will drive growth in the next three years.

• **Healthy Foodies.** Foodies over index for health awareness; 42% count calories, more than twice the percentage of the general population; 36% are much more likely to say nutritional value is the most important factor in what they eat; 31% want to try to lose weight.

• **Restaurant Foodies.** According to a 2012 Culinary Visions Panel survey, 54% of casual diners are foodies as characterized by their desire to

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everyday home meals, reports NASFT; 34% do so for a special occasion.

Total sales of specialty foods reached \$75.1 billion in 2011, according to NASFT's *State of the Specialty Food Industry 2012*. Chocolate, specialty oils, cheese, and yogurt/kefir are purchased by more than half of specialty food shoppers; yogurt/kefir is the fastest-growing sector.

According to Packaged Facts, based on Experian Simmons consumer survey data, 19.5% of the adult population or 44 million adults are "true foodies," who are characterized by their interest in trying new products and more intensive attitudes/behaviors about foreign, spicy, gourmet, and natural/organic food as well as their desire for fresh ingredients and

iors. Here's one approach to categorizing them.

• **Fans of Foreign/Spicy Food.**

According to Packaged Facts, 29% of foodies are more likely to enjoy eating foreign foods than the general population; 24% have a much higher than average preference for foods cooked with a lot of spices.

More than half (57%) of specialty food shoppers bought Italian specialty items in 2012; 56% bought Mexican products; 38% Asian/Chinese; 28% regional American; 27% other Asian (e.g., Thai); 21% Spanish; 19% Mediterranean; and 12% Indian, per NASFT.

• **Enthusiastic Chefs.** Foodies are much more likely than consumers overall to look for the freshest ingredients possible, to really enjoy cooking, and to try

consumers are always looking for new ingredients to use in recipes; 81% say it is worth it to pay for better quality ingredients, per NASFT.

• **Gourmet Foodies.** While the terms foodie and gourmet are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. Foodies often go in for gourmet dog or burger, but gourmet eat strictly gourmet level. There's a gourmet component to the foodie movement. The index nearly doubled in the mainstream population to eat gourmet food.

• **Organic Foodies.**

Nearly half of specialty food buyers look for organic ingredients in their food purchases, per Packaged Facts.

Restaurant Foodies

According to a 2012 Culinary Visions Panel survey, 54% of casual diners are foodies as characterized by their desire to try new menu items always or usually when going to a restaurant.

These adventurous diners are significantly more likely than the general population to choose menu items with bitter, sour, and umami flavors.