

## New consumer research indicates resilience for coffee cakes

New study reveals pandemic era consumers' perspectives.



Culinary Visions has released new insight from The Mindful Dining Initiative focused on pandemic-era consumers, which delves into factors that favor the coffee café culture in the U.S. This initiative has surveyed over 8,800 consumers in the past seven years with new insight collected recently as consumers grapple with finding their balance in a world that continues to seek a post pandemic new normal.

Many of the practices that captured devoted customers have proven to be strong motivators to keep loyal customers engaged with their favorite places. Aspects

of value beyond price that were appreciated by consumers pre-pandemic are even more important today as today's patrons enthusiastically embrace the things they have missed for more than a year.

***"Coffee cafes are in a strong position to welcome their customers back to a new normal that has many of the features they have missed and still crave beyond their favorite beverage," said Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions. "These customers are looking forward to returning to places that have taken part in caring for their communities in difficult times without losing sight of the importance of assuring a sustainable living for everyone involved in bringing this experience to them."***

Some highlights from the Mindful Dining Initiative that focused on away from home dining can be particularly meaningful in pointing to a healthy future for the café culture.

### Dining ethics

As on-premise dining opens up across the country, today's consumers are expressing themselves by choosing operations based on some of the behaviors they observed during the past year. More than half (53 percent) of consumers surveyed said they have changed the restaurants they patronize based on how employees have been taken care of during these difficult times. 77 percent are choosing to patronize restaurants that supported the local community over those that did not get involved. 75 percent say they like to patronize operations that support causes they believe in.

## **Mindful sourcing**

Coffee café operators often serve customers that are uniquely interested in understanding the origin of their favorite brews and how everyone involved in bringing their favorites to them is able to make a sustainable living. 79 percent of the consumers in this survey said that they want to know as much as possible about the food that they are eating.

62 percent of consumers surveyed said that they seek out restaurants that offer responsibly produced foods on their menus. 63 percent said they prefer to order menu items that tell them where the ingredients come from, specifying not just the country or region of origin, but specific farms. An important indicator for the business is that 64 percent say they would be willing to pay more to order ethically produced meals.

## **Personal connection**

The café culture offers patrons the opportunity to be around people whether actively engaged in conversation or focused on working in a convivial environment. Even consumers who enjoyed their solitude pre-pandemic really missed human connection as the pandemic wore on beyond expectations. 67 percent of survey participants said they have missed being around other people, and 74 percent said they were looking forward to reconnecting with their friends in restaurants.