



Study: Restaurant customers want conscious, convenient brands

CHICAGO, IL — (Marketwired - November 12, 2014) — New research from the Culinary Visions Panel found that restaurant consumers now want more than just good food, value and service when they dine out. They're also more likely to choose an establishment that treats their employees well and supports their community.

Data was collected from more than 1,200 consumers for the study, which focused mostly on what impacts their decisions when they dine out or purchase food away from home.

Highlights from the study include:

- 83 percent of consumers like to patronize restaurants known for treating their employees well.
- 73 percent of respondents choose to patronize restaurants that support their local community or causes they believe in.
- At restaurants that promote positive business practices and responsibly source ingredients, 52 percent expect fresher food, 48 percent expect healthier food, 45 percent expect the food to taste better, and 33 percent expect the food would cost a bit more but be worth it.

Additionally, the top menu claims that influence consumers' menu choices were:

- Fresh (86 percent);
- Local (73 percent);
- Whole Grain (68 percent);
- All Natural (66 percent); and
- No High Fructose Corn Syrup (62 percent).

Other menu claims that influence ordering include:

- Grass Fed/Pasture Raised (59 percent);
- Hormone Free (57 percent);
- Antibiotic Free Protein (56 percent);
- Free Range/Free Roaming (55 percent);
- Non GMO (55 percent);
- Sustainably Caught/Raised (54 percent);
- Fair Trade (54 percent);
- Heirloom Fruits and Vegetables (52 percent);
- Cage Free (52 percent); and
- Organic (50 percent).

Additional factors

Convenience

The survey also found that convenience has become just as important to consumers as taste and quality. Consumers said they are more likely to seek out QSRs more often than casual or fast casual because of convenience.

Healthy

Diners are more likely to choose dishes designated as fresh, locally-sourced food, items containing whole grain and anything deemed to be all natural. By the same token, a majority of consumers are avoiding GMO foods and those containing high fructose corn syrup, hormones and antibiotics. The appeal of humanely-raised meats and sustainably caught/raised seafood also is evident among today's diners, who tend to order these items when available.

Local marketing

In the current competitive foodservice environment, a growing number of restaurants are taking steps to become a bigger part of their community. By sponsoring area events, donating to charities and supporting local businesses, restaurants are creating a positive profile in their neighborhood, and consumers think more highly of these restaurants, according to Culinary Vision's research.

Cost vs. service

Even with economic conditions on the upswing, affordability remains a primary factor for consumers when choosing a restaurant. As a result, the perception of value still plays a primary role in the decision-making process, with many saying the biggest challenge when ordering is finding food items that are worth the price. Still, the majority of those eating out are not willing to cut corners when it comes to service.

Indulgence

Consumers are more likely to forego their diets and calorie counting when eating out. Palates have become more sophisticated, so while many still stick to ordering their favorite dishes, the opportunity to explore new foods and flavors is difficult to pass up.

Environmentally conscious

As people become more educated about the origin of meat and produce, including how and where it's grown or raised, a growing number of consumers are advocating for responsibly-produced food by seeking out restaurants with their same ideals, according to the survey.

In the year ahead, the mindful dining movement will continue to grow, as consumers seek out restaurants that mirror their values and adhere to their standards.