

# Study identifies merchandising cues that communicate freshness

While cleanliness and presentation are significant, transparency also plays an important role in defining freshness.

A new study from **Culinary Visions**, Chicago, explores [consumer perceptions of freshness and purchasing habits of fresh food at home and away from home](#). The study uses in-depth consumer insights to understand the contributing factors that define freshness. Results revealed that merchandising cues signifying freshness were crucial in shaping consumers' perceptions about a food's freshness.

"Freshness is affected by a long list of different factors beyond the food itself. These factors include packaging, store perceptions and service style," says Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions. "Consumers gravitate toward fresh merchandising cues such as clean and fully-stocked display cases. Uncluttered shopping, dining and ordering spaces are also important aspects to consumers' perceptions on freshness."

A fully-stocked display plays a significant role in swaying perceptions on freshness. In fact, **76%** of consumers surveyed reported that a fully-stocked shelf or display case is important to determining freshness.

[The cleanliness of merchandising displays is also important to over 90% of consumers](#). Likewise, **66%** of consumers surveyed said that a clean display case was extremely important to consider food as fresh while **28%** of consumers described that factor as a moderately important.

Clutter is also counterproductive to perception of freshness, as [90% of consumers surveyed said it was important to have a clear and uncluttered shopping, dining or ordering space when buying fresh food](#). Meanwhile, **49%** of consumers surveyed said it was extremely important, and **41%** of consumers said it was moderately important.

While the cleanliness and presentation of a service counter, salad bar or an action station in on-site foodservice operations is significant, transparency also plays an important role in defining freshness. For instance, **85%** of consumers surveyed said that transparent packaging was "moderately important" or "extremely important" when considering freshness of food. And, **88%** of consumers agreed that a label stating when the food was prepared was an important factor in their consideration of the freshness of food.

When it comes down to freshness, [consumers allow online and word-of-mouth assessments of stores and restaurants to influence their decision to purchase fresh foods](#). Case in point: **88%** of consumers said the reputation of a retail store is important when buying fresh foods, and **84%** of consumers reported that a restaurant's reviews and ratings were important when making dining decisions to eat fresh foods.

## About the survey

The [Culinary Visions Fresh Perspectives Study](#) surveyed 1,500 U.S. consumers to gather comparable data about the key influencing factors impacting fresh food purchasing decisions at home and away from home. This comprehensive report explores fresh perception between age demographics, as well as topics such as merchandising, flavor preferences, customization and convenience.