



New Culinary Visions® Consumer Study Explores the Evolution of Restaurant Dining



GMC Breaking News

Innovative restaurateurs are reshaping the customer experience.

By Culinary Visions®

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New Culinary Visions® consumer research with over 2,000 consumers nationwide suggests restaurants that explored new business models to keep their patrons nourished and connected during the pandemic are reaping benefits in the new post-pandemic culture. The study was inspired by restaurants that found inventive ways to feed their communities and stay connected with their customers while keeping their businesses alive.

With restaurants and bars reopening, more than half (53 percent) of the respondents to this survey said they consider themselves to be a regular at their local restaurant. Yet the pandemic-fueled enthusiasm for cooking at home remains with 91 percent of respondents saying they enjoy cooking at home. There is no reason this cannot be a win-win for consumers and savvy foodservice operators as one local Chicago establishment, Kite String Cantina, has demonstrated.

Open only two years when the pandemic hit in 2020, chef and co-owner Renee Ragin shared that they created the Kite Food Club, which was a chef-curated collection of restaurant prepared foods combined with bulk produce sourced from local farms. Chef Renee describes their program as meal kit meets CSA (community supported agriculture). It helped them stay in touch with their customers and strengthen their relationships.



As the pandemic wore on, the proprietors created a market inside their restaurant where customers could pick up meals and components. Today, their marketplace is making way for more seats and their food club continues to evolve to meet the desires of their customers at home and when they come into the establishment.

“Restaurant operators have faced incredible challenges over the past two years. It is inspiring to see how some imaginative chefs and restaurateurs have been undaunted and created new ways of doing business to keep their customers engaged with them,” said Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions. “It is especially gratifying to see that consumers who participated in this survey have responded so positively.”

In the new Culinary Visions study, consumers around the country indicated that many of the hallmarks of these programs continue to appeal to them today when they have vastly more options available. Some highlights from the study include:

Consumers enjoy food adventure

The restrictions of the past two years have done little to dampen consumers' desires to explore new foods and cuisines. Seventy-six percent of consumers surveyed considered themselves adventurous eaters. This sense of adventure appeals both at home and in restaurants. Eighty-four percent said they enjoy being creative with ingredients in the kitchen.

Chefs inspire trust

The idea of having a professional chef curate a box of groceries appealed to 71 percent of those surveyed. Sixty-eight percent said they would enjoy a video tutorial from a local chef to accompany the ingredients in a home cooking kit

that they put together. Creative collaboration between local restaurants and farmers is another welcome choice for 72 percent who said they would be interested in a meal kit with ingredients put together by a restaurant chef and local farmers.

Global flavors appeal at home and dining out

International flavors continue to captivate American consumers and restaurants have been a perennial go-to for patrons looking for global culinary exploration. In a recent survey about restaurant behavior, 80 percent of consumers surveyed said they enjoy international foods with flavors they cannot easily prepare at home. In this most recent survey, 76 percent said they like to order take out from restaurants for things that are difficult to make at home. When cooking at home, prepared sauces or flavoring components make it easier for 68 percent of those who participated in this survey bridging the gap between enjoyment and ease of preparation.