

International flavors drive culinary trends

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While local foods have a powerful appeal, international foods and flavors are enticing. Even though global travel has been dampened in recent years, many countries are promoting their culture around the world with culinary diplomacy programs that introduce new foods to consumers at home and away from home. 83% of consumers in this survey said they enjoy exploring new cultures through food.

The newest Culinary Visions 2023 nationwide survey of more than 2,100 consumers found the hectic pace of modern life requires fast fuel as much as personal service and social food-centric experiences.

Modern consumers have a powerful sense of culinary adventure when it comes to exploring global foods.

The most recent Culinary Visions study finds American consumers continue to be captivated by opposing trends both at home and away from home. The research identified three important areas where food professionals can satisfy and delight their patrons:

Pandemic weary consumers have returned with enthusiasm to immersive experiences like food festivals, street markets and fancy food emporiums where food is both the attraction and the entertainment. 71% of those surveyed in the recent study said they enjoy a food market experience because it is just as much a social occasion as it is a shopping trip.

Yet the pace of life and volume of commitments are also fueling fast casual and quick service restaurants. 57% of survey participants said sharing a meal with a friend or family members in the car suits their hectic lifestyle.

"In 2016 Culinary Visions coined the term Oxy-Modern to describe a world of cultural contradictions that were driving food culture," says Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions. "In the most recent study, we found that trends and counter-trends are very much at play in today's menus."

The desire and willingness to pay for local and sustainable foods has become a mega-trend. Survey participants expressed an appreciation for everyone involved in bringing their food to the table. Furthermore, 77% said they are willing to pay more for food that comes from local producers. Having the opportunity to meet the producer adds to the appeal. 75% of consumers surveyed said they like talking to food vendors who are passionate about the products they sell.

Food savvy consumers want to know as much as they can about the food they consume, and that goes beyond required ingredient statements on packaged goods. Technology that makes information easily accessible at the point of sale can encourage purchases of freshly prepared foods. 80% of shoppers agreed that they would like to have more information about the sources of the fresh items they purchase in the grocery store readily available to them in-store.

Although shoppers want the convenience of shopping that technology has enabled, when they come into the store, they want a worthwhile experience. 72% said that experts available to answer questions on specific food items made them feel like it was worth the trip to the store. And 86% said they enjoyed sampling products when shopping for groceries.