

Consumer Trends: What Would Entice Americans to Try New Foods?

Mintel Group

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) — Most Americans would agree that eating healthfully should be a priority in their daily life, but what truly drives consumers to choose healthy items over the potentially more enticing, yet unhealthy options? What would entice them to try something new, or are consumers still in the mind-set that restaurant visits don't warrant healthy eating? [New Mintel research](#) [1] finds that more often than not, diners eat with their eyes, not their stomachs—as about 38 percent of adults agree that if a healthy menu item sounds tasty in the menu description, they are more likely to order it.

Moreover, some 27 percent of consumers say they like to order healthy meals with ingredients they are familiar with. According to Katrina Fajardo, foodservice analyst at Mintel, "For consumers who are often on the fence for healthy or indulgent eating, familiarity can help ease them into healthier choices, rather than alienating them with superfoods they have not heard of or have a reputation for lackluster taste."

So how do Americans define healthy dining? Nine percent agree a menu item that includes a "gluten-free" mention denotes a healthy choice, down from 10 percent last year and 39 percent think entrees with more fruits and vegetables come across as healthy. Meanwhile, 37 percent believe an item with a low calorie count is a healthy option and 34 percent think a dish with less sodium is considered healthy.

Katrina notes:

"One of the possible reasons for consumers' indecisiveness on healthy foods in foodservice is the fact that foodservice still has the stigma of being unhealthy, regardless of what is ordered. As a result of the numerous exposes showing the real caloric counts in salads, sandwiches, and other menu items deemed as 'healthy,' consumers are conflicted with the idea that a restaurant could offer real, healthy items. In addition, the overwhelming amount of healthy-eating knowledge available for consumers can be overbearing, and skew the way they are personally defining health. For operators, this is a difficult position to be in. However, if the menu items are described well, and are made with familiar items, it could help entice customers who are seeking a healthy meal."

Nearly one out of every four US consumers (24 percent) is not interested in eating healthfully when they go out to eat, because they view away-from-home visits as a treat. Similarly, about a quarter of consumers (24 percent) mentioned that they look at the more healthy options, but opt for the unhealthy meals instead.

"While this may sound like operators don't necessarily need to pander toward the

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health-minded visitors, there is still a sizeable number of consumers who are willing to purchase healthy foods," Katrina concludes. "Operators who do not have a foundation in healthy offerings should continue to offer their traditional fare, but create menu items that are either lower-calorie items, customized versions of main meals, or add locally-sourced or organic ingredients to items in order to boost consumer's perceptions of health on the menu without needing a full menu overhaul."

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