

Technomic Identifies Gender and Age Differences in Natural and Organic Food Preferences

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As natural and organic foods continue growing in popularity, consumer research by foodservice consultants Technomic found that women place significantly more importance on being able to select from a wide variety of natural, organic and sustainable food offerings when shopping for food or dining out-although overall interest was strong for both men and women.

According to Technomic, these findings suggest, among other things, that marketing campaigns for 'healthy' food categories may find greater success if targeted by gender.

The new research was prompted by growing interest in understanding and meeting consumers' demands for healthy food options, especially in foodservice venues. Products labeled as natural or organic have seen double-digit sales growth in recent years and now represent close to \$21 billion annually.

'One of our more compelling findings is that younger consumers seem to have a stronger affinity for natural, organic and sustainable menu items,' says Darren Tristano, Executive Vice President of Technomic Information Services. Tristano explained that even though older Americans have particular concerns about health and specific diet-related health issues, they may, in fact, represent the slowest adopters of organic and natural foods.

Seven out of 10 survey respondents (71 percent) associate items menued as natural, organic and sustainable with the idea of healthfulness, and nearly as many (62 percent) connect them with using the freshest ingredients. However, only 41 percent associate organic, natural and sustainable ingredients with a perception of quality. Even fewer associate 'good taste' with these items, and only 18 percent see them as good values.

'Before foodservice operators and suppliers can cash in on the organic and natural trend, there are significant challenges for R&D and the marketing department-or both,' added Tristano.

These and many other findings are presented and interpreted in *The Healthy-by-Design Foods Report: Natural, Organic and Sustainable Items in Foodservice*. The report includes key findings and recommendations, extensive insights from a survey of 1,000 consumers, issues in menu management and consumer demand, and distribution challenges. Several appendices also address back-of-house issues, thought starters for menu development, organic and natural items on chain menus and leading independents, profiles of emerging concepts, and much more. To purchase or learn more, please visit www.foodpubs.com or contact one of the individuals listed below.

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