

Technomic Finds More Evidence of Consumers Cutting Back on Dinners Out

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More than one-third of consumers (35 percent) said they are eating or buying dinners out less frequently than one year ago, reports foodservice consultants Technomic. Money issues dominated the reasons for decreased patronage, 77 percent of those cutting back are doing so to save money, while 59 percent said they have less money to spend and 46 percent cited the price of restaurant meals.

'It's vital for operators to provide consumers with added value incentives to maintain and grow their business,' says Darren Tristano, Executive Vice President of Technomic. 'Consumers want to feel that their dinner experience is a good value regardless of the price point. Special offers, promotions, family-pack and combo meals promote that perception. Beyond increasing the value proposition for consumers, bundling items in a combo meal helps operators to build add-on sales.'

The findings come from Technomic's Dinner Occasion Consumer Trend Report, which provides an in-depth analysis of the dinner market in the areas of menu trends and consumer attitudes, preferences and purchase behavior. Other findings include:

Customization factors strongly into consumers' value equation. The majority of consumers (58 percent) want to be able to substitute or choose a side dish, and 29 percent said they sometimes make a meal out of appetizers.

Ethnically-inspired dishes and bolder flavor profiles that consumers cannot easily create at home are an important part of the dinner experience. Mexican is the leading ethnic dinner option among both full- and limited-service restaurants. Asian flavors are also especially popular, and Asian preparation techniques and ingredients are growing in dinner offerings.

Convenience is an important factor in dinner trends, including ordering, parking and location. Many consumers (27 percent) said they often view menus online when choosing a dinner venue, while 38 percent said free and easily accessible parking was important for choosing takeout. Convenience was also the top reason for choosing a retail meal.

Technomic developed the Dinner Occasion Consumer Trend Report to provide operators and foodservice professionals with valuable market and consumer insights into the dinner segment. The report combines quantitative data from over 1,500 consumer surveys, menu analysis from Technomic's proprietary MenuMonitor database and restaurant data from its Top 500 Report to generate fresh and timely analysis.

Appendices to the report provide detailed profiles of 20 emerging chains and independent restaurants with a unique dinner focus and highlight innovative marketing and menu-development strategies to attract late-night diners. Listings of new menu items, limited-time offers and special occasion dinner items are included.

To purchase or learn more about the Dinner Occasion Consumer Trend Report, please visit www.foodpubs.com.

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