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THE BAKER'S MAGAZINE

INDUSTRY NEWS

## New Survey Reveals A "New Frugality" Among Restaurant Diners

A new survey from the Culinary Visions Panel program—led by Chicago-based Olson Communications—shows that consumers continue to enjoy eating out in restaurants, but are ordering differently to be able to satisfy both their pocketbooks and their palates.

This "New Frugality" mindset is reflected in the responses to the online survey from the Culinary Visions Panel, which polled 210 consumers who identified themselves as frequent patrons of casual dining restaurants. More than half of survey participants (53 percent) reported that they have changed their dining choices in the

past 12 months as a result of the economy. Moreover, 81 percent said they are paying closer attention to menu prices.

Among other evolving behaviors, the Culinary Visions survey results revealed where, what, and how people are ordering is indicative of their interest in scaling back spending while still seeking a rewarding dining experience.

Special offers are special: Just as coupons are popular in today's supermarket purchases, savings offers are important to restaurant patrons. Seventy-two percent (72 percent) of respondents to the Culinary Visions

survey noted that they are researching the best dining values and using restaurant coupons.

Restaurant operators, for their part, report that specially priced dinners—such as a \$23 three-course lunch, early-bird choice, or daily "meal deals"—are increasingly popular.

Share and share alike: Sharing or splitting dishes is becoming more common. Forty percent of those who took the online survey said they have split an entrée with a dining partner more often than they did a year ago, while a third revealed they are patronizing restaurants that serve larger portions that can be shared or taken home as leftovers. Respondents also reported sharing appetizers and desserts instead of ordering one for every person at the table.

Swap to save: Instead of ordering a slew of appetizers, cocktails and desserts as accompaniments to main dishes, many consumers are going the "either/or" route, choosing either appetizers or desserts or cocktails or desserts to keep a lid on expenses. That's true for pleasure dining as well as business dining.

The more things change...the more they stay the same: Some eating behaviors have not altered much as a result of the economic downturn, according to the Culinary Visions report.

For instance, 42 percent of participants said they are buying prepared foods from supermarkets in place of dining out, while 38 percent said they have not changed their buying habits in that regard.

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