

Eating out up 4% says Horizons? consumer survey

Consumers are eating out more often this summer, than they did this time last year, with 71% of respondents to a new Horizons' survey saying they had eaten out in the past two weeks, a clear sign that confidence is returning to the sector.

The Eating Out-Look survey, conducted online by YouGov amongst 2,366 respondents, reveals that convenience (27%) and conviviality (26%) are the most frequently cited reasons for eating out amongst those who have done so, but increasingly consumers report that they opt for meals out or takeaways because they don't want to cook themselves (25%), are hungry (20%) or because meals out represent good value for money (17%).

However, while the number of survey respondents eating out in the previous two weeks has risen from 67% in June 2013 to 71% in July 2014, average spend has dropped year-on-year from £13.30 to £12.72.

Although frequency of eating out is still below pre-recession levels, the increase in penetration and frequency of eating out indicates that the sector is no longer in decline, commented Horizons' director of services Nicola Knight. The fact average spend has dropped slightly suggests that there is a greater willingness amongst consumers to intersperse special occasion meals with more everyday purchases.

Respondents to the survey reported that over the previous two weeks they had eaten out an average of 2.21 times, up from last year's average frequency of 1.77 times. While pub restaurants continue to take a healthy share of the market, when asked where they last ate out, takeaway and home delivered food proved more popular at 19% (up from 16%), suggesting that the rise in eating out is consumers 'topping up' with takeaway or delivered food between more formal meal occasions.

According to the survey, the increase in eating out is driven by those on higher incomes (ABC1s), (78% vs. 73% in 2013) and is seen across the nation with the exception of the Midlands (65% vs. 69% in 2013).

While the majority of those dining out do so in the evening (63%), 47% have lunch out and an increasing number eat breakfast out of the home (12%) compared with this time last year (10%).

Some 12% of respondents to the survey that eat out said they looked for vegetarian options when choosing where they eat out or what they eat, with 12% saying calorie information affects where and what they choose to eat and 9% looking for low-fat options. Over half of diners (53%) say that it's important for them to know the origin of the main ingredients in a dish they are going to eat.

Women are more likely to mention at least one health or lifestyle issue affecting their choice of eating out venue (37%), with only 25% of men having the same concerns.

Younger age groups (18-24 and 25-34) are most likely to eat out at 78% and 79%, with those aged over 55 eating out less frequently, but spending the most when they do (£13.78) with those aged 18-24 spending the least (£10.40).

When choosing somewhere to eat out, the quality of food is the most frequently cited factor amongst respondents (76%), with price second (65%) and cleanliness third (60%).

So what puts people off eating out? Of the respondents who hadn't eaten out in the past two weeks (27%), expense was the most commonly cited barrier, with quality and healthiness also having an influence.

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The QuickBite surveys were conducted online by YouGov plc

2014 June survey: Total sample size was 2,366 adults. Fieldwork was conducted 20- 23 June 2014.

2013 June survey: Total sample size was 2,003 adults. Fieldwork was conducted 21-23 June 2013.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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Editor's Note

Eating Out-Look is a collaboration between foodservice expert Horizons and JRA Research. Eating Out-Look brings together research from consumers and operators to give a rounded view of the eating out market. By looking at the market from the perspectives of both consumers and operators, Eating Out-Look provides invaluable insights into what is driving eating out trends.

Eating Out-Look builds on data from what was formerly known as Horizons' QuickBite consumer eating out survey and findings from JRA's panel research of catering professionals. The quarterly report will analyse key eating out trends from both a consumer and operator perspective.

Between them Horizons and JRA Research have more than 50 years' experience in the foodservice sector. Horizons offers an integrated portfolio of services to businesses and other organisations with an interest in foodservice. These services range from Menurama, a twice yearly review of menu trends, to industry-leading market statistics and trends, and Ones to Watch, the survey of the fastest growing eating out brands. www.hrzns.com

JRA runs a panel for catering professionals with chefs and other professionals throughout the foodservice sector. It has a national field force of 750 interviewers who carry out research covering a wide spectrum of issues, from overall attitudes and behaviour within the sector to new product development, product and brand usage within catering kitchens, testing of new product formulations. www.jraresearch.com