

Nutrition to Go! Restaurant Trends

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

Food & Culinary Shifts in Eating Out

After researching the latest eating out trends in health and wellness, while there are significant challenges that the restaurant industry still faces in being able to support health conscious consumers, there were also some pleasant surprises. Here are some of the latest nutrition, food and culinary changes in the restaurant industry:



Are more Canadians eating out?

I was surprised to learn that the answer is NO. Traffic growth in the restaurant industry is actually flat and has declined slightly (down by 0.2 %) based on NPD CREST data for the year-end November 2014.

The NPD also reports that in Canada, the foodservice industry is expected to grow at a modest rate of less than 1% per year over the next five years.

Canada's restaurant industry report of 2010 suggests Canadians are eating out more often for convenience and less often based on watching the budget more closely.

Who is eating out?

- Women represent 52% of traffic versus men at 48% of traffic
- 35-55 year olds eat out the most (32% of traffic), followed by millennials aged 18-35 years (31% of traffic), then those aged 55+ (20% of traffic) followed by those under 18 years (1% of traffic)





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Where are Canadians eating out (based on traffic)?

- 65% quick service, 24% full service, 11% retail
- Top 10 quick service restaurants in Canada:
 1. Tim Hortons
 2. McDonalds
 3. Subway
 4. Starbucks
 5. A&W
 6. Dairy Queen
 7. Wendy's
 8. KFC
 9. Pizza Pizza
 10. Burger King
- Time of day: 33% morning, 25% lunch, 24% snack, 18% supper
- What are they eating? 34% breakfast goods, 20% sandwiches, 14% burgers, 3% soup, 2% salad

(NPD CREST Traffic, Year End Nov 2014 Canada)

What are the latest restaurant industry buzzwords?

Its less about **removing negatives** such as fat, cholesterol, sugar and gluten. It's also not as appealing for consumers to think about **adding positives** such as whole grains, fibre, antioxidants.

Current messages are more about simply eating real food.

An April 2015 article in Restaurant Hospitality summarized the top 4 buzzwords: *Authentic, Customized, Fresh, Local*

Other Buzzwords:

- Honest food
- Real
- Fresh
- All-natural
- Non-GMO
- Sustainable
- Locally sourced

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- “Craft foods”
- Gluten-free
- Leafy greens
- Food waste reduction
- Farm-to-table
- House-made
- From scratch
- Artisan
- Ethnic fusion
- Ancient grains
- Pickled, fermented
- Smoked, cured
- Veggie-centric

*Restaurants Canada 2015 chef survey.
National Restaurant Association USA 2015 Menu Trends to Watch*

What are the biggest challenges that restaurants have in offering healthier options?

In a recent April 2015 CTV interview, Greg Dollarhyde, CEO of Veggie Grill a “veggie-centric” chain in Santa Monica had a great quote that summed up “today’s consumer” and the challenge for today’s restaurant owners:

“Make it better for me, but I don’t want to give anything up. I want less salt, no antibiotics, no trans-fats, more fruits, more veggies. I don’t go out to restaurants to give stuff up; I go to be tantalized”

The tall order is this: consumers want food fresh, cheap and fast and most importantly they don’t want it to taste like it’s good for them.

What is the best advice for restaurant owners, grocery stores, hospitals, recreation centers and school cafeterias?

As food researcher Dr. Jim Painter says, **“Don’t sell health as much as the sizzle.”** Use **seductive nutrition** which means create and position healthier dishes as equal in taste, value for money, and overall satisfaction to their less healthy counterparts.

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Mike Donahue who is co-founder and chief brand officer of the healthy restaurant chain Lyfe Kitchen in the USA (and former chief of corporate communications of McDonalds) said it best in a Feb 2015 interview with Fortune magazine:

“Our people are so excited to tell you how healthy we are, that they scare customers away sometimes. I beg them to not use the H word. Talk about great taste, talk about flavor, talk about ingredients, talk about the food and taste quest that we went on. And then, by the way, it’s good for you.”

Anyone that produces food can benefit from selling the taste first, then surprise them its healthy.

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