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## Better For You

Nutrition is a top 2011 trend – for both consumers and Operators. According to National Restaurant Association research, 73% of adults say they try to eat healthier when dining at restaurants than they did two years ago.<sup>1</sup> And by March 2011, mandates from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will require foodservice Operators with 20 or more units to post calorie counts on indoor menu boards and menus at drive-through locations. While this legislation may take longer to execute industry-wide, it will generate enough media exposure to make nutrition top of mind with consumers.

### What Does Better For You Mean?

Making more healthful food choices has always proved a challenge to foodservice consumers, with most people preferring “better for you” (BFY) menu choices in theory rather than in practice. This year, once again, consumers say they plan to eat more healthy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Reported Healthy Dining Strategies for 2011

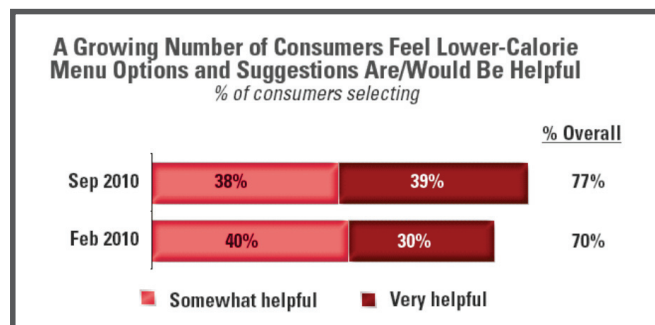
What healthy dining choices will you make in 2011?	
	%
Ordering Items with Less Fat	57
Ordering Items with Fewer Calories	49
Ordering More Fruits & Vegetables	46
Ordering Smaller Portion Sizes	45

Source: Mintel's Emerging Restaurant Concepts – U.S., December 2010

However, eating healthier doesn't just mean more vegetables, fruit and fiber. Instead of wanting to eat absolutely healthy when dining out, consumers are looking for restaurants to help them take small steps in bettering their diet. Restaurants can help diners with these steps not by introducing entirely new menu sections but by adding more portion-size options, healthier or better-for-you ingredient substitution options, like whole-grain bread, low-fat salad dressings, fruit and vegetable side dish options.<sup>2</sup>

Plus, a growing number of consumers feel lower-calorie menu options and suggestions are/would be helpful. Interest in calorie information has grown by 7% in just a few months as illustrated in Figure 2. Consumer interest in calorie disclosure is proportionate among both men and women to inform them of which foods are healthiest.

Figure 2. Would lower-calorie menu options be helpful?



Source: American Express Market Briefing October 2010

More than 41% of consumers report that they would prefer to see lower-calorie menu options offered on a special section of the regular menu. About one-third (32%) of consumers indicate that they'd ideally opt for inclusion of better-for-you items on the regular menu, with some sort of denotation as to their more healthful status.<sup>3</sup>

## The Healthy “Halo”

Consumers enjoy visiting restaurants that are perceived as healthy because these venues make them feel good about themselves and their meal choices. Don't forget you can enhance consumer perception of your establishment as healthy by making small menu changes. Even if diners don't opt for the healthiest item on the menu, they want to feel that they're eating at an establishment that serves inherently better-for-you foods.

By making little menu tweaks such as calling out lower fat offerings or featuring smaller portion-size options, Operators can create the perception of their menu being healthier. Making these small changes reduces the risk that those seeking better-for-you options will dine elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Consumers are also seeking out menu items that contain descriptors that make them feel better about their choices such as “fresh,” “house-made,” “authentic” and “simply.” The mention of ingredient sourcing such as California-grown tomatoes, Idaho potatoes or Georgia peaches also resonates with consumers as they recognize and value ingredients sourced from well-known domestic growing regions. Beyond geography be sure to include other important attributes such as “seasonal,” “traditional” and “authentic.” Operators can also create a better-for-you perception by serving dishes that feature the best of what's in season and items that are available only for a limited time. All these attributes help to give consumers the perception of freshness and foods that are healthier.

**Key P.A.T.R.O.N.® segments seeking better for you options are:**

**Health-Conscious Managers**

- Age: 45-65
- Married
- Constantly engaged in managing their health and seek healthful menu items and senior specials
- Prefer leisurely paced meals and a quiet atmosphere

**Fretful Parents**

- Age: 35-44
- Married, skews female
- View dining out as a functional way to feed the family.
- They look for cheaper, speedy, kid-friendly restaurants to minimize stress
- Healthy and low-mess options are important to them

**SIDE DISH**

Source: ConAgra Foodservice proprietary Food Away from Home Study 2009

## Patron Key Issues

The bottom line for Operators is that while healthy eating and better-for-you dining options are top of mind with most consumers, it's important for restaurant Operators to remember that taste trumps all. Simply adding whole grains to a dish, including more vegetables in a recipe or reducing portion sizes is not enough unless it tastes good. Better-for-you must be synonymous with good tasting.

Consumers have traditionally battled internally between eating healthy or indulgent food. At the end of the day it is about balance. Casting a better-for-you halo over indulgent and craveable menu items will win with most consumers. Sometimes a consumer is looking to simply make a better choice, so offering their favorite dish in a smaller portion or made with seasonal ingredients helps them feel as though they are able to still enjoy what they crave but the dish itself is better-for-you.

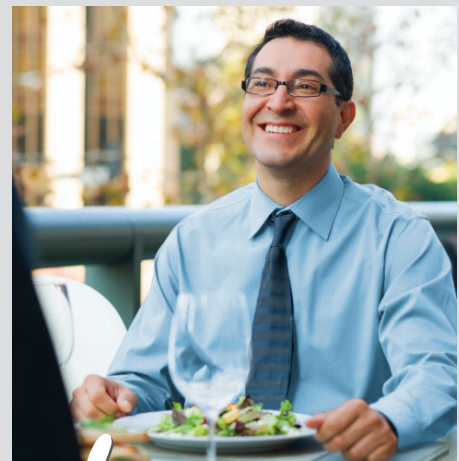
For restaurant Operators, appealing to consumers looking for healthy dining options does not require a complete menu overhaul. Instead, the addition of a few key ingredients or changing the way items are presented to hit upon what consumers are looking for when eating healthy may position the menu as better for you, as well as one that has appeal when looking to indulge.

*For more targeted recommendations to grow your business ask your ConAgra Foodservice representative for a customized P.A.T.R.O.N. profile report.*



## Bringing Better for You to Life in Your Operation – Top 5 Actions

1. Make small additions to your menu to help elevate your establishment as healthy by adding more fruits and vegetables or healthier side dish options.
2. When marketing healthier menu items, restaurant Operators can add value by going beyond calorie and fat counts and integrating carbohydrate and sodium information in an effort to aid people in controlling their diets.
3. Consider preparation method when looking at your menu for opportunities to improve the healthy halo. Identify items that can be grilled, steamed or sautéed as opportunities to improve the healthful perception of a dish.
4. Improve the better-for-you perception of items on your menu by using descriptors such as "local," "fresh," "house-made," "simply" and "seasonal," and include local or regional source identification of ingredients if possible.
5. Celebrating the season or a harvest such as apples in the fall or spring peas, creates a "get-it-now" urgency with a healthy halo.



*to go...*

Sources:

- (1) National Restaurant Association "America's Restaurants: Putting Nutrition at the Center of the Plate" 2010
- (2) Mintel Research 2011: A Look Ahead December 2010
- (3) American Express Market Briefing October 2010
- (4) Mintel Health & Wellness Trends Report December 2010

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