

# Restaurant Consumers' Concern for Food Safety and Their Willingness to Pay Extra for Food Safety



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# Purpose

Determine perceptions of consumers about food safety when eating away from home and their willingness to pay higher prices for food safety assurance.



# Methods

- E-mail survey using Zoomerang zSample
- Sample recruited by Zoomerang through U.S. mail
- zSample used for market research



# Sample Characteristics

- N = 309
- 88% white
- 51% male
- 32% some college, 47% college graduate
- Age
  - 12% 18-25
  - 18% 26-34
  - 37% 35-50
  - 32% 51-65



# Concern for Food Safety

- 57% agreed or strongly agreed that they were concerned about food safety when eating out
- 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- No relationships based on gender, employment, age, or education



# Weekly Meals Away from Home

## ■ Meals eaten in restaurant or other foodservice

■ 0	6%
■ 1-2	63%
■ 3-4	21%
■ 5 or more	10%

## ■ Meals eaten if food safety were not concern

■ 1-2	57%
■ 3-4	24%
■ 5 or more	20%



# Weekly \$ Spent for Food Away from Home

- Less than \$10 14%
- \$11-15 19%
- \$16-20 18%
- More than \$20 50%

Part-time employed spent less for food than full-time employed



# % of Meal Price that would be paid extra for improved food safety

% Extra	No. Respondents	% Respondents
0	123	40
Less than 5	114	37
5-10	58	19
11-15	10	3
16-20	2	.6
Over 20	1	.3





# Factors Impacting Willingness to Pay Extra for Food Safety

- Those who were willing to pay more for safer food would like to see establishments advertise their safer food practices.
- Those who observe food safety problems were about twice as likely to say that they would pay extra for safer food (an additional 5%).
- Those who wanted to see food safety certificates posted were more likely to pay more for food safety.



# Implied Warranty

- Consumers may view that restaurants or other foodservice operations should serve safe food so that it should not be a concern.
- Because of implied warranty, consumers may not believe that they should pay “extra” for food safety.



# Demographic Characteristics and Willingness to Pay Extra

- Younger consumers were more willing to pay extra than older consumers
- Characteristics not related to willingness to pay:
  - Education
  - Gender
  - Employment



# Consumer Attitudes

Item	% Yes
<p>I have observed food safety problems in restaurants or other foodservice establishments.</p> <p>Strong association between consumers' concern about food safety when eating out and observations of food safety problems.</p>	73



# Perceived Food Safety Problems Observed

- No hair restraints 65%
- Handling food with bare hands 62%
- Touching face or hair with hands 58%
- Hot food not hot 56%
- Poor personal hygiene of workers 44%
- Poor handwashing 40%
- Insects 34%
- Cold food not cold 26%



# Consumer Attitudes

Item	% Yes
<p>I think foodservice establishments are doing enough to provide me with safe food.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Men twice as likely to say YES than women</li><li>➤ Part-time employed twice as likely to say YES than full-time employed</li></ul>	51



# Consumer Attitudes, cont.

Item	% Yes
■ I think that restaurants and similar establishments need to advertise that they are using practices that ensure that foods they serve are safe.	73
■ I feel more secure eating in restaurants if I see food safety certificates for employees posted.	73



# Consumer Attitudes, cont.

- Women more likely than men to respond YES to feeling more secure when food safety certificates are posted.
- Respondents who believe that restaurants are doing enough to provide safe food are less likely to think that restaurants need to post food safety certificates.





# Consumer Attitudes, cont.

Item	% Yes
■ If food safety were not a concern, I would eat out more often.	25
■ I would be interested in knowing more about food safety issues related to eating away from home.	72



# Conclusions

- Consumers observe food handling practices in restaurants.
- Consumers have concerns about food safety when eating away.
- Restaurateurs could post food safety certificates to instill confidence.
- Restaurateurs must continue to emphasize food safety and good food handling practices with employees.



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