

Australian diners eat up but choosing healthier

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Australian diners are thinking healthier when they head out to eat, choosing healthy meals, eating more salad and less dessert, according to new research.

The latest American Express Dining Insights report into dining habits of Australian revealed that one in four Australians are ordering healthier meals when dining out compared to 12 months ago, with one-in-five claiming an increase in their salad consumption.

But there was an increase in people saying they were ordering less dessert (39 per cent), gourmet meals (40 per cent), and fast food (37 per cent).

Good news for the foodservice industry is that this increased concern about health hasn't stopped diners from heading out to dine, or spending when they get there. The research found that the size of the average dining transaction has not changed over the past year, and that 20 per cent of respondents said they were eating out more this year than in 2009.

"Australians have a love affair with eating out but more and more they are balancing up the need to look after their health and their waistline," said American Express Vice President Merchant Services Australia Geoff Begg.

"While the size of the bill hasn't changed the items being ordered are now much more likely include salads, fresh vegetables, low-fat ingredients and even a tick from the Heart Foundation."

Conducted by Galaxy Research, the national poll found Western Australians aged fifty years and older are twice as likely to have increased their consumption of healthy meals (35 per cent increase over the past 12 months than Victorians (17 per cent) eating more).

John Hart, CEO of Restaurant and Catering Australia, said, "Australians continue to see eating out as part of the Australian way of life and healthy eating is now mainstream and nearly all restaurants promote healthy eating options.

"More than ever, Australians are better educated about what they are eating and the area of demand is great tasting food that is good for you," he added.

The survey also revealed that the trend towards healthy meals and salads does not mean vegetarian meals. Only 11 per cent of respondents claimed they had increased their ordering of vegetarian meals over the past 12 months.

“The increasing preference for healthy meals and salads coupled with the popularity of casual restaurants and cafes is seeing a shift in the types of menu options available in Australia,” Begg said.

“While Australians are increasingly looking for healthy meal options, but not necessarily vegetarian options, it is the reputation for quality food, affordability and service that still wins over a customer and has them returning again and again.”

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