

How Many People Order Vegetarian Meals When Eating Out?

To gauge the demand for meatless meals in restaurants, The Vegetarian Resource Group conducted a poll to find out how often customers were ordering vegetarian. We were surprised by the results.

Though our previous polls indicate about one percent of the country is vegetarian (no meat, fish, or fowl), about five times as many people say that when eating out, they always order a dish without meat, fish or fowl (5.5%). And over half of the population (57%) sometimes, often, or always orders a vegetarian item. (See total of 1, 2, and 3 in poll results table.)

These statistics certainly give restaurant owners and foodservice managers something to think about. There is an exploding demand for meatless meals.

However, to make life complicated, 39% say they never order a dish without meat, fish, or fowl. Almost the same amount of Americans have sometimes ordered a vegetarian meal.

This means there are many tastes to which foodservice staff must cater. It's not as easy as offering one item for everybody. But if a vegetarian item tastes good, about half the population will eat it. So food companies and restaurants should keep working on those veggie entrees.

Poll Results

When you eat out, do you...

	Total	Male	Female
1. Sometimes order a dish without meat, fish, or fowl	40.8%	37%	45%
2. Often order a dish without meat, fish, or fowl	11.7%	10%	14%
3. Always order a dish without meat, fish, or fowl	5.5%	5%	6%
4. Never order a dish without meat, fish or fowl	38.9%	45%	33%

The poll of 1,181 adults nationwide was conducted in March 1999 by Zogby International. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.12%. Error margins are higher for subgroups.

When you eat out, do you Always order a dish without meat, fish or fowl?

Total	5.5%	Eastern United States	8.0%
Full time student	4.6%	South	3.9%
Income below \$15,000	8.0%	Central/Great Lakes	5.9%
Income over \$75,000	4.4%	West	4.3%
White	5.5%	18-29 years of ag	11.7%
Afro-American	4.5%	30-49 years of age	5.2%
Asian	26.4%		