

*** BPM: BEATS PER MINUTE ***

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Welcome to this month's edition of BPM - the e-newsletter all about Young Adults. BPM is created through surveys conducted with our online panel, respondents from Alloy.com, the leading teen Web site, and CCS.com, the online destination for skate and surf culture.

This month we spoke with nearly 500 young adult men and women ages 13 to 24 about their eating habits. As you read these findings, consider other characteristics typical of the lifestyle of today's teens, college students and young independents such as:

1. They are constantly on-the-go. Even when at home, they are multi-tasking - often eating, but rarely at the kitchen table
2. Image consciousness. Does the focus on projecting appearance affect their decisions of what to eat?
3. Fundamentally, young adults are experimenters. They love taking risks and trying new things.
4. And, they are much more diverse than previous generations. Do their taste buds and eating habits mirror this diversity as much as their CD collection?

Here is what these young men and women had to say...

For the most part, young adults have a carefree eating attitude, with many admitting to pigging out on whatever they feel like and being junk food junkies.

* Eating habits and choices are not considered to be weighty decisions - with a quarter (25%) of respondents saying "I pig out on whatever I'm in the mood for" and an additional fifth (19%) admitting that their eating habits aren't healthy, "I am a snack food junkie; I tend to eat foods that aren't good for me."

- However, this "attitude" towards eating is much more prevalent with males. 22% of females claim to watch what they eat -- while only 7% of males say the same.

* In addition, many young adults just eat what is convenient for them: 24% explain that "I eat whatever's made for me (at home, at school, etc)." and 19% say they "don't really think about what (they) eat."

* Only 8% of respondents claim to be "goodie-goodie when it comes to food; I eat what's good for me," 5% say they are "on a diet, I only eat certain foods."

- In fact, less than one-third (26%) of respondents factor in how good food is for them when making a decision on what to eat.

When it comes to making decisions about what to eat, young adults are looking for good, cheap food, and a lot of it.

* When asked about what they consider when figuring out what they want to eat, the top deciding factors, with taste having a significant lead, were:

- How good it tastes (84%)

- How much it costs (53%)

* Falling in the second tier of factors in the decision process were:

- How big the portion is (30%)

- Where they are at the time (20%)

- If they can eat it on the go (16%)

- The activity they're doing at doing at the time (15%)

- Who they're with at the time (10%)

With the rise of single family homes, working parents, and on-the-go lifestyles, it is not surprising that many young adults make or cook their own meals.

* More than one-third (39%) of the young adults we spoke with revealed that they make/cook meals for themselves at least once a day, while another third (29%) make/cook meals for themselves once a week or more.

* 9% of respondents make/cook meals for themselves less than once a month, and only 6% say they never make/cook meals for themselves.

* Not surprisingly, the percentage of young adults who make/cook meals for themselves increases with age, with an exception during the "college years" (probably due to dining halls and meal plans).

Though they may be putting meals together for themselves, respondents expressed that they keep it simple, either by using recipes that are not too complicated or by making meals that don't involve any actual cooking.

* Most respondents stick to straightforward ways of preparing meals, including:

- Recipes that aren't too complicated (i.e. rice, pasta, etc) (22%)

- Meals that don't involve any cooking (20%)

- Make microwaveable meals (18%)

- Instant meals (i.e. "just add water") (17%)

* A smaller number said they actually cook meals from scratch (14%), and only 9% don't make meals at all.

Due to their hectic lifestyles, most young adults only get to have one meal a day with their family-at best. Rushing to get out the door to get to school in the morning results in eating breakfast alone or not at all, going to school during the day means eating lunch with friends, and depending on their schedules, dinner is usually the only meal eaten with the family.

* Nearly half of respondents claim that they eat breakfast alone (42%)

- Over one-quarter don't eat breakfast at all (28%)

- 22% eat with family

- 8% eat with friends

* Almost three-quarters of young adults eat lunch with friends (70%) (Note: this survey is during the school year and results may differ during summer vacation).

- 14% eat lunch alone

- 7% eat with family

- 7% don't eat lunch at all

* Nearly three-quarters (70%) of respondents eat dinner with their family.

- 16% eat dinner with friends

- 12% eat dinner alone

- 3% don't eat dinner at all

Young adults today are an ethnically diverse bunch (in fact, according to the 2000 US Census one in three young adults is not Caucasian). They embrace and expect diversity in many facets of their lives - even when it comes to food. Respondents expressed being very open-minded and willing to give anything a try, even if it is just once.

* 65% of the young adults we spoke with try new foods all the time and are willing to pretty much try anything. Examples of "weird" foods they've tried and told us about include:

- Pigs Feet

- Alligator

- Frog legs

- Kangaroo meat

- Escargot

* One-quarter (25%) said they will sometimes try new things, but pretty much like to stick with what they know.

* Only 8% say they don't like to experiment with new foods at all.

When we asked respondents to rate foods on a scale of one to five, where 1 meant "Totally gross, I would never eat that" and 5 meant "I love it," we found that just because they liked the experience of trying new foods, it doesn't necessarily mean that they liked what they tried.

* In fact, the more "traditional" and common foods received the highest ratings, with respondents calling them either "good" or "Awesome, I love it." These foods included:

- Pizza (94%)
- Mac&Cheese (77%)
- Spaghetti & Meatballs (76%)
- Peanut Butter and Jelly (69%)

* Interestingly, Burritos were right up there in popularity (69%) with these traditional dishes.

* Falling in the middle, were more non-traditional foods such as:

- Sweetbreads (36%)
- Duck (29%)
- Sushi (23%)
- Jambalaya (22%)
- Curry (22%)
- Calamari (18%)

* However, respondents drew the line on eating certain foods again that they thought were just too gross:

- Frog Legs (11%)
- Caviar (6%)
- Escargot (6%)
- Anchovies (5%)