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Brown-bag lunches grow in popularity: NPD

By Ann Bagel Storck on 7/28/2008

As time-pressed workers try to cut costs and eat healthier, brown-bagging is becoming increasingly popular in the American workplace, according to a new study from market research company the NPD Group. NPD reports that the rise in lunches carried from home is contributing to the softening of the midday meal business at commercial restaurants.

According to "How Brown-Bagging Is Affecting Foodservice Lunch," weekday lunches carried from home reached a new high in 2007, increasing from 35 bagged lunches per capita in 2006 to 38 in 2007. Adult males carry brown-bagged weekday lunches most frequently, but adult females have driven gains over the last few years. White-collar professionals with mid- to high-incomes tend to have the greatest interest in carrying their weekday lunch from home. The most frequent brown-baggers pack their lunch an average of three times per week.

Among consumers who typically visit restaurants for their weekday lunch, nearly half said they were visiting less often, a pattern that applies to quick-service and full-service restaurants. NPD reports that the declines in foodservice weekday lunch are largely the result of fewer meals being ordered from both commercial and non-commercial outlets (e.g., workplace cafeterias) to take back and eat at the workplace.

Consumers cite financial concerns as the top reason for carrying their lunch from home more often, and health and nutrition ranked second, according to the NPD study. Other reasons include convenience, taste, diet, quality and environmental concerns.