

How People Pick Foods



As consumers wheel their shopping carts down the supermarket aisles, the wheels are turning in their heads as they consider what matters most to them in choosing foods. A *Better Homes and Gardens/BrandSpark International* poll, released late last month, gives a detailed look at their thinking.

The chart here displays the factors that matter most to respondents when deciding whether to buy a new food. While many care that the food is generically "healthy," the polling (fielded October-December) found less interest in some specific aspects of that. Just over half said it's important (17 percent

% saying each factor is **extremely** or **very** important to them when considering purchase of a new food or beverage



Source: Better Homes and Gardens/BrandSpark International

"extremely," 36 percent "very") that a new food be "low in sodium/salt." Fewer attached such importance to "free of preservatives" (16 percent "extremely," 33 percent "very") or "cholesterol free" (15 percent "extremely," 31 percent "very"). Likewise, just over one in five said it's important to them (6 percent "extremely," 15 percent "very") that a new food product be "organic."

The low ranking for new "organic" foods reflects wariness toward the whole category. Fifty-two percent of respondents don't buy organic. Of this cohort, 39 percent "don't trust that all products labeled as organic are actually organic"; 35 percent "do not believe that organic food products are better for my health." Consumers may also feel they're satisfying their wish to eat healthier by avoiding food that's blatantly unhealthy. Along those lines, 69 percent are "trying to eat healthier snacks"; 60 percent are "concerned about the amount of fat in my diet."

With a majority (57 percent) saying they are "trying to reduce the amount of processed foods that I consume," fruit is a natural alternative. When respondents were asked to cite the fruits that "are particularly important to you from a nutritional standpoint," bananas got the most votes (71 percent). Apples (66 percent), oranges (61 percent), strawberries (59 percent) and blueberries (54 percent) also scored well.

63%

say they'll continue buying private-label goods even after the economy recovers

what the product contains. Thus, 67 percent said they are "paying more attention to food labels." Asked to cite specific elements that are important to them, respondents gave the most mentions to calcium (65 percent), whole grain (64 percent), fiber (63 percent), Vitamin D (59 percent), Vitamin C (59 percent), protein (57 percent) and anti-oxidants (56 percent).

Another part of the report makes it clear that consumers are way beyond regarding private-label products as a cheap-but-tacky last resort. Fifty-nine percent agreed that "private-label/store-brand products are just as good as brand-name products"; 66 percent said such products "are usually extremely good value for the money."

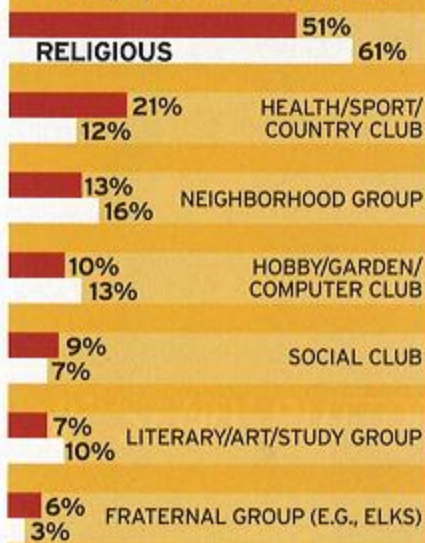
That helps explain why 56 percent said they've bought more of these items in the past 12 months. But this isn't a behavior that will go away once the recession has ended. In one telling indication of how entrenched the category is, 63 percent of the respondents agreed (including 19 percent "completely") that they "expect to purchase private-label/store-brand products even after the economy rebounds."

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Americans Remain A People Who Join

As far back as Tocqueville, observers of life in this country have noted Americans' proclivity for joining "voluntary associations." Despite talk in recent years of people "bowling alone," Americans continue

% of MEN and WOMEN who report belonging to each kind of group*



Source: AARP *Respondents age 29-plus.

to be joiners. A report released last month by AARP gives an indication of the kinds of organizations that appeal to men and women age 29-plus.

GM, Super Bowl, Etc.

- The federal bailout/quasi-takeover of General Motors continues to be unpopular: 30 percent of respondents approve of it, 65 percent disapprove. (NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*)

- Forty-five percent say they or immediate family have donated money to relief efforts in Haiti. (KRC Research)

- Asked to say which "superhero" power they'd most like to have, 35 percent chose "ability to read people's minds." "Ability to fly" ran second (21 percent), trailed by "ability to become invisible" (19 percent), "super-strength" (13 percent) and "X-ray vision" (3 percent). (*Vanity Fair/60 Minutes*)

- In an online poll, 43 percent of prospective Super Bowl viewers say they will be online via Wi-Fi during the game; 44 percent say they'll be surfing the Web during halftime rather than watching the show. (Wi-Fi Alliance/Wakefield Research)

