

ready, to, eat report

A report on consumer behavior
& convenience eating



**good,
natured**
better everyday products



it's like we've hit the "eating-on-the-go overdrive" button!

Our reliance on prepared foods and ready-to-eat meals, whether that's due to eating habits influenced by the pandemic, our increasingly time-starved lifestyles, or an increase of food options, is at an all-time high and driving up packaging waste.

Now more than ever, consumers expect the brands they trust to pay careful attention to their packaging choices and ensure they're delivering their products in the most sustainable way possible. As a result, food producers are actively looking for packaging that's better for the environment, but also protects the visual appeal of their product and keeps it fresh until its ready to be consumed. There's no single right way to make packaging more sustainable, but packaging options that are easy, affordable, functional and reduce reliance on fossil fuels are in high demand.

This report uncovers and further outlines that convenience eating is here to stay¹. It also shows that we have to work together as a packaging industry to ease the burden on consumers who are choosing convenience

foods to manage their busy lifestyles. Whether biodegradability or curbside recyclability is the best end-of-life option, our goal is to make it easy and affordable for businesses to switch to renewable, plant-based materials and reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.

(1) Methodology: Our findings are from 1,000 U.S. adults aged 18 to 64 years old surveyed in July 2023.

In spite of cost of living concerns, consumers continue to prioritize convenience benefits with prepared foods



Convenience eating has always been a trend but what's changed is how people are consuming takeout meals. What was once grabbing a pizza and bringing it home, has turned into salad bars and grab-and-go lunches from the grocery store, takeout and quick service meal spots.

- Paul Antoniadis, CEO

72%

of respondents said that they are consistently buying or increasing their consumption of ready-to-eat meals, meal kits, and takeout food and delivery since the start of the year.

21%

Despite persistent inflation, cash-strapped consumers are choosing ready-to-eat meals over groceries: Nearly 1 in 4 respondents said that shopping for ready-to-eat meals was less expensive than buying groceries.

1 in 5

respondents said that they decreased their weekly purchases of prepared foods, as well as takeout and food delivery in the last 6 months.

convenience eating

In spite of cost of living concerns, consumers continue to prioritize convenience benefits when it comes to purchasing prepared foods.



19%
smaller food portion sizes



21%
costs savings



40%
time savings



70%
convenience

*Based on "select all that apply" answer criteria

meal planning

The most common reasons consumers are buying ready-to-eat meals at a grocery store.



56%

Additional side dishes



56%

Meals for one



35%

Desserts



32%

Appetizers

meal planning and cooking at home are cramping consumers' style

Cooking and meal prep are taking time away from people being able to spend quality time with family and friends or participate in leisure activities.

The two most common reasons consumers are buying hot and cold ready-to-eat meals at a grocery store are meals for one (56%) and to supplement their home cooked meals with additional side dishes (56%).

69%

of respondents said buying convenience foods allows them to spend more time with family or do something fun.

30%

said that they are prioritizing work, sleep, and household chores with any free time that they have.

consumers are judging food by what it's packaged in

With the rising consumption of prepared meals, it's no surprise that attention toward how these meals are packaged and displayed has also increased. Consumer expectations for food freshness, presentation and safety have become major deciding factors when making ready-to-eat meal choices. The convenience eating trend is resulting in heightened demand for innovative and eco-friendly packaging that maintains the integrity of the food being stored – including design features like tamper resistance, chemical-free materials, fridge and freezer to microwave friendliness, and leak resistant seals for longer-lasting freshness and portability.

55%

of respondents are worried about their food being tampered with, followed by the temperature of their food and chemicals of concern in food packaging like BPAs and phthalates leaching into their food.

73%

of consumers cited "food freshness" as the most important factor when buying food at the grocery store, restaurant, convenience store, or when getting food delivered.

86%

of respondents want high clarity food packaging and would be likely to buy the product if they can see what it looks like first.

“The key factors consumers keep in mind when shopping for food are visibility and freshness. These factors are illustrated in our various product innovations. Our goal is to make it easy for businesses to choose good natured® packaging and not have to think twice about food safety, quality or freshness when choosing eco-friendly packaging options.

- Paul Antoniadis, CEO

food packaging

Consumers' top takeout food concerns might not be what you think.



73%

Food freshness

55%

Tampered packaging

49%

Temperature control of the food

41%

Chemicals of concern in packaging

*Based on "select all that apply" answer criteria

sustainable packaging

Consumers are looking for sustainable packaging when purchasing ready-to-eat meals.



sustainable packaging is a top priority, but consumers expect businesses to do the heavy lifting



43%

of respondents feel that it is a business's responsibility to provide eco-friendly food packaging to help reduce the effects of climate change.

77%

say that eco-friendly food packaging is important to them and that they usually look at a product's packaging when shopping.

circular economy

Roughly 1 in 3 respondents have good intentions to dispose of or recycle their food packaging, but don't know the proper procedures to do so.



33%
believe they are recycling or disposing of them properly



76%
of respondents typically wash their food containers

confusion around how to be more eco-friendly could become America's hottest climate issue

Not all packaging is equal, and there is not a "one size fits all" solution for disposal, re-use and recycling. Various materials and packaging applications are better suited to certain end-of-life practices, and available infrastructure to support packaging end-of-life options varies greatly by region, city and even by waste management companies.

These varying practices and differences lead to a lot of confusion for consumers. In one area, they can throw all packaging into a single recycling bin for sorting off-site. In another area, and sometimes just across town, only PET beverage bottles with lids removed are acceptable. Some areas with composting facilities accept all BPI certified compostable* materials. Another asks that any plastic-like materials be landfilled, even if certified compostable. This is part of why despite recycling education spanning back over 40 years, 33% of respondents answered that while they "have good intentions to dispose of or recycle their food packaging", they're still not confident of the proper procedure to do so.

More education alone will not solve this confusion unless there's consistence in waste management practices on a broader scale. Respondents answered clearly that they expect businesses and industry to take on this challenge and not put the burden of demystifying waste management practices and regulations on them. Especially with packaged convenience foods playing a big role in their quality of life.

* Commercially compostable only where such facilities exist.

33%

of respondents have good intentions to dispose of or recycle their food packaging, but don't know the proper procedures to do so.

76%

typically wash their food containers thoroughly before disposing of them.

53%

are influenced by social media to become more eco-friendly, meaning the impact of more wide-spread conversation and education is palpable.

packaging that's designed with your food (and the planet) in mind!

100+

eco-friendly food containers designed to amp up product visibility and keep your food fresh, safe and protected.

up to
99%

plant-based materials and no chemicals of concern (so you don't have to worry about nasty stuff leaching into your food).

two

plant-based materials options that are better for the planet; commercially compostable* and curbside recyclable.

Perfect for prepared meals...and better for the planet? We hear you loud and clear! The love for "convenience eating" shouldn't be causing your valued customers anxiety, and they want to know your awesome treats are packed for freshness, safety and eco-friendliness.

That's why we're in the biz to make it easy and affordable for business owners to make the switch to smartly designed plant-based food packaging that uses more renewable materials, less fossil fuel, and no chemicals of concern.

We design and manufacture high-performance food packaging that's designed to keep your deli, bakery, produce, and hot or cold takeaway meals protected and fresh, from store shelves all the way to the dinner table.

Looking for eco-friendly containers that show off your food from all its best angles? Look no further, good natured® has you covered (literally).



* Commercially compostable only where such facilities exist.



chat with us!

info@goodnaturedproducts.com

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