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SCHOOL NUTRITION

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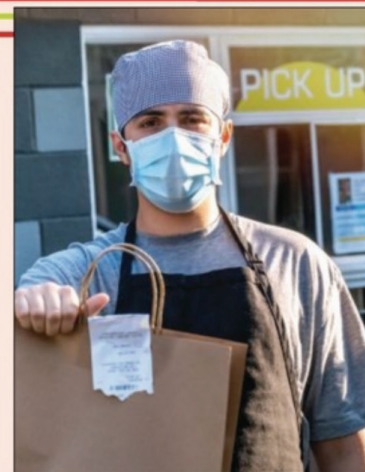
Young Adults Struggle With Pandemic Dining

Diners age 34 and under report they've been experiencing culinary monotony brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, found a survey from Chicago-based research organization Y-Pulse, with nearly 60% of responding young consumers stating that they eat the same foods every day, and more than three-quarters noting that they crave the variety of foods available in dining out.

"Young consumers are feeling both inspired and exhausted by the conditions of the pandemic," said Sharon Olson, Y-Pulse Executive Direc-

tor. "They're fluctuating between a need for distraction and a quick fix to their everyday dining needs. That kind of shifting perspective needs to be met with dynamic ideas to captivate young audiences."

Along with a desire to shake up their menu options, Millennial and GenZ survey respondents vacillate in their definition of "comfort" foods. Nearly 70% indicate that indulgent menu items have been a mainstay in recent months, but 83% admit to looking forward to returning to healthier eating patterns.



Although culinary skill-building seems to be on the rise, with 70% exploring cooking new recipes during stay-at-home periods, more than half of survey respondents say they prefer

purchasing fully prepared meals over making meals from scratch—something for school nutrition operations to keep in mind when developing family-style meals as extras for students and their families.

A 70% majority of young adult consumers also miss social dining events, and 77% say they have a greater appreciation for the restaurant experiences they used to take for granted. But this craving comes with some wariness about resumption of normal social routines. Roughly two-thirds (65%) indicate they will be reluctant to return to large food halls and marketplace environments. Still, nearly 80% agree that chefs have become heroes in continuing to find ways to serve their communities, and 75% report they would patronize foodservice operations known for taking care of their employees. Visit www.ypulse.org/services to request additional consumer research reports.