



FOOD NEWS: Restaurant Vegetarian Menus Grow by 66 Percent in Three Years

By Naomi Imatome-Yun
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According to a new report: In the past three years, vegetarian menus saw a “66 percent growth at restaurants while 51 percent of consumers agree they enjoy items that heavily feature vegetables.” The [“Innovation on the Menu”](#) report was published by Mintel Menu Insights (part of Mintel, a global market research company), which tracks food and drink trends in the United States.

This new focus on vegetables and vegetarian options is linked to consumer health concerns. The research shows that health is important for most American diners right now: 61 percent of consumers say they are trying to eat more healthfully and 48 percent actually look for health information on menus before ordering.

According to [Caleb Bryant](#), foodservice analyst at Mintel: “Rising interest in vegetables is especially promising for restaurants ... restaurant goers aren’t just accepting vegetables, but are embracing them in their diet.”

Bryant tells Forks Over Knives: “The increase in vegetarian menus and vegetarian dishes as a whole speaks to a few macrotrends regarding health and international dishes. Consumers are looking for health-positioned dishes more than before. We can see this in the emergence of many of the salad or healthy dining fast casual concepts like Sweetgreen, Saladworks, and Freshii. Also, consumers are more adventuresome with their restaurant choices, and we are seeing increased interest in less-familiar cuisines like Asian or Middle Eastern, which tend to be less meat-centric than some European cuisines.”

The healthy eating focus also has diners looking for freshness and “ancient grains” like [quinoa](#), [barley](#), farro, and couscous.

*Bryant clarified for Forks Over Knives that “vegetarian menu” refers to “a separate section on the menu as a whole.” For example, a menu might have a pasta section, a pizza section, and a vegetarian section.