

2026 SUMMER TRAVEL & DINING TRENDS

KEY DEVELOPMENTS SHAPING RESTAURANT DEMAND

2026 SUMMER TRAVEL & DINING TRENDS: KEY DEVELOPMENTS SHAPING RESTAURANT DEMAND

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METHODOLOGY

This report is composed of responses from 1,003 adult consumers for an online survey fielded May 1-3, 2026.

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THIS REPORT

As the summer tourism season gets underway, the National Restaurant Association is examining how this busy travel period could shape restaurant traffic and dining habits. It draws on a May survey of more than 1,000 consumers, who shared information about their summer travel plans, the role restaurant meals play during vacations and trips, and even how dining fits into their gatherings closer to home. Despite ongoing economic pressures, most said they still expected to take a personal trip this summer. This report explores what their responses reveal for the restaurant industry.

Visit [Restaurant.org/research](https://www.restaurant.org/research) for the latest industry trends and analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the country, summer is a busy season for restaurants. As many people make travel plans or even plan to attend local gatherings close to home, restaurant operators anticipate an uptick in on-site sales, foot traffic, and off-premises transactions via delivery and takeout.

While consumers continue to express some concern over the economy and the increased cost of gas, the majority seem intent on vacationing and continue to prioritize dining out. Operators are optimistic that they can make the most of those plans, via increased sales, and foot traffic.

This report offers a glimpse into their thinking and how and whether they plan to spend their disposable income on restaurants and hospitality this summer.



SECTION 1 KEY FINDINGS

01 SUMMER TRAVEL IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

According to the data, **55% indicate they'll vacation or take a personal trip within the U.S.** that includes at least one overnight stay. Younger adults, urban residents, families with children, and higher-income households are the most likely to have travel plans.

02 DINING OUT TOPS TRAVELER TO-DO LIST

The survey found that 98% of respondents said they planned to use restaurants during their upcoming trips. That includes 93% going to eat at a restaurant, 90% getting restaurant food or beverages via takeout, delivery or drive-thru, and 84% picking up a drink or treat, such as coffee or ice cream, from a coffee shop or snack place. **Using restaurants is more popular among summer travelers than other activities**, such as shopping (85%), sightseeing (83%) and going to a beach (76%).

03 CONVENIENCE AND VALUE DRIVE DECISIONS

The survey found that **90% of consumers would look for convenient locations and affordability** when selecting a restaurant, and 70% said they'd seek out restaurants offering daily specials, discounts or value promotions.





04 VACATIONERS CRAVE LOCAL FLAVORS

Among summer travelers, **79% said they want to try the local cuisine** offered at their destinations and plan to frequent restaurants that offer the foods and beverages those cities and regions are known for.

05 SUMMERTIME = CULINARY EXPLORATION

For many consumers, traveling the country means enjoying new culinary experiences. According to the survey, **88% said they plan to visit a restaurant they've never tried before.**

06 WORD OF MOUTH WINS NEW CUSTOMERS

Talking about and sharing information on new restaurants is a great marketing tool, according to **87% of respondents who said they'd consider recommendations from family or friends** when choosing a restaurant not yet tried.

07 DIGITAL IS THE GO-TO FOR RESTAURANT DISCOVERY

Summer travelers said they'd **prefer to use online resources and social media to get information when choosing a restaurant**. This includes 80% relying on online review platforms, 67% using social media, 64% using travel review platforms, 58% on delivery platforms and 54% using online reservation platforms.

08 RESTAURANTS ARE CENTRAL TO AT-HOME GATHERINGS

Among the respondents, **79% said they'd likely include a restaurant-prepared item at a home gathering**, such as a family reunion, cookout or barbecue, or get-together for holidays, like July 4th or Labor Day. Interest appeared strong across all sections of menus, with 56% saying they'd focus on appetizers, 57% on main dishes, 61% on side dishes, 64% on desserts or sweets, and 64% on beverages.

09 RESTAURANTS COULD BE PART OF THE WORLD CUP™ EXPERIENCE

The World Cup soccer tournament in June and July is expected to generate a large U.S. viewing audience and restaurants could benefit significantly. The survey found that 32% of adults said they'd **likely attend viewing parties for World Cup soccer matches hosted at restaurants** in their area.



SECTION 2

RESTAURANTS FEATURE IN SUMMER TRAVEL

This summer, 55%, or about 6 in 10 consumers, plan to take at least one overnight vacation or personal trip. Another 11% plan to travel internationally, and 6% said they'd do both. Among survey respondents, younger adults, urban residents, families with children, and higher-income households are most likely to travel this summer.

SUMMER TRAVEL IS ON: MOST ADULTS PLAN OVERNIGHT GETAWAYS (THROUGH SEPTEMBER)

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	ANY TRIP	A TRIP TO A DESTINATION WITHIN THE UNITED STATES	A TRIP TO A COUNTRY OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES
ALL ADULTS	60%	55%	11%
GENDER			
Male	66%	59%	13%
Female	55%	51%	8%
GENERATION			
Gen Z (18-29)	71%	63%	16%
Millennials (30-45)	64%	59%	13%
Gen Xers (46-61)	53%	49%	7%
Baby boomers (62-80)	55%	51%	8%
REGION OF THE COUNTRY			
Northeast	60%	56%	12%
Midwest	57%	55%	7%
South	59%	53%	10%
West	64%	58%	13%
TYPE OF COMMUNITY			
Urban	66%	60%	14%
Suburban	59%	54%	11%
Rural	50%	48%	3%
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION			
Children in the household	70%	63%	15%
No children in the household	56%	51%	9%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
Less than \$50,000	47%	43%	7%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	63%	57%	10%
\$100,000 or more	80%	73%	18%

Source: National Restaurant Association
Base: All adults

Restaurants are the top activity for summer travelers

During the journey and once the destination is reached, visiting a restaurant is the most popular activity for summer travelers.

- According to the survey, 98% of respondents said they plan to use restaurants during their upcoming trip. This includes going out to eat at a restaurant (93%); getting food or beverages from a restaurant using takeout, delivery, or drive-thru (90%); and picking up a drink or treat—such as coffee or ice cream—from a coffee shop or snack place (84%).

84% 

PLAN TO PICK UP A DRINK OR TREAT FROM A COFFEE SHOP OR SNACK PLACE

- Other popular activities planned by summer travelers are shopping (85%), sightseeing (83%), and going to the beach (76%).
- 65% of travelers – including 78% of millennials and 72% of Gen Zs – say they plan to participate in recreational activities, such as golf, tennis, hiking, biking or boating, during their summer trips.
- A majority of travelers plan to attend concerts (56%) or sporting events (51%) this summer – activities that are more popular among younger adults.
- 56% of summer travelers say they plan to participate in events that celebrate America's 250th anniversary.



WHAT TRAVELERS ARE PLANNING TO DO THIS SUMMER

ACTIVITY	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z (18-29)	MILLENNIALS (30-45)	GEN XERS (46-61)	BABY BOOMERS (62-80)
Any restaurant activity	98%	97%	99%	97%	99%
Go out to eat at a restaurant	93%	86%	94%	95%	97%
Get food or beverages from a restaurant using takeout, delivery, or drive-thru	90%	93%	95%	91%	82%
Pick up a drink or treat — such as coffee or ice cream — from a coffee shop or snack place	84%	83%	88%	86%	78%
Go shopping	85%	83%	91%	87%	81%
Go sightseeing	83%	90%	84%	84%	76%
Go to a beach	76%	84%	84%	76%	61%
Participate in recreational activities, such as golf, tennis, hiking, biking, or boating	65%	72%	78%	67%	42%
Go to a museum or historical place	63%	63%	69%	64%	55%
Go to a concert or music festival	56%	70%	67%	50%	36%
Participate in events that celebrate America’s 250th anniversary	56%	51%	60%	62%	50%
Go to a sporting event	51%	62%	65%	50%	28%

Source: National Restaurant Association
 Base: Adults taking any personal trips within the U.S. that include at least one overnight stay



98% PLAN TO USE RESTAURANTS DURING THEIR UPCOMING TRIP

Restaurants are the top activity for summer travelers (cont)

During their upcoming trips, a vast majority of travelers across all demographic groups plan to use restaurants.

Older adults are the most likely to have plans to dine out at restaurants during their travels, while younger adults are more likely to order food and beverages off premises from restaurants.

TOP ACTIVITIES SHAPING SUMMER TRAVEL PLANS

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	ANY RESTAURANT ACTIVITY	GO OUT TO EAT AT A RESTAURANT	GET FOOD OR BEVERAGES FROM A RESTAURANT USING TAKEOUT, DELIVERY, OR DRIVE-THRU	PICK UP A DRINK OR TREAT — SUCH AS COFFEE OR ICE CREAM — FROM A COFFEE SHOP OR SNACK PLACE
All adults	98%	93%	90%	84%
GENDER				
Male	99%	95%	91%	84%
Female	97%	91%	89%	83%
GENERATION				
Gen Z (18-29)	97%	86%	93%	83%
Millennials (30-45)	99%	94%	95%	88%
Gen Xers (46-61)	97%	95%	91%	86%
Baby boomers (62-80)	99%	97%	82%	78%
REGION OF THE COUNTRY				
Northeast	96%	90%	87%	82%
Midwest	97%	92%	88%	84%
South	99%	96%	91%	82%
West	98%	92%	93%	88%
TYPE OF COMMUNITY				
Urban	99%	95%	92%	87%
Suburban	98%	92%	89%	83%
Rural	97%	91%	86%	77%
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION				
Children in the household	98%	90%	94%	88%
No children in the household	98%	95%	88%	81%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Less than \$50,000	97%	91%	89%	78%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	97%	93%	94%	84%
\$100,000 or more	99%	96%	88%	89%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Adults taking any personal trips within the U.S. that include at least one overnight stay



Summer travelers want convenience and affordability

When it comes to choosing a restaurant during their travels, convenient locations and affordability were listed as important factors by 90% of respondents.

90% 

LIST CONVENIENT LOCATIONS AND AFFORDABILITY AS IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A RESTAURANT

- As part of their quest for affordability, 70% said they'd seek out restaurants offering daily specials, discounts or value promotions.
- 88% of summer travelers said they'd pick restaurants offering some personal favorites on the menu.
- Nearly 8 in 10 travelers (79%) want to experience the local cuisine, and plan to choose restaurants offering food and beverages the city or region is known for.
- The option to make a reservation isn't that important for summer travelers (54%) – especially among Baby boomers (36%).

WHAT MATTERS MOST WHEN TRAVELERS CHOOSE A RESTAURANT

	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z (18-29)	MILLENNIALS (30-45)	GEN XERS (46-61)	BABY BOOMERS (62-80)
The location is convenient	90%	80%	90%	93%	94%
It's affordable	90%	86%	92%	92%	89%
It offers some favorite food and drink items	88%	81%	91%	89%	91%
You can get in and out quickly without waiting	80%	86%	83%	81%	71%
It offers food and beverages the city or region is known for	79%	79%	79%	84%	75%
It's family friendly	74%	68%	80%	79%	67%
Offers daily specials, discounts, or value promotions	70%	71%	84%	68%	54%
It's a restaurant they're familiar with	65%	70%	71%	64%	53%
You can make a reservation	54%	67%	61%	50%	36%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Adults taking any personal trips within the U.S. that include at least one overnight stay



8 IN 10

OF TRAVELERS WANT TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL CUISINE THAT THE CITY OR REGION IS KNOWN FOR

Travelers look to friends and family for restaurant recommendations

Trusted personal recommendations can reduce the uncertainty of trying somewhere new while traveling. That's why many summer tourists often rely on restaurant suggestions from family members and friends. As a result, word of mouth offers them a sense of confidence when choosing an unknown restaurant to go to. Suggestions from people they know could help travelers feel more certain about food quality, atmosphere, value, and overall experience. That makes those recommendations especially influential when deciding where to dine on a trip.

HOW TRAVELERS DISCOVER NEW RESTAURANTS

INFORMATION SOURCE	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z (18-29)	MILLENNIALS (30-45)	GEN XERS (46-61)	BABY BOOMERS (62-80)
Recommendations from family or friends	87%	79%	93%	86%	87%
Online review platforms	80%	83%	92%	82%	60%
Recommendations from a hotel concierge or local staff	73%	70%	81%	77%	65%
Social media	67%	77%	83%	68%	35%
Travel review platforms	64%	58%	77%	67%	51%
Local business organizations, such as a restaurant association or chamber of commerce	59%	67%	65%	61%	40%
Delivery platforms	58%	78%	74%	58%	19%
Online reservation platforms	54%	62%	67%	49%	32%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Summer travelers planning to visit a restaurant they haven't tried before

- Traveling around the country means new culinary experiences for many consumers: 88% of respondents said they plan to visit an establishment they haven't tried before.
- Word of mouth has always been the best marketing tool for restaurants, and that holds true for this summer's travelers. According to the survey, 87% said they'd rely on recommendations from family or friends when choosing restaurants that they haven't tried before, and 73% said they'd ask a hotel concierge or local staff for recommendations.

87%



**RELY ON RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM FAMILY OR FRIENDS WHEN
CHOOSING RESTAURANTS THAT
THEY HAVEN'T TRIED BEFORE**

- Online resources and social media are also top sources of information when choosing restaurants, especially among younger adults. This includes online review platforms (80%), social media (67%), travel review platforms (64%), delivery platforms (58%), and online reservation platforms (54%).
- Nearly 6 in 10 summers travelers (59%) said they'd likely check with local business organizations, such as a restaurant association or chamber of commerce, for information on restaurants they haven't tried before.





Restaurants play an important role in at-home summer gatherings

Summer travelers aren't the only consumers who'll boost the business of restaurants this summer. According to respondents, restaurants will also play an important role in home-based gatherings.

Nearly 9 in 10 adults (89%) said they planned to attend home gatherings this summer, such as a family reunion, a cookout or barbecue, or a get-together for holidays. Among those consumers, 79% said they'd likely include a restaurant-prepared item at those gatherings.

Interest is strong across all sections of restaurant menus, including appetizers (56%), main dishes (57%), side dishes (61%), desserts, or sweets (64%) and beverages (64%).

Younger adults, urban residents, and families with children would most likely include restaurant-prepared items at their home gatherings.

79% 

ARE LIKELY TO INCLUDE A
RESTAURANT-PREPARED ITEM
AT A HOME-BASED GATHERING

CONSUMERS WHO SAY THEY WILL LIKELY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING RESTAURANT-PREPARED ITEMS AT A HOME GATHERING

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	ANY RESTAURANT- PREPARED ITEM	APPETIZERS	MAIN DISH	SIDE DISH	DESSERT OR SWEETS	BEVERAGES
All adults	79%	56%	57%	61%	64%	64%
GENDER						
Male	85%	62%	61%	66%	65%	70%
Female	74%	50%	52%	57%	63%	58%
GENERATION						
Gen Z (18-29)	90%	65%	60%	64%	73%	71%
Millennials (30-45)	85%	69%	68%	70%	72%	73%
Gen Xers (46-61)	82%	51%	55%	61%	64%	66%
Baby boomers (62-80)	62%	39%	43%	49%	49%	48%
REGION OF THE COUNTRY						
Northeast	74%	55%	57%	60%	63%	62%
Midwest	79%	57%	58%	61%	64%	65%
South	80%	53%	55%	59%	63%	63%
West	83%	61%	57%	65%	67%	68%
TYPE OF COMMUNITY						
Urban	86%	65%	66%	69%	74%	70%
Suburban	77%	55%	54%	59%	60%	62%
Rural	71%	41%	45%	50%	55%	56%
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION						
Children in the household	87%	70%	68%	71%	74%	75%
No children in the household	75%	49%	51%	56%	59%	59%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
Less than \$50,000	79%	53%	55%	58%	61%	65%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	80%	52%	53%	59%	65%	61%
\$100,000 or more	80%	66%	63%	69%	67%	66%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Adults who'd likely attend a home gathering this summer, such as a family reunion, cookout or barbecue, or get-together for holidays



SECTION 3

RESTAURANTS & SPORTING EVENTS

One-third of adults would go to a restaurant for a World Cup watch party

Professional sports watch parties could give restaurants a sales boost this summer. Restaurants hosting viewing events for major sporting events, such as the World Cup matches, could tap into strong consumer interest that results in guests visiting, staying longer, and spending more on food and beverages while they view the games. This would not only drive traffic, but also build energy around the dining experience, as well as create additional occasions for group visits, family outings, and higher check averages.

The World Cup is expected to generate a large viewing audience among the general public, and restaurants have an opportunity to play an important role. Overall, 42% of adults said they'd likely watch some of the matches on TV.

To further enhance their experience for the games, **32% said they'd likely attend a viewing party for a World Cup soccer match, if one was hosted at a restaurant in their area.**

Interest in going to a restaurant watch party is strongest among Gen Zs (46%) and millennials (43%), urban residents (45%), individuals in higher-income households (44%), and men (40%).

Those gatherings could also be family-friendly events, as 48% of adults with children in their household said they'd be likely to attend a viewing party at a restaurant.

WORLD CUP FEVER: FAN INTEREST HEATS UP

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	WOULD LIKELY WATCH WORLD CUP SOCCER MATCHES ON TV	WOULD BE LIKELY TO ATTEND A VIEWING PARTY FOR A WORLD CUP SOCCER MATCH, IF HOSTED BY A RESTAURANT IN THEIR AREA
ALL ADULTS	42%	32%
GENDER		
Male	53%	40%
Female	32%	24%
GENERATION		
Gen Z (18-29)	56%	46%
Millennials (30-45)	51%	43%
Gen Xers (46-61)	43%	40%
Baby boomers (62-80)	24%	11%
REGION OF THE COUNTRY		
Northeast	44%	35%
Midwest	38%	29%
South	42%	31%
West	45%	32%
TYPE OF COMMUNITY		
Urban	57%	45%
Suburban	37%	25%
Rural	28%	22%
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION		
Children in the household	56%	48%
No children in the household	36%	24%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Less than \$50,000	31%	23%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	49%	34%
\$100,000 or more	55%	44%

Source: National Restaurant Association
Base: All adults



Summer tourism and travel are essential drivers of our industry's success. They create demand that extends well beyond everyday dining occasions. **Travelers rely on restaurants during their trips**—for meals, takeout, snacks and local food experiences—and when consumers stay closer to home, turning to restaurant-prepared items to serve at gatherings. All of this helps generate traffic, sales and visibility, particularly as operators rely on every opportunity to connect convenience, value, and experience. All of this makes the **summer travel season not just a busy period for restaurants, but a critical source of resilience and growth.**



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