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‘TIS THE SEASON, TO EAT, DRINK & BE... **STUFFED?**

Despite their love of fast food, young adults have adventurous palates.

The holidays are upon us, and with that come gatherings with food – at parties, family events, and restaurants. Opportunities to overindulge abound, but in many respects this is par for the course for most Americans, as dining out is a national pastime. What’s more, palates are eclectic. According to a national Monmouth University Poll, young adults are not only regular diners at fast food chains, but they are also more willing to sample unfamiliar foods. Youthful palates are excited not only by food served at counters, but also by the opportunity to try something new.

To be sure, we are still a “Fast Food Nation,” especially our country’s midsection. One-third of Americans (33%) eat lunch or dinner at a fast food restaurant at least weekly; another third (36%) eat fast food one to several times a month; two-in-ten (19%) eat fast food less often than that; and one-in-ten (12%) never eat fast food. “With time pressures mounting, many Americans rely upon prepared food, including meals at restaurants, which take on even more prominent roles in our diets around the holidays,” noted Elizabeth Cooner, Assistant Director of the Polling Institute at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

Even higher proportions of adults who are young (42% of 18-29 year olds) or racial and ethnic minorities (40% of those who are black or Hispanic) eat fast food at least weekly. Similarly, adults living in the Midwest (39%) or Southeast (37%) are notably more likely than those in the Northeast (23%) to eat fast food on at least a weekly basis. While college graduates (26%) are notably *less* likely than those who have completed no more than a high school education (37%) to eat fast food this often, there are no significant differences based upon income. Adults earning \$100K or more are just as likely as those earning less than \$50K to eat lunch or dinner at fast food chains – about one-third of both groups do so at least weekly.

Outside of the fast food arena, there are many other types of dining establishments where Americans eat out, ranging from small cafes to upscale restaurants. Four-in-ten Americans (40%) eat at these types of restaurants at least weekly; another four-in-ten (42%) dine out once to several times per

month; one-in-ten (12%) eat at these restaurants less often than that; and five percent never do. College graduates (52%), those with incomes of \$100K or more (54%) and Midwesterners (43%) report that they eat at these other types of restaurants at least weekly. Those who are *less* likely to do so include adults with household incomes less than \$50K (25%) and those who have completed no more than a high school education (30%).

Frequently, dining out has the potential to add to diners' waistlines, especially when dessert and alcohol are added to the tab. Among adults who eat in restaurants ("diners"), one-in-ten (9%) *always* or *often* order dessert; half (48%) *occasionally* do; and four-in-ten (42%) *never* do. Diners in the West (15%) and Southeast (13%) are more likely than those in the Midwest (4%) to *always* or *often* order dessert when dining out. Similarly, diners who are black or Hispanic (16%) are notably more likely than those who are white (6%) to indulge in sweet treats with this frequency.

Two-in-ten adults who eat at restaurants (22%) *always* or *often* order a glass of wine, beer or a cocktail when dining out; three-in-ten (32%) *occasionally* do; and almost half (46%) *never* do. Men are notably more likely than women to order alcoholic beverages as part of their dining experience (26% of men *always* or *often* do, compared with 17% of women). College graduates (37%) and those with incomes of \$100K or more (32%) are also more likely than others to *always* or *often* order a drink. Adults who eat at restaurants more frequently are also more inclined to have a drink with their dinner: almost three-in-ten adults who dine out at least weekly (28%) *always* or *often* order alcoholic beverages with their meal, compared with less than two-in-ten of those who dine out less than monthly (17%).

Given the additional costs associated with ordering a drink or dessert, it is not surprising that almost half of diners with incomes below \$50K (47%) *never* order dessert, compared with just over a third of those with incomes above \$100K (37%). Similarly, almost six-in-ten diners with incomes below \$50K (58%) *never* order alcoholic beverages, compared with just a third of those at the highest income level (32% of those with incomes of \$100K or more). Whether it's a matter of finances or temperance, older diners are particularly disinclined to order a drink with their meal. Two-thirds of those aged 70 or older (65%) *never* order alcoholic beverages when dining out, compared with less than half of younger adults (findings range from 40% to 47%).

Despite young adults' attraction to fast food, they have a more adventurous palate than their older counterparts. Overall, six-in-ten diners (60%) are willing to try anything once when eating out; four-in-ten (38%) prefer to stick with foods that they know they like. When it comes to sampling new foods at a restaurant, three-quarters of diners aged 18-29 (74%) are willing to try anything once; however, less than half of those aged 55 or older (48%) share that spirit. "These findings suggest that young adults are a prime market for restaurants serving more exotic cuisines, provided they can offer such foods at a reasonable price point," suggested Elizabeth Cooner. Men (64%) also report a greater willingness to

sample new foods, compared with women (56%). Similarly, more than seven-in-ten Hispanics (71%) are willing to try unfamiliar foods, which places them on the adventurous end of the “palate scale.”

So, what exactly are Americans eating? Although the United States is a melting pot of cultures from around the globe, our culinary preferences are somewhat more narrowly defined. More than half of adults who dine at restaurants prefer cuisines from just three countries: Italy (20%), the United States (17%), and Mexico (14%). Regardless of what or where they are eating, three-quarters of Americans are very (38%) or somewhat (38%) satisfied with the restaurant options in their area; less than two-in-ten (17%) are somewhat or very dissatisfied.

The latest *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with national random sample of 925 adults age 18 and older from October 8 to 10, 2012. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.2 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

- Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the restaurant options in the area where you live?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Very satisfied	38%	39%	37%	42%	35%	38%	35%	37%	43%	35%	41%	36%	46%	34%
Somewhat satisfied	38%	39%	37%	37%	40%	38%	42%	33%	34%	42%	38%	39%	29%	40%
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%	9%	8%	10%	10%	7%	6%	12%	11%	11%	10%	7%	11%	6%
Very dissatisfied	8%	8%	8%	7%	10%	7%	7%	13%	5%	6%	5%	9%	10%	11%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	5%	9%	4%	6%	11%	10%	5%	7%	5%	6%	10%	4%	9%

- How often do you have lunch or dinner at a fast food restaurant like McDonalds or K.F.C. – several times a week, about once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less often, or never?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Several times a week	15%	17%	13%	19%	16%	11%	16%	17%	14%	9%	18%	17%	22%	11%
Once a week	18%	19%	16%	18%	19%	15%	19%	16%	20%	14%	21%	20%	13%	18%
Few times a month	20%	21%	19%	22%	18%	21%	24%	20%	18%	16%	23%	18%	25%	20%
Once a month	16%	15%	17%	14%	17%	16%	13%	15%	14%	21%	14%	13%	14%	16%
Less often	19%	18%	21%	20%	20%	19%	20%	21%	17%	22%	15%	21%	16%	22%
Never	12%	9%	14%	7%	11%	17%	8%	11%	16%	18%	9%	10%	10%	12%
(VOL) Don't Know	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%

3. NOT including fast food places, how often do you have lunch or dinner at a restaurant – several times a week, about once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less often, or never?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Several times a week	16%	19%	12%	16%	14%	16%	8%	17%	27%	12%	20%	15%	16%	16%
Once a week	24%	26%	22%	22%	25%	25%	17%	31%	27%	27%	23%	26%	22%	23%
Few times a month	25%	26%	25%	27%	26%	24%	27%	24%	23%	29%	23%	24%	25%	25%
Once a month	17%	15%	18%	19%	16%	15%	25%	16%	8%	14%	19%	14%	20%	18%
Less often	12%	9%	15%	13%	13%	11%	16%	10%	8%	11%	11%	15%	9%	15%
Never	5%	3%	7%	3%	4%	8%	7%	3%	7%	6%	5%	5%	6%	3%
(VOL) Don't Know	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%

[The following questions were asked only of people who said they eat at restaurants other than fast food places in Q3: moe=+/-3.3%]

4. What is your favorite type of restaurant cuisine? [LIST WAS NOT READ]

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
American	17%	20%	15%	10%	15%	26%	15%	13%	22%	16%	18%	21%	12%	16%
Caribbean/Cuban	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Chinese	7%	8%	7%	5%	8%	10%	10%	7%	8%	9%	7%	9%	6%	6%
French	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Indian	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Italian	20%	19%	22%	23%	22%	16%	20%	26%	20%	27%	18%	17%	18%	22%
Japanese/Sushi	3%	5%	1%	6%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	5%
Mexican	14%	11%	17%	22%	13%	9%	17%	12%	13%	5%	16%	9%	27%	17%
Middle Eastern/Turkish/Greek	2%	1%	3%	0%	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	0%	2%	2%
Seafood/Fish	9%	8%	10%	7%	8%	11%	12%	7%	6%	8%	9%	9%	8%	9%
Spanish/Portuguese	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Steak	9%	11%	7%	7%	13%	6%	7%	9%	10%	10%	8%	9%	15%	5%
Thai/Vietnamese	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	2%	5%
Vegetarian	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Pizza	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%
Burgers	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Fried chicken	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	3%	0%	1%
Ribs	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	3%	0%	0%
Other	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	7%	8%	9%	4%	7%	5%	9%	5%	8%	8%	8%	4%	7%

5. When dining out, would you generally describe yourself as someone who is willing to try anything once or someone who prefers to stick with what you know you like?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Willing to try anything once	60%	64%	56%	72%	62%	48%	57%	59%	63%	59%	65%	61%	51%	62%
Stick with what I like	38%	35%	41%	25%	38%	50%	42%	41%	34%	41%	33%	36%	48%	34%
(VOL) Don't Know	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%

6. How often do you order dessert when dining out – always, often, occasionally, or never?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Always	4%	3%	6%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	3%	1%	6%	6%	6%
Often	5%	5%	6%	9%	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	7%	3%	9%
Occasionally	48%	48%	49%	43%	53%	50%	45%	49%	54%	55%	49%	45%	47%	47%
Never	42%	44%	39%	44%	38%	42%	47%	42%	37%	39%	47%	40%	45%	38%
(VOL) Don't Know	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%

7. And how often do you have a glass of wine, beer, or a cocktail when dining out – always, often, occasionally, or never?

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Always	9%	10%	8%	10%	8%	10%	6%	11%	13%	12%	8%	11%	9%	6%
Often	13%	16%	9%	13%	12%	12%	7%	16%	19%	17%	14%	10%	6%	16%
Occasionally	32%	30%	34%	30%	39%	24%	29%	30%	36%	36%	33%	30%	29%	30%
Never	46%	43%	48%	45%	41%	53%	58%	42%	32%	35%	44%	47%	56%	48%
(VOL) Don't Know	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from October 8 to 10, 2012 with a national random sample of 925 adults age 18 and older, including 703 via live interview on a landline telephone, and 222 via live interview on a cell phone. Interviewing services were provided by Braun Research, Inc. (live landline and cell) and the telephone sample was obtained from Survey Sampling International. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)			
27% Rep	49% Male	31% 18-34	67% White
32% Dem	51% Female	36% 35-54	11% Black
40% Ind		33% 55+	16% Hispanic
			7% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	GENDER		AGE			INCOME			U.S. REGION				
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	< \$50K	\$50K to 100K	>\$100K	North-east	Mid-west	South-east	South-west Mountain	West
Unweighted N	925	469	456	201	323	391	302	264	242	185	200	247	133	160
moe	3.2%	4.5%	4.6%	6.9%	5.5%	5.0%	5.6%	6.0%	6.3%	7.2%	6.9%	6.2%	8.5%	7.8%

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect the entire nation. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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