



## Prepared and eaten at home

When preparing and eating lunches at home, consumers are generally still eating the same foods they ate 10 years ago. They are:

1. Sandwiches (excludes burgers/hot dogs/Mexican)
2. Soup
3. Fruit
4. Vegetables
5. Salads
6. Non-toasted bread
7. Cookies
8. Toast
9. Pasta dishes
10. Cheese

Over the past two years, the % of Canadians who ate soup, pork (excluding pork chops), pickles/relish/olives, cheese and chicken (excluding wings and nuggets) has increased.

## Lunch Trends in Canada

by Diane McCann-Hiltz

Source: NPD Eating Patterns in Canada Report, November 2008 (1)

Lunch is a meal that consumers carry from home, eat in restaurants, eat at home, or simply skip (see figure beside). The “Pick’n’Pack” meal, a meal prepared using a combination of pre-packaged, pre-made foods, is increasing in popularity. It makes it easier for consumers to carry a lunch from home and assists consumers in skipping fewer lunches.

(1)The information in the NPD Eating Patterns in Canada Report is based on four different NPD Group services.

- National Eating Trends (NET) tracks consumption behaviour relating to retail and restaurants.
- HealthTrack survey adds an attitudinal component and health/diet status to the NET database.
- SnackTrack tracks the consumption and sourcing of snack foods by individuals.
- CREST collects information about purchases of prepared foods and beverages at restaurants.

### Publisher/contact information

Magda Beranek  
Market and Consumer Analysis  
Economics and Competitiveness Division  
magda.beranek@gov.ab.ca  
Phone: 780-422-7101  
Fax: 780-427-5220

Government  
of Alberta

## Carried-from Home Lunches

Top 10 fastest growing foods for lunches carried from home are:

1. Pizza (excludes pizza novelties/snacks)
2. Yogurt
3. Cake
4. Fruit
5. Vegetables
6. Pudding/gelatine
7. Cheese
8. Snack Bars
9. Casseroles/one dish meal
10. Sandwiches (excludes burgers/hot dogs/Mexican)

Half of the top 10 fastest growing foods are pre-made/prepackaged foods that can easily be assembled together to create a meal (i.e. Pick'n'Pack). Nearly all foods that are being carried from home require little or no preparation.

## Role of Restaurants at Lunch

Over the past 10 years, eating lunch at restaurants has steadily gained in popularity. However, for the past two years there has been almost no increase in eating frequency of lunches in restaurants. In 2008, the average Canadian consumer ate at a restaurant 106 times. Of those restaurant meals, 39 were lunches.

About 58% of lunches are from quick service restaurants, followed by 17% from family/midscale restaurants and 16% from casual restaurants. The remaining lunches are from retail.<sup>(1)</sup>

*(1) Based on traffic in restaurants. Excludes meals sourced at restaurants and eaten at home.*

## Top 10 foods eaten at lunch in restaurants

The most popular food items from fast food restaurants are losing volume to perceived better-for-you items such as sandwiches, soup, and seafood/fish. The top 10 food items eaten at lunch are French fries, burgers, chicken/poultry entrees, salads, deli meat sandwich, hot chicken sandwich, soup, seafood/fish, and Chinese/Cantonese/Szechwan/Pizza.

## Fastest Growing Food at Lunch in Restaurants

(based on servings; excluding eaten at home)

1. Soup
2. Hot Chicken Sandwich
3. Burgers
4. Deli Meat Sandwich
5. Pork Entrees
6. Eggs
7. Seafood/Fish
8. Thai/Korean/Vietnamese/Other
9. Bacon/Sausage
10. Fruit



Soup is losing share in the carried from home category but is winning at restaurants. This is mainly driven by the growth of soup in combo meals. Soup in combo meals made up 39% of total soup meals in 2008.

## Did you know?

Ten years ago parents ate more like other adults while children ate different foods than the parents. This does not happen to the same extent anymore, suggesting households are no longer willing to carry two sets of groceries.

The average person who skips lunch will do so 43.2 times per year.