

Taste Tops Healthy Options; Catering to Allergies

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Taste is the number one issue when students consider their dining options, according to a study by Technomic, Inc. a market research firm.

It was ranked first by 71% of women and 66% of men interviewed, Technomic says. Healthy options were rated very important or important by 53% of women and 40% of men.

“College dining programs must find ways to appeal to health-conscious consumers, but not at the expense of taste,” Technomic’s report of the study’s results commented. “Fresh, seasonal, premium and/or local fare conveys a sense of health without suggesting bland flavor.”

Freshness is a very important characteristic, 71% of women and 56% of men in the study said. About a third of students said natural, organic, seasonal or functional positioning would make them more likely to purchase an item, but only 8% to 10% said they would be willing to pay more than a 5% price increase for these foods, Technomic reports.

The study of 1,500 students was conducted in 2009. The National Assn. of College & University Food Services distributed the report to members.

Colleges Cater to Students’ Allergies, Dietary Restrictions

College dining services “need to adapt to an explosion of kids about to arrive on college campuses who have food allergies,” according to Matthew Greenhawt, an allergist at the University of Michigan, as reported in *USA Today*.

About 4% of people in the U.S. under 18 years old had food allergies in 2007, according to the Center of Disease Control, up from 3.3% in 1997.

Some 40 colleges nationwide currently offer food allergy modifications on their menus, according to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network.

*Clarion’s new **Fresh & Natural** program can help your dining service develop an imaginative and student-satisfying healthy menu and service and improve the sustainability of your operation. For information, contact Angela Phelan, senior vice president at 973/544-6223 or e-mail us at info@clariongp.com.*