



January 12

Culinary Nutrition News: A Look Back at 2011—the Year of Culinary Nutrition

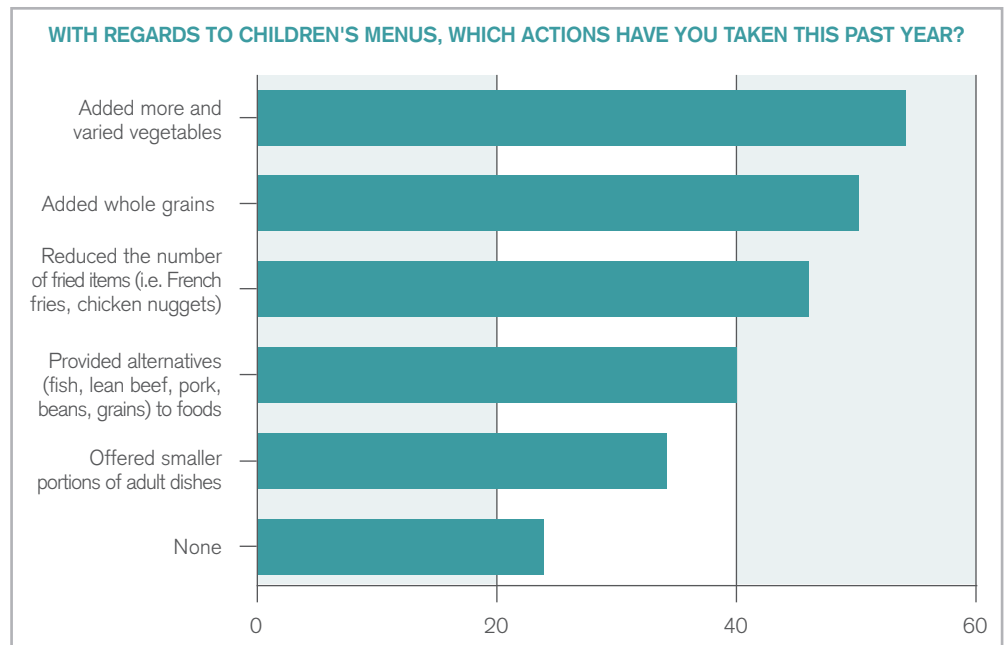
Provided through a partnership between ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University, and sponsored by French's Foodservice.

Three surveys were given to ACF chefs during the 2010-2011 academic year. The first was the ACF Member Survey, which asked a wide range of questions such as, “Have you ever used functional ingredients such as gums or modified starches to enhance texture, nutritional profile or overall appeal?” and, “What do you think is the maximum percentage of sodium reduction in high sodium dishes before customers would notice?” The second was the Chef & Child Foundation (CCF) Nutrition Survey, which sought out chefs’ thoughts and understanding of children’s nutrition, menu labeling and sodium intake. Finally, the ACF Less Meat/Alternate Proteins Survey was geared toward understanding chefs’ knowledge of the nutritional, environmental and profitable impact of serving less meat, as well as their knowledge of protein, from what are complementary and complete proteins to individual protein needs. We discovered several significant observations when we compared the results of these surveys with those of past surveys. The findings have been narrowed down to define 2011 in terms of culinary nutrition. Here are some of the highlights:

A focus on better kid’s menus

The 2009 ACF Member survey asked, “Does your establishment meet the nutritional needs of children today?” Forty-two percent of respondents answered, “No.” In the 2010 survey, we asked a similar question, “With regards to children’s menus, which actions have you taken this past year?” Various choices were offered, from “added more and varied vegetables” to “offered smaller portions of adult dishes.” However, 35% said they have not done anything different in regards to children’s menus. While this could insinuate that some have always had nutritious children’s menus, results still dropped down from the previous year’s 42%. This brings us to 2011, when we asked the same question. This year’s response fell to 21.9% who had not made any changes to children’s menus. In both years, “added more and varied vegetables” garnered the highest percentage, with 56% in 2011 and 50% in 2010.

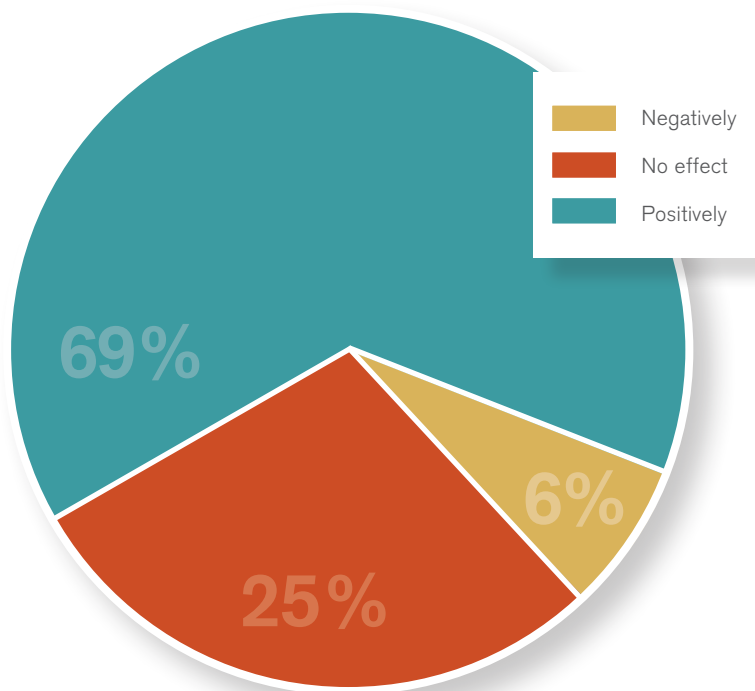
These statistics show that chefs not only care about children’s menus more today than in years past, but they are also doing something about it. The hype surrounding improving meals for our children at home, in schools and in restaurants is bigger than ever thanks to the White House’s Childhood Obesity Task Force and other groups. In fact, according to the CCF Nutrition Survey, 100% of respondents noted the need to offer nutritious children’s menu items. This may be why the National Restaurant Association’s “What’s Hot in 2012” survey of nearly 1,800 ACF chefs reveals children’s nutrition to be one of the hottest trends, comprising three of the top 10 menu trends.



Hello, health-conscious consumers

In each survey, chefs have always considered consumer demand to be the single most important factor when it comes to determining what makes the menu. In other words, consumers must want and buy healthier menu items before chefs make them mainstays. In past discussions, chefs have acknowledged that people express the desire for healthier menu items, but noted that they often do not purchase them. Luckily, consumers are beginning to put their money where their mouths are when it comes to healthier menu offerings. According to the Chicago-based foodservice research and consulting firm Technomic, many restaurants have increased menu offerings that are low in fat, calories and sugar and are promoting them more prominently on menus. This means more consumers are purchasing these healthier items, so keep them coming.

IF MENU LABELING LAWS WERE ENACTED TODAY FOR YOUR BUSINESS, HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR CUSTOMERS WOULD RESPOND TO KNOWING THE NUTRITIONAL ELEMENTS ON YOUR MENU?



Technomic also predicted restaurant trends for 2012. They observed that consumers want full transparency when it comes to what they are eating, from calories and allergens to labor and local-sourcing practices. Previous surveys revealed chefs' hesitation with menu labeling laws, but chefs are beginning to be more accepting. In 2010 we asked, "Do you think the proposed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) menu labeling requirements will change guests' dining or purchasing habits?" The answer was close to a 50/50 split, with 51% saying, "Yes" and 49% answering, "No." We asked a similar question in 2011, "If menu labeling laws were enacted today for your business, how do you think your customers would respond to knowing the nutritional elements on your menu?" A whopping 69% said "Positively" and 25% believed there would be no effect. This is good news for the health-conscious consumer.



In 2012, consumers will want more transparency on menus, including information on food sourcing.

Plant foods gain popularity

We have been pushing the power of plants for a while now, from highlighting the antioxidant-packed phytonutrients to curbing meat portions in order to make more room on the plate for plant foods. At times readers may have viewed our message on eating more "vegetarian-like" or swapping plant proteins for animal proteins as a bit too strong. Meat is great when eaten in moderation and chosen wisely. In fact, we dedicated two articles to the protein powerhouse: "Protein: Meats on the Menu" in October 2011 and "The Other Red Meats" in September 2011. The main concern with meat is that we eat too much, which increases the likelihood of various health problems. We also often eat meat in place of health-enriching plant foods.

Results from the ACF Less Meat/Alternate Proteins Survey provided support to the notion of cutting back on meat and filling this void with a variety of plant proteins. Perhaps one of the more promising findings of the survey was that the vast majority, 85%, agreed that providing vegetarian meals offers a benefit in terms of sales. Given the

importance of a restaurant's bottom line, this sort of view is exactly what is needed to bring culinary nutrition onto the plates of consumers. Furthermore, 75% of respondents said they have increased the number of vegetarian options on their menu in the last year. Eighty-two percent disagreed with the statement, "Customer demand is not large enough to place more vegetarian items on the menu." The results of this survey reveals that many chefs acknowledge the positive health benefits, potential increases in profitability, cost effectiveness and environmental impact of serving less meat or meatless dishes.

What's ahead in 2012?

While there is an increased enthusiasm for all things culinary nutrition, chefs need to understand how to apply certain concepts. This is why we are providing chefs with interactive culinary nutrition sessions at the 2012 American Culinary Federation Regional Conferences. Here's a look at the topics that will be covered:

- **Cooking for Kids**
- **Lighten Up Your Menu: Preparing Healthy Meals for You, Your Family and Your Employees**
- **Primer on Fat (advanced level)**
- **Sodium: A Little Goes A Long Way**

We look forward to seeing you in 2012! ■

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About the American Culinary Federation and the Chef & Child Foundation



The American Culinary Federation, Inc., established in 1929, is the premier professional organization for culinarians in North America. With over 20,000 members in more than 210 chapters nationwide, ACF is the culinary leader in offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and accreditation. In addition, ACF operates the most comprehensive certification program for chefs in the United States. ACF is home to ACF Culinary Team USA, the official representative for the United States in major international culinary competitions, and to the Chef & Child Foundation, founded in 1989 to promote proper nutrition in children and to combat childhood obesity. For more information, visit www.acfcchefs.org.

About Clemson University



"Culinary nutrition" is the application of nutrition principles combined with food science knowledge displayed through a mastery of culinary skills. CU CHEFS® (Clemson University's Cooking and Healthy Eating Food Specialists Outreach Services), led by Dr. Margaret Condrasky, promotes healthy foods

research and applications for culinary professionals and the food industry. Ranked No. 25 among the nation's top public institutions, Clemson University is a science-and engineering-oriented research university that maintains a strong commitment to teaching and student success. French's Foodservice is proud to sponsor this series of nutritional articles authored by Clemson University for the ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation.

About French's Foodservice



At French's Foodservice, we believe that "you are what you serve," and have built our reputation by providing the highest-quality ingredients to meet the ever-changing needs of the foodservice industry. As chefs, restaurateurs, educators and nutritionists, you positively impact the health of our nation by advocating the positive impact of healthy eating, especially among children. We are proud to support this worthy cause.

Over the last 100 years, French's has become one of the most recognized and respected brands in America. Today, the French's Foodservice family of brands delivers the highest-quality, most flavorful products possible. For the brands your patrons know and love and the incredible flavors that enhance everything from soups and salads to sandwiches and entrées, entrust your patrons to the flavors of French's.