

DIRTY GROCERY STORES & RESTAURANTS LOSE BUSINESS

New National Survey Uncovers Grocery Shoppers' Pet Peeves

Fast Food Patrons Sound Off On Dirty Tables

ROSWELL, Ga. (September 18, 2002) – Dirty-looking grocery stores and fast food restaurants were big turn-offs to consumers considering whether or not to patronize a particular establishment, according to a new national survey.

The survey, conducted for National Food Safety Education Month (September), found that 78 percent of grocery store shoppers and 82 percent of fast food restaurant patrons say their purchasing decisions are influenced by the cleanliness of the establishment. The survey of 1,046 adults was conducted in August by Opinion Research Corporation International on behalf of Kimberly-Clark Professional. This is the second year Kimberly-Clark Professional has surveyed consumers on cleanliness and food safety issues in grocery stores and quick-serve restaurants.

Initial and Repeat Business Suffers

When asked what they would be most likely to do when visiting a grocery store that appeared to be dirty or unsanitary, slightly over half (52 percent) of survey respondents said they would leave the store immediately without purchasing anything. More than one-quarter of respondents (26 percent) said they would purchase items at that visit, but they would probably not shop at the store again. This is up slightly from last year, when only 17 percent of survey respondents said they would purchase items at that visit, but would probably not shop there again.

Dirty fast-food restaurants fared more poorly in consumers' eyes. Of those queried, nearly three-fourths (74 percent) said they would leave the fast-food restaurant immediately without eating there or without purchasing food for take-out. Only eight percent said they would purchase food for take-out from a

dirty-looking restaurant, and 12 percent said they would complain to a restaurant employee.

Grocery store and fast food restaurant patrons spread the word about dirty conditions as well. In fact, a vast majority (90 percent) of those surveyed said they would tell friends and family not to patronize a grocery store or fast-food restaurant they found dirty.

“People often make an intuitive connection between the cleanliness of a grocery store or restaurant and the cleanliness or safety of the food found in that store or restaurant,” says Linwood Herndon, grocery segment manager for Kimberly-Clark Professional. “Whether it’s a dirty counter or table, a spill on the floor, or a food handler that doesn’t pay attention to proper handwashing practices, the general public has an awareness of conditions that may affect the safety of their food.”

In fact, food safety issues are of such concern that more than one-quarter (27 percent) of survey respondents said that if their favorite store or fast-food restaurant was involved in a food recall or foodborne illness outbreak, they would probably never patronize the establishment again. More than half (54 percent) said they would wait until someone in an official capacity gave an “all clear” before they visited the establishment again.

Shoppers, Diners Identify Pet Peeves

Poor service was listed as the number one pet peeve by 29 percent of grocery shoppers surveyed. The next largest pet peeve was food handlers who don’t wash their hands, identified by 18 percent of grocery shoppers surveyed. Twelve percent of survey respondents said dirty tables or counters in foodservice and food court areas was their biggest pet peeve, while eleven percent said spills or messes in the aisles or on shelves was their biggest pet peeve.

Cleanliness issues were a big concern to slightly more than half of the fast-food restaurant patrons surveyed. Twenty-eight percent of those surveyed identified dirty restrooms as their biggest pet peeve when visiting a fast-food restaurant. Eighteen percent said having to wipe up the table or chairs

themselves before sitting down was their biggest pet peeve, and eight percent said their biggest pet peeve was having to wait for a table to be cleaned. Again, poor service topped the list; 35 percent said their biggest pet peeve when visiting a fast food restaurant was unfriendly or incompetent counter staff.

“Fast-food restaurants and grocery stores are starting to invest in innovative new surface sanitation solutions that eliminate potential sources of customer dissatisfaction,” Herndon says.

A Need For Clean

Fast-food patrons are resourceful when it comes to creating a clean place to eat. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed said they would wipe up a dirty table or chair with a wad of napkins themselves, while the same percentage said they would mention the mess to an employee. Thirteen percent would leave the restaurant and go outside or to their car to eat if faced with dirty tables and chairs inside the restaurant.

And what about those ubiquitous spray bottles and rags many fast food restaurant employees use to keep the place clean? While 46 percent of those surveyed said they are glad to see the staff cleaning up, 34 percent of survey respondents don't think they should be spraying the cleaner so close to their food. And 15 percent question the cleanliness of the cloth rags used to wipe up.

About Food Safety Education Month

The International Food Safety Council presents National Food Safety Education Month every September. The month-long awareness campaign, now in its eighth year, focuses on the importance of food safety education and the restaurant and hospitality industry's commitment to serving safe food.

About Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark Corporation is a leading global manufacturer of tissue, personal care and health care products. Kimberly-Clark Professional provides

tissue and towel products, skin care products and industrial wipers for workplace settings.

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