

Association in the United States revealed that the number of ethnic entrées on restaurant menus has increased almost 50 percent in the last 5 years. Ethnic foods made up 30 percent of the entrée listings surveyed. Growing Hispanic and Asian groups have developed into significant markets for food producers and processors.

Data on consumer expenditures from the US Department of Labor reveal that in 1990 food expenditures rose only slightly more than the average for all expenditures. This is in contrast to 1989 when expenditures on food increased by 11 percent over the previous year.

Between 1990 and 1991, spending on food at home remained static at 8.6 percent of disposable income, as did spending on food away from home, at 4 percent. This reverses the trend in the 1980s, when spending on food outside the home (i.e. restaurant meals) increased at a faster rate than spending on food in the home.

Between 1990 and 1991 shipments of cereal and bakery products decreased by close to 1 percent; meat, poultry, fish and eggs increased by 2.6 percent; dairy products decreased by 1 percent and spending on fruits and vegetables increased by close to 3 percent.

Expenditures on food as a percentage of total expenditures has remained roughly constant near 15 percent in recent years.

Today's American consumers are looking for products that are healthful and convenient. The emphasis in the 1980s on low-calorie foods is expected to shift to nutrition in the 1990s. This shift is reflected in such initiatives as the changes in FDA labelling requirements with respect to nutrition. America's aging population will likely demand convenient and nutritionally-balanced foods, perhaps packaged in smaller portions. The trend toward "healthy" foods is affecting the retail grocery as well as the foodservice sector. Increasingly, foodservice establishments are introducing low-fat, low-cholesterol, and low-sodium menus in response to consumer demand.

In general, low fat and cholesterol levels in a product are important elements in increasing product demand.

It is possible that increased oil and gas prices in the 1990s will slow sales of products which require extensive distribution, such as bakery products. Practically speaking, most American wholesalers and distribution operators limit their distribution to a 200-mile radius, and those wholesalers who are able to deliver multiple product lines are increasing in importance as delivery costs escalate.

The alcohol beverage industry faces declining sales due to health concerns and the economic downturn.

There has been an increase in private labelling of grocery products by retailers. This is in response to consumer reaction to higher-priced, brand-name products. It is also an effort by grocers to highlight their own high quality items so as to increase consumer loyalty and their profit margins.

Red meats and Poultry

Consumption of poultry is increasing even as the demand for red meats is declining. Poultry at present makes up 40 percent of all meat consumed, up from 26 percent in 1981. The explanation for this trend is twofold: poultry costs less and is being used more in frozen entrées and other convenience foods; and there is a perception among consumers that poultry has less cholesterol than red meat and is consequently more healthful.

Per capita consumption of poultry is predicted to increase since people tend to eat less red meat and more poultry as they grow older. The market for value-added poultry products is also expected to grow. At the same time, the per capita consumption of beef is expected to fall slightly, forcing producers to focus on value-added products and branded product lines.

In 1991 Canadian exports of poultry to the United States accounted for 51 percent of the total poultry imported, mainly poultry cuts and