

Picking Healthy Meals Harder Than Doing Taxes?

May 25, 2012 — Fifty-two percent of Americans responding to an online survey said they think it's easier to do their own taxes than it is to figure out how to eat healthfully.

Men, people lacking a college degree, overweight or obese adults, and people with high blood pressure, heart disease, or high cholesterol were most likely to say they find it harder to know what foods they should or should not be eating.

These findings were released this month as part of the International Food Information Council Foundation's 2012 Food & Health Survey. Designed to help gauge Americans' attitudes and beliefs about their diet, health, and food choices, this yearly web-based survey was completed in April by more than 1,000 men and women aged 18 to 80.

Nine out of 10 people polled described their health as good or better, an upward trend from previous surveys. Although they consider themselves to be in good health, about one in four people said their diet is extremely or very healthful, while about one in five rated their diet as not at all or not too healthful.

Nearly everyone was making an effort to improve at least one aspect of their eating habits, with eating more fruits and vegetables topping the list. The next most popular behavior changes were drinking more water or low- and no-calorie beverages, cutting back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt, eating more whole-grain foods, and eating smaller portions.

Taste and Price Most Important

Men said they were more challenged by consistently eating a healthful diet (60%) than they were by remaining physically active (40%). The opposite was true for women, with 44% finding it harder to eat well and 56% finding it more difficult to get regular exercise.

The survey also found that about 90% of those polled had given at least a little thought to the ingredients found in their food and beverages. But taste remains the No. 1 influence on food choices, followed by price, healthfulness, and convenience.

More than half of the participants report they are trying to lose weight, a number that was similar to past surveys.

Here are some other interesting findings:

- About two-thirds of parents polled worry more about the healthfulness of their children's diets than their own.
- More than half of those surveyed feel that enjoying food is more important than worrying too much about what's in it.
- Three out of four of people felt that changes in nutrition advice make it hard to know what information to believe.
- One in seven people surveyed could correctly estimate the number of calories they need to maintain their weight.
- Buyers check the expiration date and nutrition facts panel most often before making food purchases.
- Three out of four people polled were confident in the safety of the country's food supply, and nearly half felt imported food was less safe than domestic products.

SOURCES:

2012 Food & Health Survey, International Food Information Council Foundation.

News release, International Food Information Council Foundation.

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