THOUGHT for food

National survey findings show moms are reading food labels in search of NUTRITIOUS, NATURAL FOODS without synthetic colors or preservatives

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Improving food & health

REAL MOMS want real food

Americans spend about $1 trillion a year on food, and grocery-shopping moms play a critical role in driving the direction of the U.S. food industry.

The 2014 grocery-shopping mom is sending a clear message to food manufacturers: She wants healthy and natural foods for her family. She's paying attention to ingredients and nutrition when making food purchases, and is willing to pay more for foods she perceives as being healthier. This white paper reveals the results of a survey of more than 1,100 moms across the U.S., and their grocery-shopping behaviors that are driving market trends.

THOUGHT for food

Walk down any aisle in a typical supermarket and you are hit with a dizzying array of choices for any one product, each touting various health claims — low-fat, high protein, all-natural, gluten-free, organic, etc. How do consumers know what claims to believe and what products actually are good for us?

Moms, as the primary shopper for their families, are keenly focused on labeling and nutritional facts more than ever before as they seek to feed their families healthy — and safe — foods. Making informed, healthful choices about the foods they buy for their families is increasingly complicated against a backdrop of alarming media reports of harmful food additives, deceptive labeling, unsafe processing practices, and rising obesity rates[1] and food allergies among children.[2]

In "Thought for Food," a recently conducted national survey, the majority of moms — 71 percent — believes the foods they eat affect their quality of life. In an effort to buy foods they perceive to be healthier and safer, moms have developed their own methods of judging healthful claims, and are adjusting their purchases accordingly.

The online survey, commissioned by the Natural Colors Division of leading food ingredient company Chr. Hansen, gauged food shopping behaviors and perceptions of synthetic and naturally derived colors in foods, among more than 1,100 U.S. moms.

Many moms are drawn to naturally derived ingredients, and are on the lookout for foods without preservatives, synthetic colors, allergens and GMOs (genetically modified organisms). Nutritional content is extremely important to moms, cited by the overwhelming majority — 86 percent — as the key purchase factor.

This segment of the grocery-buying public is shaping trends and behavior within the food and beverage industry, as corroborated by other recent reports. According to results of "The 2nd Annual U.S. Food and Beverage Industry Study," **the No. 1 trend driving sales in 2014 is healthy/nutritious foods.**

Consumers are demanding simplicity in the foods they purchase, according to global market researcher Mintel. A more educated, health-conscious shopper is seeking a shorter ingredients list with foods close to their natural format and stripped down packaging. Simple is the new buzzword. In 2009, there were 1,196 global food and drink launches using either simple or simple in the product name or description. In 2013, that number jumped about 225 percent to 2,685, Mintel research shows.

Large U.S. food manufacturers have made attempts to meet consumer demands for healthier foods in recent years. The country's 16 biggest food firms have dropped more than 6 trillion calories from their products between 2007 and 2012, making good on a pledge to the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation.[3]

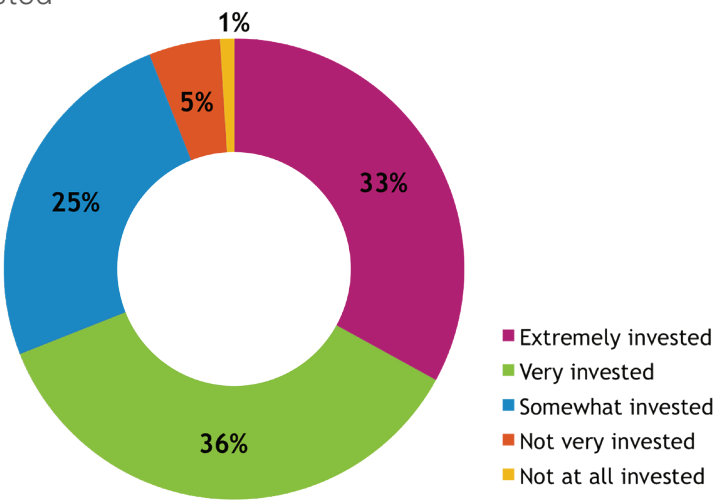
The results of the "Thought for Food" survey provide significant insight into how U.S. moms arrive at their purchasing decisions, their concerns about ingredients and the extent to which they will go to ensure they are putting healthy and safe foods on the table.

KEY FINDINGS

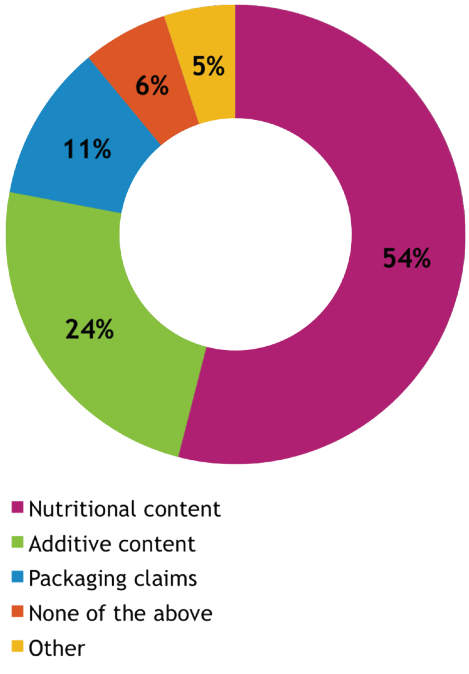
Key findings of the survey:

Nearly 90 percent of moms say they are invested in knowing what ingredients are in the foods they eat, with nearly two in three moms saying they read food labels always or most of the time before purchasing a product.

Investment in food ingredients



One factor considered most when making a purchase decision

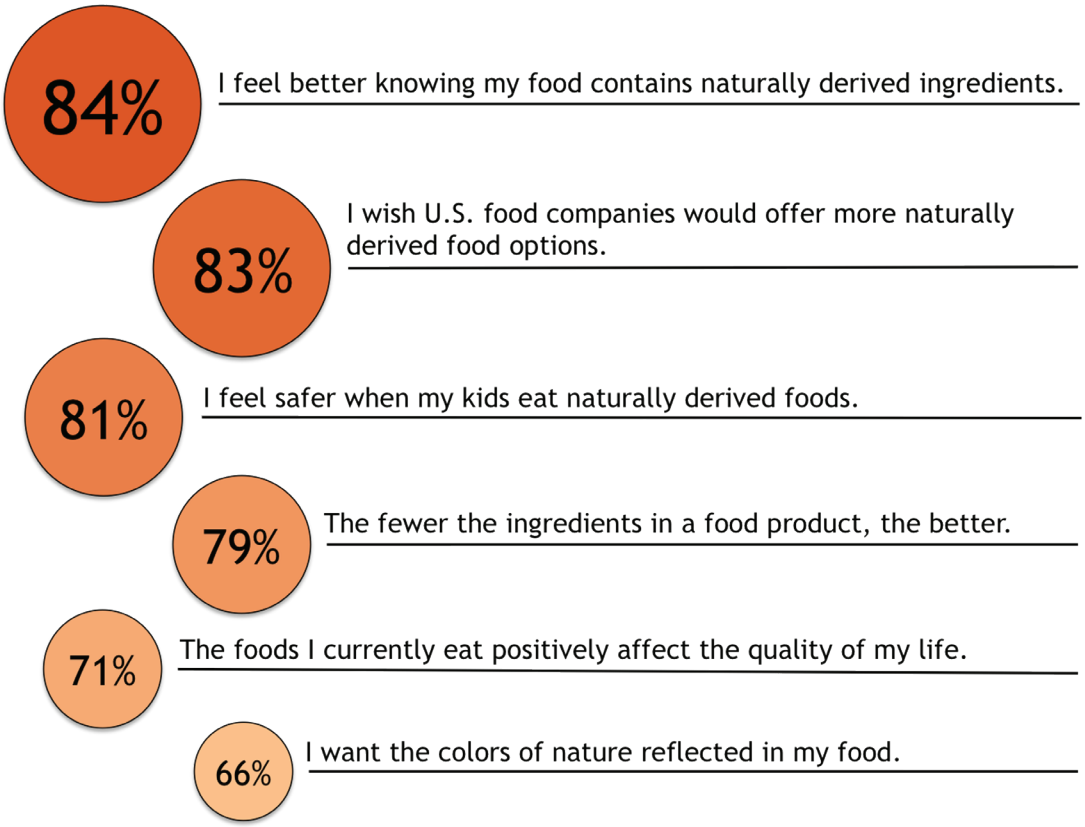


Moms rely heavily on product labels for information on content, with nutritional factors such as calories, fat, protein, sodium, etc., being the primary purchase factor for more than half of respondents. Nearly one in four consider additive content, such as preservatives, synthetic colors, allergens and GMO (genetically modified organism) ingredients, as the primary purchase factor.

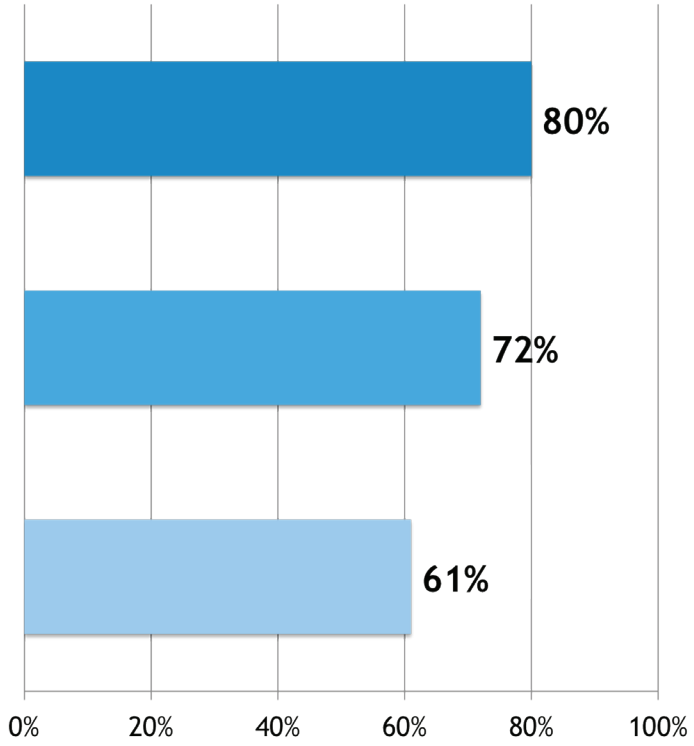
Today's grocery-buying moms are paying more attention to what's in the foods they buy than they did in the past, with 57 percent acknowledging they are more likely to purchase foods containing naturally derived ingredients than they were 10 years ago.

Natural foods RANK HIGH

Eighty-four percent of moms say they feel better knowing their food contains naturally derived ingredients, with 81 percent saying they feel safer when their children eat naturally derived foods. Eighty-three percent wish U.S. food companies would offer more naturally derived food options, and just 42 percent trust U.S. food manufacturers.



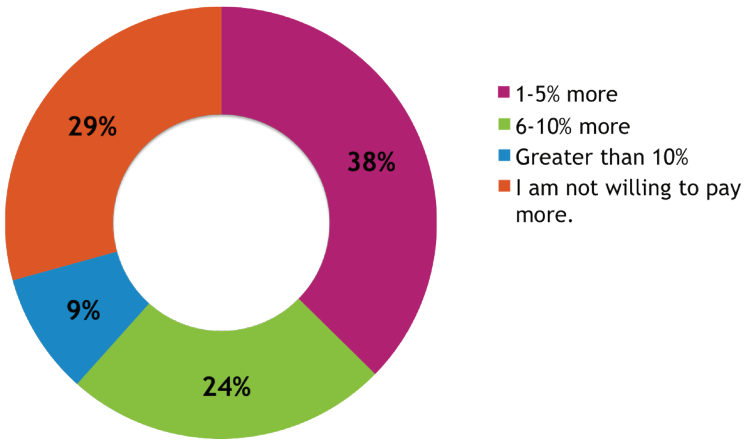
Perceptions of food



Grocery-shopping moms are synchronizing their purchasing behavior with their beliefs, with 80 percent saying they agree completely or agree somewhat with the statement: "I am more likely to purchase a product for my kids if it contains naturally derived ingredients." Seventy-two percent said they would forego color in a food product in order to avoid synthetic colors.

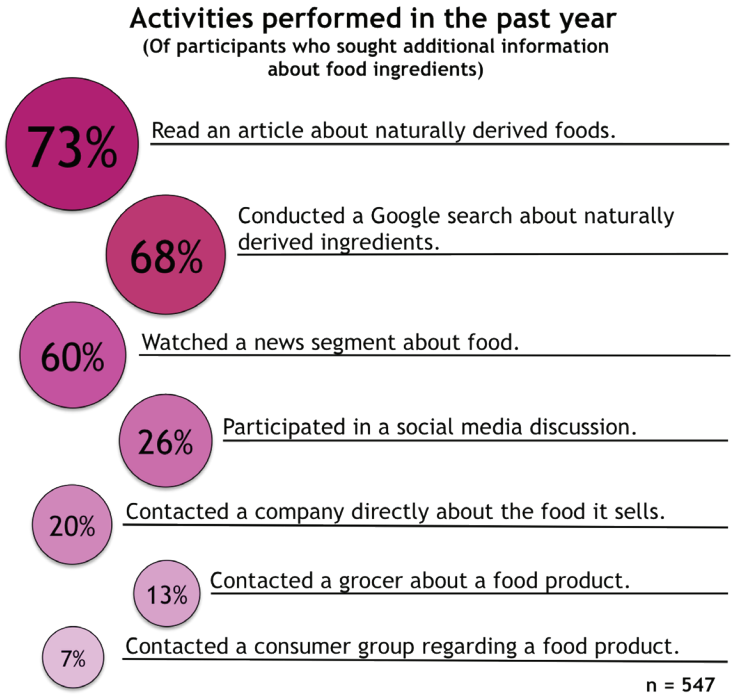
Additional amount willing to pay to obtain naturally derived colors

Additionally, cost was not identified as a barrier in regard to purchasing products that contain naturally derived colors instead of synthetic colors. Sixty-one percent of moms say they would be willing to spend more on a product that met the criteria.

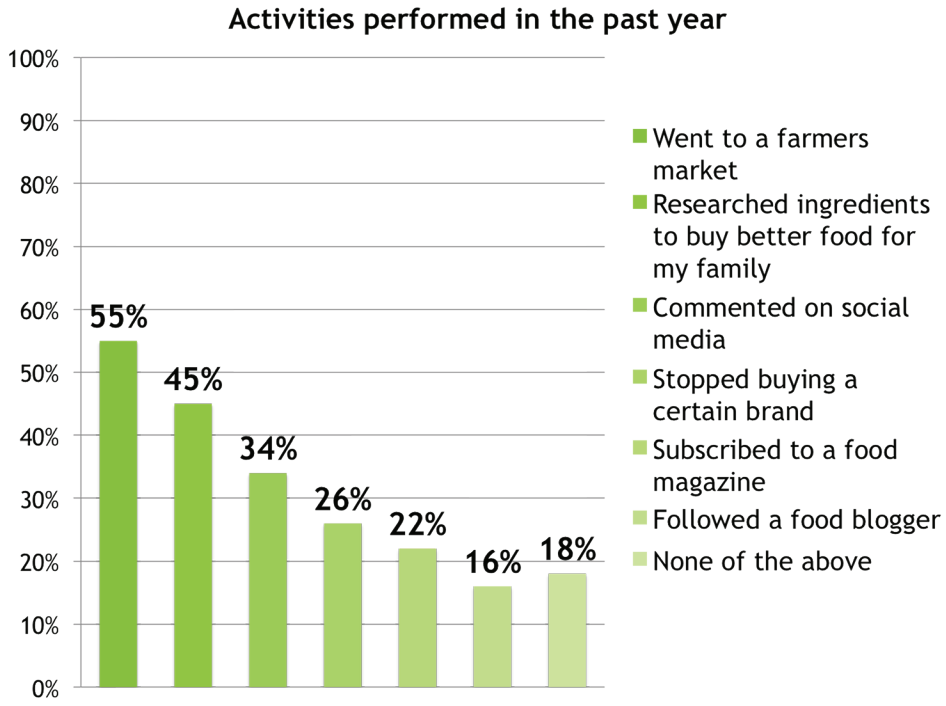


Knowledge is POWER

Beyond labeling, nearly one in two moms said they looked for information about food ingredients in the past year. Among those moms, 73 percent said they read an article about naturally derived foods, 68 percent did a Google search about naturally derived ingredients, and 60 percent watched a news segment about food.

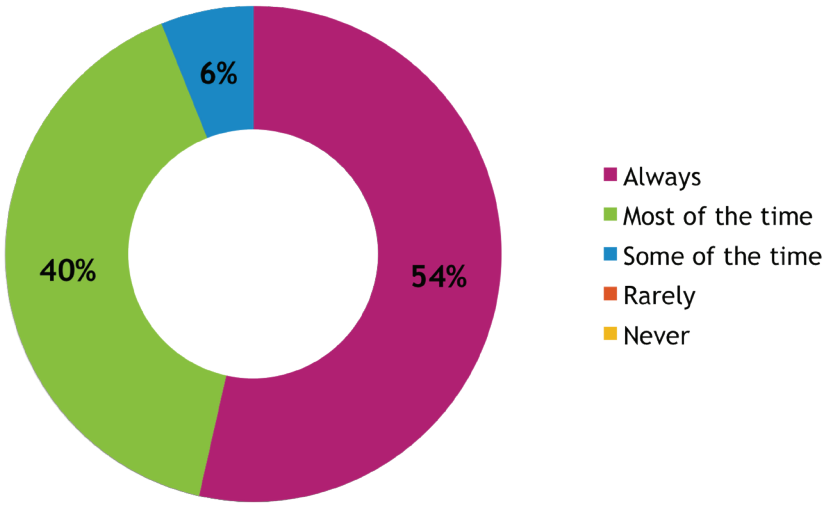


Among all moms in the survey, 45 percent researched ingredients to buy better food for their families; 34 percent commented on social media; 26 percent stopped buying a certain brand.



As awareness of healthful eating practices grows, more moms are turning to the food blogger community for additional resources. Chr. Hansen shared the "Thought for Food" survey with readers of a handful of Internet blogs, including online readers of Lisa Leake's 100 Days of Real Food. The survey results from 100 Days readers support the results of the national sample, with blogger followers expressing an even greater interest in avoiding foods with synthetic additives, actively searching for information about food ingredients and a greater willingness to pay more for foods made from naturally derived ingredients.

Frequency of reading food labels (100 Days of Real Food)



Among this segment of moms, trust in U.S. food manufacturers was just 6 percent, compared to 42 percent in the national sample, which is perhaps linked to their independence in gathering information on food health and safety.

SUMMARY

Summary

The quest for healthy food options is not likely to diminish as debate about what healthy means continues to evolve. Food manufacturers are bracing for the impact of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act, the most sweeping changes to the nation's food safety laws in more than 70 years, which will likely have an effect on consumers.

Topics such as the push for higher nutritional content in foods and the use of more natural ingredients, claims about links between food dyes and behavioral problems and a push for more transparency in labeling of products, will fuel debate and effect eventual change. And as consumers further scrutinize food manufacturers' practices and products, the food industry will evolve in response to this enhanced customer-driven environment.

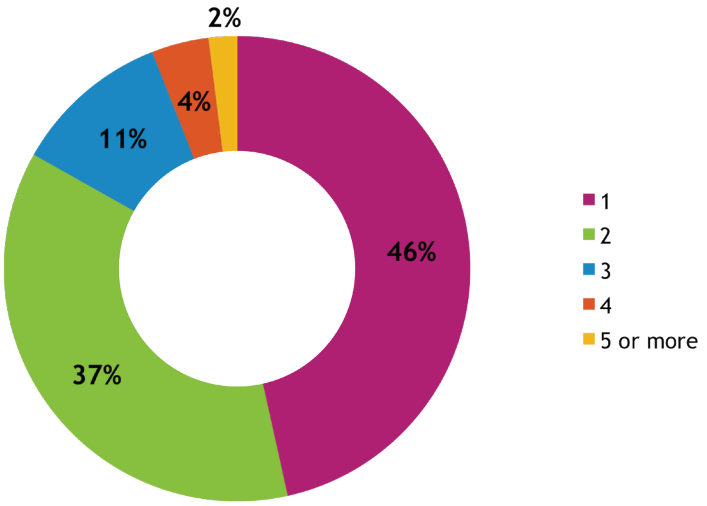
ABOUT the survey

In the national survey conducted by Qualtrics in May 2014, the majority of the 1,140 survey respondents is married with one or two children younger than age 18.

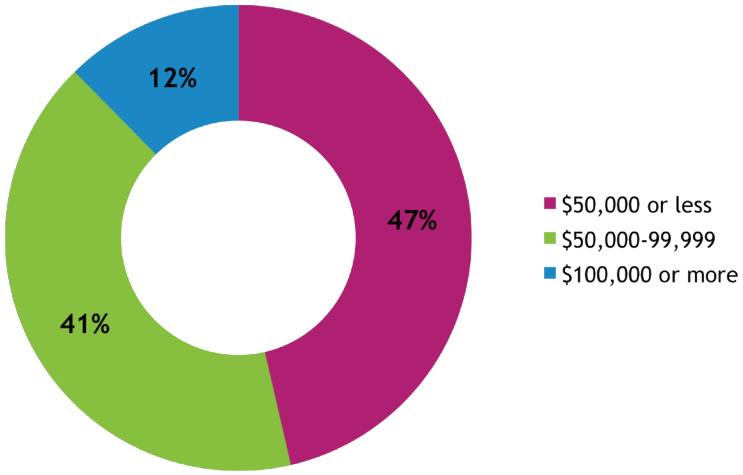
About 40 percent reported working full time; 30 percent are full-time homemakers. All are the primary grocery shoppers for their households or equally share the responsibility with another person in the household.

Full survey results available by request.

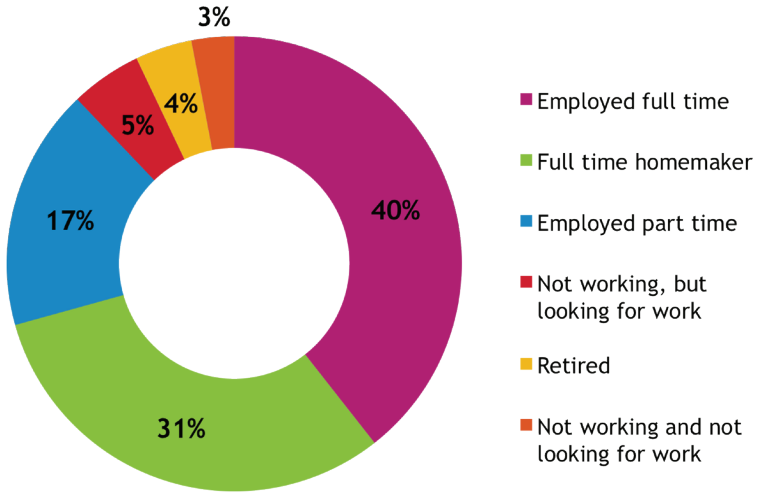
Number of children under age 18 in household



Total annual household income



Current employment status



RESOURCES

[1] The State of Obesity:
Better Policies for a Healthier America,
Trust for America's Health,
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[2] Trends in Allergic Conditions Among Children:
United States, 1997-2011,
National Health Interview Survey, 2013

[3] Food Industry Leaders Finding Ways
to Help Solve Nation's Obesity Epidemic,
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www.healthyweightcommit.org,
Sept. 17, 2014

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