January 2025

Consumer Health Priorities

In the food and drink industry

Highlights

Meat-free gains popularity: Almost half (46%) of all consumers are picking up meat-free products. Even 21% of "committed carnivores" are buying into the trend.
Page 11

Data sharing gains acceptance: Over half consumers (52%) would feel comfortable sharing their health goals, as well as diet and exercise regimes. Men are more than twice as likely to accept this than women.
Page 7

Demand for diet tracking: Over half (51%) of consumers would appreciate a digital nutrition tracking system on takeaway platforms.
Page 13

Functional goes mainstream: Nearly two in five (38%) of 35–44-year-olds, and around a third of vegans and vegetarians (30%) are buying functional foods often.
Page 8

Dive into our Health and Wellness report to discover key insights and cross-sector takeaways.

Methodology

Vypr is a **leading product intelligence platform** designed to empower brands with the insights needed to make informed product decisions at the right moments. Our platform leverages a **proprietary community of over 80,000 UK consumers**, providing our cutomers with direct access to real-time feedback. This unique capability allows brands to refine their strategies and develop products that truly resonate with their target audiences.

At Vypr, we go beyond traditional market research by focusing on the immediate, intuitive reactions of consumers. Instead of lengthy questionnaires, we engage our community with short, targeted questions that capture fast, instinctive responses. This approach is rooted in the principles of **System 1** thinking, a concept popularised by Daniel Kahneman in his seminal work, Thinking, Fast and Slow. System 1 represents the brain's quick, automatic decision-making process, which is responsible for approximately 95% of purchasing decisions. By tapping into this cognitive function, Vypr enables brands to understand consumer behaviours and attitudes with **accuracy and speed**.

Research Methodology

The findings in this report are based upon first-party research, conducted between October 2024 and December 2024. The primary research apparatus used to collate consumer feedback was a bespoke survey application, available on smartphone. The application is device agnostic and allowed a nationally representative community of real UK consumers to provide answers to a broad range of questions. To deliver comprehensive insights, Vypr adopts a mixed-method approach, by integrating both **qualitative and quantitative** research methodologies.

Qualitative Research

For our qualitative research, we utilised two distinct types of questions:

Free Text Responses: Engaging a sample size of 50 consumers, this approach allowed respondents to provide open-ended answers. These responses offer deep, personal insights into consumer thoughts and attitudes, capturing the nuances of their experiences.

Sentiment Analysis: Leveraging AI technology, we analysed responses from 250 consumers to summarise the overall sentiment, whether positive or negative, related to specific topics. This method provides a clear understanding of the emotional tone behind consumer feedback, highlighting the underlying sentiments that drive behaviour.

Quantitative Research

Our quantitative research was designed to capture structured, statistically significant data:

Sample Size and Question Types: We conducted surveys with a robust sample of 1,000 consumers. This larger sample size ensures the data is representative of the broader population, allowing us to draw meaningful conclusions across different demographics.

Single and Multi-Answer Multiple Choice Questions: These questions offered respondents a range of predefined options, enabling us to measure consumer preferences and behaviours with precision.

Vykert Scale: Our proprietary Vykert question, a refined version of the traditional Likert scale, uses a sliding scale to capture the intensity of consumer opinions. This provides a more nuanced view of their preferences and attitudes.

Representation: All quantitative research was conducted using a nationally representative sample of 1,000 consumers. This means that proportionate weightings, aligned to the most recent ONS population data (2024), were used to ensure proportional representation associated to age and gender

In Brief

Brands and retailers have a lot on their plates. As “free-from” diets continue to gain traction, consumers are seeking better-tasting alternative products at affordable prices. As 2024 came to a close, we observed that while many consumers are willing to relax their health goals slightly, they still prefer brands that cater to their specific needs.
For certain groups, the drive to make innate healthier choices remains strong. Younger millennials, vegans, and those following specific diets are eager for innovative, delicious options that support their health goals, and they’re willing to pay a premium for them. Sustainability in health also continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the buying decisions of an increasing number of consumers. Brands that can address these needs with a data-driven strategy are set to thrive throughout 2025.

Grocery shopping: Consumers are looking at the price tag, which is to be probably expected given the UK's ongoing cost-of-living crisis. However, health and environmental factors are also coming into play. A standout statistic from our research revealed that almost half of all grocery shoppers are now buying meat-free alternatives, including around a fifth of committed carnivores.

Takeaway: Consumers are hungry for convenience options that not only taste great but can help them reach their health goals. To achieve this a growing number of people - men in particular - are prepared to trade their personal information for in-app nutritional and calorie tracking.

Dining out: Eating out is slowly taking a new form, as hungry consumers increasingly reach for the printed menu for nutritional information as well as food options. There's a rising demand for meat-free, gluten-free and dairy-free options as well, which should be just as delicious as the other items.

This report dives into some of the most striking consumer behaviours and analyses the subtle ways that they're evolving. Overall, we'd encourage brands to support a wide variety of consumers in their personal dietary choices. This means going above and beyond with nutritional information, sustainable labels and even offering diet tracking apps.

Health and Wellness in the Grocery Sector

Balancing taste, price and health

Healthy eating has petered out a little since the summer of 2024. But consumers are still eager for good-tasting functional foods. Interestingly for retailers, an appetite is growing for personalised health recommendations too, with shoppers more open to sharing their personal data in exchange for better diets.

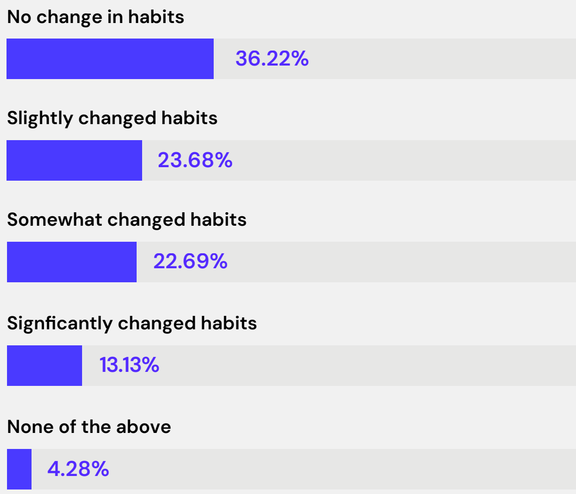
- Just over a third (36%) of consumers are consciously changing their habits and putting healthier options into their trolleys, compared to half (50%) in the summer. This suggests that they are less interested in health and wellness as the end of the year approaches.

- Again, for over a third (37%) of consumers, the cost of products is the most crucial factor at this time of year. In second place comes taste, picking up around a quarter of votes (25%).

- When it comes to learning about health-focused or fortified foods, over a quarter (28%) of consumers would prefer to hear about it from someone they trust like a health professional, family or friends. In second place, nearly one in five (19%) would be interested by in-store displays.

- On the whole, consumers want to be healthy. When we asked them what innovation they'd most like to see in store, there was a strong demand for supermarkets to help them make the most nutritious choices across all types of foods. Lack of understanding is currently a big blocker, but our data indicates that consumers are eager to learn and improve.

How has your focus on health and wellness changed your takeaway ordering habits in the past year?



Sent to a nationally representative sample

Clear labelling and transparency

Consumers are paying close attention to nutrition labels and ingredient lists, but many find them confusing and difficult to trust. With health and environmental concerns driving choices, brands have an opportunity to simplify labels and build greater confidence among shoppers.

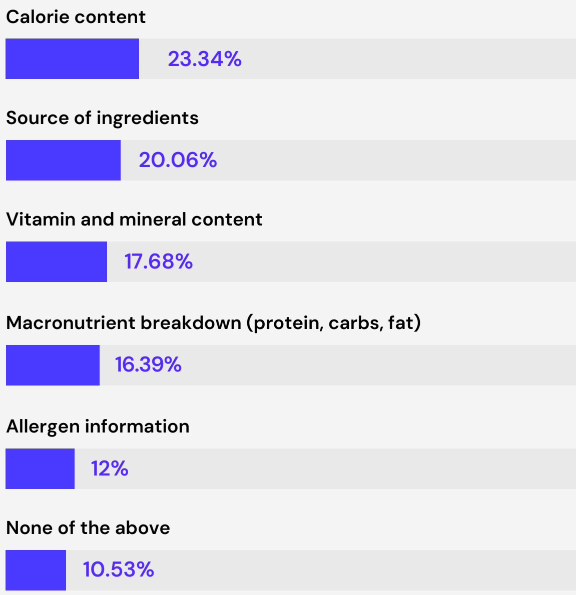
Packaging Scrutiny is the Norm: Over three-quarters of consumers (78%) examine nutrition labels and ingredients, with 17% doing so every time they shop.

Calories and Ingredients Take Centre Stage: Calories remain the top priority for 23% of consumers, but the source of ingredients (20%) is emerging as a key concern, reflecting growing environmental awareness.

Clear Labelling and Coding is Key: Less than 40% of consumers find nutrition labels easy to understand, highlighting the need for brands to simplify their designs. Colour coding is the most preferred way to make labels easier to follow, particularly among consumers aged 45 and over.

Only 13% of consumers completely trust nutrition labels, though trust is slightly higher (24%) among younger shoppers aged 18-24.

Which of the following labelling elements are most important to you when making food choices?



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Personalised nutritional technology

Consumers are increasingly seeking personalised nutritional solutions to support their health and wellbeing. Our research reveals a strong appetite for tailored recommendations, with many open to sharing personal data to achieve this, though trust in AI-driven options remains a work in progress.

Rising Demand for Personalised Nutrition: Our research uncovered a consumer demand for personalised nutritional technology and recommendations. Nearly half (47%) of the population want to see this in supermarkets, rising to 53% for the 18-24 age group.

Comfort in Sharing Health Goals: In their search for better wellbeing and nutrition, over half consumers would feel comfortable sharing their health goals (54%), as well as diet and exercise (52%).

Mixed Feelings About Sensitive Data: When it comes to sharing their biometric data, medical history or genetic information people are less comfortable. But a considerable 48%, 44% and 44% (respectively) will still do so if it means getting personalised nutritional recommendations.

Desired Nutritional Services: We asked more about which nutritional serves consumers would be most interested in using. The top choice was a customised meal plan, picking up over 21% of the votes and in second place was personalised supplement recommendations with 17%.

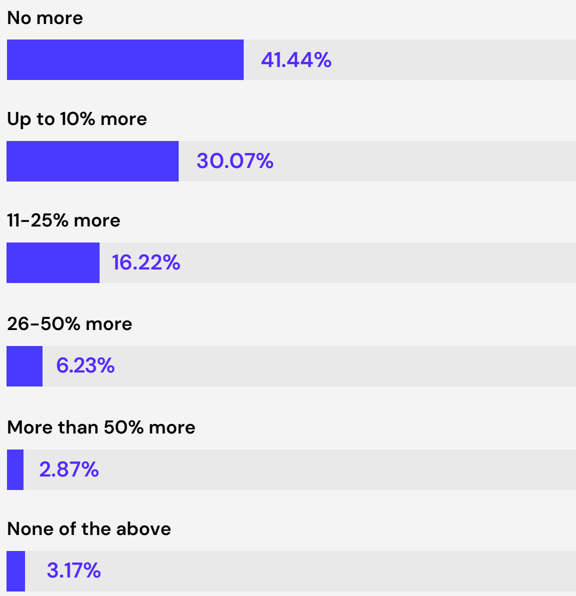
Scepticism and Trust in AI: Just 6% of consumers would most like to receive AI-generated rec, indicting a reluctance to trust and rely on this technology as much as other options. Though it may not be their first choice, a quarter (25%) of consumers would be open to AI-generated nutrition plans, and just under a third (31%) have no strong views about it.

Functional food and beverages

Earlier in 2024, we also uncovered the rise of products fortified with additional nutrients or beneficial compounds, particularly among men. Today, nearly two in five (38%) of 35–44-year-olds across genders add them to their weekly baskets. Another key group are vegans and vegetarians, with around a third (30%) buying functional foods often, possibly to supplement what may be missing in their diets elsewhere.

- A quarter (25%) of consumers are putting functional foods into their weekly shopping baskets, rising to 30% for the vegan community.
- The strongest demand comes from people following diets for medical reasons. Half (50%) of this group buy functional foods weekly.
- Consumers are looking to tackle a range of health concerns with functional foods, the most common being digestive health, accounting for 16.4% of votes. Immune system support and heart health also feature strongly, picking up 15% and 14% of votes, respectively.
- For consumers aged 18-24 years old, they tend to buy functional foods and beverages to boost their energy and metabolism levels.
- Taste is marginally more important than price for functional foods and beverages, receiving 85% of the consumer votes against 73%.
- While some (30%) consumers are willing to pay up to 10% more for functional foods, most (41%) are not.

How much more, if any, are you willing to pay for functional foods or beverages compared to regular alternatives?

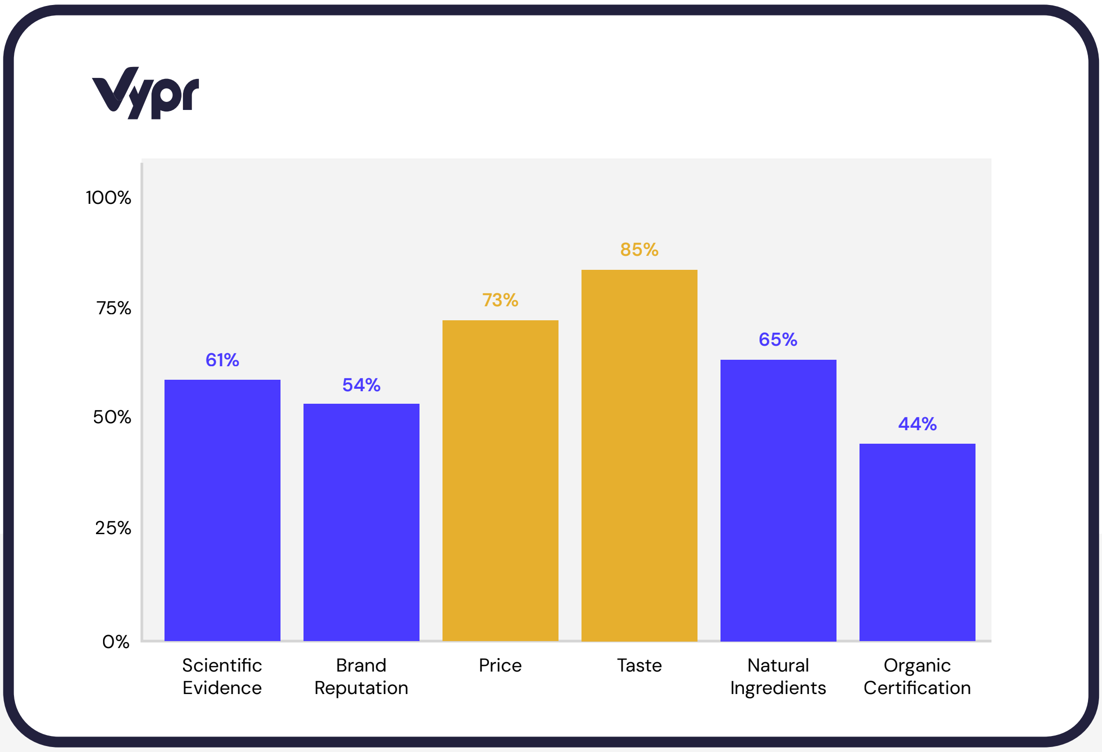


Sent to a nationally representative sample

- People that are reducing their meat intake or follow a diet for sporting activities are generally willing to pay more for functional foods. They are also more trusting about the health claims on packaging too.

- When it comes to functional foods, consumers tend to be more confident about health claims. Almost half (46%) trust the claims at least somewhat. Women generally believe the claims more than men.

Which factors are most important to you when choosing functional food and beverages?



Rising Trends: The Growing Appeal of Free-From and Meat-Free Foods

While foods which are free from gluten, lactose or other ingredients "free from foods", and meat free alternatives are still niche, they are fast gaining popularity... and not just for people with specific diets. Almost half (46%) of all consumers sometimes or often picking up meat-free products. Even 21% of "committed carnivores" are buying into the trend. Across all groups, just over 3% do so because of dietary restrictions. The others opt for meat-free for reasons such as health or taste, with over two thirds (64%) believing they are or can be healthier than meat versions.

Free-from food trends

- Over half (51%) of consumers are purchasing free-from products like gluten-free or dairy-free at least monthly, with over a quarter (27%) picking them up weekly.

- Free-from products are less popular among the over-55s, with more than two-thirds (68%) of this group rarely or never buying them.

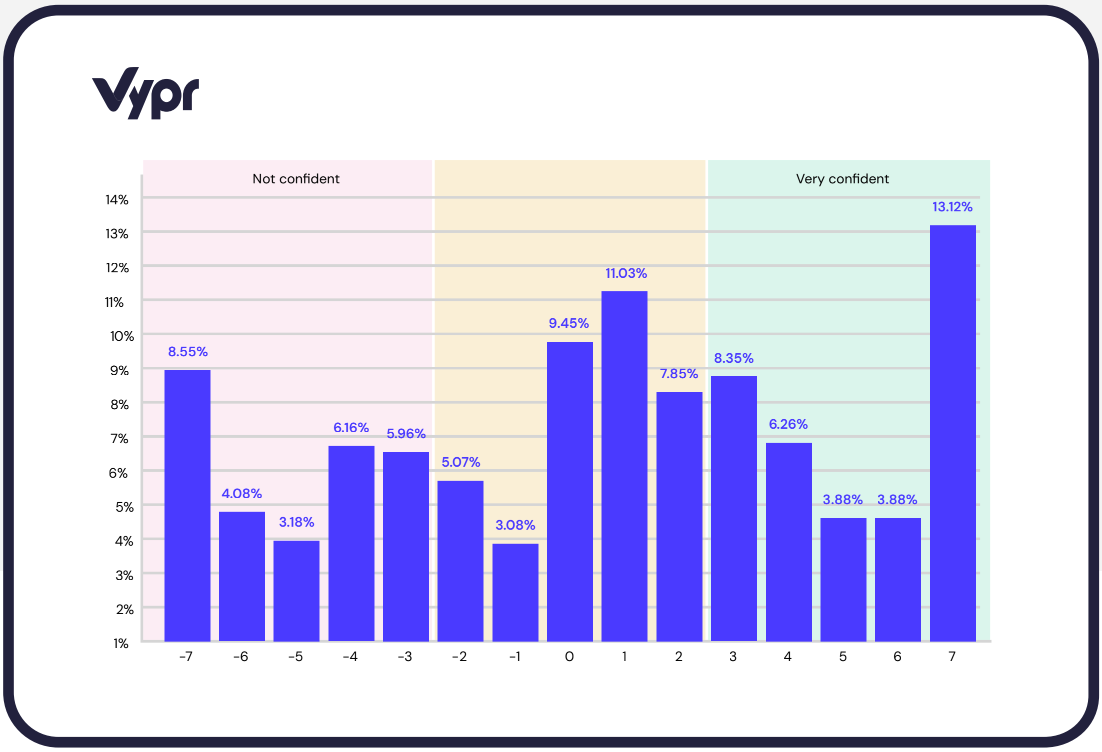
- In stark contrast with the over-55s, a high proportion (46%) of men aged between 35 and 44 are buying free-from products on a weekly basis.

- More than a third (35%) of consumers feel that free-from alternatives have the same taste and texture as regular products. This conviction was especially strong among people under the age of 44, with two-thirds fully feeling extremely confident about it. By contrast, the older age groups were less convinced.

- Price is the biggest barrier to purchasing free-from foods, collecting almost a third (32%) of the votes, while a quarter (24%) of consumers pinpointed trust issues.

- When asked what would make them more likely to buy free-from products, over a quarter (27%) would need a better taste, while just under a quarter (25%) said lower prices. Around a sixth (15%) of consumers would like to see improved health benefits.

How confident are you that free-from products (e.g., gluten-free, dairy-free) offer the same taste and texture as regular products?



Meat-free food trends

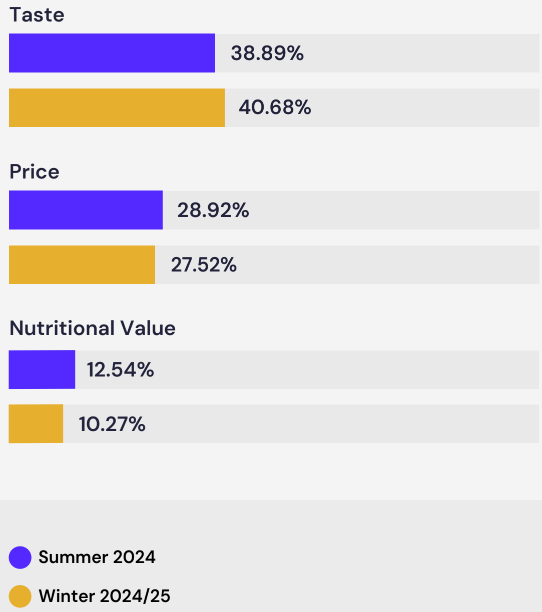
- Nearly a third (32%) of UK consumers never eat meat-free alternatives.
- For the people that do eat meat-free alternatives, a significant number (20%) do so for the health benefits and significantly less (15%) because they prefer the taste. Perhaps surprisingly, just 3% are going for meat-free alternatives because of dietary restrictions. This suggests that meat-free is gaining popularity and moving into the mainstream.
- Almost half (46%) of people who do eat meat buy meat-free products at least sometimes. This includes 21% of people who classify themselves as "committed carnivores".
- Over a quarter (28%) perceive meat-free alternatives to be healthier than traditional meat products. However, just under a quarter (24%) noted they were not sure – suggesting that more education in this area could improve sales for meat-free products.

Health and Wellness in the Takeaway Sector

Like grocery shopping, consumer's healthy intentions have dwindled a little since the summer. But some groups such as vegans and young millennials are persevering. There is demand for more transparency when it comes to nutritional value. A good place for this information could be social media as it is a top information source, especially for younger people.

- Almost half of consumers (46%) tried to make healthier takeaway choices over the past year, especially within the 25-34 age range.
- Moving into 2025, good-tasting takeaways have become slightly more of a priority for consumers (+2%). Meanwhile, price and nutritional value have become marginally less important (-1% and -2% respectively). Standing out from other consumers, 35% of vegans voted nutritional value as a top priority for takeaways.
- One in five (21%) consumers find out about healthy takeaway options from social media, rising to 38% for the 25-34 age group.
- Consumers want to see more transparency on their takeaway menus, with many citing ingredient information – including plant-based ingredients and calorie content as useful additions.

Which of the following factors most influence your takeaway food choices?



Digital nutrition tracking

The idea of a digital nutrition tracking system on takeaway platforms was especially well received, for 51% of consumers. Young millennials were most keen on this idea, as well as 32% of people who exercise daily. Over a fifth of all consumers (21%) would find a calorie tracker the most useful tool.

- Over half (51%) of UK consumers would be interested in a takeaway ordering app that tracks nutrition, with those aged 25-34 citing the most interest.

- Consumers would like takeaway apps to provide nutritional information. Almost half (49%) would use it to help them make healthier decisions.

- A calorie counter, macronutrient breakdown and allergen alerts would be the most appreciated features in a nutrition tracking system. These accounted for 21%, 11% and 10% of votes, respectively.

Health-focused menu innovation

Consumers are receptive to seeing health innovations on their takeaway apps and menus. Foods that can improve gut health would be the most popular, but vegetarians would prefer to see more energy-boosting options. Trust is a major hurdle that restaurants would need to overcome, as only a quarter of consumers currently have faith in the health claims. However, this could be achieved with more detailed information on things like the sources of ingredients.

Interest in Health-Focussed Takeaways: Nearly half (46%) of consumers would be interested in ordering takeaway options that cater to specific health benefits or include fortified ingredients. This rises to three in five (60%) for those on specific diets.

Gut, Heart, and Energy Benefits Lead the Way: Digging a little deeper, takeaway foods aimed at improving gut health would be the most popular, gathering 23% of votes. Also significant were heart health and energy enhancement, which collected 22% and 17% of the votes, respectively.

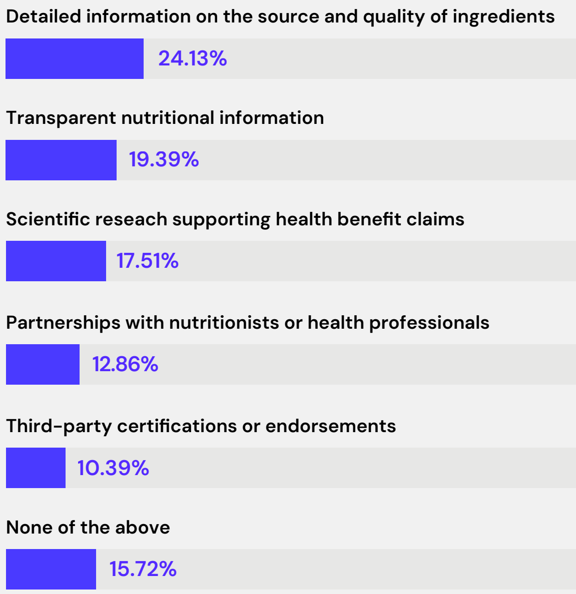
For vegetarians, energy-boosting food was the most appealing, picking up 31% of votes.

Health Claims Drive Experimentation: Around half (48%) of consumers would try out a new takeaway dish if it claimed to offer specific health benefits.

Gender Divide in Trust: Men are more than four times more likely to trust takeaway restaurant health claims than women (17% compared to 4%). Overall, just over a quarter (26%) UK consumers have confidence in them.

Transparency Builds Trust: To increase trust, a quarter of people (24%) would need to see more detailed information on the source and quality of ingredients.

Which of the following would most increase your trust in a takeaway restaurant's health-focused menu items?



Sent to a nationally representative sample

Customisable Nutrition

While around one in two consumers think that offering food customisation is important, not that many would use it for those that would; the most popular service would be to have more control over portion sizes. People with certain diets, like pescatarians or vegans, are more likely to value customisation options.

- Half of consumers (50%) think that customisable takeaway options are important, with 19% finding it very important.
- Over a sixth (19%) of consumers would like to customise their portion sizes. But when it comes to adding in nutritional supplements or fortified foods, demand was less strong with just 7% interested in this option.
- Just under a third (31%) of consumers would pay more for customisable takeaway options, rising to nearly half (46%) for pescatarians. This suggests that fish or seafood meals would be a good place for restaurants to begin.

Health and Wellness in the Dine-out Sector

The perception of dining out has remained broadly the same since the summer. While consumers would appreciate healthier options, it's not their main priority. However, Gen-Zs appear to be bucking the trend, one in four are making a concerted effort to be healthy when they eat out. There is also a growing demand for more menu transparency, especially around macronutrient labelling.

Gen-Z Leads the Shift to Healthier Dining: Over the past year, a quarter (24%) of Gen-Zs aged 18-24 have made a significant effort to eat healthier food when they go out. But generally, most of the population has only made slight improvements (22%) or no changes at all (43%).

Taste Takes Priority When Eating Out: When it comes to eating out, taste is important. Nearly two in five consumers (39%) cite this as the most influential factor. Price is still relevant though, picking up 25% of the votes and finally, for 12% it's the nutritional value which sways them.

Menus Still Dominate Over Digital Tools: While social media and restaurant websites play a stronger role for younger consumers, on-menu descriptions are the favourite channel with 37% of votes. Diners appreciate learning about health-focused options, restaurant initiatives and nutritional information here. Almost half (49%) would prefer a printed menu over a separate nutritional guide (11%) or QR code (11%).

What do you expect from your dining-out experience?

A well organised standard kitchen. A sustainable farm product for meals, and less chemical preservation.

Female, 35 – 54

Openness to New Dining Concepts:
More than half (52%) of consumers are willing to try new health-focused dining concepts or experiences. And Gen-Zs aged 18-24, almost a third (31%) were strongly in favour, suggesting a hunger for something new.

Demand for Transparent and Creative Menu Options: When we asked about what health and wellness initiatives diners would most like to see in restaurants, clearer macronutrient labelling and calorie content within menus came up a lot. There was also an appetite for more creativity with special diet dishes.

Nutritional transparency

Diners are increasingly seeking transparency about their food, valuing clear nutritional information to make informed choices when eating out.

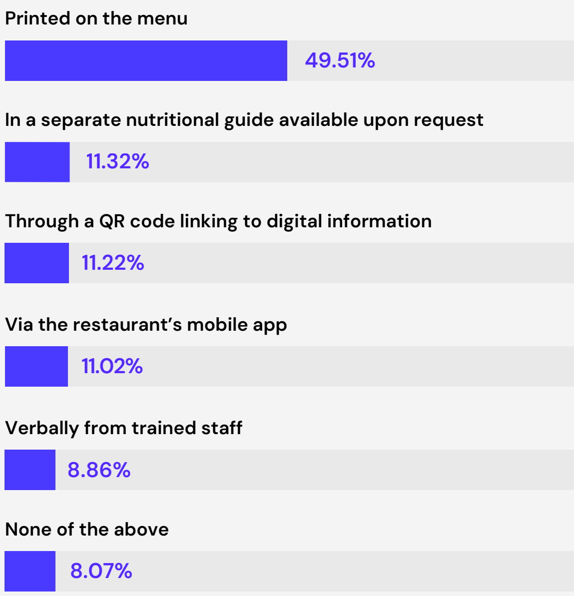
- Diners are becoming more aware of the health implications of their food choices. While they may not always opt for the healthier choice, they would like to have all the information at their fingertips.

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of diners would like to see detailed nutritional information on their menus. For vegans, this is especially crucial, with over half (52%) marking it as very important.

- Calorie content would be the most appreciated information, accounting for 25% of the votes. Allergen information and a macronutrient breakdown come in second and third at 17% and 11%.

- Menus are by far the most popular place to find out more about nutritional information, accounting for half (50%) of consumers' votes.

How would you prefer to access nutritional information in a restaurant?



Sent to a nationally representative sample

Personalised dining experiences

Generally, there is a reluctance around receiving personalised nutritional recommendations from staff in restaurants. Even if the advice was coming from someone who is well-trained, just a third of people would follow it. However, the data skews differently for people with specific diets, like vegans, who would be almost twice as likely to take the recommendation.

- When it comes to personalised recommendations from staff and servers, with 22% of votes, most people would like to know if they can customise existing menu options for their diet.

- If the restaurant staff were trained in health and wellness, a third (33%) of consumers would follow the recommendations.

- Around one in two (47%) people who follow specific diets would follow the suggestions of a trained member of staff. This is especially relevant for vegans, as 60% report having health-related preferences when they eat out.

- Generally, two in five (41%) consumers don't have any specific dietary requirements that they try to follow when eating out.

Functional menu items

When it comes to functional foods in restaurants, millennials are a clear target market. More so than any other generation, they're on the lookout for healthier versions of their favourite dishes, and men especially are interested in protein content. However, the group willing to pay the most are male Gen-Zs.

- A quarter (25%) of millennials are actively looking for functional or fortified ingredients when they eat out. This is especially true for added protein. This group is also the most likely to trust health benefit claims on menus.
- Consumers are most interested in learning about the vitamins and minerals in their meals when they dine out, accounting for 23% of votes. In second place comes information about fibre-rich ingredients (16%), and third is antioxidants for immune support (15%).
- Around a quarter (26%) of the population would pay a tenth more for healthier fortified or functional foods in restaurants. That rises to 38% for Gen-Zs - especially for men.

Cross-sector takeaways

1. **Nutritional information**

   Restaurants could heighten awareness of their healthier dishes by adding clear macronutrient labelling and calorie content to printed menus.

   Another interesting point could be to show the sustainability and carbon emissions of each dish, as brands like Wahaca are already doing.

2 **Functional versions**

   Nearly two in five younger consumers would pay up to 10% more for dishes that have been fortified with additional nutrients or benefits. Adding more of these to the menu could help to draw in Gen-Zs.

3. **Take "free-from" foods seriously**

   Brands could benefit from providing creative and tasty food for meat-free, gluten-free or dairy-free consumers. This group shows signs of being currently underserved.

4. **Educating consumers:**

   Our research indicates some misinformation or uncertainty exists around the healthiness of meat-free and fortified foods. Brands could boost awareness and sales with educational campaigns or clear nutritional labelling.

5. **Diet tracking:**

   Younger males are especially interested in how their data can be used to help them make better food choices for their health. Investing in this technology now could benefit brands later.

In Summary

Consumers in the UK care about health and wellness across grocery shopping, ordering takeaways and dining out. **Functional foods are marching steadily into the mainstream**, and a growing number of people are opting for **meat-free alternatives for health reasons**. However, it is not the only priority for consumers, and it can quickly take a back seat to other factors.

Over a third (36%) of people are most **concerned about the price of food** as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite. In the second position (25%) is taste, which has an increased importance around the end of the year, as consumers tend to relax their health goals and indulge more.

Leaning into these factors will be vital for brands and retailers to thrive. We've suggested that they can help consumers reach their health goals with diet tracking services, educational campaigns and clearly labelling nutritional information. In addition, the data reveals **a gap in the market as increasing numbers of consumers look for delicious and affordable free-from options**.

Partner with Vypr to Lead the Market

Now is the time to act on these insights.

As you shape your strategies for the coming year, consider how Vypr's **data-driven approach can support your business in staying ahead of the curve with vast insights and product intelligence.** Whether it's through refining your product offerings, enhancing customer engagement, or driving sustainable practices, the actionable insights Vypr can provide can empower you to make informed decisions that resonate with today's consumers.

Don't just react to change—lead it. Contact us today to learn how Vypr's global intelligence platform can help your brand navigate the future of retail with confidence and success. Together, we can shape the industry's future, one insight at a time.

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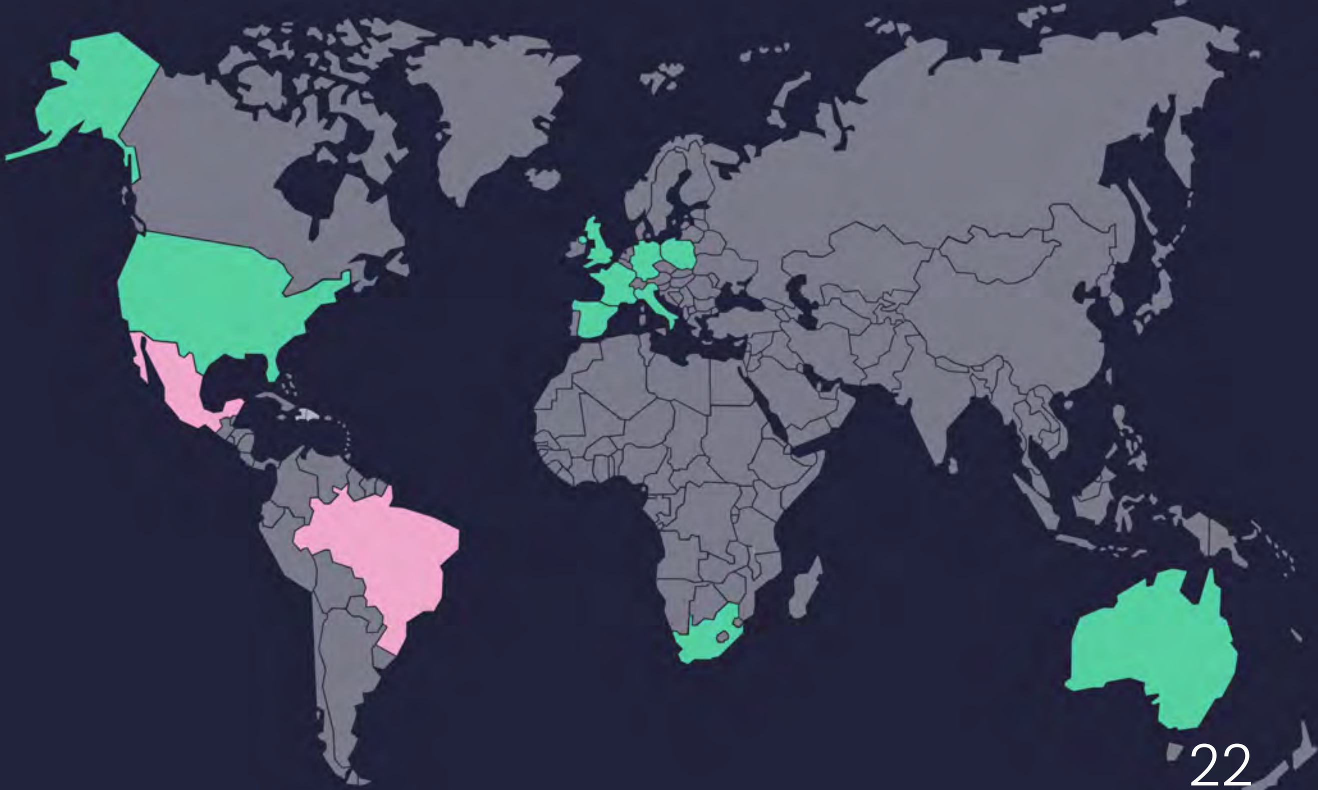

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