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Consumer Preferences & Dining Habits

FSAA
FOODSERVICE ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Vypr

Contents

Methodology

Vypr is a global product intelligence and consumer insights platform that helps brands make informed product decisions quickly and confidently. Our approach combines mobile-first research tools with engaged consumer communities, delivering insights that are accurate, actionable and agile.

For this study, **Vypr partnered with the Foodservice Association of Australia (FSAA)** to ensure the research reflects the priorities and challenges most relevant to Australia's foodservice sector. By combining **FSAA's deep industry knowledge and network with Vypr's consumer-led research approach**, we are able to provide insights that are both representative of Australian consumers and directly aligned to the needs of suppliers and operators.

The findings in this report are based on research conducted in August 2025 with a nationally representative sample of 200 Australian consumers, weighted to the latest population data across age and gender. Our methodology is rooted in behavioural science and captures instinctive, System 1 responses through short, targeted, mobile-optimised questions.

To provide a rounded view of consumer attitudes and behaviours, we combined structured survey data with open-ended feedback, analysed using both traditional quantitative methods and AI-driven sentiment analysis. This approach offers a balanced perspective on consumer preferences, behaviours and the motivations behind them.

To conduct this research, we used:

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.

Executive Summary

Australian dining behaviours are shifting rapidly in 2025 as cost-of-living pressures reshape how, when, and where people eat out. While price remains the dominant factor in decision-making, **younger demographics are still driving demand for food-away-from-home experiences**, creating both challenges and opportunities for operators.

More than one in two Australians (57%) eat out at least once a week, with 25–44-year-olds leading the trend. This group, encompassing older **Gen-Zs and Millennials, is even normalising daily dining out**, albeit with smaller average spends. In contrast, over-65s are the most disengaged, with 69% eating in almost every day and nearly two in five rarely or never dining out.

Quick-service restaurants are the nation's most frequented venues, with 62% visiting regularly, followed by casual dining (47%) and cafés (33%). **Younger Australians are also twice as likely as average to order from delivery apps**. Despite these habits, almost two in five (39%) say they are eating out less than last year, with only 17% dining out more frequently.

Value for money is the top improvement diners want to see: 52% call for better portion sizes or more generous offers. Promotions such as discounts (63%), combo meals (45%), and freebies (37%) are the strongest traffic drivers. Consistency across outlets (45%) and use of local ingredients (32%) are also high on the list of consumer priorities.

This report highlights **a consumer base that is cost-conscious yet experience-driven**. Restaurants that deliver value, maintain quality, and subtly weave in health and sustainability cues will be best positioned to secure loyalty in 2025.

Highlights

Nearly four in five (78%) Australians eat out at least once a week. Gen-Zs and young Millennials are dining out the most, while over-65s tend to stay at home
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Three in ten (30%) people are eating out less, with some (9%) stopped stopping altogether
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More than two in three (71%) Australians are looking into the **healthier options at restaurants**
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Online reviews are the most influential factor for consumers deciding where to eat out
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More than one in two (52%) of diners would like to see **better portion sizes or more value for money** when they dine out
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Introduction

With the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis mounting, Australians have a lot on their plates. Or rather, they would like to. Our research reveals that in the quest for true value on a budget, **Australians want bigger portion sizes, lower prices** and they're less willing to take risks on foods they may not like.

Without question, price sensitivity looms large over the dining decisions of consumers. But it doesn't stop older **Gen-Zs and Millennials from eating out several times a week, or even daily**. Rather than cutting back entirely, these demographics prefer to spend less each time. This is in stark contrast to the over-65s, these days a sizeable portion hardly or never eat out at all.

Fast food places are today's most popular eateries in Australia, enjoyed by all ages. They are especially frequented by those who eat out several times a week but **spend less than $60 in total**.

The more relaxed and expensive spots like casual eateries or cafes are viewed as much more of a treat in the current climate. These brands can lean into this elevated status by offering discounts on celebratory meals or adding in something like a cake or sparkling wine for occasions. Even **while consumers enjoy milestone moments, they are keeping a close eye on prices**.

Playing second fiddle to the price tags but **growing in importance are sustainability and health trends**. Consumers are also hungry for nutrient-packed meals that are kind to the planet. Incorporating these aspects into restaurants is a **strong strategic way to help stay future proof for longer**.

As Australians tighten their belts in more ways than one, there are plenty of **opportunities for restaurants to stand out, shine and gain loyalty**. In this data-filled report, we've unpacked some of the strongest ways to bring back the joy of eating out.

Eating out is a weekly ritual for younger Australians, but older generations are dining in

More than one in two (52%) Australians eat out at least once a week. The 25 to 34 age group is 1.4x more likely to go to a cafe or restaurant, compared to the population average (79% vs 57%).

Following the trail blazed by 25- to 34-year-olds, **71% of 35- to 44-year-olds also eat out at least weekly**. Unlike the other age groups, a handful of Millennials and older Gen-zs (aged 25 to 44) eat out every single day, suggesting that it is more of a lifestyle trend. As this tends to be the age of professional workers with incomes and more city living, these groups could have built on-the-go breakfasts, coffee breaks and light lunch breaks into their daily routines.

Consumers over the age of 65 are the least likely to eat out compared to the rest of the population. More than two in three (69%) eat in almost every day, maybe dining out just a few times a month at a maximum. Analysing this figure further, the almost two in five (39%, or 26% of over-65s) report that they don't even eat out monthly (21% selected "rarely", and 5% "never"). This finding suggests that older Australians could be feeling excluded from dining experiences, possibly because of finances, ambiance or accessibility.

Fast food is the most popular, but casual dining and cafes also gain foot traffic

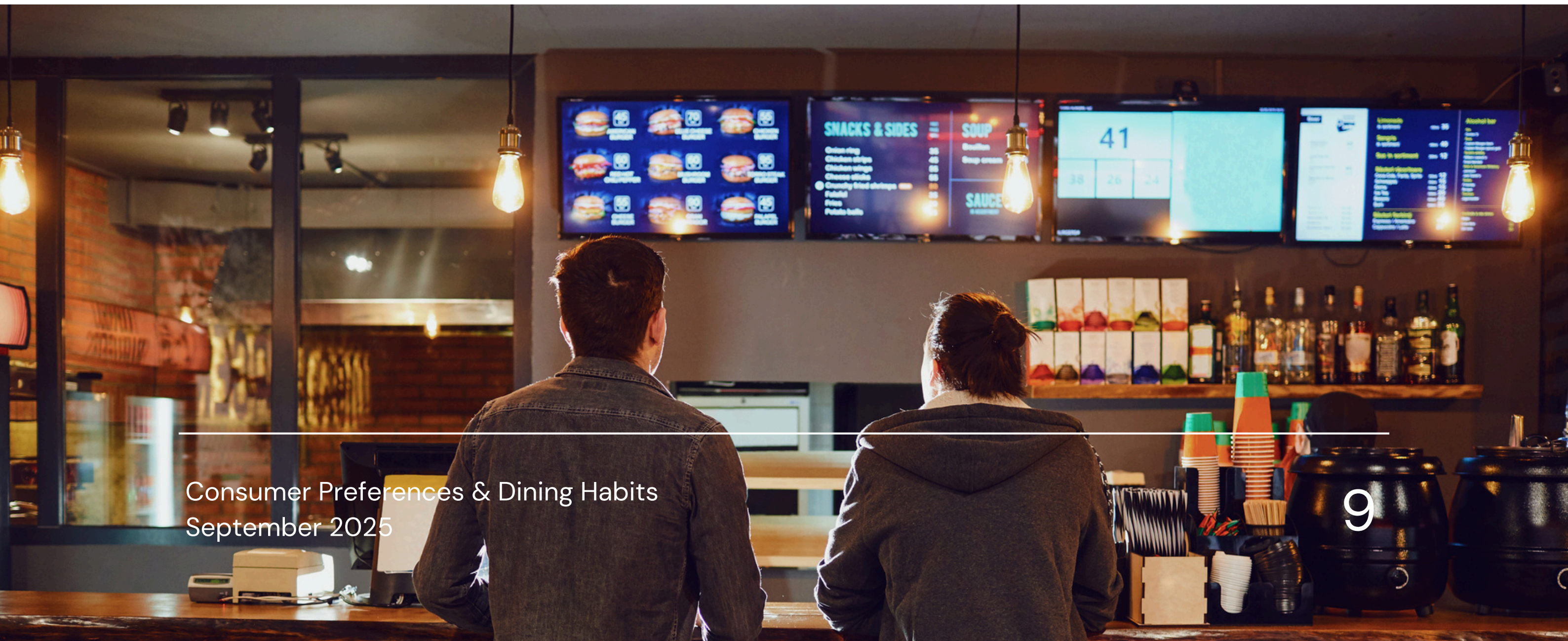
Quick service restaurants are officially Australia's favourite choice. More than three in five (62%) visit places like McDonalds or Guzman y Gomez often. For older millennials aged 35 to 44, this rises to more than three in four people (77%).

In second place comes casual eateries like Grill'd or Nando's, with **almost one in two (47%) people tucking into the familiar menus often**. Again, it is the 35 to 44 years age group dominating the trend. This group is 1.3x more likely to opt for casual chains than the population average (59% vs 47%).

Cafes or coffee shops come in third with one in three (33%) Australians frequenting them regularly. This time it's the older Gen-Zs and younger millennials aged 25 to 34 years who lead the trend, they are 1.3x more likely to go enjoy a coffee and a treat than the population average (42% vs 33%). Interestingly, this is also the top choice for over-65s, **more than two in five (40%) enjoy going to cafes and coffee shops often**.

Food courts and food halls are less popular overall (29%), but they are propped up by customers aged 55 to 64. **This age group is 1.4x more likely to visit food halls than the population average** (29% vs 40%).

Delivery apps like Uber Eats and DoorDash are heavily supported by younger consumers. **The 25 to 34 age group is 2.0x more likely to order from an application** compared to the overall population (53% vs 27%).

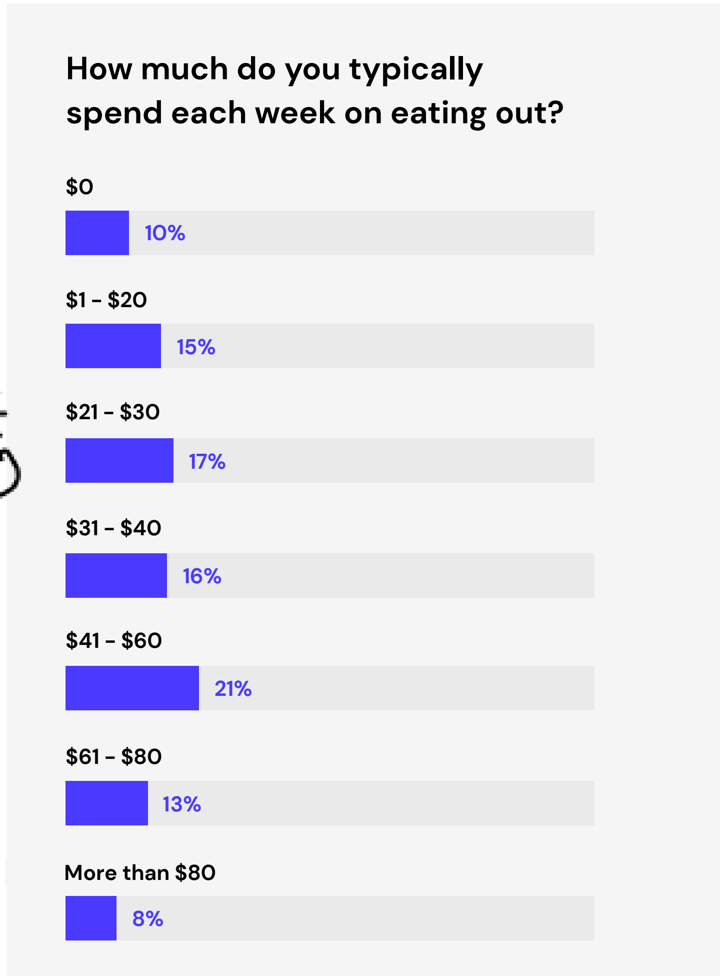


Australians are more cost-sensitive compared to last year

Slightly over two in five (41%) Australians have not changed their dining out habits since last year. However, three in ten are going less (30%) or have stopped eating out altogether (10%). **Less than one in five people (19%) are going to restaurants more frequently**, showing an overall downward trend. This could be due to the cost-of-living crisis which gives customers less disposable income. Alternatively, it could also be part of a return to home cooking trend, as the last of the COVID-19 "vengeance spending" years come to a close.

As well as visiting restaurants less often, customers are also spending quite modestly each time. Over a full week of eating out, **four in five (79%) Australians spend less than $60**. The most common weekly spend is between $41 and $60, with 21% of votes.

Significantly, **one in ten (10%) Australians report spending nothing at all on eating out** - including lower-ticket items, like tea, sandwiches or snacks – over a full week. This implies that they may be going through very tough financial moments, as small indulgences such as coffees on-the-go are usually quite affordable and enjoyable.



When deciding between eateries, more than one in three (35%) of customers are drawn to restaurants offering classic favourites or familiar dishes. This implies that in more cash-strapped moments, consumers prefer not to take risks and experiment – preferring to **opt for dishes they know they will lik**e.

Further reinforcing this finding, **comfort food is the second most popular type of dining experience**, with almost one in four votes (24%). As the cost-of-living crisis bites, diners may want to make meals out count, opting for affordable indulgence over less satisfying alternatives.

A long way third, with around **one in ten (13%) of the votes of comfort dishes, comes high-protein or functional foods**. Given that many Millennials and young Gen-Zs eat out several times a week, these practical meals could form part of their casual workday or pre-workout diets.

An uptick in health and sustainability trends

For one in five (20%) Australians, healthier options in restaurants are a key decision-making factor. More than one in two (51%) consider it sometimes depending on the meal or venue, while for three in ten (29%) it's not a priority.

The data shows a slight uptick in health trends. To take advantage, restaurants could incorporate some functional and nutrient-packed options into the menu – especially if they also cross over into the category of affordable classic or comforting foods. **Promoting health in a subtle or optional way may have more impact than overt positioning**.

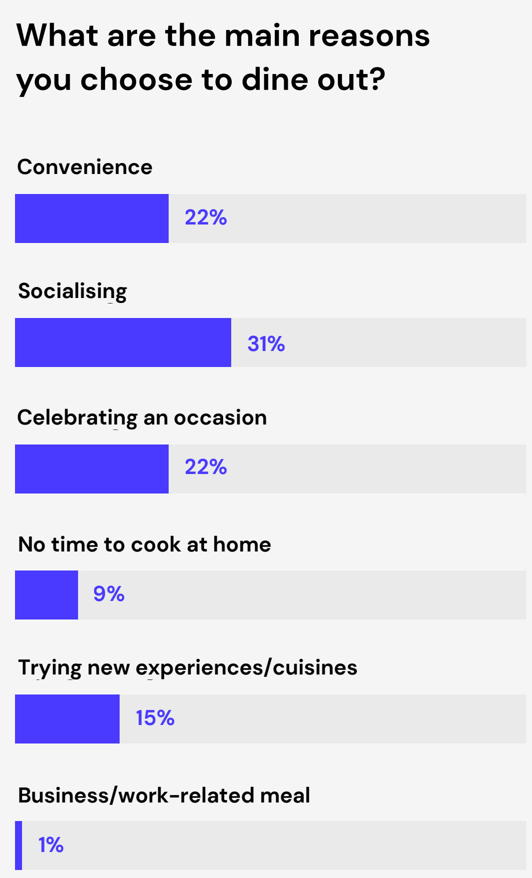
Another decision-swaying factor is coming into play. Slightly over two in five (42%) **consumers are considering sustainability** as they select meals and restaurants. For most of this group (55%, or 23% overall), it's a preference. They'd rather eat at a place which has made some overarching sustainable efforts, **for example incorporating eco-friendly packaging**. While for the rest of the group (45%, or 19% overall), the focus is much more directly on the food itself and underlying business model, the want venues that use local ingredients.

Sustainability is increasingly playing in consumer's minds as they decide which restaurant to visit. However, it is less important than health factors. And, as it is still in the early stages, there's a gap between sustainability sentiment and action. Operators should focus on subtle, or behind-the-scenes changes rather than heavily marketing sustainability as a core unique selling point.

The top reason for heading out to eat is to socialise with friends and family. More than one in two (60%) Australians selected this as a common motivation, with almost one in three (31%) picked it as their number one reason. This reinforces some of the previous findings, that **eating out is seen as a way to connect and socialise** – especially for the over-65s. Celebrating occasions came in as the joint-second most popular reason to dine out, with more than two in five (44%) votes, and over one in five (22%) selected it as their top overall motivation.

Convenience was the other second most popular reason to eat out (with 44% votes overall and 22% of people marking it as their top motivation). Our research suggests people may be heading to fast food joints like McDonalds or Guzman y Gomez to quickly fill up when on the move. As older Gen-Zs and Millennials eat out the most often, **this could be a more common lifestyle habit for them**.

With the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis crushing down on Australians, there is much **less appetite to experiment with new tastes** when eating out (just 15% selected this as a top priority). They're avoiding business lunches (1%) and finding more time to cook at home (only 9% eat out principally because they don't have a moment to cook).

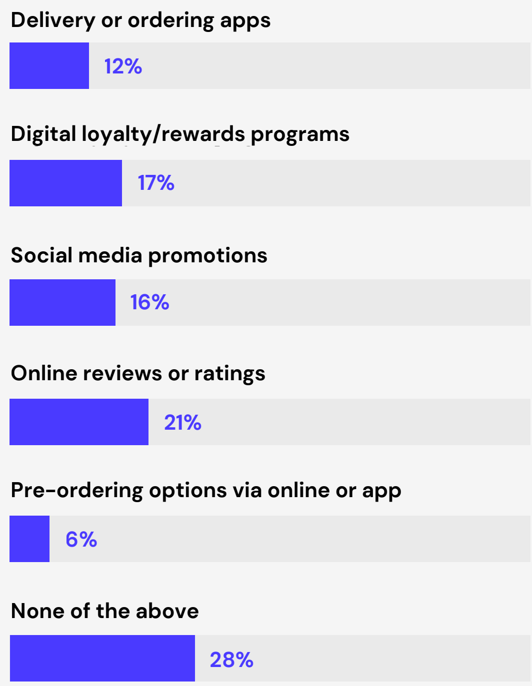


Online reviews are the most influential factors in decision making

Before heading to a new restaurant, **more than one in four (29%) will check and be swayed by the online reviews**. Considering that they are even embedded into applications like Google Maps, this can redirect foot traffic for restaurants. **Around one in five (21%) people say this is their top influence** when it comes to picking between eateries.

Digital loyalty or rewards programs have a limited influence, with slightly under one in four (23%) of the public making use of them. Around one in six (17%) consumers say this is a main driver for them. The same proportion of consumers are influenced by social media campaigns and promotions. It could be that **younger Australians are more inclined to visit places they've seen on platforms like TikTok or Instagram.**

What's influenced your decision to visit or order from a venue?



Application-based marketing, like recommendations from delivery apps or pre-ordering options may be useful sometimes, but they have a limited effect on changing consumers' minds. **Less than one in five (17%) pay attention to the delivery app promotions**, and just 13% are strongly swayed by them. Even less (8%) are influenced by pre-ordering options on apps, with just 6% citing this as the most influential factor in their decision-making.

Australians are turned off by the idea of ordering from ghost kitchens

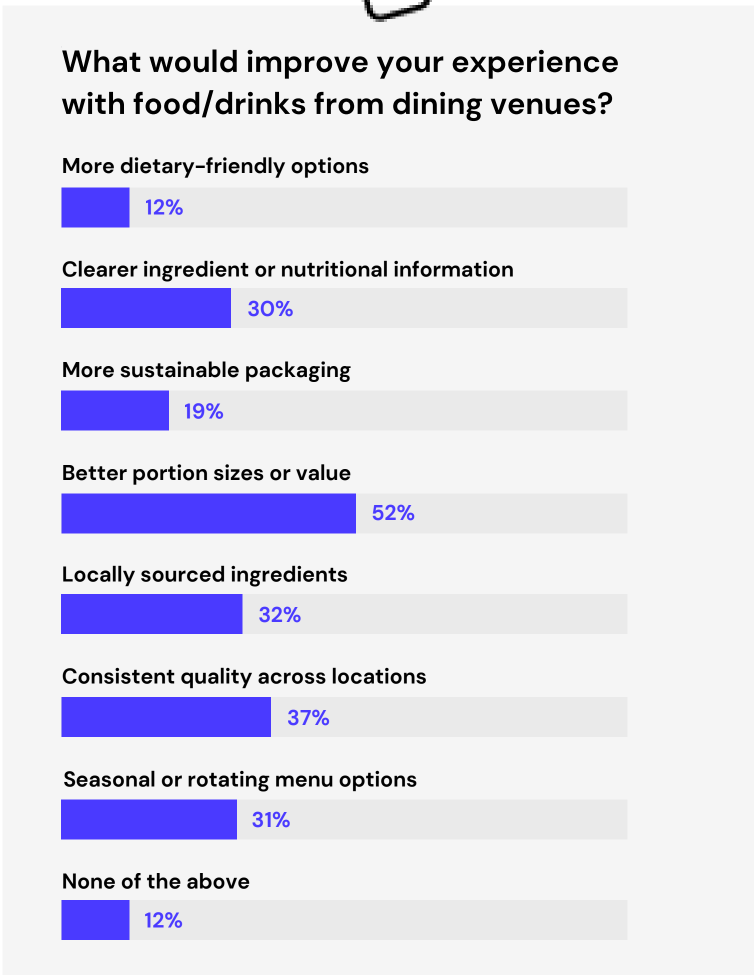
When it comes to ordering food, **more than one in two Australians would be interested in trying out takeaways from food halls** (54%) and pop-up restaurants or limited food events (51%). This could be promising food services looking to expand their market. When asked to give one single answer, food halls secured the most votes (33%), while pop-up restaurants or limited food experiences like markets came in second (31%).

Hybrid dining spaces, such as cafes inside bookstores, or shops with food counters can offer services income diversification benefits. Promisingly, **more than one in three (35%) would also be interested in ordering food** from these places. More people also selected this as their top single-answer choice than ghost kitchens (21% vs 15%).

Although chain restaurants in cities are increasingly turning to delivery-only catering to serve today's app-based food delivery needs, **the idea of ghost kitchens was not that well received**. Only one in four (25%) felt happy about ordering from them, shrinking to less than one in six (15%) when consumers could only pick one option. The difference between preferences and reality underlines that some consumers may be put off if they saw where some of their favourite deliveries were cooked.

Improve dining experiences with...

More than one in two (52%) of diners would like to see better portion sizes or more value for money when they dine out. For almost one in four (23%), this is the top option. Australians appear to be more price sensitive, which could be expected in as the cost-of-living crisis continues to stretch budgets.



Ensuring consistent quality control across locations was voted (45%) as the second most popular improvement that restaurants could make. For slightly less than one in five (19%) people, this would be the most appreciated upgrade. The data suggests that there is a rise in food chain consumption (possibly because of the value for money proposition as the earlier finding highlighted). However, it could be a double-edged sword, if brands cannot keep elevated levels of quality across all locations, **consumers could lose confidence**.

Indicative of the health and sustainability trends, around one in three (32%) people want to see menus containing more local ingredients. This was voted as the top improvement by almost one in six (14%). Chefs should balance the demand for local ingredients against the above two criteria of **offering value for money with consistent quality.**

When it comes to promotions, price discounts are the clear winner. Almost two thirds (63%) of **Australians are drawn in by "$5 off" or "2-for-1" deals**. When they were restricted to selecting just one answer, this was also the clear favourite with more than one in four (27%) votes.

Linking to the "2-for-1" mindset, **combo meals and value bundles came in second position** with almost one in two votes (45%). This could include, for example, a meal deal encompassing a drink, main meal and dessert or starter. Slightly less than one in five (19%) selected this as their favourite type of promotion.

Again, mirroring the combo meals and 2-for-1 mentality, more than a third (37%) of Australians are drawn in to promotions that give a free item with purchases. It's the firm favourite for slightly over one in six (16%).

Together, these **promotion preferences paint a picture of a bargain-seeking market**. Most people want to make their dollars stretch as far as possible. Brands should strive to help consumers save money with discounts, or failing this, offer extra something for free to keep them engaged.

Key Takeaways

Here we've listed some of the key strategic takeaways for brands:

1. **Value for money is the order of the day**
   Today's Australians are most drawn to good deals in restaurants. They're looking for price discounts, generous portion sizes and meal bundles. Brands that emphasize value. For example, with family combos, price cuts or 2-for-1 deals can serve these needs.

2. **Older Gen-Zs and Millennials have the strongest appetite for dining-out**
   As the only demographics that have somewhat normalised eating out every single day, the 25 to 44 age group is probably the most lucrative market for restaurants to target. This is particularly true for fast service, casual dining chains and cafes. Restaurants can appeal to these groups by focusing in on value-for-money convenience, as well as ensuring that the quality of food remains equally high across all locations.

3. **Mix health and sustainability into food service as strong secondary factors**
   While price and value dominate consumer decision-making, wellness trends are also becoming increasingly influential. Brands that incorporate local ingredients, protein-packed options and eco-packaging stand to benefit.

4. **Excellent online reviews is an essential ingredient**
   Growing numbers of consumers are checking the online reviews before they try restaurants or order takeaways. Restaurants should ensure that they keep positive ratings to secure foot traffic.

5. **Create packages and discounts for social occasions**
   Most people enjoy dining out to catch up with friends and celebrate important moments. As the cost-of-living crisis crunches down, brands can cater to the evolving needs of consumers with by offering discounts and packages on family meals or occasions.

Conclusion

This report highlights how rapidly consumer behaviour is shifting across the FMCG and retail landscape, and the implications for brands aiming to stay ahead. Eating and shopping habits are increasingly shaped by convenience, health awareness, and value pressures, with age and lifestyle playing a major role in frequency and channel choices. Younger consumers continue to drive higher levels of out-of-home spending, embedding dining out and on-the-go purchases into their routines, while older demographics remain more cautious, favouring at-home consumption.

Price sensitivity is another consistent thread, influencing both trial and loyalty. However, consumers are not simply trading down – they are making more selective decisions, seeking products that deliver visible quality, health benefits, or alignment with personal values. Sustainability and wellness remain powerful motivators, but only when balanced with affordability and accessibility.

For FMCG suppliers and retailers, the challenge is to interpret these nuances and respond with agility. Data-led insight is key to understanding how preferences are fragmenting, where unmet needs exist, and which innovations will resonate across different consumer groups. By applying these findings, businesses can make more confident decisions, reduce wasted investment, and build stronger connections with their customers.