

The Gen Z Diner - US - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and Gen Z dining habits.
- Restaurant occasions driving Gen Z teen and adults visitation.
- Reasons Gen Z teens and adults select one restaurant over another.
- The importance of social media in restaurant discovery and visitation.

Gen Z teens and adults are similar in many ways; however, their different lifestyles cause them to think about restaurants differently. While fast food restaurants are appealing to both teens and adults, Gen Z adults also tend to gravitate toward fast casual and casual dining restaurants as they seek out an elevated experience. Interestingly, as they dine, teens are more cautious about sharing food due to the pandemic, opening up opportunity for restaurants to get creative in how they package and distribute their menu items.

The ups and downs of COVID-19 will continue to impact restaurants and Gen Z alike. With an uncertain future and economy ahead, Gen Z will still prioritize saving over spending, looking for value deals and ways to make their dollars go further. Uncertain about re-closures, restaurants should look to remind Gen Z of the benefits of at-home dining, giving them a reason to dine out even when they can't dine in.

With that, COVID-19 does threaten the restaurant industry with uncertainty. Depending on the spread of variants, some states may look to shut down indoor dining or limit capacity to slow the spread. Additionally, some supply chains are still leveling off from pandemic shutdowns, and natural disasters threaten supply as well (eg chicken wings). Lower supply and higher demand also means that COVID-related inflation will negatively impact Gen Z's already limited budget. This means that restaurants will need to be prepared to offer Gen Z alternative options to dining that still satisfy their cravings and budget restrictions.



“Gen Z is a generation with great influence, both financially and culturally, despite being a smaller group compared to Millennials and Baby Boomers. Teens already have great influence over where they eat with their family and friends, which shows that restaurants need to connect with Gen Z early on.”

– **Katie Hansen, Retail & eCommerce Analyst**

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One of the biggest opportunities, though, is to leverage digital opportunities, particularly through social media. Social commerce is on the rise and some restaurant brands are looking to leverage this option to allow consumers to order directly through their social pages. This not only reaches Gen Z consumers where they spend much of their time but also streamlines the purchase process, provides access to exclusive deals and meals and creates a new, fun dining experience.



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