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Ingredient decisions in the kitchen may increasingly influence consumer perception.

Survey Finds Cooking Oil Influences Where Americans Choose to Eat

New national data shows the type of cooking oil matters—and it's reshaping where Americans dine, with a generational divide driving the shift

Vernon, CA (March 24, 2026) — [Coast Packing Company](#), the leading supplier of animal fat shortenings in the Western U.S., has released new findings from a national consumer survey showing that the type of cooking oil a restaurant uses is no longer just a back-of-house decision. A survey of 1,005 U.S. consumers finds that 43% of Americans say a restaurant's cooking oil influences where they choose to eat. What's more, the data reveals a sharp generational split: younger diners are nearly twice as likely as older Americans to let cooking fat shape their dining choices.

When asked which cooking oil they want restaurants to use, nearly 1 in 4 diners (24.7%) prefer traditional animal fats — such as butter or Beef Tallow — compared with just 15.6% who prefer seed or vegetable oils. That represents a roughly 60% higher preference for animal fats. The findings suggest that what's in the fryer is becoming a deciding factor at the door.

The Generational Divide

The gap between younger and older diners is striking. More than half of diners ages 18–34 (52%) say knowing whether a restaurant uses Beef Tallow or seed oils affects where they choose to eat. Among those 55 and older, that number drops to just 33% — a 19-point difference that the restaurant industry may not yet fully appreciate.

The divide sharpens further when diners face a direct choice. When presented with two otherwise identical restaurants — one cooking with Beef Tallow, the other with seed oils — nearly 1 in 3 adults ages 18–34 (31%) pick the Beef Tallow option. Among those 55 and older, just 19% make the same

choice. Gen Z diners choose Beef Tallow at 29%, Millennials at 28%, compared with only 19% of Boomers.

Among the youngest diners, butter preference alone rises to 25%, and Beef Tallow preference reaches 11.4% — compared with 5.8% among those 55 and older, who are less than half as likely to choose it.

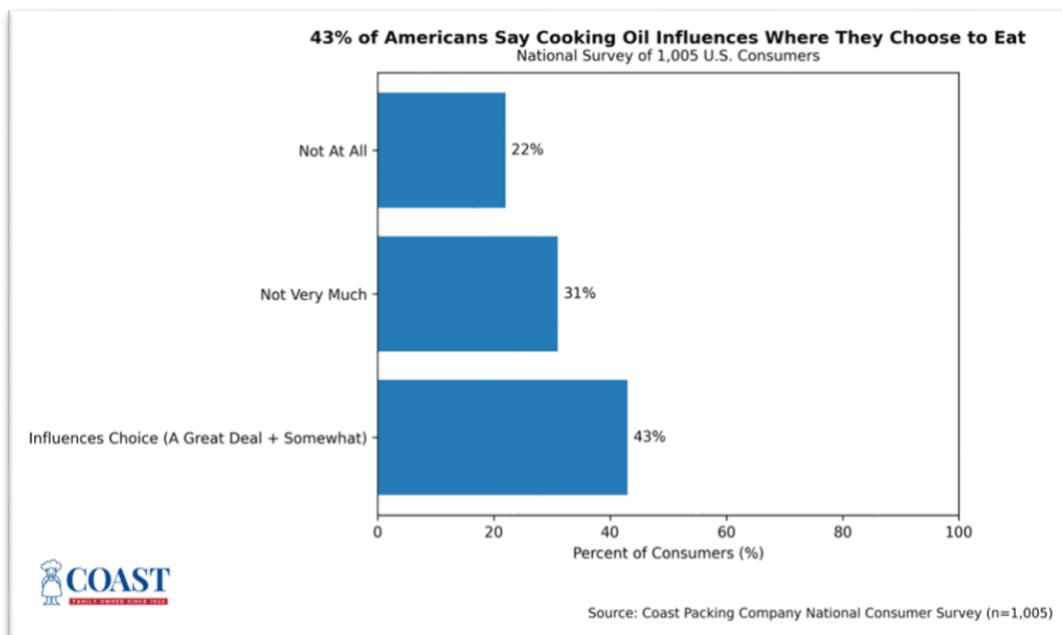
“What we’re seeing from younger customers is that they care about how their food is made,” said Greg Hozinsky, corporate chef at Coast Packing Company. “Specifically, they’re asking about which cooking oils are used. Current data shows that there’s a strong preference for animal fats and it’s driving where they decide to eat. That’s a signal restaurants can’t afford to ignore, especially those that want to lock in repeat, loyal customers.”

From Taste to Dining Decisions

Coast has tracked consumer attitudes toward animal fats for more than a decade. Earlier research found growing openness to Lard and Beef Tallow, particularly among younger diners who associate them with better flavor and old-school cooking. This latest survey moves beyond attitudes to actual dining behavior, asking not just what consumers think about cooking fats, but whether those opinions translate into where they spend their money. The results suggest they do.

A Broader Shift in Food Trends

The findings align with broader industry signals. Whole Foods Market’s [2026 food trend forecast](#) named Beef Tallow as an emerging ingredient gaining visibility on menus. Market analysts project continued growth in the global tallow sector through 2030. And while the survey does not suggest a sweeping change in restaurant kitchens overnight, it does indicate that cooking fat — long treated as a back-of-house operational choice — is becoming a front-of-house consideration for a growing share of diners.



43% of U.S. consumers say a restaurant’s cooking oil influences their dining decision.

For more information about Coast Packing Company or to download the “Back to Flavor, Back to Tallow” white paper, please visit: www.coastpacking.com/backtotallow

About the Survey

The Coast Packing Company study was fielded Feb. 18–19, 2026, among 1,005 U.S. consumers and measured dining preferences and the influence of cooking oil on restaurant selection. For a copy of the survey results, please email info@researchoncommand.com.

About Coast Packing Company

Now marking its 104th year in business, Coast Packing Company (www.coastpacking.com) is the No. 1 supplier of animal fat shortenings in the Western United States. The company sells to major manufacturers, restaurant chains, food distributors, retailers and bakeries. Coast’s TasteMap™ (www.coastpacking.com/community/tastemaps) serves as an online guide to restaurants offering dishes prepared with Lard and Beef Tallow, featuring establishments nationwide. Coast is a founding member of the Healthy Fats Coalition (www.healthyfatscoalition.org).

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