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You Are What You Consume: The James Beard Foundation Releases First Consumer Research Project That Explores Food Beliefs and Behaviors

NEW YORK, NY (October 19, 2017) – The James Beard Foundation (JBF) released findings from its first-ever research study undertaken to understand U.S. adult consumers’ motivations and thought processes behind their food choices, beliefs, and behaviors. The research project, coordinated by Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P), and conducted in collaboration with Radius Global Market Research and the Good Housekeeping Institute, focuses on what people have been eating, doing, and thinking about food over the last three years. These issues will be further explored at the JBF 2017 Food Summit: Consuming Power, taking place this October 23 and 24 in New York City.

“Since we launched the inaugural JBF Food Summit almost a decade ago, the way consumers relate to food has changed dramatically,” said Mitchell Davis, executive vice president, James Beard Foundation. “As we developed the theme for this year’s summit, it became important to be able to speak to all the complex aspects of consumer choices—from dietary changes, to commercial forces impacting decision making, to what ideas influence American eating habits.”

Key findings from the JBF Consumer Research Project: Consumer Food Beliefs and Behaviors include:

- **Food, Politics, and Healthy Eating: Your Party Doesn’t Matter:** Seventy percent of adults have changed the way they eat healthier in the past three years. Whether they were Republicans or Democrats didn’t make a difference in how they think about food, taste, and wellness.

- **Set in Their ways!?** Adults who have done the least to improve what they eat and not changed their eating habits are people 45 and older (48%—almost half!).

- **The Younger You Are, the More Health-Conscious You Are About Eating:** Eighty-one percent of people under 45 have changed their eating habits over the last three years.

- **The One-Third Problem:** Thirty-three percent of Americans have not changed their food choices in the past three years. And nearly one in three (29%) say they don’t care where their food was grown or raised. If they could change ONE thing, one-third of adults wish the food they ate were more affordable (34%). One-third of people believe that organic food is not healthier to eat (33%).

- **After Flavor/Taste, Health Matters Most:** True foodies: two-thirds of people care most about taste (66%), and health and wellness, came in a close second (62%).

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• **Mom's Influence Is Waning:** Half of adults say the number-one influence on what they eat is food companies 50% (retailers 48%; advertising 46%). The refrain “just like Mom used to make,” or tradition, comes in third place at 41%.

• **And Now for the Good News!** Seventy percent of Americans who have made changes are now eating healthier foods. A sizable majority do want to know where their food comes from (77%), what its environmental impact is (76%), understand the ingredients in their foods (90%), see truthful nutritional information (90%), and have GMO ingredients labeled as such (80%).

“Designing and executing our own research in partnership with JBF and Radius Global Market Research was an important step in the evolution of this annual conference. The results provided a unique context for speakers to respond to, and allowed the planning team to be more engaged in this process. The findings provided an additional level of understanding of the complexity of people’s relationship to food that we will be exploring live on October 23 and 24,” said Karen Karp, president, KK&P, who has been the co-producer and co-designer of the JBF Food Summit for the past nine years.

"Conducting customized research is an important way that the Good Housekeeping Institute tracks consumer trends and behavior patterns," says Laurie Jennings, Director of the Good Housekeeping Institute. "This particular survey revealed that diets are changing, people are more health-minded and experimental with their food habits and purchases, yet they still crave convenience. These results generate rich insights that help us create meaningful content for our readers and partners.”

**Methodology**

KK&P developed a 10-question survey in close collaboration with Radius Global Market Research and the James Beard Foundation. The survey was conducted online by Radius Global Market Research with 1,105 randomly selected U.S. adults ages 18 + from June 30 through July 5, 2017. The sample is representative of the U.S. census based on age, gender, region, and income. The same survey was then distributed by Good Housekeeping to their subscribers in late July 2017, receiving almost 2,500 responses. The results from both surveys were largely similar in their tenor and in the preferences and beliefs expressed by respondents.

Further research was conducted at a roundtable of food industry executives held in August 2017 at the James Beard House in New York City. The executives and several experts in food consumption data were engaged in a conversation on issues related to those highlighted in the survey and informed by the responses received.

To read the full findings of the **JBF Consumer Research Project: Consumer Food Beliefs and Behaviors**, please find an Executive Summary here: [https://jbf-media.s3.amazonaws.com/production/page/2017/10/22/101617_FS_CONSUMER_SURVEY.pdf](https://jbf-media.s3.amazonaws.com/production/page/2017/10/22/101617_FS_CONSUMER_SURVEY.pdf)

**About the James Beard Foundation**

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, the late James Beard was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts, instilling in them the value of wholesome, healthful, and delicious food. Today JBF continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for culinary students, publications, chef advocacy training, and thought-leader convening. The Foundation also maintains the historic James Beard House in New York City’s Greenwich Village as a “performance space” for visiting chefs. For more information, please visit [jamesbeard.org](http://jamesbeard.org). Get
food news, recipes, and more at the James Beard Foundation’s blog, or subscribe to the free digital newsletter Beard Bites. Follow @beardfoundation on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat. Watch the James Beard House Kitchen Cam, James Beard Awards, and more on the Foundation’s Livestream channel. Find more JBF-related video on the Foundation’s YouTube channels.

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