

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

U.S. Consumers Want to Eat More Seafood Instead of Meat

A third of Americans want to eat less meat, and their top choice is to eat seafood instead of any other proteins, including plant-based meat replacements.

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New research by Changing Tastes now finds that Americans' top choice for replacing meat is fish and seafood. One quarter of U.S. consumers now want to eat less red meat, principally beef, and their top choice for replacing meat is now fish and seafood, even more so than plant-based meat replacements. This reflects a shift from prior studies Changing Tastes conducted over the past decade and *the first time that fish and seafood are Americans top choice for replacing meat.*

Over the past several years, about a quarter of Americans have consistently wanted to eat less meat. However, now and for the first time, fish and seafood is their preferred replacement, with nearly half wanting to replace red meat with fish or seafood. This preference for fish and seafood is higher than any other option, including smaller portions of meat, going meatless on certain days or meals, or choosing to eat plant-based alternatives.

30% of American consumers in general – regardless of whether they intend to reduce or avoid meat – want to eat more fish and seafood over the next two years. That's about the same share of consumers who eat fish and seafood so they can have a wider variety of protein choices.

"American consumers are reconsidering and resorting how proteins fit into their diet. This is a once in a generation — or perhaps even once in two generations — event. It provides an opportunity to substantially grow the market for fish and seafood," according to Arlin Wasserman, founder and managing director of Changing Tastes.

"This window of opportunity will not remain open forever. But it will for at least the next couple of years and may even grow larger given the share that intend to eat less meat and more fish and seafood in the near future," noted Wasserman.

Since 2000, Americans have reduced their beef consumption by more than 10 pounds and replaced it with an even larger amount of poultry, with consumption increasing by about 16 pounds. "That switch is about the same as total fish and seafood consumption. Garnering even a part of this protein shift would represent tremendous growth," notes Wasserman.

There are generational and regional differences among consumers. Millennial males, men born between 1981 and 1996, are most likely to be the ones considering increasing their consumption of fish and seafood.

About twenty percent of Millennials as well as East Coast consumers are more likely than other groups to think seafood is safer than other proteins as well as better for the environment. Younger consumers are also more concerned about ocean health issues. These include ocean plastic waste and chemical pollution, which impact their seafood choices. They also are more accepting of other ways to produce fish and seafood, including cellular aquaculture and aquaculture overall.

Wasserman also notes that, “The conventional wisdom that Americans prefer wild fish and consider fish to be their healthiest protein choice is eroding, although it is still true among older Americans. Younger Americans are more aware of ocean health concerns like plastic pollution, which play a role in attitudes about eating fish and seafood. Younger Americans are also more interested in fish and seafood that is produced using a variety of methods including wild capture, farmed, and cellular aquaculture.”

Baby Boomers, born before 1964, have a stronger preference for wild fish than younger generations. Three quarters of Baby Boomers also like the taste of fish – which is higher than any other preference among generations. In fact, only about half of Millennials and Gen Zers like the taste of fish and seafood compared to older consumers, compared to 77% of Baby Boomers and those in the Silent Generation, born before 1939. This generation is also attracted to the high levels of Omega 3s found in seafood and the heart health benefits.

Older Americans and those living on the coasts are more likely to have tried clams and oysters while Millennials and those on the west coast are more likely to have tried kelp, nori, wakame, and other sea vegetables. Boomers and those in the Silent Generation are most likely to have listed salmon or cod as their favorite type of fish, while the youngest consumers are more likely to consider crab, squid, and octopus as favorites.

“American consumers are poised to significantly increase their consumption of fish and seafood for a variety of reasons including diversity of protein choices, healthier choices, and finding alternatives to red meat,” says Wasserman. “To fully take advantage of this opportunity, the industry has to find ways to produce and offer fish and seafood that address the current consumer concerns about the impact of ocean health on fish and seafood.”

Changing Tastes is a values-driven consultancy firm that provides business strategy and culinary consulting to Fortune 500 companies, growth stage restaurant and hospitality firms, investors, and the philanthropic sector. Through its work, the firm has created more than \$2.5B in value for its clients while catalyzing some of the most significant changes in the U.S. food industry including reaccelerating growth in the natural and organic food industry by developing a new marketing strategy focused on personal health benefits, helping the leading U.S. restaurant companies address antibiotic use in livestock production, and pioneering the now popular plant-forward dining strategy.