vinetur

Thanksgiving restaurant reservations run 12% ahead of last year

Bookings for parties of six or more rose 21%, suggesting more families see eating out as a cheaper holiday option

Wednesday, November 25, 2026



Restaurants are heading into Thanksgiving with stronger advance demand, according to OpenTable data reported on Tuesday, November 24 by Nation's Restaurant News. U.S. online reservations for Thanksgiving were running 12% ahead of the comparable

pace for 2025, while reservations for parties of six or more were up 21%, pointing to a larger holiday share for restaurants, especially those set up to serve families and other group gatherings.

For the hospitality industry, the trend matters because Thanksgiving has long been dominated by meals prepared at home. A rise in advance bookings suggests more operators could see fuller dining rooms on Thursday, November 26, and more business tied to larger parties. OpenTable said the comparison was limited to U.S. online reservations made through its platform. It measured bookings made at least eight days before Thanksgiving 2026 against reservations made at the same lead time before November 27, 2025.

The platform's data also showed that large parties are playing a bigger role in holiday demand. Reservations for six or more people accounted for nearly one-third of Thanksgiving diners already on the books, according to the report. That points to more families choosing to eat out together rather than organize the meal at home.

A separate set of figures cited in the same report suggests cost is a major factor behind that shift. Popmenu, a restaurant technology company that says it works with more than 12,000 restaurants, surveyed 1,000 U.S. consumers in November. In that survey, 52% said they planned to order in or dine out for Thanksgiving, and 86% said the cost of celebrating at home felt out of control. Popmenu said households hosting Thanksgiving expected to spend about $200 on average.

The survey also found that 32% of consumers who planned to use restaurants for Thanksgiving dinner were doing so because they believed it would cost less than cooking at home or about the same. That finding helps explain why restaurant meals are drawing interest even though many traditional dine-in holiday offerings are not inexpensive. Nation's Restaurant News said a number of fine-dining and polished-casual restaurants were promoting fixed-price Thanksgiving meals, with most starting at $59 per person.

That price point may still leave room for family-dining chains and takeout operators to compete more aggressively for holiday traffic. The report pointed to group meal bundles as one of the clearest examples. Cracker Barrel was offering a heat-and-serve

Turkey Family Dinner for four to six diners for about $119.99 and a Turkey Feast for eight to 10 diners for $189.99. Bob Evans was selling cold Farmhouse Feasts for groups of four to 10 starting at $94.99, along with a hot Holiday Celebration Family Meal for up to six people at $114.99.

Other brands named in the report as offering Thanksgiving meals aimed at groups included Golden Corral, Denny's, Maggiano's and Cotton Patch Café. Those company examples are separate from the market data, but they show how chains are trying to capture demand from consumers who want holiday food without the labor, planning and cleanup of cooking at home.

Popmenu's chief executive, Brendan Sweeney, said in a statement cited by Nation's Restaurant News that some restaurants using the company's tools had already generated Thanksgiving preorders of $20,000, $50,000 or even $150,000. He also said some consumers were cutting costs in other ways, including by shrinking guest lists or leaving some customary dishes off the table.

Taken together, the OpenTable reservation figures and the Popmenu survey suggest a holiday meal market that is shifting, at least in part, toward restaurants. The increase is not a measure of the entire industry, since OpenTable's data only covers restaurants on its platform, but it still points to higher advance demand for operators that are open on Thanksgiving and prepared to serve larger parties or fulfill takeout orders.