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Americans shift to eating at home as restaurant prices rise and economic concerns grow

Supermarkets and meal delivery services see increased demand as consumers seek affordable and convenient meal options

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Across the United States, more people are choosing to eat at home instead of dining out. This trend is being driven by concerns about rising costs, economic uncertainty, and a desire for better value. Data from industry analysts and company executives

show that supermarkets and food delivery companies are seeing increased business as a result.

Many Americans say that eating out has become too expensive. Inflation and higher menu prices have made restaurant meals less appealing for families and individuals watching their budgets. Some consumers also report that the quality of restaurant food does not always match the price. As a result, they are turning to grocery stores and meal delivery services for more affordable options.

Supermarket chains have responded by offering more low-cost meal solutions. Ahold Delhaize, which owns Food Lion and Giant stores in the U.S., recently expanded its range of budget-friendly meal kits and ready-to-eat options. The company’s CEO, Frans Muller, said in a recent interview that customers can now find meals for as little as $2.50 per person in their stores. These offers are designed to help families save money while still enjoying convenient meals at home.

The shift toward eating at home is reminiscent of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns forced people to cook for themselves. During that period, home delivery companies like Just Eat.com saw record sales as people avoided restaurants. Although demand for delivery services dropped after restrictions were lifted, the current economic climate is once again making home-cooked meals more attractive.

Recent figures from market research firms show that food retail sales in supermarkets and similar stores have grown faster than sales at restaurants and bars. In the Eurozone, inflation-adjusted sales at supermarkets rose by 1.5% between January and May this year, compared to just 0.1% growth during the same period last year. Meanwhile, sales at restaurants and bars fell by 0.3%. In the U.S., foot traffic data from Placer.ai shows that visits to grocery stores increased by 1.3% year-over-year in June, while visits to restaurants declined by 0.4%.

Analysts say that supermarket sales are recovering more quickly than restaurant sales, especially for weekday meals. Maria Castroviejo, a consumer foods sector analyst at Rabobank, points to the growing popularity of grab-and-go items like salads, wraps, and sandwiches in grocery stores. These convenient options are drawing customers away

from traditional foodservice outlets.

Meal-kit companies are also benefiting from the trend. A recent survey commissioned by Hellofresh found that 93% of more than 5,000 U.S. adults expect to cook as much or more at home in the coming year compared to last year. More than three-quarters of those who plan to cook more say that economic factors are influencing their decision.

Some consumers cite health reasons as well as cost savings for their shift toward eating at home. Jenny Russmann, who works for an international organization in Vienna but shops regularly in U.S.-style supermarkets, said she started cooking at home over a month ago to eat healthier and save money.

Others point out that restaurant portions have shrunk even as prices have risen, making dining out feel less worthwhile. Chiara Schiavoni, who works for a regional administration in Milan but faces similar issues seen in American cities, said her work-issued food vouchers no longer cover the cost of a simple sandwich at nearby restaurants but stretch further at supermarkets.

As Americans continue to weigh their options amid ongoing economic pressures, it appears that eating at home will remain a popular choice for many households. Supermarkets and meal delivery companies are adapting quickly to meet this demand with new products and promotions aimed at budget-conscious consumers looking for convenience without sacrificing quality or value.