

PEOPLE ARE THINKING **Evi Mustel**

## What's eating you?



The saying is, “You are what you eat” (think about that as you dive into your turkey and pumpkin pie this Thanksgiving), but when looking at food trends, it seems that we eat what we are. Eating habits are greatly influenced by our age, lifestyle, health, income, ethnicity and attitudes.

The most important driver of trends is demographics. As a population, we are becoming older and more ethnically diverse. Household sizes are shrinking and more women are working, yet still doing the majority of meal planning. Some of the food trends emerging from these shifts are:

**Convenience** is more important than ever. We have more money and less time to devote to meal-related chores. When convenience foods were first introduced, we were willing to accept lower quality and substandard taste. But today, our demands are more sophisticated with freshly cooked deli sections in grocery stores being as popular as the trendy restaurant down the street.

“**Dashboard dining**” as well as eating at your desk has given rise to single serving, portable foods allowing you to eat wherever you are. Mini meals and snacks are also gaining popularity as we change our eating habits from three meals a day to eating several smaller meals throughout the day. As a result, convenient, nutritious snacks like energy bars and sports drinks are in demand.

The **safety of our food** has become a cause for concern, placing greater trust in locally grown and produced products than imports. A CanWest News poll showed that 60 per cent of Canadians have very little or no confidence in the safety of food imported from Asia and Africa. The “100-Mile” diet is gaining momentum, with concern about the environmental impact of transporting products (“food miles”) being an added reason for supporting local producers. Over half (55 per cent) of British Columbians in a Mustel Group poll reported to be increasing their consumption of local products, with campaigns such as “Get Local” and “Eat B.C.” and groups like Farm Folk/City Folk growing in recognition.

**Organic products**, once only found in specialty food stores, now are mainstream and available in all supermarkets, with B.C. being the Mecca for organic farms.

**Reduced carb diets** are continuing to be popular. A Mustel Group poll showed that 32 per

### CHANGING FOOD HABITS

	Increasing consumption	Decreasing consumption
<b>Local products</b>	55%	2%
<b>Organic products</b>	43%	1%
<b>Bottled water</b>	28%	18%
<b>Transfats</b>	4%	61%
<b>Overall fats</b>	5%	56%
<b>Red meat</b>	5%	45%
<b>Carbohydrates</b>	8%	32%

Source: Mustel Group (500 BC adults)

cent have reduced their intake of carbs over the past five years (only 8 per cent have increased). Other health trends include concern about fats, specifically transfats with 61 per cent reporting to be reducing the latter. And interest in any weight-loss products continues to grow, along with our mounting obesity rates.

Other foods that are “out” include red meat (45 per cent eating less), ice cream, eggs, and sugar. Foods that are “in”: chicken, tofu, tea, yoghurt, ethnic foods and wine.

We think of trends as something that takes place only in the world of fashion and consumer goods. Nevertheless, eating habits are undergoing significant changes as well these days. Our appetites, like our population, are changing. **vLM**

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