

Demo Memo: Why do you think they call it a Great Recession? It's making us healthier!

Written by Administrator

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How do you handle those hungry hipsters? A Food Truck dispenses rations for starving Porchfest attendees in Tiny Town, Sept. 2013.

The Great Recession may have dinged our wallets, but it improved our diets. According to one study, Working-age Americans (those born from 1946 through 1985) cut their calories and ate fewer fast-food meals in 2009-10 than in 2007-08, according to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Total daily calorie consumption fell during those years, as did daily calories from fast food. Consumption of saturated fat and cholesterol was also down. The number of fast food meals declined, and the number of family meals prepared at home increased. These changes in eating habits were not solely due to the decline in household income during the Great Recession, says the USDA, but also due to the increased time available for shopping and preparing food at home.

Are these changes permanent, or will we revert to our bad habits as the economy improves? The USDA analysis suggests that some of the change may be permanent because a growing share of consumers are paying attention to nutrition. Between 2007-08 and 2009-10, the percentage of working-age adults who say they use the Nutrition Fact Panel always/most of the time when buying food climbed from 34 to 42 percent.

"Diet quality may not decline if consumers continue to pay closer attention to the nutritional quality of the food they consume," concludes the USDA. Even if we eat out more often—as

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seems likely— there's hope. According to the report, "the 2010 Affordable Care Act mandates that restaurant chains with more than 20 locations list the caloric content of each standard menu item, which would make it easier for consumers to identify lower calorie and otherwise healthier choices when eating away from home."

Source: USDA Economic Research Service "Changes in Eating Patterns and Diet Quality among Working-Age Adults, 2005-2010"

From *Demo Memo* by Cheryl Russell <http://demomemo.blogspot.com/>

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