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Demand for fresh fruit grows in US restaurants



Operators now value year-round availability of good quality fruits more highly than locally-sourced produce

A study commissioned by the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) shows the penetration of fresh fruit on US restaurant menus is increasing as consumers opt for healthier options when eating out.

The research, which pulled data from 4,800 national and regional chains and independent restaurants, showed three-quarters of restaurants featured at least one fruit item, with almost 8 per cent of all dishes on the menu featuring at least one fruit ingredient. It revealed that between 2009 and 2013 fruit grew in menu penetration across nearly all segments. Whole fresh fruit has become the most commonly purchased format, while the word "fresh" had become the key descriptor,

appearing on more menus than the words "seasonal", "organic" or "local".

The study showed a majority of operators valued having fresh fruit year round more than offering locally in-season fruit. Avocados, lemons, oranges and apples were each found on more than a quarter of US menus, with citrus fruits considered an essential ingredient for fine dining and in-house cocktails.

"The research shows that fruit is an essential element on US restaurant menus, with an emphasis on freshness," said Maeve Webster, senior director at Datassential, the company that carried out the research.

CFFA said the findings were good news for Chilean fruit companies, as chefs

were increasingly relying on good quality supplies year-round.

"Chefs know how much appeal fresh fruit brings to the table, and so do their patrons," said Karen Brux, CFFA's managing director for North America. "Chile fills in the gaps to ensure supplies of fresh fruit when domestic fruits are out of season. We work closely with our growers and exporters to ensure that fresh fruit from Chile is high in quality and as convenient, consistent and reliable as possible."