



# The State of the Plate

## Helping Consumers Meet the Dietary Guidelines by Balancing their Plates



### The "State of the Plate"

It seems like such a simple concept: balance, variety and moderation. In short, balance what you eat by consuming a variety of foods in the right proportions. Great suggestion, although one in which only a few seem to be able to achieve. According to the [NPD Group's National Eating Trends®](#) database which tracks the eating and drinking habits of U.S. consumers, the average consumer meets at least 70 percent of USDA Dietary Guidelines for the recommended intake for dairy, fruit, grains, proteins, and vegetables on only seven days out of the year (2%).

To gauge consumers' current knowledge of MyPlate and the dietary guidelines recommendations, as well as to understand their current meal consumption patterns, Nestlé USA partnered with Harris Interactive to conduct a comprehensive survey among more than 1,500 primary grocery shoppers, age 21 and older. The survey was conducted between February 21 and 25, 2013.

### Consumers Meet USDA Dietary Guidelines only 7 Days Out of the Year

### Consumer Awareness of MyPlate

- When asked if they were aware of MyPlate or ChooseMyPlate.gov, the healthy eating guidelines published in 2011 by the United States Department of Agriculture:
  - 41% of consumers reported they were aware of the guidelines.
  - More than half of consumers (59%) said they were unaware of, or not sure if, they had seen MyPlate.
- After being shown the MyPlate icon:
  - 75% said they were only somewhat or not at all familiar with the MyPlate graphic.
  - 92% reported they had not visited ChooseMyPlate.gov.

- Although disappointing, the good news is over two-thirds of consumers said they would be interested in learning about simple ways of following dietary guidelines by incorporating healthier prepared and whole foods into their diet.

### 75% of Consumers are Not at All or Only Somewhat Familiar with the MyPlate Graphic



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## Trends in Meal Consumption

- While nearly all consumers reported eating dinner during a week, somewhat fewer say that they eat breakfast at least once during this period.
- 82% of meals are prepared at home, while 18% are prepared by someone outside of the home (such as takeout or at a restaurant).
- Over 1 in 5, or 22%, of meals made at home include frozen foods – especially at dinner.
  - Nearly two-thirds (62%) of those making grocery decisions or doing the meal planning have at least one frozen meal a week.
- When eating frozen meals, only one-third of those eating occasions are supplemented with other foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains or dairy.
  - 77% of frozen meal users believe that frozen meals are a balanced meal that provides several food groups.
  - While many frozen prepared meals feature components from several food groups, the amounts vary and may not provide full servings.

**Implication: There is an Opportunity for Health Professionals to Reinforce the MyPlate Recommendations through Teaching Consumers How to Balance Their Plate with Prepared Foods**

## Barriers to Healthy Eating

- Over half (57%) of consumers surveyed reported they find it difficult to eat healthy. The top five reasons cited were:
  - It is too expensive (54%)
  - It takes too much time to shop for and cook quality healthy meals (32%)
  - Advice on healthy eating is contradictory (19%)
  - Healthy foods don't taste good (17%)
  - Limited cooking skills (16%)
- Over two-thirds of consumers were interested in learning about ways to eat healthier for weight loss/maintenance reasons, or to help them find healthy foods they can enjoy regularly.
- Taste, convenience and value were the three most important perceived benefits of purchasing and consuming frozen prepared meals.
  - Over half of consumers surveyed felt that helping to control weight and managing caloric intake are important attributes of frozen meals.

**Implication: Frozen Prepared Meals, When Plated with Other Foods, Can Help Consumers Achieve Balance, Variety and Moderation**