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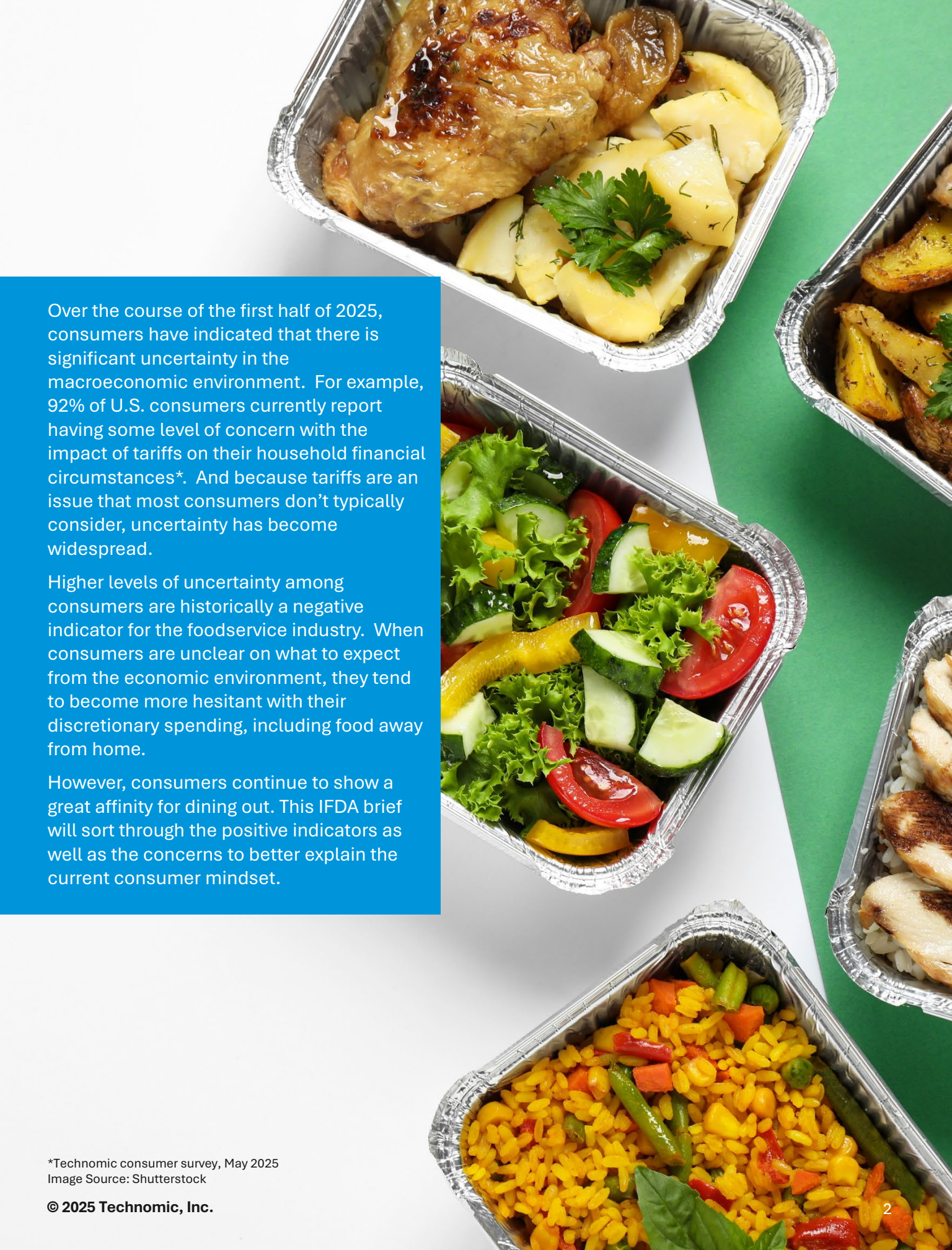
# QUARTERLY BRIEF

**The Current  
Mindset of the  
Foodservice  
Consumer**



**Technomic®**





Over the course of the first half of 2025, consumers have indicated that there is significant uncertainty in the macroeconomic environment. For example, 92% of U.S. consumers currently report having some level of concern with the impact of tariffs on their household financial circumstances\*. And because tariffs are an issue that most consumers don't typically consider, uncertainty has become widespread.

Higher levels of uncertainty among consumers are historically a negative indicator for the foodservice industry. When consumers are unclear on what to expect from the economic environment, they tend to become more hesitant with their discretionary spending, including food away from home.

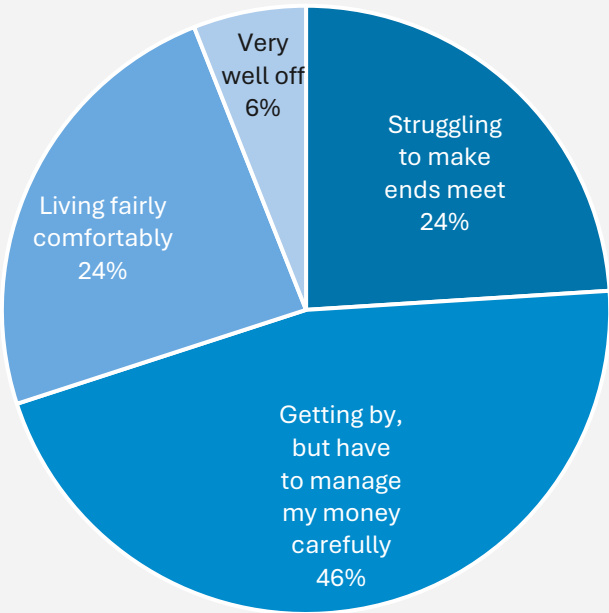
However, consumers continue to show a great affinity for dining out. This IFDA brief will sort through the positive indicators as well as the concerns to better explain the current consumer mindset.

\*Technomic consumer survey, May 2025  
Image Source: Shutterstock

# Current Consumer Perceptions

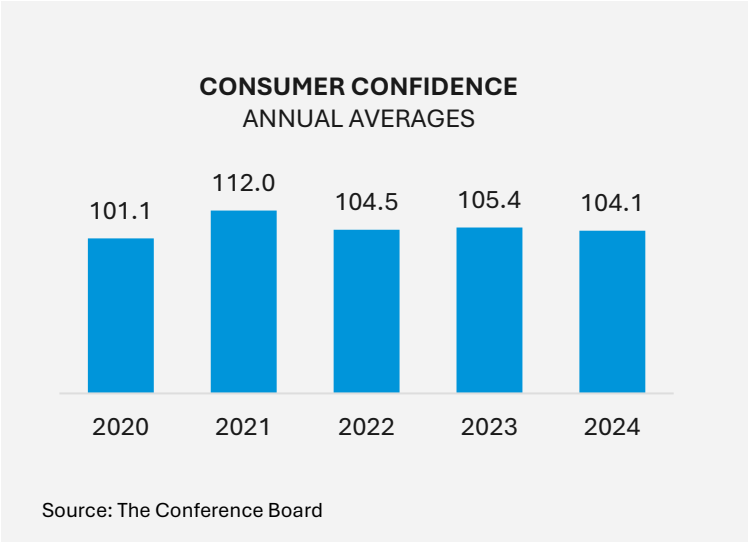
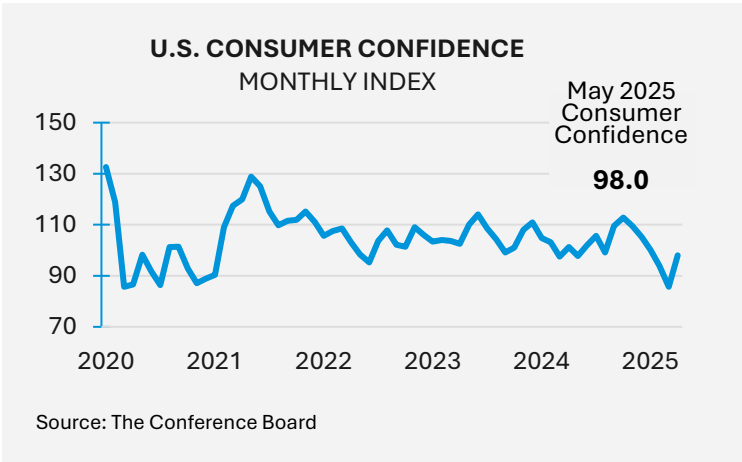
Consumer attitudes toward their own finances are more pessimistic than six months ago. As of late May 2025, 70% of consumers report that they are “struggling” or “just getting by” financially. In November 2024, that percentage was 63%. Further, the percentage of consumers that state they are “living fairly comfortably” has dropped from 32% to 24% during that same time period.

CONSUMERS' SELF-DESCRIBED  
FINANCIAL SITUATION



Source: Technomic consumer survey, May 2025

That pessimism is also evident in the U.S. Consumer Confidence Index published by The Conference Board. The May index of 98.0 was one of the lower monthly numbers reported since the pandemic year of 2020. Ideally for foodservice, the Consumer Confidence Index would surpass 100 and maintain that level throughout 2025. The Conference Board’s corresponding Consumer Expectations Index – which examines consumers’ short-term outlook for the economy – was 72.8. A value under 80 signals a collective consumer expectation of a looming recession.

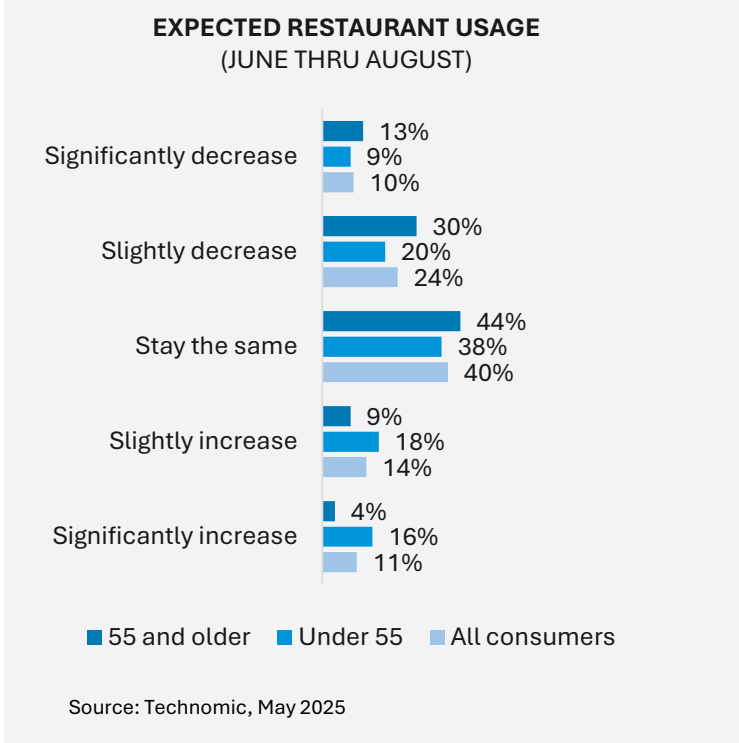


# Foodservice Usage

In the most recently-reported period (January through March) of Technomic data, consumer traffic across the 140 largest chain restaurants in the United States declined by 2.6%. The timing of this decline aligns with the slippage in consumer attitudes toward their personal financial situations.

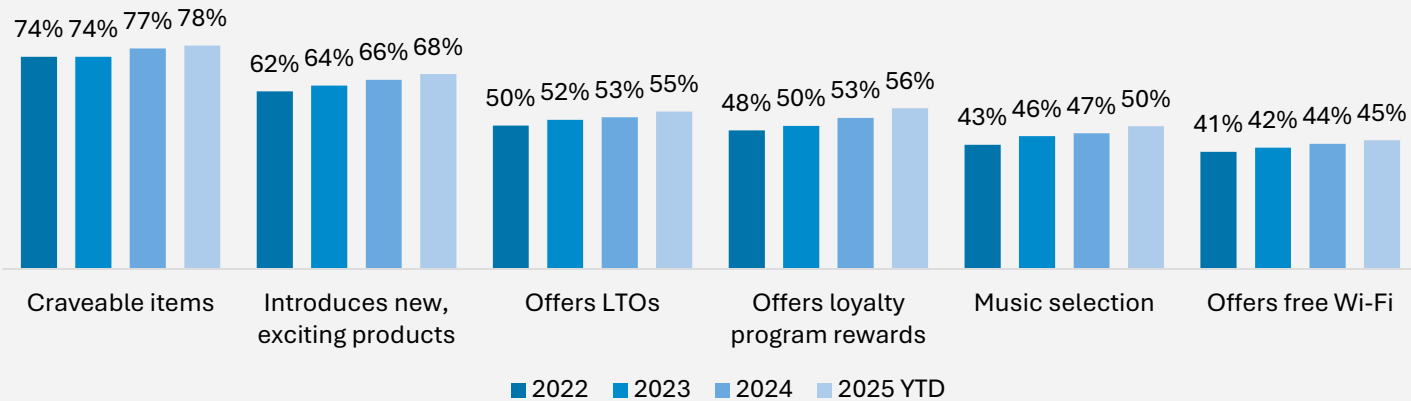
Further, consumers are more likely to predict decreasing restaurant usage than increasing restaurant usage over the summer months of 2025. Thirty-four percent (34%) of consumers anticipate less dining out versus 25% expecting to increase restaurant usage. For comparison purposes, in May of 2023, 29% of consumers expected to increase summer restaurant usage and only 26% envisioned a decrease.

Older consumers are less likely to increase restaurant usage this summer. Research shows that consumers over 55 are more likely to prioritize financial security over discretionary spending. However, there does appear to be opportunity with younger consumers, especially those between the



ages of 25 and 44. These consumers are far more likely than other age groups to self-identify as “well off” financially. They are the consumers who are shaping the trendline showing more importance being given to restaurant selection factors outside of quality and price. These factors include loyalty programs, in-restaurant music curation, complementary wi-fi, and the consistent availability of new menu items.

## IMPORTANCE TO CONSUMERS WHEN CHOOSING A RESTAURANT



Note: Percent of consumer indicating important or very important  
Base: Approx. 9,300 consumers ages 18+ per attribute for each calendar year  
Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer



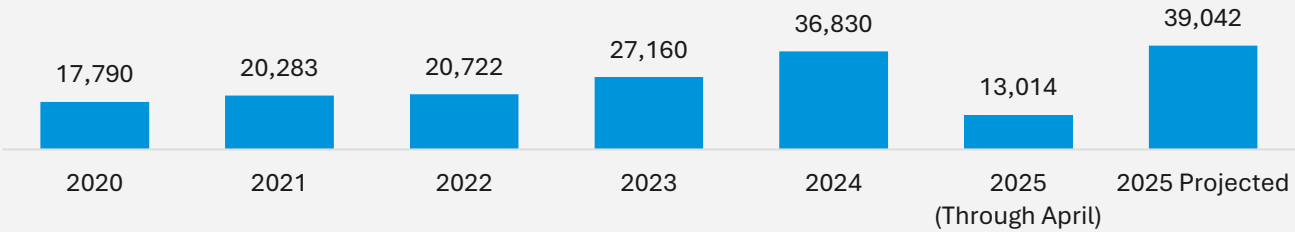
# Customer Interests

Menu innovation is particularly important to consumers and that can be seen in the performance of operators perceived to be innovative. Restaurant operators identified by consumers as having innovative menu items in Technomic’s Ignite Consumer platform saw 2024 sales growth of 7.5%. Operators not identified as

of consumers expecting higher prices will order from restaurants less often and 40% will look for more deals, bundles, and price specials when considering foodservice. Only 1 in 8 consumers expecting higher menu prices says that their use of foodservice won’t change at all.

These potential changes in behavior may also be reflected in what consumers order. Thirty-six percent (36%) of consumers expecting prices to rise will specifically seek out lower-priced or value menu items. Four in five say they will cut at least one item from a typical order, like desserts, appetizers, or adult beverages.

NUMBER OF LIMITED-TIME OFFERS IN U.S. RESTAURANT CHAINS



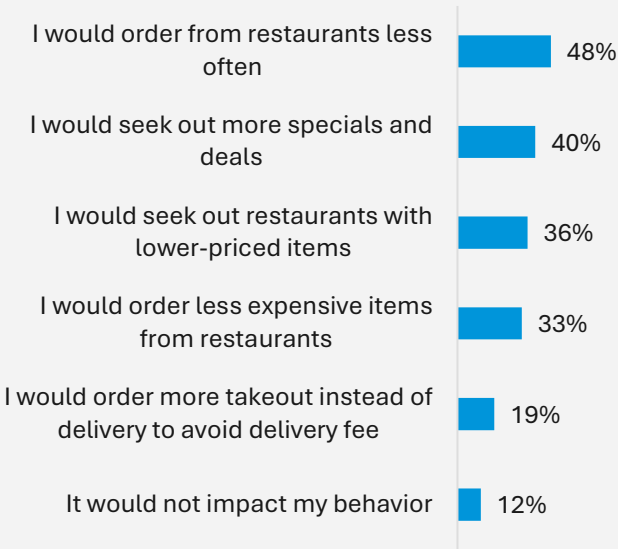
Source: Technomic Ignite Menu

innovators on average saw sales declines in 2024.\* Having evolving menus that bring something unique to the consumer is, in turn, a high priority for the foodservice business. Operators are introducing more limited-time offers to consumers than ever before in the hope that a steady flow of new menu items will be seen as different and exciting. The number of limited-time offers in restaurants in 2025 is expected to be twice what was seen in 2022. Operators are observing that the current consumer mindset includes the desire to spend on foodservice offerings that are new, unique, craveable, and special.

The ability of operators to deliver unique items will be especially important if tariffs, higher food and labor costs, and inflation lead to more menu price increases. More than 6 in 10 consumers (62%) believe that menu prices will increase between May and November of 2025. Only 11% of consumers expect menu prices will decline.

For those consumers expecting menu prices to rise, their dining behaviors will change. Nearly half

IMPACT OF FUTURE INCREASES IN RESTAURANT PRICES



Source: Technomic Ignite Menu

**Because of rising menu prices...**

- 48% of consumers are ordering fewer desserts
- 45% of consumers are ordering fewer appetizers
- 35% of consumers ordering less alcohol
- ONLY 19% have not cut back on any menu parts at all

\*Technomic menu and sales analysis

# Summary

The majority of U.S. consumers are currently reporting feelings of economic uncertainty. Many are pessimistic about their personal financial situation and, in turn, are more closely watching their discretionary spending, including food away from home. While this hesitancy isn't yet reflected in overall industry sales data, most consumers also say that they expect pull back from foodservice this year, especially if menu prices continue to rise. To counter the financial concerns of diners, operators throughout the industry will be trying to appeal to the large group of consumers interested in menu innovation and improved amenities.

