

The results are in: Consumers choose their favorite U.S. restaurants

Unique and steadfast brands prevail in first annual Consumer Picks survey from Nation's Restaurant News and WD Partners

NEW YORK (Sept. 7, 2011) — Papa Murphy's Take 'N' Bake Pizza, In-N-Out Burger, Ruth's Chris Steak House and Bonefish Grill are among the top scorers in the inaugural Consumer Picks survey unveiled today.

The survey canvassed more than 5,000 customers resulting in 40,000 evaluations covering the limited service (quick service and fast casual) and full service (casual dining) restaurant industry segments. Consumers were asked to evaluate brands they have visited at least once in the past six months to determine the brand's strengths and weaknesses relative to competitors. Consumers rated brands in nine areas, including food quality, value, cleanliness, service, menu variety, reputation, atmosphere, likelihood to recommend and likelihood to return.

The Consumer Picks survey, which ranked 139 restaurant brands, is the first of its kind to report on several emerging brands, such as Five Guys Burgers and Fries, Pei Wei Asian Diner, Potbelly Sandwich Shop, Bonefish Grill, BJ's Restaurant and Cheddar's Casual Café.

Findings point to the importance of differentiation, staying true to a restaurant concept's core philosophies and delivering the promised experience.

The Consumer Picks results are detailed in the Sept. 5 issue of Nation's Restaurant News, the restaurant industry's most respected source of business intelligence, and at www.nrn.com/consumer-picks. Online, readers can find details on the survey's methodology, more information on the Top 10 performers, watch exclusive videos outlining standout chains and the strategies behind their success, and get insights from both Nation's Restaurant News and its research partner, WD Partners.

The top-ranking Consumer Picks brands are:

Top 10 Limited-Service Restaurants

- 1) Papa Murphy's
- 2) In-N-Out Burger
- 3) Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop
- 4) McAlister's Deli
- 5) Haagen-Dazs
- 6) Potbelly Sandwich Shop
- 7) Chick-fil-A
- 8) Panera Bread
- 9) Cold Stone Creamery
- 10) Jason's Deli

Top 10 Full-Service Restaurants

- 1) Ruth's Chris Steak House
- 2) Bonefish Grill
- 3) P.F. Chang's China Bistro
- 4) The Cheesecake Factory
- 5) Carrabba's Italian Grill
- 6) McCormick & Schmick's
- 7) Cheddar's Casual Café
- 8) Olive Garden
- 9) Outback Steakhouse
- 10) Red Lobster

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Consumers choose their favorite restaurants— Contact Ann Rogers, 614-634-7413

“Consumer Picks data offers a way to evaluate performance based on consumers’ perspectives,” said Dennis Lombardi, executive vice president of foodservice strategies at WD partners. “This kind of unbiased information has been missing in the restaurant industry.”

“Success in the restaurant industry is all about exceeding the consumer’s wants and needs,” said Robin Lee Allen, executive editor of Nation’s Restaurant News. “As we produce these annual surveys, Consumer Picks will not only offer historic data about performance from the customer’s point of view, but it will also provide a roadmap for those who want to excel in their service and consumer perception going forward.”

Note to editors: additional information and videos of Dennis Lombardi, EVP Foodservice Strategies at WD Partners, talking about the findings can be found at www.nrn.com/consumer-picks.

About WD Partners

WD Partners is a customer experience expert that helps global food and retail brands. Research conducted by WD Partners’ Insights group is part of the company’s integrated approach to enhancing shoppers’ experiences and brand performance. For more information, please visit www.wdpartners.com.

About Nation’s Restaurant News

For more than 40 years, *Nation’s Restaurant News* has been the #1 source of business intelligence for the restaurant industry. Today, offering information solutions for changing times, *NRN* is the media brand professionals trust to help them tackle the challenges facing the foodservice business. For operators, *NRN* provides a one-stop resource for the most industry coverage in whatever formats they prefer, whether print or digital, web-based or at events. For suppliers, *NRN*’s audience-rich portfolio of print, digital and live-event products provides the reach, access and flexibility needed to open doors and grow their businesses. For more information on NRN, visit www.nrn.com.

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