Dining trends: consumer cut backs include protein

By Erika Kubick on 6/18/2013

Consumers interested in more healthful dining are reducing their servings of those foods they perceive to be less healthy or cutting them out altogether, according to new research by The NPD Group.

In the study, “Healthy at Foodservice — Consumer Expectations Put in Perspective,” many of the choices diners said they make  translate into less consumption of protein.

For example, the No. 1 healthier choice for diners is to order a salad as a meal; 39 percent of diners said they make this choice when they want to eat healthy.

Less common, but still on the list, is the options of ordering a soup as the main dish. Other options include ordering or consuming smaller portions — including sharing an entrée or ordering an appetizer as the main dish — substituting leaner proteins such as poultry or beans, or having the meal prepared using more healthful techniques.

Also popular: Skipping desserts or sweets.

“The bottom line is that even with an increasing number of restaurants offering healthier menu items or posting calories and other nutritional information, at the end of the day, consumers see dining out as a treat,” noted NPD’s restaurant industry analyst, Bonnie Riggs. She suggested that for foodservice.