

## Fine dining sees third year of increases

By [Lisa M. Keefe](#) on 4/9/2014

Visits to fine-dining establishments in the United States have rebounded from double-digit declines during the recession to its third straight year of increases, according to a new report by The NPD Group.

Much of the credit goes to the restaurants themselves, which "evolved to meet the needs of today's foodservice consumer," a news release about the report said, including adopted casual dress codes and environments, added value, increased business travel, and culinary enhancements.

Visits to fine dining restaurants were up 5 percent in the year ending December 2013, NPD reports. The gains last year were ahead of the total foodservice industry, which ended 2013 with visits flat. The fine dining segment, which represents a small share of overall industry traffic but a 14 percent share of foodservice consumer spending, has been ahead of the industry in visits for the past three years.

The growth in fine dining traffic isn't because of lower cost but rather higher perceived value, the research firm determined. An average eater check at a fine dining restaurant was \$28.55 last year, compared to \$5.32 on average for quick service restaurants, which represent the bulk (78 percent) of total restaurant traffic..

"Fine dining restaurant operators are listening and responding to marketplace needs," said [Bonnie Riggs](#), NPD restaurant industry analyst, in the release. "There was a time when many of these restaurants were in such high demand that they decided who could visit and what they would pay. The recession hit and ... [f]ine dining operators responded by making the changes necessary to appeal to their customer base and their customers have responded."