

**NEW STUDY OF TRAVELER EATING INTERESTS SHOWS
PROMOTING CULINARY ACTIVITIES CAN PAY OFF**

Almost A Third of Travelers Choose Destinations Based on Eating Opportunities

New York and New Orleans Top Foodie Destinations

WASHINGTON, August 27 – A new study of traveler behavior reveals that the way to tourists' wallets may be through their stomachs.

Conducted by the travel market research firm Mandala Research and sponsored by the World Food Travel Association and other tourism organizations, the study shows that almost a third (30%) deliberately choose destinations based on the availability of activities related to local food and drink, whether it's a beer or wine festival, a farmers market, or a farm to table experience.

“For ‘deliberate’ culinary travelers, the availability culinary activities is a primary reason for taking a trip,” said Laura Mandala, managing director of Mandala Research. “In fact, authenticity and local flavors are the greatest drivers of destination choice for these travelers.”

Over half (51%) of all respondents said they travel to learn about or enjoy unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, and nearly two-thirds (61%) are interested in taking a trip to a destination within the U.S. to engage in culinary activities within the next year.

Asked what U.S. destinations come to mind when thinking of food tourism, the top five responses included New York City (46%), New Orleans (38%), San Francisco (21%), Chicago (21%) and Napa Valley (12%).

“While the results are not unexpected as classic foodie destinations, there is a tremendous opportunity for secondary and tertiary destinations to invest more effort in luring the foodie traveler,” advises Erik Wolf, executive director of the World Food Travel Association.

Added Mandala, who has worked extensively with the U.S. Department of Commerce and has conducted national studies for resorts, hotels, shopping malls and destinations: “This study goes beyond just eating and drinking, and identifies travelers who are seeking out unique and memorable experiences that are authentic to the destination they are visiting.”

Among the implications of the study's findings are:

- Travelers are most interested in local and authentic foods and culinary experiences that are different from those they can get at home.
- Most travelers combine culinary activities with other activities, also participating in culture, heritage and nature-based activities.
- Increasing reliance on reviews and recommendations of friends makes getting the word out through social media and other user content sources critical for destinations.
- Festivals motivate culinary travelers, so destination marketing organizations should consider hosting a beer, wine or culinary festival to feature local fare, products and unique food activities like chef demonstrations and samplings.
- Foodies want to be educated when traveling. Eighty-three percent enjoy learning about the local culture and cuisine of the destinations they visit. And the same percentage say they will spend more money on food and drinks while traveling.

Additional sponsors of the study included the California Travel & Tourism Commission, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Delaware Tourism, U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council and the Shop America Alliance.

The survey included 2,113 web interviews from May 2-10. All interviews were conducted via an online panel. To qualify for the survey, respondents must have taken at least one trip in the past 12 months for pleasure, vacation or personal purposes within the United States that included an overnight stay.

Those interested in learning more about this market and how to benefit from it may order a copy of the Culinary Traveler Study at [www.Mandala Research](http://www.MandalaResearch.com).com.

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Contact: Nicole Rychtanek, (708) 935-5548, nicole@mandalaresearch.com

About Mandala Research

Mandala Research is one of the leading travel and tourism research companies in the world. The firm has pioneered the "firsts" of many niche studies in the travel industry and offers extensive knowledge of several growing demographics and trends, including U.S. Hispanic travelers, wine and culinary tourism, Gay and Lesbian travelers, The International Shopping Traveler, Travelers from Growth and Emerging Markets, and the African American Traveler.

Mandala's clients include destinations, major travel brands, government agencies, associations and more, with extensive expertise in brand tracking, brand equity, and brand identity research. For more information visit www.MandalaResearch.com

About the World Food Travel Association (WFTA)

The WFTA (formerly International Culinary Tourism Association) is the world's leading authority on food travel, with robust programs in food tourism education and research, food tourism development, and food tourism promotion. Join us at the World Food Travel Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden September 21-24. For more information visit www.worldfoodtravel.org