

# CAMBRIDGE TRANS FAT SURVEY

Restaurants, bars, bakeries, hotels, a supermarket, and corporate and university dining services were among the 165 establishments that completed a 2007 Cambridge Public Health Department survey about trans fat use. Here are some key findings.

## Who Is Trans-Fat-Free?

Nearly half of all Cambridge food service establishments reported they never used products containing trans fat or have voluntarily eliminated these products. According to the health department survey, about 47% of Cambridge food service establishments reported they are trans-fat-free. These establishments run the gamut from pizzerias and sandwich shops to upscale restaurants, company cafeterias, and university dining halls.

### *Of Interest*

- Ethnic restaurants represent about a quarter of establishments that are trans-fat-free, according to the health department survey. These restaurants specialize in a variety of international cuisines, including Asian, Indian, Italian, Portuguese, Caribbean, and Mexican.
- The Cambridge Public Schools' Food Services Department has phased out most products containing trans fat. The district expects to be trans-fat-free by the start of the 2008-2009 school year.

## Who Is Currently Using Trans Fat?

The types of Cambridge food service establishments that currently use trans fat are not substantially different from those that are trans-fat-free. Among the establishments currently using artificial trans fat are fast food restaurants, bakeries, pubs, upscale restaurants, and university faculty clubs.

## Perception of Consumer Demand

Many Cambridge establishments believe their customers want foods that are trans-fat-free. According to the survey, 76% of food service establishments expressed interest in a citywide recognition program for establishments that were trans-fat-free. This interest likely reflects both a perception of consumer demand for trans-fat-free dining opportunities and a desire to be recognized for being a trans-fat-free establishment.

### Going Trans-Fat-Free: Perceptions of the Cambridge Food Service Community

- 47% of Cambridge food service establishments reported they are trans-fat-free, while 29% currently use oils, shortenings, or other food products containing trans fat. Another 23% of establishments are unsure if they use products containing trans fat.
- 74% of Cambridge food service establishments know where to purchase trans-fat-free products, while 26% do not.
- 32% of food service establishments believe that switching to trans-fat-free products would increase their costs, while 25% disagree. Another 44% of establishments are unsure.
- If the public health department enacted a ban on artificial trans fat use, 88% of food service establishments that currently use trans fats report they could successfully transition to trans-fat-free products within a year, while 12% report they would require more than a year.

Source: Cambridge Public Health



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## Perception of Cost

Many Cambridge food service establishments don't know if switching to trans-fat-free products would increase their costs. According to the health department survey, 44% of food service establishments reported they were unsure if switching to trans-fat-free products would increase their costs. Another 32% of establishments believed their costs would increase, while 25% believed their costs would remain the same.

### *Of Interest*

- Among establishments that are trans-fat-free, 31% reported that switching to trans-fat-free products increased their costs.
- Among establishments that currently use trans fat, 48% believed that switching to trans-fat-free products would increase their costs.

## More Information and Resources Needed

Many Cambridge food service establishments would like more information about trans fat, including how to identify trans fat in products and where to purchase replacement products. According to the health department survey, about 26% of Cambridge food service establishments don't know where to purchase trans-fat-free products.

## Sufficient Time Needed To Make the Transition

If the public health department enacted a ban on artificial trans fat use, 88% of food service establishments that currently use trans fats reported they could successfully transition to trans-fat-free products within a year, while 12% reported they would require more than a year.