

Some stocking stuffers from Mintel

CHICAGO, US: With the holiday season in full swing, Mintel looked into their market intelligence to find out just what US consumers do to make their holidays special. Some just might surprise you...



Gifts, cards & decorations

- Some 13% of US consumers think a cell phone is a good gift for children aged 6-11, up from just 4% earlier this year.
- November is the most popular time to start shopping for holiday gifts, with nearly one-third (30%) of US shoppers starting then. However, 15% start their holiday shopping in December - the majority (18%) are male.
- Roughly one-third (32%) of Americans expect stores to offer boxes for holiday gifts; close to a quarter (22%) plan to cut down on the number of people they buy gifts for; and, more than two in 10 browse in-store, but buy online to save money.
- Gift for them and a treat for you? 27% of US consumers say that when they go gift shopping for the holidays, they usually wind up buying something for themselves.
- In the US, 69% of women bought a Christmas gift for someone in the past year, versus only 57% of men... come on guys, get out there, and shop!
- From last year's holiday season (i.e. Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, etc.), the average amount of money spent on video gaming equipment as gifts for other people was US\$78.
- Skipping the wrapping paper? 21% of Americans say they only use it rarely if at all, since gift bags are so plentiful.
- 42% of Americans say they bought Christmas decorations in the past year, compared to only 24% for Halloween and 14% for Easter.
- Giving or receiving? Christmas is the top occasion for sending a Christmas card in the US - 64% of US consumers purchased a Christmas greeting card in the past year - but more than that (67%) received one.
- Americans have very smart pets. 11% of them sent a greeting card or gift to their loved ones.
- Close to three in 10 (29%) US consumers say they bought a fragrance as a gift for someone else on Christmas. The winter holidays represent the peak season for fragrance sales.
- "Sniff, sniff..." who doesn't love the smell of the holidays... evergreens, cinnamon and sage. It turns out that just more than a quarter (28%) of Mintel respondents buy candles specifically for the holidays.

Food, drinks & entertaining

- According to Mintel Menu Insights, there's been a 6.9% increase in cranberry sauce menu items on restaurant menus in Q3 2011, compared to Q3 2010.
- Nearly one in five (18%) of US consumers claim they "absolutely have to entertain guests for the holidays."
- Holidays, such as Christmas, are the second most popular reason families vacation with nearly a quarter (24%) of Americans claiming this reason for taking a family vacation over the past 12 months.
- Over half (58%) of Americans say Christmas, Hanukkah and other winter holidays motivates them to cook gourmet or elaborate meals (i.e. meals that take three or more hours to prepare).
- Some 61% of Americans purchased chocolate in seasonal packaging in the past year, which is perhaps why 'Christmas chocolate' is expected to hit a new sales high (since 2006) in 2011, surpassing US\$400 million in sales, an

increase of 42%.

- Cheers! Falling just behind New Year's Eve (37%), Christmas is the next most common holiday that Americans buy booze for (28%).
- In 2010, 23 new food and drink products were launched in the US with Egg Nog in the product description; meanwhile, one in 10 US women who enjoy spirits usually mix them with milk or Egg Nog.
- 14% of American nut-lovers enjoyed chestnuts as a snack or part of a meal in the past month, though probably not roasted over an open fire!
- Say cheese! Some, 24% of Americans say they buy specialty cheese selections (samplers) as gifts.
- The infamous holiday leftovers... how do you store yours? 79% of Americans use resealable containers for leftovers, while 54% prefer wrap or foil... way, they won't last long!
- Nearly one in 10 US consumers claim cinnamon is the ingredient they most closely associate with comfort food.
- Treating your pet with turkey treats for the holidays, too? 48 new pet food products launched in the US this year with turkey as an ingredient - up from 35 in 2006.
- 'Tis the season of goodwill - nearly one in five (18%) of Americans try to do some kind of volunteer / charity work during the holidays. This rises to 22% of those earning US\$100 000+.

In case you're in the need for some holiday spirit(s), Kathy Hayden, foodservice analyst at Mintel, has some suggestions:

"Bartenders are getting in the holiday spirit(s) with cocktails like the cognac-laced Maple Snow at Hank's Oyster Bar in D.C.; gingerbread martinis at Outback Steakhouse; a triple-spiked Jolly Java coffee at bd's Mongolian Grill and the Disgruntled Elf from Wildfish Seafood Grille in Newport Beach."

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