

Chief Mentor, EPCH honoured with "Prerna Strot Award"

Himachal Pradesh – In a prestigious ceremony held on the occasion of India's 78th Independence Day, Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Chief Mentor in a role of Director General, EPCH and Chairman, IEML, was awarded the "Prerna Strot Award".

The Award was presented by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Shri Thakur Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu, in recognition of Dr. Kumar's significant contributions to the Indian handicrafts sector. EPCH has expressed immense pride in Dr. Kumar's achievement, acknowledging his unwavering dedication towards promoting Indian handicrafts on the global stage. His efforts have been instrumental in boosting the visibility of India's artisans and their craftsmanship worldwide. ■



Homewares and garden tools popular EOFY sales items

While EOFY sales are viewed by many as an opportunity to stock up on discounted work-related items and maximise tax deductions, this year might be a little different. Recent research from PayPal shows that only one in 10 (12 per cent) among Australians will be shopping for tax deductibles, with most (51 per cent) shopping for clothing or fashion, followed by electronics (31 per cent), homewares and garden items (26 per cent), and health and beauty products.

"As the cost-of-living crisis continues, it's clear that Australians are eager to save money whenever and wherever they can, looking to online sales events to help reduce spending," says PayPal consumer shopping expert, Bonnie Brady.

"While sales can be a great way to save money on things you need or already intend to buy, it's important to plan purchases and set budgets to avoid impulse buys and overspending." Indeed, more than half (52 per cent) says online sales can help them manage the current cost-of-living pressures. The fact that two-in-

five (42 per cent) will shop the EOFY sales online rather than in store this year may be another sign of economic times, as the same proportion (40 per cent) says it's easier to compare prices online and that they usually get better deals.

Despite the preference for digital discounts, almost all Australians (93 per cent) are concerned about online security, with fake retail sites now leveraging generative AI to be more convincing than ever. In addition, 85 per cent of Australians say scams are becoming more sophisticated and harder to recognise and two-in-five (40 per cent) are more concerned about online security than they were a year ago. "The convenience of online shopping has never been more popular, but we must all do the work to learn how to stay safe online and to keep that understanding up as new threats emerge," Brady adds.

"The protective steps that each of us can take are simple and often free, but no one can take them for us." ■

Source: *australiangiftguide*

Quick meals/invested occasions define dining habits across generations

What is gen z, gen x making for dinner? a new Circana report has the answers. Consumer behavior and trend tracker Circana has released insights from its Future of Dinner report, revealing that U.S. consumers source 81 percent of their dinners at home and “most often enjoy dinner with others.”

While Gen X prefers dinners that require minimal preparation and few ingredients, Gen Z consumers increasingly invest in special occasion dinners as they hone their kitchen skills, while also seeking no-prep dinner solutions. In fact, half of all dinners are ready in 15 minutes or less according to the report.

“More than one-third of dinners are motivated by a need for connectedness, and how consumers meet this need depends on various factors,” said Darren Seifer, industry advisor for consumer goods and foodservice at Circana. “With the shifting demographics of our population, such as Gen Z entering adulthood, we can expect corresponding shifts in dinner foods and preparation methods. It’s crucial to take a closer look at these varying consumer behaviors to meet their growing needs.”

Gen Z consumers are just starting to learn their way around a kitchen and will want to advance their cooking skills, but also balance quick dinner meals. They also are more likely to indulge in their favorite dishes at dinner or have a treat or reward for dinner. For Gen Z, the key projected categories through 2026



include center-of-plate proteins, breakfast foods and ready-to-eat snack foods.

Older Gen Z consumers will, according to the report, lean on recipes and participate in “invested dinner occasions” as they begin living independently and are “most likely to choose an item at dinner strictly because they do not want to cook.”

Gen X consumers will continue choosing dinners that satisfy their cravings and tastes, as well as their favorite dishes. Gen X will also make dinners with items on hand more often than younger generations. Combination dishes, such as rice bowls, are expected to grow over the next two years, driven by Gen X consumers who will not be increasing their use of traditional center-of-plate proteins at dinner. Instead, they are opting for more diverse meal options that blend flavors and ingredients.

■ Source: Circana/NPD

Consumers to economise on day-to-day to allocate more for holidays

According to Coveo’s seasonal shopping survey, consumers are cutting back on day-to-day spending to allocate more for holiday purchases. Over half of the 4,000 U.S. and U.K. respondents plan to reduce spending in some areas to boost their holiday budget. Additionally, around three-fourths intend to maintain or increase their gift-giving.

For the home furnishings industry, 15% of U.S. consumers plan to visit home furnishings stores on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, compared to 45% who will head to big-box or department stores. Electronics and apparel shops are also popular destinations. Spontaneous purchases are common, with 25% likely to buy home décor or garden items online, though fashion

and food lead impulsive shopping. The top concern for 29% of shoppers is managing cost, value, and budget, followed by finding the right gift (14%) and ensuring on-time delivery (11%). Other considerations include product quality, availability, and shipping costs. Most consumers (80%) discover holiday offers through digital channels like email, social media, and online searches, while U.S. shoppers respond more to print mailings and coupons than their U.K. counterparts (27% vs. 13%).

The survey also highlights a growing openness to AI-powered virtual assistants for online gift shopping, with 31% of shoppers willing to use them. This trend is even stronger among Gen Z (39%) and Millennials (44%). ■ Source: *hometextilestoday*