

QUARTERLY DINER INSIGHTS

# Connect with guests this holiday season

More than 23,000 people told us how they're planning to dine out for the holidays, what they're craving most, and what they'd like to see in the new year.



As we enter the busiest season for restaurants, we asked people how they're dining out and looking to celebrate the holidays. Will this year look similar to pre-pandemic—or different? People want truly memorable experiences, whether in a restaurant or from the comfort of their home.

Getting insights into what exactly diners want and how they plan to celebrate helps restaurants make decisions about how to make the most of the holiday season.

OpenTable conducted our Quarterly Diner Insights survey, designed to take the pulse of diners. Let's dive into what diners think.



# People want to eat out, even amid COVID variants

Many people aren't influenced by the new variant

**50%**

say the Delta variant hasn't affected their willingness to dine out



People are still dining out frequently, despite some hesitancy due to the pandemic

**59%**

say they're dining out at least once a week, down from 62% in Q3

Canadians continue to care more about vaccine proof

**30%**

of Canadians say they will *only* dine out if vaccinations are required, compared to 5% of Americans



# Celebrations will be merry and bountiful

With the holidays right around the corner, one thing is clear: People want to celebrate.

## 'Tis the season to celebrate

**53%**

say they plan on dining out to celebrate 5+ times

**31%**

say they'll be dining out 2-5 times to celebrate the holidays

**8%**

say they don't plan on dining out this holiday season

## And they'll dine out all holiday season long



### Thanksgiving

**36%** globally say they'll be dining out



### Christmas Eve

**40%** of Americans are looking to dine out, and **29%** of Canadians



### New Year's Eve

**58%** want to go out to celebrate



### New Year's Day

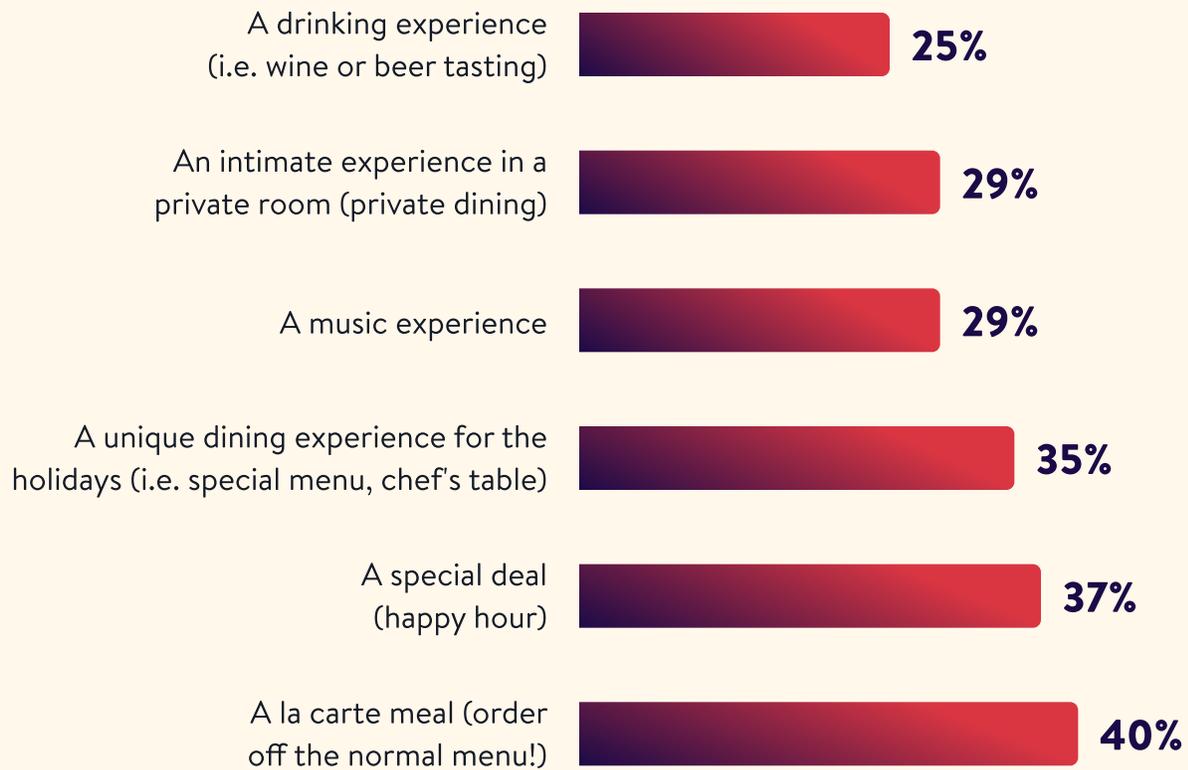
**34%** want to go out to celebrate



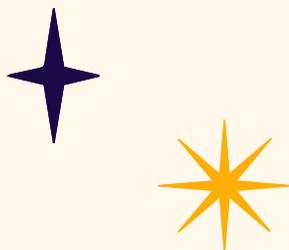
### Undecided

**10%** are undecided how they'll be celebrating the holidays

## Dining experiences people crave the most this holiday season



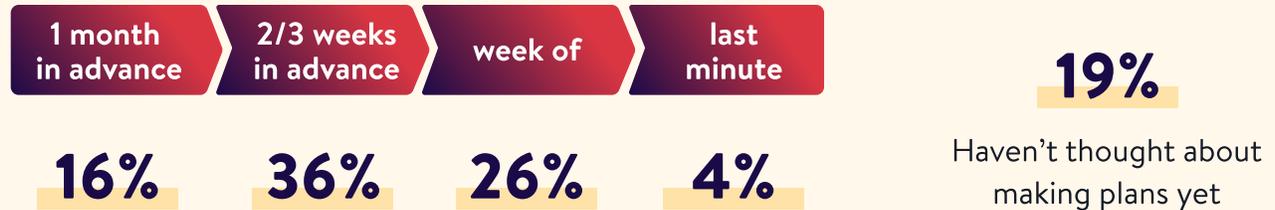
**TIP** Highlight special types of seating, such as igloos, rooftop gardens, and outdoor patios with OpenTable dining areas.



# And the planning starts early

As people look forward to the holidays, a majority are booking in advance after getting recommendations from multiple people and places.

## People are booking in advance for the holidays



**TIP** Get your books ready early and share the experiences and menus you're offering for the holidays to capture early planners.

## Diners turn to multiple sources to find holiday experiences



And they are more willing to pay to secure their spot

**42%**

say they're willing to pre-pay for holiday experiences



And private dining is picking up for smaller get togethers with colleagues

**15%**

say they'll be hosting a private event

**9%**

say they'll go out to dinner with smaller groups

**6%**

say they're planning to have a party

**TIP** Rethink your private space and divide it to cater to smaller groups.



# It's not too early to think about next year

As we close another year, restaurants can pull inspiration from what people want going into 2022: dining out to celebrate, outdoor dining, takeout, and contactless.

## Celebrations don't stop at the holidays

**72%**

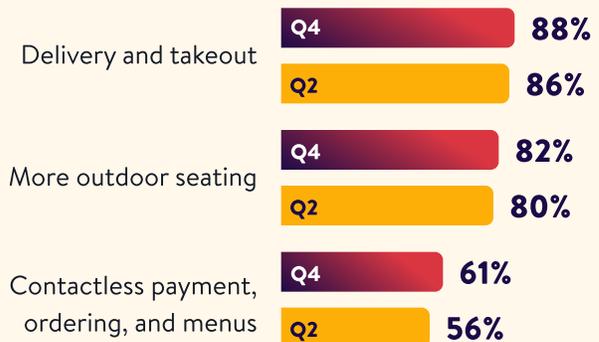
say they're eager to dine out to celebrate birthday, anniversaries, and graduations

**82%**

say they want to dine out to have fun

## And they're hungry for restaurants to offer more outdoors, takeout, and contactless

We're seeing a shift in what diners want restaurants to continue offering, compared to Q2:



## But still wavering for wanting proof of vaccination

**54%**

say they want restaurants to require proof of vaccination, but may still dine out without it, up from 19% in Q2

# Tips for a fired up holiday season

## Maximize covers and revenue

- Make it easy for people to find your unique holiday menus and offerings by featuring them as [Experiences](#).
- Consider prepaid experiences to bring in engaged guests looking for a special event, have certainty of your shifts, and earn revenue up front.
- [Adjust floor plans and shift settings](#) to ensure successful service at any volume.
- Get in more turns—and set guest expectations—with [dining time limits](#).
- Offer online and in-app [takeout ordering](#) on OpenTable.
- Keep track of your revenue performance by connecting [your POS system](#) with OpenTable, at no additional cost (Core and Pro plans only).
- Target same-day bookers or fill last-minute cancellations by starting a targeted digital marketing campaign or by using Bonus Points.
- Showcase your [gift cards](#) on OpenTable to motivate guests to give the gift of your restaurant to others.

Fill late cancellations with a reservation waitlist or Availability Alerts.

## Let your festive creativity run wild

- Consider [festive and unique experiences](#), such as seasonal menus and ticketed holiday events, to celebrate the holidays with guests.
- Create DIY kits for guests to bring home that reflect your brand and the holidays, such as a New Year's Eve cocktail kit or a festive-themed prime rib dinner.
- Add various types of seating, such as igloos, parklets, sidewalk tables, rooftop gardens, and outdoor patios with [OpenTable dining areas](#).
- Decorate your indoor and outdoor spaces to get guests in the festive spirit.
- Consider giving guests a small gift, such as holiday recipes or a bag of confections.
- Celebrate with your staff too, with a team holiday dinner or other celebration.

## Keep guests in the know

- Go the extra mile on your [OpenTable profile](#)—update [menus](#), [takeout](#), experiences, and [delivery](#) availability, and don't forget to [upload photos](#).
- Once you're set up with takeout, promote your takeout options and share your unique order link on your website and across your marketing channels.
- Update your [safety precautions](#) so guests [know what to expect](#), including if proof of vaccination is required to dine indoors and outdoors.
- [Customize booking confirmations](#) to communicate with guests before every reservation and remind them of any dining mandates that must be followed.
- Avoid surprises upon arrival—use [Direct Messaging](#) to confirm reservation details with guests ahead of time.
- Use [QR codes](#) for contact-free sharing of menus, safety precautions, contact tracing surveys, and more.

## Get more guests heading into 2022

- Update your happy hour and special menu experiences to get in front of guests via the Newsfeed.
- Reach out to your previous holiday regulars and VIPs through [targeted and automated email campaigns](#) to invite them to join you again during the holiday season.
- Give guests a reason to visit you more than once in the season, by offering special events or exclusive offerings for past guests.
- Book out your private dining space and promote it on OpenTable and your website to generate new holiday leads and bookings.
- Offer digital ordering as a way to reduce wait times, cater more takeout and delivery, and boost customer satisfaction.
- Recognize loyal guests and offer them a memorable dining experience to keep them coming back for more.
- Get seen more by those looking for their next meal and drive more bookings going into January slowdown with a digital marketing campaign.
- Add any holiday delivery options on your OpenTable profile.



Keep a pulse on industry trends in 2021 using country, state, and city-level data and insights on [OpenTable's State of the Industry hub](#) and get additional tools and tips to get back in action.

For more insights from OpenTable's Quarterly Diner Insights series, [see results from the past six surveys](#). Plus get everything you need to know to tackle the industry's latest challenges in [our resource center](#).

#### About the survey

OpenTable surveyed over 23,000 diners in the U.S. and Canada on the OpenTable network between October 4, 2021 and October 8, 2021.

