



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Agricultural  
Research  
Service

Beltsville Area  
Beltsville Agricultural  
Research Center

Beltsville, Maryland  
20705

Dear Resident:

Your household has been selected to participate in a survey called What We Eat in America, an important and interesting project sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). You may have heard about the survey on television or the radio or you may have read about it in your local newspaper.

USDA is required by law to collect information about what people eat and drink so that appropriate national food and nutrition policies can be developed. For three years beginning in 1994, we are visiting 62 communities to gather information from 16,000 people who have been scientifically selected to represent the nation as a whole. The survey will determine what kinds and amounts of foods people eat. It also will help to answer such questions as 1) Are American diets nutritionally adequate? 2) How much do Americans spend on food? 3) How are food choices changing?

We have asked Westat, Inc., a research company, to help us conduct this survey. In the next few weeks, an interviewer wearing a photo identification badge will visit your home and ask a short series of questions about you and other household members. On the basis of the answers to these questions, the interviewer may select individuals to answer additional questions about what they eat.

This survey is a vital part of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program authorized by Public law 1010445. All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Neither USDA nor other government agencies will have access to information that identifies you. Survey information will be published only in the form of statistical summaries or tabulations.

Enclosed is a brochure with more information about the survey. Please share this letter and the brochure with other members of your household. If you have any questions about the survey, please ask your interviewer, or call Westat, Inc. at 1-800-204-6656 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. EST, and ask for Frances Green. After business hours and on weekends, please leave a message and Ms. Green will return your call.

Sincerely,

*Sharon Mickle*  
Sharon Mickle  
Survey Project Officer

Enclosure

# Brochure

Your Participation  
Is Very Important  
to Us.



Both the left and right flaps open to reveal the following two pages.

# WHAT WE EAT IN AMERICA: 1994-1996

## What is this survey about?

The purpose of the survey is to find out what people eat and what they know about diet and health. This nationwide survey is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It is authorized by Public Law 101-445.

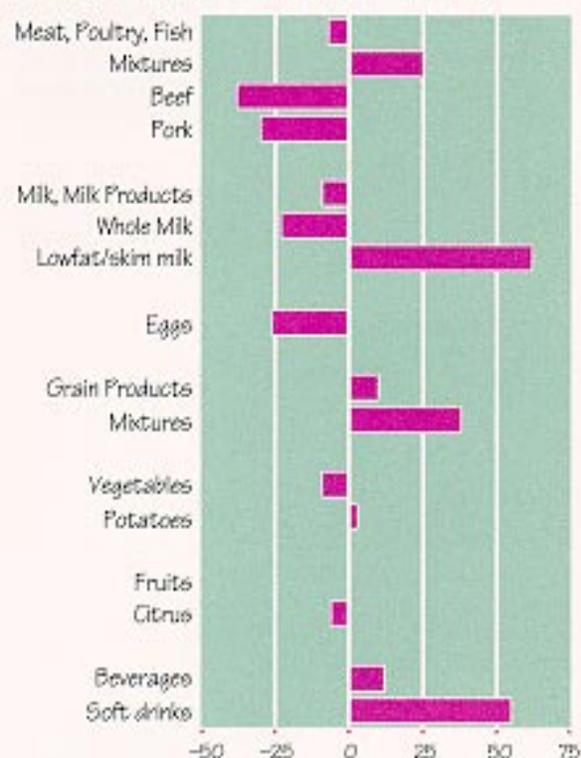
## How does USDA use the information from this survey?

It is used to help the nation in many ways. For example, it will help improve:

- nutrition education programs,
- labeling of food,
- food safety, and
- food assistance programs.

Also, survey results will be used to help USDA and the food industry assess the demand for various foods and ensure their availability.

## What are the major changes in our diets from 1977-78 to 1987-88?



## How was my household selected?

We would like to interview every household in America, but it would be far too expensive. Instead, we randomly select household addresses to represent the total population; we do not know who lives at each address.

During the next 3 years, we will visit 62 communities to gather information from 16,000 people who have been scientifically selected to represent the nation as a whole. Because your household represents many others throughout the country, your participation is very important. Participation is voluntary; however, because we scientifically selected your household, we cannot substitute another household for yours if you do not participate.

### **How do I know my answers will be kept confidential?**

We respect your privacy and are pledged to protect it. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires USDA and other Government agencies to protect personal information about individuals. The information you give will be published only in statistical summaries and tabulations such as the chart shown to the left.

### **How much time will this take?**

The initial interview will take about 10 minutes. If someone in your household is selected for an additional

interview, we estimate that each additional interview will take about 30 minutes.

### **What is Westat?**

Westat is a research company in Maryland that has conducted studies on nutrition, health, education, environmental safety, and many other subjects since 1961. USDA chose Westat to help them conduct this survey. All of the survey interviewers are locally hired and professionally trained by Westat.

### **How will I recognize the interviewer?**

The interviewer will be wearing a Westat identification badge that looks like this:

**What We Eat in America 1994-1996**

PHOTO

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Field Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**WESTAT**  
An Employee-Owned Research Corporation

**What if I have other questions?**

If you have questions about the survey, you may call Frances Green at Westat's toll-free number: 1-800-204-6656 between 9 am and 5 pm EST. After business hours and on weekends, please leave a message and Ms. Green will return your call.

If you have any comments about any part of the survey, including suggestions for reducing the time it takes to complete, please send them to USDA, Clearance Officer, OIRM, Room 404-W, Washington, DC 20250 and to OMB, Paperwork Reduction Project (OMB #0586-0014), Washington, DC 20503.

**Thank You for Your Participation in This Important Survey**



Programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to everyone regardless of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, marital status, handicap, or any other nonmerit factors.

For More Than



50 Years, the

U.S. Department of Agriculture



Has Collected

Important Information

on What



We Eat and Drink



in America.

# Your Participation is Very Important to Us.



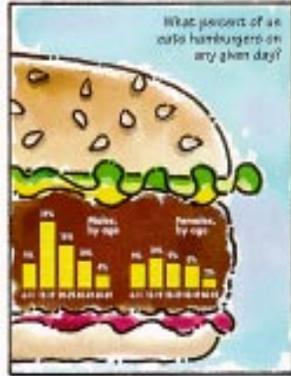
## What We Eat in America: 1994-1996

### WHY IS THIS SURVEY IMPORTANT?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is interested in what you eat and drink so it can:

- Learn more about teenage diets;
- Understand how the foods teenagers eat may be different from what the rest of the population eats;
- Learn more about teenagers' participation in public food programs, like school breakfast and lunch; and
- See how factors like working mothers, convenience foods, and fast foods affect the nutritional quality of teenage diets.

We can't talk to every teenager in the country because it would cost too much money and take loads of time. Instead, a "random sample" is selected. To be accurate, this type of sampling means that no other teenager can take your place.



Source: Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, 1987-1988



## Flyer

(Actual size 8 1/2 X 11)

# Su Participación es Muy Importante para Nosotros



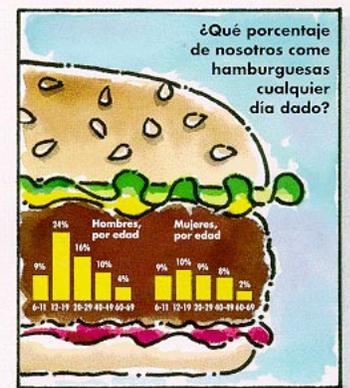
## Lo Que Comemos en América: 1994-1996

### ¿POR QUE ES IMPORTANTE ESTA ENCUESTA?

El Departamento de Agricultura de los EE. UU está interesado en saber lo que usted come y bebe de tal modo que pueda:

- Aprender más acerca de la dieta de los adolescentes;
- Comprender cómo los alimentos que los adolescentes comen pueden ser diferentes a los que come el resto de la población;
- Aprender más sobre la participación de los adolescentes en programas públicos de alimentación, tal como desayuno y almuerzo escolar; y
- Ver cómo factores tales como madres que trabajan, comidas precocinadas, y comidas de preparación rápida afectan la calidad nutricional de la dieta de los adolescentes.

No podemos hablar con cada adolescente en el país, porque costaría mucho dinero y tomaría demasiado tiempo. En lugar de esto, se selecciona una "muestra al azar". Para ser precisos, podemos decir que este tipo de muestra significa que ningún otro adolescente puede tomar su lugar.



Fuente: Encuesta Nacional de Consumo de Alimentos 1987-88



English

Spanish