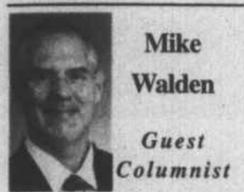


FORUM



Americans spent more on eating out than on eating in: Is that good?



Mike Walden
Guest Columnist

A milestone was set in January of this year. No, it wasn't in sports, entertainment or politics — although there may have been some records established in those areas I missed.

Instead, it was a milestone in our collective personal spending. For the first time, Americans spent more on eating out than on eating in. Specifically, we spent \$50,475 billion eating in restaurants and other food outlets that month, compared to the \$50,466 billion we paid for food in grocery stores and supermarkets.

You might think that's not much of a record because the two spending amounts are so close. But just five years ago we spent \$7 billion more per month at food stores than at restaurants. And in the early 1990s, households spent more than twice as much on food bought at

grocery stores and supermarkets than they did on restaurant food.

Interestingly, households of all income levels spend about the same percentage of their income eating out — around 5 percent — although this translates into more dollars spent by those with higher incomes.

However, younger households spend more eating out than older households, and the young also devote a higher percentage of their income eating out.

The obvious question is, "Why?" Why are we spending more money buying meals away from our homes than we are preparing and eating meals at home? The answer is based on three big socio-economic changes occurring in the last 100 years.

Development of the factory economy

A century ago the economy was centered on farming. Families worked all day on the farm. There were few restaurants to go to, and those that did exist were likely hours away.

Food that was eaten was raised on the farm. Tasks were also very gender-specific, with men tending to livestock and crops and women handling the cooking, cleaning and child-rearing.

The first shift to eating out occurred with the development of the factory economy. As mechanization came to the farm — thereby reducing the need for farm laborers — millions moved off the farm and into the city to take jobs in the emerging manufacturing sector. Most factory workers couldn't go home for lunch, so many carried their cold meat, cheese, bread, fruit and perhaps soap in pails ("lunch pails") to the factory floor.

But over time, smart-thinking merchants saw an opportunity to offer low-cost, quick meals to the workers. This was the forerunner of "fast food," and lunch became the first meal for many workers to eat out.

The labor force participation of women

As the manufacturing

economy morphed into the service economy, how and where we ate our meals changed again. This time, the change was led by women moving into the paid workforce.

The development and mass use of household appliances (washing machines, dryers, refrigerators, vacuums) reduced the time and effort needed to maintain homes. At the same time, businesses found many of the new service jobs could be performed as well by women as by men. These two factors led many women to take paying jobs in the labor force. Indeed, the labor force participation of women rose from 34 percent in 1950 to more than 60 percent today.

One result of this change was a time crunch at home. In two-adult households where both partners work and in the increasingly prevalent one-parent households, time is often the most limiting factor. Taking time to purchase food ingredients and prepare meals became a chore many households decided they couldn't do. Going out to eat or purchasing pre-

pared meals at restaurants for eating at home became a typical pattern for many families.

The rise of the millennial generation

This brings us to today and the third big trend affecting where we eat: the rise of the millennial generation. The "Millennials" — those born between 1981 and 1997 — will surpass the Baby Boomers (born from 1946 to 1964) this year as the most populous generation. Millennials have been following their own path — staying in school longer, marrying later and delaying having children. Eating out is a big part of their social life. As the Millennials have gained in numbers this decade, spending on eating out has experienced its sharpest jump ever.

Is it good that as a society we are eating out more? Some yearn for the "old days" of the family gathered around the dinner room table eating a home-cooked meal. They say something has been lost as this scene becomes rarer. While others may recognize the loss from this tra-

dition, they argue times change, and forces, like those cited above, have altered the way we eat.

I won't try to answer whether eating out more is good or bad. I will say that, with today's fast-changing technology, any trend can be easily reversed in the future. Who knows — maybe urban gardens and new cooking methods will lure families back to the kitchen and dining room table. Someday we may be lamenting the "good old days" of restaurant food and carry-out. You decide!

Dr. Mike Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor and North Carolina Cooperative Extension economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics of North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook and public policy. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences communications unit provides his You Decide column every two weeks.

Ferguson is still everywhere if you're Black



Rika Tyler
Guest Columnist

It's been 250 days since our fallen brethren Michael Brown Jr. was fatally shot in Canfield Apartments in Ferguson, Missouri, by Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson.

Wilson got rich, famous and a vacation after killing Mike Brown, a phenomenon that is occurring all too often across the U.S. In fact, an MXGM (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement) study has reported that every 28 hours a Black person is killed by police. Accountability is the key. Accountability is the answer.

As you may remember, Wilson was not indicted and the community of the Saint Louis and Saint Louis County Region still suffers for it. Ferguson's response sparked a movement and uprising from people of different congregations, ethnicities, genders and ages nationwide to stand up against this system and be a voice for black, brown, and oppressed people.

Since the killing of Michael Brown, there have been numerous similar killings and then protests, rallies, direct actions and more. Yet it will not stop. From private attorneys to the Department of Justice,



T-Dubb-O
Guest Columnist

there have been several investigations of shootings of unarmed African-Americans; yet we still cannot fully attain the transparency or accountability that we deserve from police officers. Ferguson is still everywhere if you're Black.

Therefore, we must start moving in a way to create our own narrative. This means doing our own investigations of these incidents involving officers, who are sworn to protect and serve us. The system itself also needs investigating.

In other words, we need policies that establish accountability. Accountability by police would mean them taking responsibility, being liable and answerable for these travesties of justice. Looking at what accountability actually means, can we as a nation say our police departments are truly held accountable for their fumbling of community relationships?

The constant mistakes, bad judgment, racist motives and lack of transparency would result in immediate termination in any other fields in this country. Why don't normal



morals and human standards apply to police officers?

They tell us police have the right to make it home. Well, shouldn't every citizen in this country have the right to make it home? Or how about the right to be able to sleep in your home and not be killed due to reckless gun fire by police like 7-year-old Aiyana Jones, who was killed by Detroit police during a raid at her home. Final charges against Joseph Weekley, the cop who shot her, were dismissed early this year.

We must hold these officers accountable. In the Saint Louis Region, there have been at least 10 more police involved killings since Michael Brown Jr.,

which happened in August 2014. Around the nation, there are too many names to name with similar circumstances with no transparency and no justice in the system: Kimberly Randall King, Vonderritt Myers Jr., Tamir Rice, Eric Garner and more recently Freddie Gray of Baltimore.

Fortunately there are indictments of the officers in the Freddie Gray case, but for the most part around the country, there is currently no way to hold these departments accountable. It seems as if they run the nation and we serve them instead of the other way around.

During protests in Ferguson, municipalities established many unconsti-

tutional rules. For example, they refused to wear name badges even after the Department of Justice said they were legally obligated to do so. They refused to identify themselves. They continued to use illegal unnecessary force against citizens. Ferguson Police officers even issued a five-second rule stating that a person could be subject to arrest if they stood still for longer than five seconds while protesting. A federal court ruled against it. Yet, police officers are still on the normal predator policing tactic.

The Department of Justice released a report confirming all the racial targeting that the Ferguson police department prac-

ticed against people of color and oppressed people in general. Yet, police still use shoot first tactics because there is no one holding them accountable. Ferguson is still everywhere if you are Black.

T-Dubb-O, a Hip-Hop artist, is a director for Hands Up United, a grass roots organization building toward the liberation of oppressed Black, Brown and Poor people through education, art, civil disobedience, advocacy and agriculture.

Rika Tyler, a community organizer and advocate for children, is a program director of Hands Up United. She works to ensure programs are aligned to serving the community of Ferguson and the Greater St. Louis area.

This article is part of an op-ed series on behalf of the Civil Rights Coalition on Police Reform. The coalition, convened and led by the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, is comprised of over 30 national civil and human rights organizations, faith and community leaders working to address the nationwide epidemic of police brutality and lethal shootings, claiming the lives of Black men, women and youth; and provide necessary reforms to change the culture of policing in America. For more information, please visit www.lawyerscommittee.org.