Catering to RAGBRAI® Participants

Selecting the Right Menus During RAGBRAI

The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa

GETTING READY TO FEED THE MASSES

Thousands of riders and visitors will be coming through your town during RAGBRAI and they're all going to be hungry! Some refer to the event as "eating your way across Iowa!" So what are you going to do to feed them? To help make this tough decision a bit easier, the Des Moines Register conducted a survey of a sampling of over 1,300 participants following the 2003 ride.

The objective of the survey was to garner a better understanding of the dietary preferences of participants and the locations they prefer to eat their meals during the course of the day. This information is intended to help overnight towns and pass-through towns along the route to better plan their food menus.

The following pages offer survey results to give you some idea of what participants prefer to eat and when they prefer to eat it. This would include times or distances they prefer to ride before stopping to eat, the types of foods and drink they enjoy and the places that they choose to eat at during RAGBRAI. You'll find information on each of the basic food groups as well as snacks and beverages.

Be sure to keep in mind that this booklet by no means provides hard and fast rules for what you should serve, but it should give you some good ideas about what foods will be well received and when they should be served.

Please note that some percentages may not equal 100% as some questions were left blank.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The following information should give you some basic demographics on RAGBRAI participants and ideas about the overall participant preferences. These preference percentages will be used to make further assumptions on subsequent pages.

Participant demographics

- 68% of respondents were male
- 32% of respondents were female
- Average age of respondents was 45.7
- Median age of respondents was 46.0
- 70% of respondents were over 40 years of age

Preferred starting time to begin riding

- 4% prefer to start at 5:00 a.m.
- 43% prefer to start at 6:00 a.m.
- 37% prefer to start at 7:00 a.m.
- 12% prefer to start at 8:00 a.m.
- 3% prefer to start at 9:00 a.m.
- 0% prefer to start at 10:00 a.m.

Preferred riding distance between stops

- 28% prefer to stop between 1-10 miles
- 66% prefer to stop between 11-20 miles
- 5% prefer to stop after 21+ miles

Stopping during the day

- 23% stopped in every town
- 67% stopped in most towns
- 1% stopped in bars only
- 8% stopped infrequently
- 0% did not stop at all

Vegetarians

- 5% responded yes, they consider themselves vegetarians
- 94% responded no, they do not consider themselves vegetarians

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is split into two groups: those who prefer to eat in the host town and those who prefer to put in some miles before stopping to eat.

Preference to eat breakfast

- 18% prefer to eat in the host town in the morning
- 79% prefer to eat on the road
- 2% prefer not to eat breakfast at all

Based on the above preferences and assuming a participant population of 10,000, you may anticipate that overall, 1,800 (18%) will eat breakfast in the host town.

Type of breakfast of those who prefer to eat in host towns

- 58% prefer to eat a light or continental breakfast
- 42% prefer to eat a full-course breakfast

Location to eat breakfast when eating in the host towns

- 28% prefer local eateries/restaurants
- 32% prefer civic/non-profit group vendors
- 16% prefer churches
- 3% prefer schools
- 21% prefer campground

Based on the above preferences and assuming a participant population of 10,000, you may anticipate that overall, 7,900 (79%) will eat breakfast after riding some distance.

Preferred riding distance before eating breakfast on the road

- 6% prefer to eat after riding between 1-5 miles
- 39% prefer to eat after riding between 6-10 miles
- 42% prefer to eat after riding between 11-15 miles
- 13% prefer to eat after riding between 16-20 miles

Preferred location to eat breakfast on the road

- 34% in the first pass-through town
- 20% in the second pass-through town
- 13% at a road-side vendor on the route prior to the first pass-through town
- 5% at a road-side vendor on the route after the first pass-through town
- 28% which ever has the shortest lines and minimal waiting

Doug Wells/The Des Moines Register

BREAKFAST ITEMS

Listed below are breakfast food items that are typically for sale on RAGBRAI. Assorted fruit, pancakes and breakfast burritos were by far the most popular breakfast items while cereal, pork chops and crepes were the least popular. Participants were asked to choose from the four responses: "definitely would buy", "probably would buy", "probably would not buy", or "definitely would not buy" for each item. The results for each breakfast food item are listed below.

Pancakes
- 48% definitely would buy
- 27% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Continental Breakfast
- 10% definitely would buy
- 30% probably would buy
- 38% probably would not buy
- 15% definitely would not buy

Cereal
- 5% definitely would buy
- 14% probably would buy
- 40% probably would not buy
- 34% definitely would not buy

Scrambled Eggs
- 27% definitely would buy
- 41% probably would buy
- 18% probably would not buy
- 9% definitely would not buy

Waffles
- 28% definitely would buy
- 35% probably would buy
- 21% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

Bacon/Sausage
- 32% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 14% definitely would not buy

Pork Chops
- 11% definitely would buy
- 15% probably would buy
- 31% probably would not buy
- 36% definitely would not buy

French Toast
- 27% definitely would buy
- 37% probably would buy
- 21% probably would not buy
- 10% definitely would not buy

Biscuits & Gravy
- 18% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 24% probably would not buy
- 30% definitely would not buy

Crepes
- 10% definitely would buy
- 23% probably would buy
- 34% probably would not buy
- 26% definitely would not buy

Omelettes
- 26% definitely would buy
- 37% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 12% definitely would not buy

Egg/Sausage Sandwich
- 27% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 17% probably would not buy
- 14% definitely would not buy

Breakfast Burrito

- 42% definitely would buy
- 27% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 12% definitely would not buy

Bagels

- 22% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 25% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

Assorted Fruit

- 36% definitely would buy
- 42% probably would buy
- 13% probably would not buy
- 5% definitely would not buy

Yogurt

- 17% definitely would buy
- 26% probably would buy
- 31% probably would not buy
- 20% definitely would not buy

Granola Bars

- 16% definitely would buy
- 29% probably would buy
- 32% probably would not buy
- 17% definitely would not buy

Muffins

- 17% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 27% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

LUNCH/BRUNCH

Participants eating habits for lunch/brunch vary greatly. To understand participants eating habits, they were asked when they prefer to stop for lunch/brunch, where they stop and what they like to eat when they stop. The majority of participants tend to eat lunch/brunch in the pass-through towns and most will ride at least half of the route before stopping for lunch/brunch. It is obvious that RAGBRAI participants do not wish to wait in line for lunch/brunch.

Preferred location to eat lunch/brunch on the road

- 8% prefer local eateries/restaurants in pass-through towns
- 44% prefer official vendors in pass-through towns
- 18% prefer churches in pass-through towns
- 8% prefer road-side vendors in-between pass-through towns
- 21% prefer which ever has the shortest lines and minimal waiting

Warren Taylor/The Des Moines Register

Preferred riding distance before eating lunch/brunch on the road

- 6% prefer to eat before riding half of the day's ride
- 46% prefer to eat after riding approximately half of the day's ride
- 19% prefer to eat after riding approximately 3/4 of the day's ride
- 27% prefer eating a little bit in each town, rather than a full lunch

LUNCH/BRUNCH ITEMS

Listed below are lunch/brunch food items that are typically for sale on RAGBRAI. Grilled chicken and turkey sandwiches, pasta and pizza were the most popular lunch/brunch items while fried fish fillets, veggie sandwiches and chicken nuggets were the least popular. Participants were asked to choose from the four responses: "definitely would buy", "probably would buy", "probably would not buy", or "definitely would not buy" for each item. The results for each lunch/brunch food item are listed below.

Hamburgers

- 27% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 10% definitely would not buy

Hot Dogs

- 13% definitely would buy
- 24% probably would buy
- 32% probably would not buy
- 26% definitely would not buy

Mexican

- 14% definitely would buy
- 33% probably would buy
- 31% probably would not buy
- 17% definitely would not buy

Chinese

- 8% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 40% probably would not buy
- 25% definitely would not buy

Pork Chops

- 24% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 18% definitely would not buy

Veggie Sandwiches

- 11% definitely would buy
- 20% probably would buy
- 30% probably would not buy
- 34% definitely would not buy

Baked Potato

- 20% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 13% definitely would not buy

Pizza

- 24% definitely would buy
- 38% probably would buy
- 23% probably would not buy
- 10% definitely would not buy

Pasta

- 35% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Fried Fish Fillets

- 5% definitely would buy
- 15% probably would buy
- 38% probably would not buy
- 36% definitely would not buy

Chicken Nuggets
- 4% definitely would buy
- 17% probably would buy
- 42% probably would not buy
- 32% definitely would not buy

Fried Chicken
- 6% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 37% probably would not buy
- 30% definitely would not buy

BBQ
- 21% definitely would buy
- 42% probably would buy
- 17% probably would not buy
- 14% definitely would not buy

Salad
- 19% definitely would buy
- 38% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

Grilled Chicken Sandwich
- 32% definitely would buy
- 48% probably would buy
- 10% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Turkey Sandwich
- 31% definitely would buy
- 44% probably would buy
- 13% probably would not buy
- 7% definitely would not buy

Steak Sandwich
- 28% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 18% probably would not buy
- 13% definitely would not buy

Ham Sandwich
- 15% definitely would buy
- 38% probably would buy
- 25% probably would not buy
- 16% definitely would not buy

Peanut Butter Sandwich
- 9% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 34% probably would not buy
- 29% definitely would not buy

Tacos
- 15% definitely would buy
- 33% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 19% definitely would not buy

Maid-Rites
- 20% definitely would buy
- 35% probably would buy
- 22% probably would not buy
- 18% definitely would not buy

Brats
- 22% definitely would buy
- 33% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 20% definitely would not buy

Gary Fandel/The Des Moines Register

DINNER

Almost all RAGBRAI participants prefer to eat between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Over half of the participants choose to eat at local churches with the rest split fairly equally between local restaurants and official vendors in town. Riders typically do not choose to eat dinner at schools and in the campground.

Preferred location to eat dinner in the host towns

- 17% prefer Local eateries/restaurants
- 15% prefer Civic/non-profit group vendors in town
- 52% prefer Churches
- 1% prefer Schools
- 1% prefer Campground
- 13% prefer which ever has the shortest lines and minimal waiting

Preferred time to eat dinner in the host town

- 5% prefer 4:00 p.m. or early
- 24% prefer 5:00 p.m.
- 40% prefer 6:00 p.m.
- 29% prefer 7:00 p.m. or later

DINNER ITEMS

Listed below are dinner food items that are typically for sale on RAGBRAI. Lasagna, spaghetti and grilled chicken were the most popular dinner items while veggie sandwiches, chicken nuggets and pork chops were the least popular. Participants were asked to choose from the four responses: "definitely would buy", "probably would buy", "probably would not buy", or "definitely would not buy" for each item. The results for each dinner food item are listed below.

Lasagna with Meat

- 55% definitely would buy
- 30% probably would buy
- 6% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Vegetarian Lasagna

- 24% definitely would buy
- 24% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 21% definitely would not buy

Spaghetti with Meat

- 53% definitely would buy
- 30% probably would buy
- 8% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Spaghetti without Meat

- 24% definitely would buy
- 28% probably would buy
- 27% probably would not buy
- 16% definitely would not buy

Turkey & Noodles
- 32% definitely would buy
- 31% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 13% definitely would not buy

Beef & Noodles
- 29% definitely would buy
- 32% probably would buy
- 21% probably would not buy
- 14% definitely would not buy

Hamburgers
- 22% definitely would buy
- 33% probably would buy
- 27% probably would not buy
- 14% definitely would not buy

Hot Dogs
- 10% definitely would buy
- 18% probably would buy
- 36% probably would not buy
- 31% definitely would not buy

Mexican
- 24% definitely would buy
- 37% probably would buy
- 20% probably would not buy
- 13% definitely would not buy

Chinese
- 18% definitely would buy
- 32% probably would buy
- 25% probably would not buy
- 20% definitely would not buy

Pork Chops
- 22% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 20% probably would not buy
- 17% definitely would not buy

Veggie Sandwich
- 9% definitely would buy
- 15% probably would buy
- 32% probably would not buy
- 38% definitely would not buy

Baked Potato
- 28% definitely would buy
- 40% probably would buy
- 19% probably would not buy
- 9% definitely would not buy

Pizza
- 30% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 18% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Broiled Fish Fillets
- 12% definitely would buy
- 27% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 27% definitely would not buy

Steak Sandwich
- 27% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 17% probably would not buy
- 15% definitely would not buy

Ham Sandwich
- 11% definitely would buy
- 28% probably would buy
- 34% probably would not buy
- 21% definitely would not buy

Warren Taylor/The Des Moines Register

Chicken Nuggets
- 5% definitely would buy
- 17% probably would buy
- 40% probably would not buy
- 31% definitely would not buy

Chef Salads
- 19% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 15% definitely would not buy

Maid-Rites
- 17% definitely would buy
- 31% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 20% definitely would not buy

Brats
- 19% definitely would buy
- 32% probably would buy
- 22% probably would not buy
- 22% definitely would not buy

Fried Chicken
- 15% definitely would buy
- 29% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 23% definitely would not buy

BBQ
- 28% definitely would buy
- 41% probably would buy
- 13% probably would not buy
- 12% definitely would not buy

Grilled Chicken
- 34% definitely would buy
- 45% probably would buy
- 9% probably would not buy
- 7% definitely would not buy

Turkey Sandwich
- 20% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 24% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

SNACKS ITEMS

Listed below are snack food items that are typically for sale on RAGBRAI. Bananas, home-made ice cream and home-made pie were the most popular snack items while candy, popcorn and pretzels were the least popular. Participants were asked to choose from the four responses: "definitely would buy", "probably would buy", "probably would not buy", or "definitely would not buy" for each item. The results for each snack food item are listed below.

Fresh Corn
- 48% definitely would buy
- 26% probably would buy
- 16% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Home-made Ice Cream
- 63% definitely would buy
- 23% probably would buy
- 7% probably would not buy
- 4% definitely would not buy

Frozen Fruit Bars
- 22% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Frozen Fruit Cups
- 25% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 27% probably would not buy
- 9% definitely would not buy

Sno-Cones
- 10% definitely would buy
- 21% probably would buy
- 42% probably would not buy
- 22% definitely would not buy

Candy
- 6% definitely would buy
- 17% probably would buy
- 42% probably would not buy
- 30% definitely would not buy

Cookies
- 30% definitely would buy
- 45% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Home-made Pies
- 62% definitely would buy
- 24% probably would buy
- 7% probably would not buy
- 3% definitely would not buy

Carrot Sticks/Celery Sticks
- 17% definitely would buy
- 30% probably would buy
- 32% probably would not buy
- 16% definitely would not buy

Pretzels
- 7% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 45% probably would not buy
- 21% definitely would not buy

Popcorn
- 7% definitely would buy
- 21% probably would buy
- 42% probably would not buy
- 25% definitely would not buy

Bananas
- 63% definitely would buy
- 27% probably would buy
- 4% probably would not buy
- 3% definitely would not buy

Oranges
- 29% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 24% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Watermelon
- 42% definitely would buy
- 32% probably would buy
- 14% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Apples
- 24% definitely would buy
- 38% probably would buy
- 25% probably would not buy
- 8% definitely would not buy

Grapes
- 29% definitely would buy
- 38% probably would buy
- 22% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Trail Mix
- 22% definitely would buy
- 36% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 10% definitely would not buy

Granola Bars
- 21% definitely would buy
- 34% probably would buy
- 29% probably would not buy
- 11% definitely would not buy

Energy Bars
- 20% definitely would buy
- 31% probably would buy
- 28% probably would not buy
- 16% definitely would not buy

BEVERAGES

Listed below are beverage items that are typically available on RAGBRAI. Free water was overwhelmingly requested. Sports drinks (Gatorade), lemonade and smoothies were the next most popular choices while energy drinks, coffee and mixed drinks were the least popular. Participants were asked to choose from the four responses: "definitely would buy", "probably would buy", "probably would not buy", or "definitely would not buy" for each item. The results for each beverage item are listed below.

Bottled Water

- 50% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 10% definitely would not buy

Sport Drink (Gatorade, etc.)

- 66% definitely would buy
- 22% probably would buy
- 6% probably would not buy
- 3% definitely would not buy

Energy Drink (SoBe, Red Bull

- 12% definitely would buy
- 15% probably would buy
- 37% probably would not buy
- 31% definitely would not buy

Warren Taylor/The Des Moines Register

Juice

- 26% definitely would buy
- 39% probably would buy
- 21% probably would not buy
- 9% definitely would not buy

Pop/Soda

- 20% definitely would buy
- 29% probably would buy
- 26% probably would not buy
- 21% definitely would not buy

Lemonade

- 38% definitely would buy
- 41% probably would buy
- 12% probably would not buy
- 6% definitely would not buy

Milk

- 11% definitely would buy
- 19% probably would buy
- 31% probably would not buy
- 34% definitely would not buy

Iced Tea/Sun Tea

- 22% definitely would buy
- 30% probably would buy
- 22% probably would not buy
- 22% definitely would not buy

Coffee

- 25% definitely would buy
- 18% probably would buy
- 17% probably would not buy
- 36% definitely would not buy

Smoothies

- 40% definitely would buy
- 32% probably would buy
- 15% probably would not buy
- 9% definitely would not buy

Floats

- 22% definitely would buy
- 33% probably would buy
- 24% probably would not buy
- 15% definitely would not buy

Milk Shakes

- 21% definitely would buy
- 31% probably would buy
- 27% probably would not buy
- 17% definitely would not buy

Beer

- 37% definitely would buy
- 20% probably would buy
- 14% probably would not buy
- 26% definitely would not buy

Mixed Drinks

- 14% definitely would buy
- 12% probably would buy
- 22% probably would not buy
- 47% definitely would not buy

Harry Baumert/The Des Moines Register

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

The majority of RAGBRAI participants choose not to drink any alcoholic beverages while on the route while over a fourth of all participants choose not drink alcoholic beverages in the overnight towns. The survey clear indicates that most RAGBRAI participants that choose to drink alcoholic beverages, do so responsibly.

Consumption while on the route

- 62% prefer no alcoholic beverages
- 29% prefer an occasional alcoholic beverage (1-2 drinks) in pass-though town's taverns or beverage gardens
- 5% prefer several alcoholic beverages (3-5 drinks) in pass-though town taverns or beverage gardens
- 1% prefer numerous alcoholic beverages (6 or more drinks) in pass-though town taverns or beverage gardens

Consumption while in the host or overnight town

- 27% prefer no alcoholic beverages
- 49% prefer an occasional alcoholic beverage (1-2 drinks) in the host town's taverns or beverage gardens
- 18% prefer several alcoholic beverages (3-5 drinks) in the host town's taverns or beverage gardens
- 3% prefer numerous alcoholic beverages (6 or more drinks) in the host town's taverns or beverage gardens

Alcoholic Beverage Preference

- 40% prefer light beer
- 30% prefer regular beer
- 11% prefer mixed drinks
- 1% prefer non-alcoholic beer
- 15% claim they do not drink alcoholic beverages

Jeff Thompson/The Des Moines Register

RAGBRAI "TOP 10" LISTS

Here is a quick glance at the most popular food and beverage items in each category.

BREAKFAST ITEMS

1. Assorted Fruit
2. Pancakes
3. Breakfast Burritos
4. Scrambled Eggs
5. Bacon/Sausage
6. French Toast
7. Egg/Sausage Sandwich
8. Waffles
9. Omelets
10. Bagels

LUNCH/BRUNCH ITEMS

1. Grilled Chicken Sandwich
2. Turkey Sandwich
3. Pasta
4. Hamburgers
5. Steak Sandwich
6. BBQ
7. Pizza
8. Pork Chops
9. Salad
10. Brats

DINNER ITEMS

1. Lasagna with Meat
2. Spaghetti with Meat
3. Grilled Chicken
4. BBQ
5. Pizza
6. Baked Potato
7. Steak Sandwich
8. Turkey & Noodles
9. Mexican
10. Beef & Noodles

SNACK ITEMS

1. Bananas
2. Home-made Ice Cream
3. Home-made Pies
4. Cookies
5. Fresh Corn
6. Watermelon
7. Grapes
8. Oranges
9. Apples
10. Frozen Fruit Cup

BEVERAGES ITEMS

1. Free Water
2. Sport Drink (Gatorade, etc.)
3. Lemonade
4. Smoothies
5. Bottled Water
6. Juice
7. Beer
8. Floats
9. Milk Shakes
10. Iced Tea/Sun Tea

Gary Fandel/The Des Moines Register

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Even if you have the absolute perfect menu choice, there are still a few more things you should keep in mind to be able to capitalize on your venture:

Price
Try to price your food items so that you can make a profit while still offering a reasonably priced item. For example, most riders will feel that items priced similar to McDonald's food items are reasonable.

Offer Wristband Discounts
We ask that riders with wristbands receive about a 25% discount on all food items. For example, if you are planning to charge $1.50 for a brat, offer that price to wristbanded riders as the "discount price". Allow locals to receive the discount as well. Charge all riders without a wristband 25% more, or $1.75 or $2.00 for that same brat. We hope this practice encourages all riders to register and receive wristbands.

Place your Food Stand on the Route
Even if you have the best food in town, riders will be unlikely to leave the route to find it. Also, give riders a reason to stop for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Providing entertainment and activities near your food stand might get more riders off their bikes to enjoy what you have to offer.

Advertise
Let riders know what items you will be serving and where you will be serving. Advertising in the overnight town tabloid is one of the best ways to attract participants to your location. Be sure to let them know if it is on the route or shuttle route and include a map or directions since most will not be familiar with the towns that RAGBRAI visits.

Follow Iowa Health Laws
There are several ordinances you should be familiar with. Refer to the RAGBRAI Pass-through or Overnight Handbook for more information on Iowa health laws.

QUESTIONS?

We hope you find the survey result information helpful. If you have any questions, please contact the RAGBRAI office at 1-800-I-RIDE-IA (1-800-474-3342) or via e-mail at info@ragbrai.org.