

Food and flat-boxed furniture: A third of Ikea shoppers come to eat

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Dive Brief:

- Ikea's in-store cafes have grown in popularity so much so that an estimated 30% of store visits are made just to dine there, [according to the Hartman Group](#). The Swedish retailer already has pop-up restaurants in London, Paris and Oslo, and is now reportedly considering opening stand-alone cafes in major cities around the world.
- The combination of in-store café and home furnishings goes back to the very first Ikea store, opened in Sweden in 1958. Since then, dining on the exotic Swedish food has been seen as a powerful element of Ikea's retail experience.
- Ikea is increasingly focusing on food culture and sustainability. In addition to their popular cafés, the retailer offers an array of packed, frozen and refrigerated CPG food and beverage options. On the retail side, their products can help consumers grow, cook, serve and store food.

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Dive Insight:

Ikea was scooping gravy-covered Swedish meatballs onto furniture shoppers' plates decades before the first Starbucks opened in a Target. If dining in a retail destination is

now a popular trend, Ikea can be credited as one of its founding fathers.

Like many forward-thinking ideas, this one came out of necessity. There are currently 48 Ikea stores in the US, making the massive furniture store a destination that requires a mini-road trip for many consumers. "We've always called the meatballs 'the best sofa-seller,'" Gerd Diewald, who runs food operations in U.S.-based Ikea stores, [told Fast Company](#). "Because it's hard to do business with hungry customers." Since Ikea stores first started popping up in the U.S., their food and beverage options have only expanded to meet consumer demand.

What once was a novel concept is now an exploding retail trend. [Amazon, Walmart and Target](#) have all embraced a focus on food and beverage as key drivers of sales. Upscale retailers Nordstrom, Ralph Lauren and Tommy Bahama also have their own restaurants and cafes. As more consumers can shop from their computers, there needs to be a motivation to leave the house to actually go to a brick and mortar shop. In-store dining is proving to be a powerful enough attraction that is spreading to more retailers' strategies. Expect to see more food offered in stores, not less.

Consumers are increasingly drawn to Ikea's cafeteria-style menu, setting, and take-home options. [Exotic food profiles](#) are a popular food trend right now, which plays perfectly into Ikea's offerings, like gravlax salmon and lingonberry jam. [Sustainability and transparency](#) are also important to consumers. Ikea is aiming to [halve its food waste by 2020](#), which will save money and reduce its environmental footprint. The retailer also claims to offer at least one organic meal option at each stores, as well as an organic children's meal.