

# Food Choices and Preferences of College Students

Zhuoyi Deng<sup>1, a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The State University of New York at Stony Brook, US

<sup>a</sup>Zhuoyi.Deng@stonybrook.edu

## Abstract

In my research, I would focus on the food choice and preferences of college students. Therefore, I use the dataset made by BoraPajo. The dataset includes information on food choices, nutrition, preferences, childhood favorites, and other information from the students of Mercyhurst University. There is a total of 126 responses. In the next six pages, I will separate to answer questions by using figures. Do college students care about the calories in food? How important of consuming calories per day? If there are two kinds of food, which one do they prefer? Which kind of type of food do they like to eat? What are their eating habits?

## Keywords

Calories; Food Preference; Students.

## 1. Introduction

In the supermarkets, we always see some vegetables and fruits labeling "organic." They usually have a higher price than normal's. Even this, people would like to buy them. What causes this phenomenon? From my perspective, With the fast development of techniques, more and more people not only take care of working and studying but also pay attention to their diet. To be more specific, when people buy goods, they would look through the ingredient list primarily and then consider other factors. Nutrients and calories would be the most important factors of consideration.

## 2. Data Graphics

### 2.1. Do College Students Know About the Calories in the Food Which They Eat Daily?

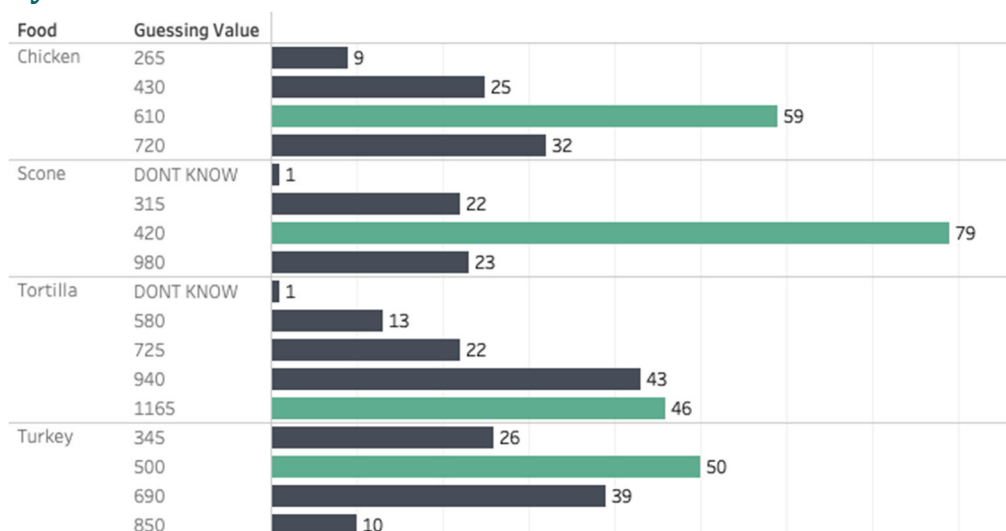
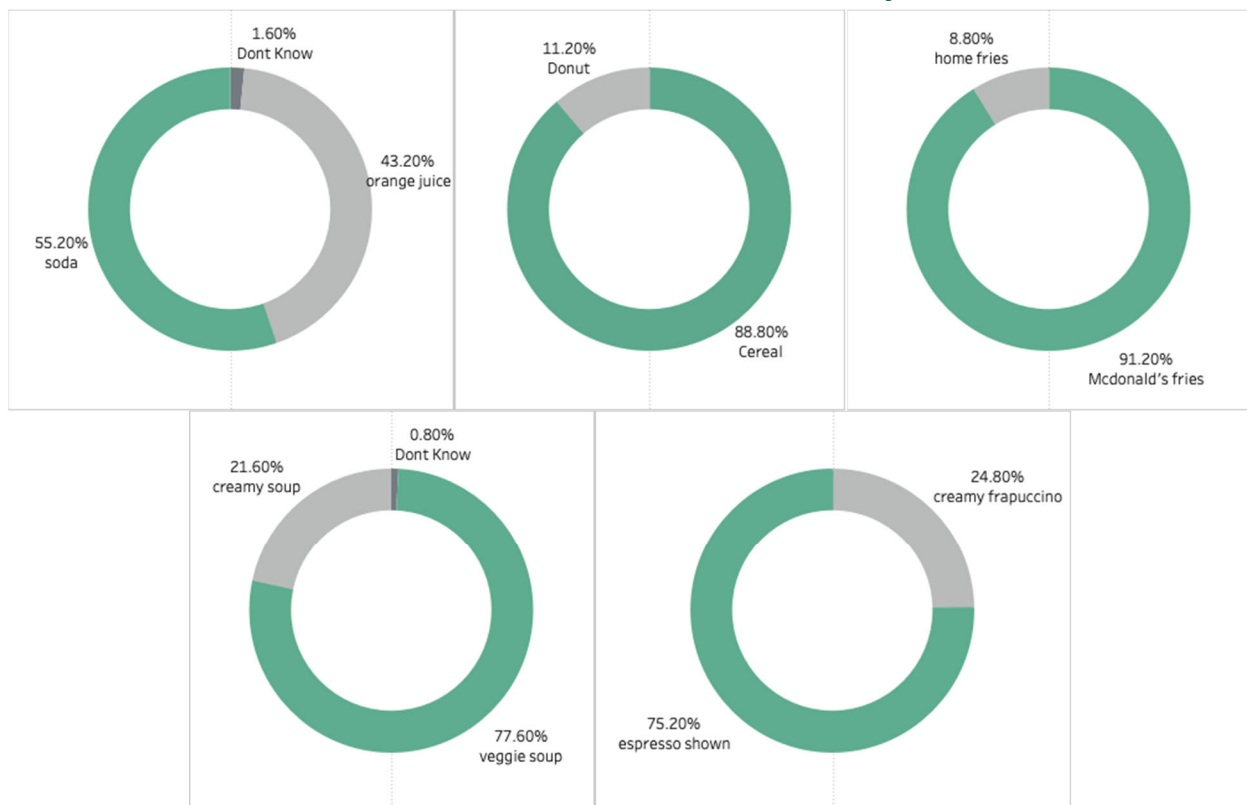


Figure 1. List of college students' guessing value of calories for several categories of foods

In this graph, I want to discuss whether college students know about the calories in the food they eat in their daily lives. The participants need to guess calories in chicken piadina, calories in a scone from Starbucks, calories in a burrito sandwich from Chipolte, and calories in Panera Bread Roasted Turkey and Avocado BLT, and then select the most approach one from the four choices. The answers are chicken - 610cal, scone - 420cal, Tortilla - 940cal, Turkey - 690cal. Most people select the exact calories value of "chicken" and "scones." For the "tortilla," most participants are confused about the two choices, which are 940cal and 1165cal. The difference is not large. For "turkey," more participants would like to choose 500cal as the answer. From this graph, I think most college students know the calories of food they eat daily. According to the data, college students know about the approximate calories range of each food. Even in some parts, some people do not choose the exact answer. Most of them will choose the approached answer. The food calories of different brands may be uniform. So it could be acceptable.

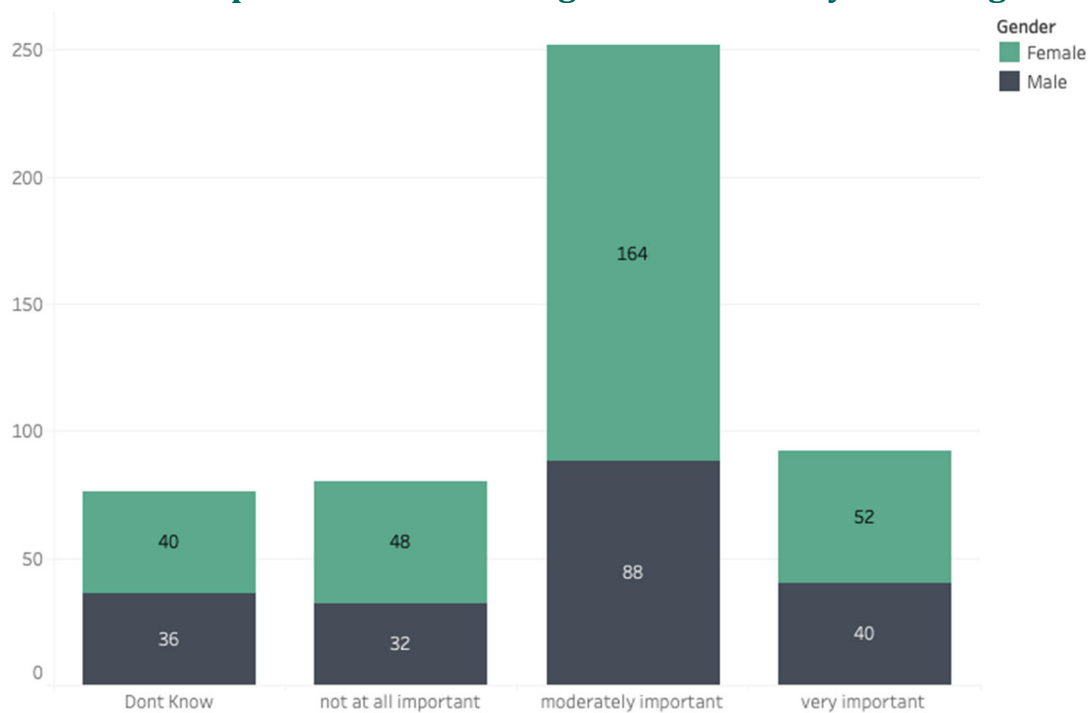
**2.2. If There Are Two Kinds of Food, Which One Do They Prefer?**



**Figure 2.** College students' preference for two kinds of food

These five pie charts help me to have basic background information of participants eating preferences. Specifically, participants are shown two types of foods and asked which food they associate with the keywords. For example, the keyword of the first chart is breakfast. Then, participants need to select one of them from cereal and donut. The remaining keywords (from left to right, from top to down) are drink, fries, soup, and coffee. From these data, I could get the habits of college students. For instance, most college students would like to drink soda and eat cereal in the morning.

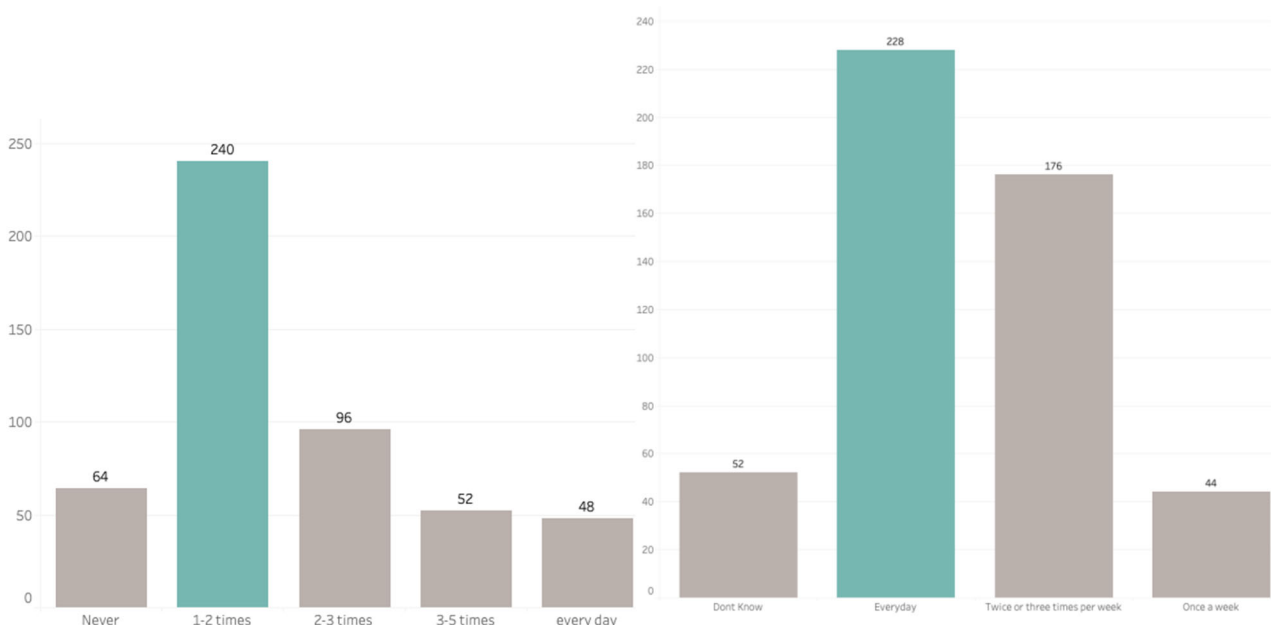
### 2.3. What Is the Important of Consuming Calories Per Day for College Students?



**Figure 3.** Different levels of concern about the daily consumed calories between male and female

In this chart, participants are asked about the importance level of consuming calories per day. According to the graph, consuming calories per day is moderately crucial for college students. I use different colors to represent genders. By the data, females attach importance to the consumption of calories. For example, in the column "moderately important," the number of females is double for the number of males.

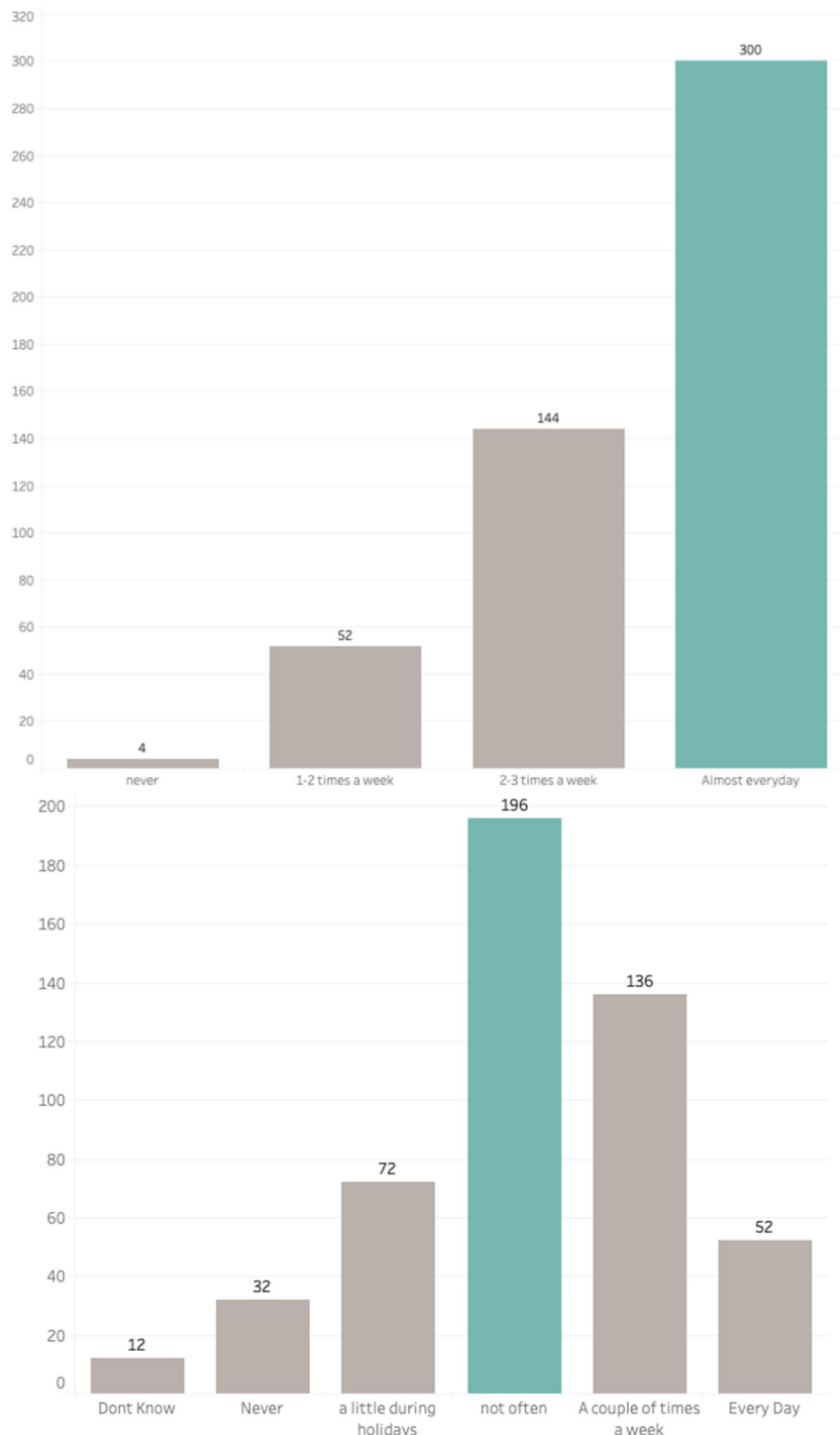
### 2.4. What Is the Frequency of Eating Out in A Typical Week? (Left)How Often Do You Exercise in A Regular Week? right)



**Figure 4.** College Students’ frequency of eating out each week and frequency of exercising each week

In these two bar charts, participants show their frequency of eating out in a typical week and exercise frequency. From the first graph, most college students would eat outside once or twice per week. From the second graph, we can see that most students exercise every day. Except for self metabolism, exercise is an essential factor for calorie consumption. This chart is connected to the third question on the last page. This data makes the conclusion, which is consuming calories per day is moderately essential for college students, more reliable. In these two graphs, we could have a deeper understanding of college students' eating and motor habits.

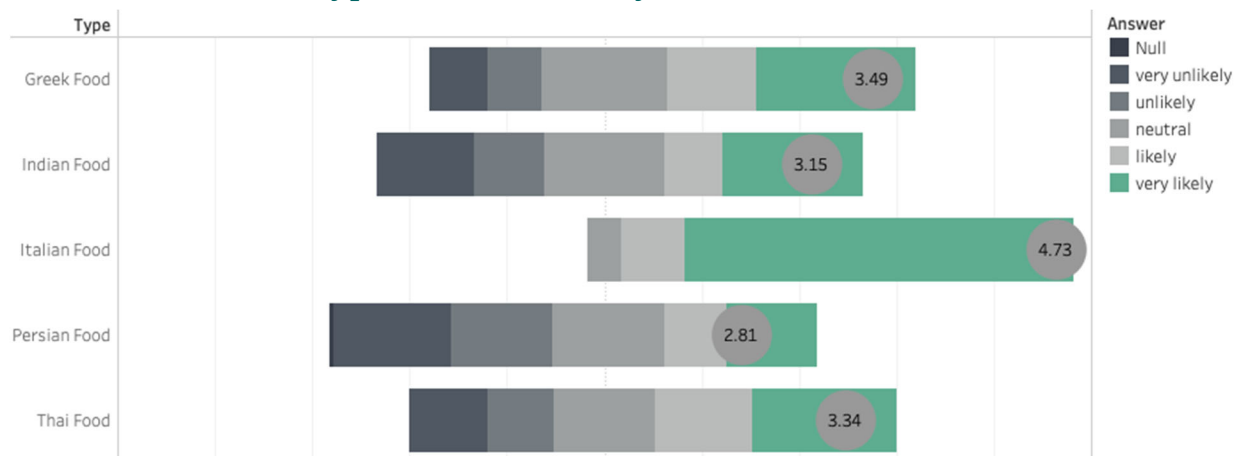
**2.5. How Often Do College Students Cook? (Left) How Often Do Their Parents Cook?(Right)**



**Figure 5.** College Students' frequency of cooking and their parents' frequency of cooking

In these two bar charts, participants show the cooking frequency and their parents cooking frequency. For college students, They are not often to cook by themselves. However, most of their parents would cook every day. We can easily connect this information and make a conclusion. The parents of college students cook in a high frequency, and students eat at home most of the time.

## 2.6. Which Kind of Type of Food Do They Like to Eat?



**Figure 6.** College students' eating preferences for different categories of food

In the divergent bar chart, participants give scores (1-5, 1 is very unlikely, 5 is very likely.) of each type of food. The kinds of cate include Greek food, Indian food, Italian food, Persian food, and Thai food. On the graph, I compare all these five types of food and label the average score for each type. According to the chart, Italian food is the most popular food for college students. On the other hand, college students have the lowest interest in Persian Food.

## 3. Conclusion

From my research and data graphs, college students care about the calories in the food and their consumption of calories per day, especially for females. In addition to self-metabolism, they do some exercise every day to consume calories. Most college students eat outside once or twice per week. The frequency is not high. I think the main reason is that most of the students' parents cook each day. Therefore, although students do not cook frequently, the frequency of eating at home is high. Besides, most participants like to eat Italian food and have a low interest in Persian Food. According to this research, I have a deeper understanding of college students' diet preferences and habits.

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