

Consumer Trends in Specialty Beverages

We surveyed 1,289 consumers to understand today's specialty drink habits and what influences purchasing decisions. The findings show that taste, value, and unique flavors are the biggest drivers of demand when consumers choose specialty beverages.

Consumers also see specialty drinks as an affordable treat, with promotions like discounts, free samples, and loyalty rewards playing a major role in encouraging people to try new drinks.



Why is this *important*?

Specialty drinks have evolved beyond simple refreshments—they've become part of how consumers reward themselves, recharge, and explore new flavors. With 57% of consumers saying they buy specialty drinks as a treat, brands have an opportunity to position beverages as small indulgences that feel worth the price.

The results also show that value and promotions strongly influence purchasing behavior. While consumers are willing to spend on specialty drinks, 71% say discounts or deals make them more likely to try something new, followed closely by free samples and loyalty offers. At the same time, refreshing taste, value, and flavor innovation remain top priorities. For brands competing in this space, balancing quality, affordability, and excitement is key to driving trial and repeat purchases.

When you want a specialty drink, which of these places are you most likely to think of first? Select one.



40%

of respondents chose **Starbucks** as the first place they think of for specialty drinks.

Other responses included: Somewhere else (13%), Dunkin' (9%), Convenience store (6%), McDonald's (6%), Sonic (5%), Dutch Bros (4%), Grocery store (4%), Caribou Coffee (1%), Swig (1%), Taco Bell (1%), and I do not buy specialty drinks (9%).

The *top 3 things* consumers look for in a specialty drink are:

1. Refreshing taste (54%)

2. Good value for the price (50%)

3. New or interesting flavors (40%)

Other priorities include caffeine or energy boosts (35%), low or no sugar options (32%), customization options (31%), fruit flavors (20%), toppings or add-ins (15%), drinks that look fun or colorful (12%), easy to drink with a meal (8%), none of these (7%), and something else (4%).



57%

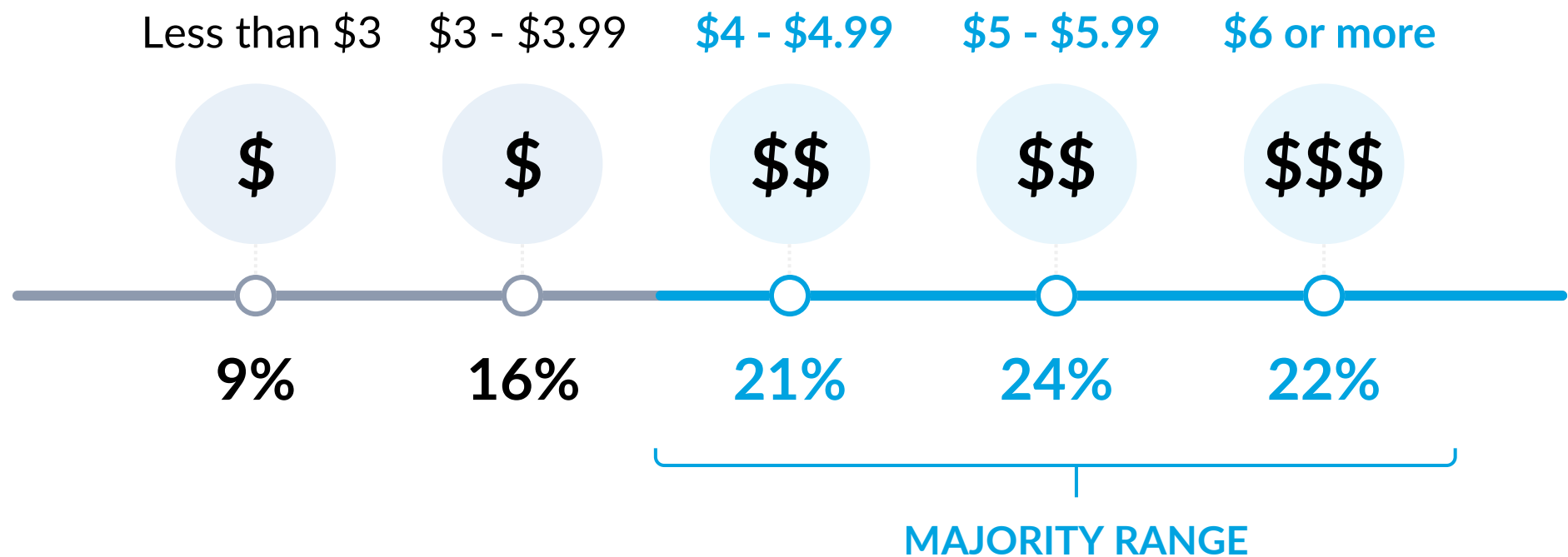
of respondents say the main reason they buy specialty drinks is to

treat themselves.

Far exceeding the other reasons, like: to get energy or caffeine (12%), to cool down or feel refreshed (11%), to try a new flavor (4%), to replace coffee or soda (3%), because I saw it advertised or promoted (3%), to go with a meal or a snack (1%), because someone recommended it (1%), and I do not buy specialty drinks (8%).



What is the most you would usually pay for a specialty drink?
Select one.



Most consumers are willing to pay between \$4 and \$6+ for a specialty drink.

67% of respondents say they would typically spend at least \$4.

The *top 3 reasons* consumers are more likely to try a new specialty beverage are:

1. Discount or deal (71%)

2. Free sample (61%)

3. Loyalty points or app offer (48%)

Other reasons include: brand I already like (29%), recommendation from a friend or family member (29%), limited-time flavor (28%), in-store sign or menu photo (20%), social media post (8%), and nothing would make me more likely (5%).



SPECIALTY BEVERAGE OPINIONS

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Our solutions are designed to streamline operations, maintain brand standards, and provide actionable insights to help our clients enhance their CX. With over 40 years of CX expertise, we excel in providing our clients with top-notch CX, customer surveys, mobile forms, mystery shopping, as well as operational and compliance audit solutions.

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