

# More men taking grocery cart for a spin

**Whether hit by unemployment or expressing a hunter-gatherer instinct, enough men are hitting the supermarket to make manufacturers change their marketing strategies.**

BY EMILY BRYSON YORK  
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**CHICAGO** — Danny Meyer, 35, began doing most of the household grocery shopping when his fiancée started graduate school.

Meyer goes to Whole Foods for produce and specialty items, Jewel-Osco for staples and Trader Joe's when he needs to really stock up. He says he is not particularly brand-loyal and is susceptible to impulse buys.

"I walk in and go with the flow of the store, going aisle by aisle," he said. "I like to walk through all the aisles even if I don't think I need anything there, because sometimes something will catch my eye."

Meyer is part of a growing contingent of men taking over grocery duty. Experts say the trend has been building slowly for decades. But the recession hit men disproportionately with layoffs and left many of them home to manage the household.

The nation's biggest food and personal-products manufacturers are taking notice, attempting to market products and adjust store layouts to cater to men.

It's a paradigm shift for the \$560 billion retail food industry which has patently referred to the primary customer as "she," focusing marketing and advertising firepower on women, and mothers in particular — sometimes making fun of dads in the process.

The female focus isn't lost on Meyer, who works as a brand manager for Bimbo Bakeries USA.

"It does kind of bother me that the focus seems to be toward moms and women in general," he said. "It seems obvious the target should represent more people."

Men ages 18 to 50, including Generation X and millen-

to do the shopping — or at least tag along.

"I don't live with a girlfriend or anything," said Judson Eakin, a 25-year-old concert promoter. "But even if I did, I wouldn't just send her" to grocery shop.

Eakin splits his shopping between nearby markets, bigger runs to Aldi for staples and trips to Jewel for higher-end items. He eats at home every day and considers cooking "a big hobby," searching [FoodNetwork.com](http://FoodNetwork.com) for recipes with five-star reviews for inspiration.

According to consumer-research firm GfK MRI and an ESPN report, 31 percent of men nationwide were the primary household grocery shoppers in 2011, up from 14 percent in 1988.

Some estimates are higher. A nationwide survey of 1,000 fathers conducted by Yahoo and market research firm DB5 released early this year said 51 percent were the primary grocery shoppers in their household. Of that group, 60 percent said they were the primary decision-makers regarding consumer package goods, which includes packaged food.

"We're seeing more men doing grocery shopping and more young dads working with their kids as a way to bond with them at home," said Phil Lempert, a supermarket consultant. "It's very different from the whole metrosexual phenomenon of six, seven, eight years ago, but a much more down-to-earth (approach), not trying to show off, but trying to be part of the family."

Brad Harrington, executive director of the Center for Work and Family at Boston College, said "men on the homefront are where women in the workplace were 30 years ago" in terms of how they are portrayed

on television and even in



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Daniel Ing looks over squash at a Whole Foods in Ann Arbor, Mich., in October.

locations like a bottom shelf or the end of an aisle, Jones said. Men had little patience searching for lotion and body wash, especially when weaving through contingents of women and teenage girls.

The man aisle puts all men's products, including P&G competitors, in one place, with shelf displays and even small TV screens to guide men to the appropriate skin-care items. Jones said the tests have gone well, with men spending more time in the aisles and, ultimately, more money.

On the food side, Barry Calpino, vice president of breakthrough innovation at Kraft Foods, said the company selected several products to market to men in 2011, with solid results. The Northfield, Ill.-based company developed, packaged and marketed **MiO** bottles of liquid flavor droplets to make water more enticing.

"Guys, when it comes to shopping and cooking, they love to customize and add their own personal touch."

Men's personal-care products were scattered across different aisles, often in subprime

tions, coupons and product demonstrations.

Calpino said the successes of **MiO**, Philly Cooking Creme and other brands are case studies Kraft is presenting to the entire company, looking for other products for which male-themed marketing makes sense.

Grocers also are looking for ways to get into the mix. A spokeswoman for Jewel said the chain is watching the trend toward more male shoppers but hasn't made any major changes. A Safeway spokeswoman said the company has man-friendly marketing in the works but declined to provide specifics.

Other chains have seen a good share of men for some time. Maggie Bahler, executive marketing coordinator for Whole Foods Market's Midwest region, said the chain's shoppers are about half men, although the company hasn't been tracking shopping habits by gender over time.

But, she said, the chain has never marketed specifically to men or women.

Men's shopping tendencies are causing food-makers to look at a different set of opportunities, as men appear to be less hurried in stores and more prone to impulse purchases than women.

"The mindset has been that she shops, she really knows every inch of the store, she is really organized, has a list, is in a huge hurry," Calpino said. "We talk to a lot of these millennial guys about shopping, and the biggest headline is they're not as structured, not as hurried, much more experimental, more adventurous."

Stephen Hahn-Griffiths, chief strategy officer with Leo Burnett in Chicago, said men are slightly more inclined to shop around for the best prices than are women.

"Though men are very mission-driven, very grab-and-go, get-it-done, it's not at the expense of paying a price premium," he said. "They are very driven by finding best prices before making purchases, and they're not going to jettison quality either."

Calpino said, adding that the interest also extends to beverages.

The brand is on track to do more than \$100 million in sales its first year; a key new-product benchmark. Much of that success, Calpino said, "is attributable to the fact that we didn't launch it in the traditional way, thinking that she buys it, takes it home and he drinks it."

Kraft also scored with men in 2011 by way of its Philadelphia Cooking Creme, Calpino said, which he attributed in part to displaying it near chicken.

"We had a lot of guys who impulsively bought that product, thinking, 'What can I mix with chicken? I want to try something different,'" he said. Kraft sees opportunity here with its sauces and dressings, which are easy add-ons to give meals a twist. Sales volumes of Philly Cooking Creme were 20 percent above expectations in 2011, the company said, after a \$35 million investment in advertising, in-store promo-