

FRIDAYS AT FOUR

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E-commerce sales are outpacing the growth in retail sales. Estimated e-commerce sales for the fourth quarter of 2003, were \$17.2 billion, an increase of 25 percent from the fourth quarter of 2002. Total retail sales for that same quarter were an increase of 6.2 percent.

The latest label that is now hot out there is Fair Trade. Natural food chains are selling fair-trade bananas. Other products that some day will be added to the list include spices, sugars, grains, and fresh cut flowers. A California firm Transfair USA certifies fair-trade products.

Mendocino County voters made this county the first one in the nation to ban genetically modified foods.

Milk and milk products which includes organic milk was the fastest growing specialty food segment, with sales up 48 percent between 2001 and 2003.

You have probably noticed a large growth in the prepared meals to take home centers in your grocery stores. The percent change in this category from 1999-2003 was 537.5%. Take home meals offered at events. Could that be the next trend?

Here's an interesting nugget. The average ATM transaction in 2003 was \$85.00. And gift cards were a huge leader this year, with consumers reporting they would allocate 11.5 percent of their spending to gift cards and the average spend of \$80.45 per shopper.

A new wristband from ViVO tech has been used at a waterpark. Customers load a certain dollar amount onto the contactless chip and wave it at readers to pay for concessions. No need to worry about carrying a wallet and keeping it dry all day. (Contact us at our web address <http://www.gfstrategies/> for more information.

Finally, we are also sending some highlights from a new book about selling that you will find interesting. The author shares some of his insights on the new world of selling.

Enjoy and send us your comments on Friday at Four.

And remember if you have a need for finding ways to create or increase revenues from food service at your venue, contact us and we will look forward to working with you.

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