



Consumers' affinity for bold snacking continues, although the need for heat and savory treats takes the forefront.



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Forward Thinking: Snack Down

Spicy and food-inspired flavors, as well as vegetable-based snacks, are driving snack activity, while popcorn gets an upgrade.

The art of snacking has been taken up a notch with recent flavor launches. But before we take a look at the now, let's take a brief look back at "Forward Thinking: The Rise of Snacking" article^a, which appeared in the September 2019 edition. At the time, consumer demand centered around bold, culinary-inspired flavors. Consumers' affinity for bold snacking continues, although the need for heat and savory treats takes the forefront.

According to the Harris Poll^b, 86 % of packaged snack food buyers currently buy salty snacks, compared to 62% that buy sweet snacks and 52% that buy hot snacks. Sixty four percent of global consumers believe indulgent snacking is acceptable as part of a healthy diet, while 51% indicate they expect snacks to offer a nutritional boost, according to FMCG Gurus' Top Trends for 2020 report^c. Snacking was already popular, however, the

^aPage 18; https://perfumerflavorist.texterity.com/perfumerflavorist/september_2019

^btheharrispoll.com/brand-tracking/spicy-snacks-adweek-2021/

^cfmcggurus.com/blog/fmcg-gurus-high-protein-snacks-are-growing-in-popularity/

pandemic propelled snacking and made it even more prominent. Research from the NPD Group^d revealed that the average U.S. consumer ate 37% more snack foods and treats while feeling sad or depressed during the pandemic than they did in 2019.

Additionally, boredom followed as a reason to snack, and consumers increased snack consumption by 33%. IRI's^e data showed similar findings, with 25% of consumers reporting snacking more frequently in 2020, while 23% said they were snacking less frequently. On average, consumers were eating a standard 2.7 snacks per day. However, more consumers reported consuming more than five snacks per day. Spicy and food-inspired flavors, as well as poultry and vegetable-based snacks, are driving snack activity, while popcorn gets an upgrade.

Just the Numbers

North American sales of savory snacks, including chips, popcorn and pretzels climbed to \$56.9 billion in 2020, an 11% increase from the previous year, according to Euromonitor International^f.

Roasted/toasted savory snacks ranked as the largest flavor segment with a market share of more than 36% in 2020^g and is expected to remain dominant due to high product demand. The spice flavor segment is also anticipated to register the fastest CAGR from 2021 to 2028.

^dwww.npd.com/news/press-releases/2021/mood-matters-when-it-comes-to-snacking-and-treating-ourselves/

^ewww.iriworldwide.com/en-us/insights/blog/what-to-expect-next-in-cpg-snacking

^fwww.euromonitor.com/sweet-and-savory-snacks

^gbit.ly/2XMtL2S



PepsiCo dropped a limited-edition Mtn Dew Flamin' Hot beverage inspired by its sibling brand Cheetos, which "combines the sweet, citrus flavor of Dew with the spicy, kicked up flavor of Flamin' Hot for the most extreme taste experience yet"; courtesy of PepsiCo, Inc.



Dinamita Flamin' Hot Queso Flavored Tortilla Chips are a limited-edition flavor featuring a piquant Mexican-style cheese; courtesy of Frito-Lay.

E-commerce is gaining traction in snack sales, with 60% of the snacking growth over the past year being in the e-commerce channel, according to IRI^h. Twelve percent of overall snack sales are happening online already for the last 52 weeks ending May 16, 2021.

Snacks Are on Fire

Spicy foods and snacks continue to be on trend and brands are accommodating the consumer demand with collaborations and innovative launches.

In the spring, Goldfish and Frank's RedHot collaborated on a limited-edition hot sauce-flavored cracker. In September, Goldfish released the limited-edition Jalapeño Popper and partnered with '90s classic denim brand, JNCO, on a wide-legged pant that contains pockets to fit a bag of Goldfish.

Doritos released the Xtra Flamin' Hot Nacho and brought back the Cheetos Flamin' Hot Spicy Pepper Puffs. Dinamita Flamin' Hot Queso flavored tortilla chips featuring a piquant Mexican-style cheese.

Keeping the temperature rising, Pringles launched Wavy Pineapple Habanero chips with "sweet and tangy flavors of pineapple and smoky habanero peppers." In addition, Pringles introduced Scorchin' Sour Cream and Onion chips that "contain a hint of spice that builds over time, due to its inclusion of smoky cayenne pepper."

^hwww.iriworldwide.com/en-us/insights/blog/invest-in-snacking-e-commerce-now



Pringles launched Wavy Deep Fried Pickle and partnered with Wendy's on the Wendy's Spicy Chicken limited-edition potato chip flavor; courtesy of The Kellogg Company.

Steering away from the chip train, but staying spicy, Blue Diamond introduced Xtremes Almonds made with real peppers in three flavors, Cayenne Pepper (hot), Ghost Pepper (hotter), and Carolina Reaper (hottest).

PepsiCo dropped a limited-edition Mtn Dew Flamin' Hot beverage-inspired by its sibling brand Cheetos, which "combines the sweet, citrus flavor of Dew with the spicy, kicked up flavor of Flamin' Hot for the most extreme taste experience yet." With the new beverage, Mtn Dew introduced a Mtn Dew Flamin' Hot capsule collection with Broken Promises. Marble Slab Creamery has received a lot of press for its Cheetos Flamin' Hot Ice Cream, which combines sweet cream ice cream with crushed Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

Food-Inspired Flavors

Flavorists are having a field day creating innovative snack flavors inspired by condiments and fast food. Pickles and chicken flavors are on trend. Pringles added Wavy Deep Fried Pickle, while Doritos relaunched Tangy Pickle as well as Tangy Ranch.

For the summer, Lay's dropped three new limited-edition flavors, Chile Mango, Summer BLT and Wavy Jerk Chicken. Pringles partnered with Wendy's on the chain's spicy chicken sandwich which went viral in early 2020 upon its debut. The Pringles Wendy's Spicy Chicken potato chip flavor "mixes the fiery spice blend with a perfectly crunchy and extremely convenient bite."

Inspired by breakfast, lunch and dinner, BLD Bars launched four flavors, Country

Ranch, Everything Bagel, Margarita Lime and Smoky BBQ. According to the brand, the nutritional bars are made with simple ingredients that are plant-based and gluten-free.

Cheez-It debuted an "Extra" line flavors including Extra Toasty Cheddar Jack, Extra Toasty Extra Cheesy and Extra Toasty Extra Spicy. To celebrate Cheez-Its' 100th anniversary, the brand teamed up with James Beard Award-winning chef, Stephanie Izard, and her Sugargoat bakery in Chicago. Infused with a whole box of Cheez-Its, the layered Cheez-It cake features "sweet and tangy cheddar caramel, creamy strawberry Nesquik buttercream, cheddar caramel buttercream and Cheez-It crunch."



In honor of Cheez-Its' 100th anniversary, the brand teamed up with James Beard Award-winning chef, Stephanie Izard, on a limited-run of Cheez-Itennial Cakes; courtesy of The Kellogg Company.



Scottie Pippen partnered with chef R.C. Mills on the debut of Husk popcorn in six unique flavor combinations.; courtesy of Husk Organics.

Eat Your Veggies

Better-for-you snacks continue to gain traction with an increase in vegetable-based snacks. For example, the use of plant-based claims for global food and beverage launches rose at a CAGR of 37% from 2016 to 2020, according to Innova Market Insights data¹.

Sensible Portions by the Hain Celestial Group, Inc. has extended its Garden Veggie line with Garden Veggie Puffs in three flavors, Screamin' Hot, Sour Cream & Onion and White Cheddar. The puffs are formulated with non-GMO ingredients, contain no artificial flavors or preservatives, are baked and contain 30% less fat.

Spudsy has launched sweet potato fries made with the brand's signature sweet potato flour. The fries are vegan, gluten and grain-free and made from non-GMO ingredients. There are three varieties available, Cheese Fry, Hot Fry and Vegan Ranch Fry.

Another honorable mention is PeaTos addition to its crunchy tortilla-style chip link with Nacho Cheese, Zesty Ranch and Vegan Fiery Nacho. Like the brand's other snacks, the products are formulated with "peas and clean ingredients."

While it seems many brands want to stay true to better-for-you roots, taking a detour to add heat-inspired options is a must to retain consumer interest and excitement.

Popcorn Is Poppin'

Popcorn is a mainstay, beloved snack and movie staple. Like other snacks, better-for-you formulas are appearing in popcorn with vegan and plant-based

ingredients. In addition, formulas and flavors are getting more sophisticated. Three Dads Superfood Popcorn, which uses nutritional yeast, also known as "Nooch," has added both Nacho and Everything But the Bagel flavors to its vegan popcorn line.

Bringing plant-based to the next level, six-time NBA champion, Scottie Pippen partnered with chef R.C. Mills on the debut of Husk popcorn, made with non-GMO, organic and all-natural ingredients. The vegan popcorn is available in six unique flavor combinations, including Cayenne and Ginger, Kale and Broccoli, as well as Matcha and Coconut Water. This line merges both trends of better-for-you and savory eats with an added dash of celebrity.

Start-up brand Opopop debuted the first-of-its-kind Flavor Wrapped Popcorn Kernels made for the microwave. The pre-flavored, individually wrapped popcorn kernels are offered in six signature flavors, half of which leaning savory with options like Chedapeno, Maui Heat and Salted Umami.

Snacks Forge Ahead

Snacking shows no signs of slowing down and consumers' thirst for savory and salty snacks continues. Spicy and food-inspired flavors continue to evolve, giving flavorists and manufacturers creative license to develop fun and limited-edition flavors. Like all consumer packaged goods, better-for-you snacks are trending. Poultry and vegetable-based snacks, as well as sophisticated popcorn formulas and flavors, are driving new product launches. Health, convenience and on-the-go behavior will drive snack innovation as the world acclimates to normalcy and returns to in-person school and work.

¹bit.ly/3CMFKZI