



*Snacking accounts for more than 20% of global food and beverage sales, according to data from Circana.*



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## Forward Thinking: Snacks Without Borders

Brands are innovating with cheese-flavored combinations, spicy flavors influenced by condiments and hot sauces, global-inspired flavors, and meat-based snacks.

Snacking is a global phenomenon that consumers love. According to IGD's Global Convenience Trends Report 2025<sup>1</sup>, the global snacking industry will surpass \$1 trillion by 2029. Snacking accounts for more than 20% of global food and beverage sales, with consumers under 40 leading the charge across all major regions, according to Circana<sup>2</sup>. Nearly half of Americans (48.8%) snack three or more times a day, a 2.7% increase year-over-year, with younger demographics (ages 18-44) driving growth<sup>3</sup>. Mondelez International's 2024 State of Snacking Report<sup>4</sup> revealed that 91% of global consumers snack daily, and 61% consume at least two daily snacks. Additionally, 65% of consumers are snacking more than they did a year ago.

Consumers increasingly crave new snack adventures. In fact, 75% "get excited when they find a new snack to try," and 67% "consider themselves a snack adventurer." Fortunately, there's no shortage of snack launches. Brands

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are innovating with cheese-flavored combinations, spicy flavors influenced by condiments and hot sauces, global-inspired flavors, and meat-based snacks.

## What Snacks Are Consumers Eating?

Piper Sandler's Taking Stock With Teens survey<sup>5</sup> of 6,400 teens found snacks with a crunch have a chokehold on teens, with Lays (13%), Goldfish (9%), and Doritos (8%) leading the category. Kellanova's snacking preferences survey<sup>6</sup> of 2,000 U.S. adults who had recently gone on or plan to go on a road trip found that Americans rank Cheez-It and Pringles in their top favorite snack brands. The survey also discovered generational snacking differences. Gen Z favors spicy and sour snacks, while Millennials rank salty, sweet, and cheesy snacks as their top picks and enjoy tangy flavors. Gen X prefers crackers, chips, and jerky, with sweet and salty flavors dominating. Boomers like traditional salty mixes, chocolate, and nuts.

## Cheese Please

Americans eat an estimated 42 lbs. of cheese per capita annually. It's no wonder that cheese is a classic and beloved snack flavor. There is a plethora of cheese-flavored snacks available, and brands are experimenting with cheese flavors, from adding varying spices to meat flavors. Frito-Lay has added Doritos Twisted Queso and Lay's Farmhouse Cheese & Ranch flavors to its range. The Doritos Twisted Queso features "a jalapeño flavor with a subtle kick of heat, plus all the cheesy taste of your favorite queso dip." In Chile, NotCo and PepsiCo partnered on the NotMayo Doritos, a new plant-based version of Doritos. Corn Nuts released the Partially



*Cheezmos, organic cheese puffs, join Lesser Evil's portfolio and are available in Blazin' Hot Cheddar and Cowboy Cheddar flavors.*

Popped line in Kickin' Cheddar, White Cheddar and Movie Theater Butter flavors.

Lesser Evil, a better-for-you snack brand, has launched Cheezmos, organic cheese puffs made with real organic cheddar and clean avocado oil. Cheezmos are available in two varieties: Blazin' Hot Cheddar and Cowboy Cheddar.

Takis launched the Intense Nacho flavor in the UK because of its strong performance in the U.S. California-based Doughbrik's Pizza debuted Wavers, a four-SKU snack line inspired by the brand's signature pizza flavors. Flavors include Extra Cheesy, Hot Honey, Late Night Pizza and Spicy Pickle. These snacks contain no artificial flavors, preservatives, or cholesterol, and are trans fat-free and non-GMO. Cheez-It and Wendy's teamed up on the limited-edition Baconator Crackers. The Cheez-It x Wendy's Baconator Crackers feature cheese and applewood-smoked bacon flavors. Bacon Grilled Cheese-flavored potato chips won the Lay's Do Us A Flavor contest, submitted by Paula George from Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

## Spicy Snacks Heat Up

Consumers' growing demand for spicy and food-inspired flavors is not waning, as addressed in Trendincite's *Perfumer & Flavorist*<sup>7,8</sup> "Forward Thinking: Lip-smacking Snacks" November 2022 article and "Forward Thinking: Snack Down" November 2021 article. Spicy flavors continue to trend in food and



*Goldfish Awesome Sauce Flavored Crackers are inspired by the sweet, smoky, and tangy condiment found at restaurants.*



beverages, driven by the younger demographics' interest in experimentation and global cuisines.

For example, NCSolutions' consumer hot sauce habits and preferences survey<sup>9</sup> of over 1,000 Americans found that 34% consider themselves "hot sauce connoisseurs," and 51% of Gen Zers classify themselves as one. Rubix Foods' NEXT Flavor Report<sup>10</sup> uncovered that 74% of Gen Z consumers prefer a mild or medium spice level, as it offers a well-rounded flavor profile. Innova Market Insights' snack data<sup>11</sup> showed 49% of global consumers have sought intense or bold flavors over the past year. Snack brands are drawing inspiration from various condiments and hot sauce flavors.

Pringles brought back its Spicy Guacamole Chips for a limited time. Goldfish introduced Awesome Sauce Flavored Crackers as a limited-edition flavor. The complex flavor combines sweet mustard and smoky BBQ sauce. It also brought back the limited-edition Goldfish Spicy Dill Pickle flavor.

Lay's most-requested flavor, All Dressed, launched in the U.S. The chips feature a "sweet, savory, and tangy, flavorful mix of Barbecue, Salt & Vinegar, and Sour Cream & Onion." Cheetos Flamin Hot Cheddar BBQ, Fritos Flavor Twists Lime & Jalapeno and Ruffles Spicy Dill Pickle are examples of recent spicy-flavored launches under Frito-Lay's portfolio. Inspired by Valentina hot sauce, Lay's Valentina and Lime was one of three finalists for the Lay's Do Us A Flavor contest.

Late July introduced Chamoy Tortilla Chips that combine "the sweet mango, tangy lime, and a kick of chili," inspired by the popular Mexican condiment. The snack is gluten-free and made with non-GMO ingredients. Kettle Brand dropped the limited-edition Chili Crisp Chips to "deliver a next-level fusion of heat, garlic, and umami in every bite."

Tinder and Mischief collaborated on RelationChips, a sweet and spicy potato chip. According to Tinder, a new relationship starts every three seconds, the same time it takes to eat a potato chip. There were 1,500 bags available for free, each containing a QR code for a complimentary week of Tinder Gold.

## Around The Globe

Global flavors are an abundant source of inspiration and culinary experiences. Snack brands are tapping into international flavors and cuisines, creating unique and complex flavor profiles. For example, PepsiCo has "rolling innovation labs," akin to food trucks, to test new concepts and gather consumer feedback.

"R&D chefs work together to identify the best flavors and ingredients that most authentically capture the heart of the region's food culture and traditional dishes," says PepsiCo R&D chef Patrick Clifford.

Under its internationally inspired flavor lineup, Lay's added a limited-edition Thai-Style Red Curry flavor exclusive to Kroger. The brand also reintroduced the Lay's Magic Masala flavor in a Wavy format. Wavy Korean-Style Fried Chicken was the third finalist in Lay's Do Us A Flavor contest. Doritos debuted Flamin' Hot Korean-Style BBQ, "a fusion of sweet soy, savory grilled beef, and a kick of Flamin' Hot heat," exclusively available at Walmart. Pringles and Miller Lite collaborated on two limited-edition flavors inspired by beer-infused backyard barbecues. The Pringles x Miller Lite Beer Can Chicken combines the flavor of savory roasted chicken with notes of garlic, onion, and the Original Light Beer. Pringles x Miller Lite Grilled Beer Brat has a smoky grilled brat flavor, with notes of black pepper, caramelized onion, and brown spice. The authentic flavor of the Original Light Beer comes through in a hoppy, malt beer aroma.

Keya's Snacks creates Indian-flavored chips that "are spiced, not spicy." The chips come in two flavors: Bombay Spice, a complex blend of 29 spices including coriander, turmeric, fenugreek, garam masala, and dry mango; and Black Salt, a tangy "cultural cousin"



Kettle Chili Crisp chips were "inspired by the global obsession with this spicy, crunchy condiment."

Image courtesy of Campbell's

of salt and vinegar. The snacks are vegan, gluten-free and kosher. Pretzelized launched Mediterranean Herb Pretzel Pita Chips at Kroger. It is “an herb-forward blend with oregano, rosemary, roasted garlic, and sea salt with a crunchy pretzel outside and soft pita-inspired inside.” UK-based Eat Real and Belazu have joined forces on the Spicy Rose Harissa & Creamy Yoghurt Hummus Chips, which provide the “signature flavor of hummus elevated with a floral, smoky heat seasoning for an authentic fusion cuisine taste experience.” A notable and unusual launch is Utz Lemonade Potato Chips. The snack is a partnership between Utz and Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation and “combines the tangy sweetness of lemonade with the classic salty crunch of Utz potato chips.”

### Snacks Get Meaty

Trendincite LLC identified the emergence of meat snacks in *Perfumer & Flavorist*+<sup>12</sup> “Forward Thinking: Snack On” article, which appeared in the September 2019 publication. The global meat snacks category is



The limited-edition Pringles x Miller Lite “combines your favorite beer-infused barbeque staples, bringing all the best flavors of a cookout in a single can.”

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projected to be worth \$20.20 billion by 2034, growing at a CAGR of 6.2%, according to Precedence Research<sup>13</sup>. According to Circana,<sup>14</sup> chicken is one of the fastest-growing proteins in meat snacks, with 84% growth over the past three years. Consumers are seeking protein-rich foods, and meat, poultry and pork snacks are naturally high in protein.

Jack Link's and Doritos continued their partnership and launched Cool Ranch Chicken Sticks. In addition, Jack Link's and MrBeast (Jimmy Donaldson) collaborated for the first time on a line of multipack meat snacks. The Jack Link's x MrBeast co-branded meat snack multipacks feature individual-sized packs of beef jerky and meat sticks such as Tender Bites Original and Teriyaki varieties and Turkey Mini Sticks.

Archer introduced a trio of new flavors: Beef Taco, Prime Rib Style and Pepperoni Style Beef Sticks. Chef-driven meat snack brand Carnal launched nationwide with its signature Black Truffle & Black Garlic Beef Stick and newly released Umami Cut Beef Jerky. Wilde Protein Chips added a Korean Sweet & Spicy flavor to its lineup. The snack is made from chicken breast, egg whites, and chicken bone broth with 10 grams of protein per serving. Inspired by Buffalo Wild Wings sauce, Slim Jim partnered with Buffalo Wild Wings sports bar on Chicken Sticks in Buffalo Style and Hot varieties.

## Final Bites

Like other food and beverages, consumers seek new flavors and experiences in their snack purchases. Cheese-flavored combinations, spicy flavors influenced by condiments and hot sauces, global-inspired flavors and meat-based snacks are fueling creativity in the snack aisle.

The younger demographic is driving growth. Innova Market Insights<sup>15</sup> identified *Wildly Inventive* as its #3 top 2025 global trend, described as “consumers’ desire for extraordinary flavors and company innovation around surprising flavors and flavor mash-ups that generate ‘wow’ reactions.” Gen Z adults care about food and beverage features such as taste and texture; Asian, African, and other international flavors; exciting textures; freshness; and spiciness. Millennials are interested in combinations and fusions of two or more flavors.

Snacks are a hotbed of innovation and deliver excitement, adventure, and flavor exploration. The snack market is a playground for flavorists and brands to push the envelope. Expect more unexpected flavor combinations, hotter spices, unique global-cuisine inspiration, and brand collaborations.



*Slim Jim x Buffalo Wild Wings Chicken Sticks are available in Buffalo Style and Hot varieties.*

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