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## Snacking

### The Meal in the Middle

Call it by any other name ... happy hour ... 4th meal ... or "linner" (that meal between lunch & dinner) - snacks are hot and consumers are eating them up more than ever. While traditional lunch & dinner traffic has seen declines this past year, 5% and 3% respectively, snacking traffic has dipped only 1% in

the same period. In a recent Technomic report, the majority of consumers surveyed (55%) reported that they snack at least once a day – and more than a quarter (26%) said they eat more than one snack daily.

However, defining a snack is a bit more complex. For one thing, the term "snack" has no uniform definition, either among consumers or within the foodservice industry. Consumers polled by Technomic defined snacks primarily by:

- Type of food or beverage (55%)
- When the item is eaten (52%)
- Portion size (41%)

### What Prompts Snacking?

According to NPD, people are snacking to satisfy a variety of needs. They are replacing a full meal with snacking to save time, money, control calories and portion size or to satisfy a craving.

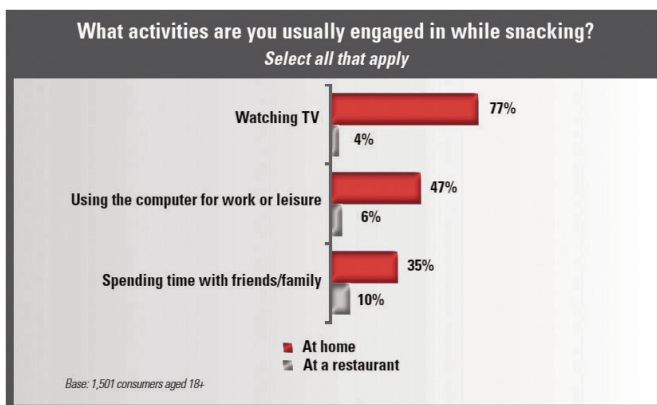
Consumers also relate snacking to specific activities as noted in the chart below. While today, restaurants may not be top of mind for snacking, there is great opportunity for Operators to build traffic by encouraging consumers to think of their concept as a snacking destination. Operators who position their restaurant as a place to enjoy a snack while spending quality time with friends or family, catching up on work or e-mails, or watch sporting events or other television programs could capitalize on incremental traffic while satisfying a consumer need.

### Snacking Indulgence

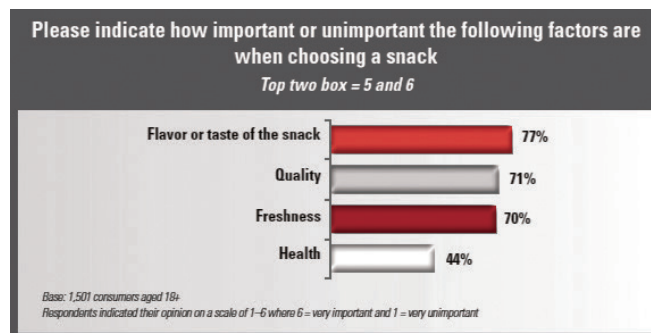
As the recession hit, snacking options became the way for consumers to get their restaurant fix at a lower price point according to Mintel. However, this does not mean dollar menu items; consumers are willing to spend on restaurant snacks that satisfy their cravings and deliver value.

Nearly 70% of consumers state that a snack is a treat they give themselves. But they are not always snacking alone. Roughly 50% of consumers usually snack with co-workers and friends, perhaps fueling the 78% growth in off-peak hour business that Operators have seen between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. according to Datassential.

Most important to heavy snack consumers when they choose snacks are flavor, quality and freshness. Health is also an important factor when snacking. Almost half of those polled (44%) say healthfulness is very important to them when choosing a snack. More than a third (35%) said they're choosing healthier snack items today than they were two years ago. Yet despite their self-reported interest in healthy snacks, consumers are more likely to consider taste when they actually choose a snack. With taste winning out most of the time, consider promoting healthfulness as an added benefit by touting freshness and quality or by using seasonal, regional or local ingredients. These attributes add to a perception of both healthfulness and taste.



Source: Technomic Consumer Food Trends, April 2010



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**Key P.A.T.R.O.N.® segments seeking snacks are:**

**Time-Crunched Socials**

- Age: 21-34
- Young singles
- Seek convenience but also have aspirational tendencies
- They go to restaurants with extended hours offering convenient menu options (all-day breakfast, snacks and late meals)
- They want restaurants to feel like their third place (beyond home and work)

**Fun Parents**

- Age: 21-44
- Married
- Place a big emphasis on showing the family a good time
- Reward themselves and family with special treats and a way to show family love and make memories
- Restaurants with shareable, family-friendly menus
- They may eat as late as midnight and are not confined to early dinners with the kids

**SIDE DISH**

## Little Plates... Big Possibilities

Operators are recognizing the snacking trend, and menu items containing the descriptors "snack" "snackable" or "snacker" have increased by 170% since 2007. However, consumers aren't waiting for a restaurant to define what's snackable on the menu – they're taking the initiative. Even for restaurants without a dedicated snack menu, consumers still view many items from the core menu as "snackable." Most often they are choosing sandwiches, appetizers, bakery items and desserts from the existing menu for snacking. The good news is that Operators do not need to re-invent the wheel to capitalize on this growing trend. A dedicated snacking menu can be created simply by featuring smaller portions of popular menu items or sampler trays with a variety. Don't forget to feature specialty beverages during snacking occasions as it presents an opportunity to increase check averages as 64% of consumers associate a snack with a beverage.

Source: ConAgra Foodservice proprietary Food Away from Home Study 2009

## Patron Key Issues

The bottom line for the foodservice industry: There are big opportunities to capitalize on consumer snacking occasions. As restaurants continue to roll out snack menus and small plates and promote these options as snacks, it is likely that consumers' snacking behaviors will shift toward restaurant occasions. Staying on top of these trends and leveraging them into opportunities could help boost incremental sales for both limited-service and full-service concepts.

*For more targeted recommendations to grow your business ask your ConAgra Foodservice representative for a customized P.A.T.R.O.N. profile report.*



## Bringing Snacking to Life in Your Operation – Top 5 Actions

1. Remember that your entire menu is snackable. Don't assume that consumers know this – create a specialized snacking menu that features various dishes from your menu in smaller portions.
2. Position your restaurant to be a destination for snacking occasions by creating a comfortable environment with TVs and Wi-Fi access in addition to a snacking menu. Perhaps create conversation areas for groups to gather.
3. Leverage snacks as one means to test new menu concepts and familiarize consumers with the latest flavor and ingredient trends.
4. Develop snack menu options that meet multiple consumer snacking drivers such as portable, indulgent, salty and filling.
5. Combine specialty beverage options with your snacking menu to increase check averages and enhance the consumer's experience.



*to go...*

Sources:  
Mintel Menu Snacking Innovations, May 2010  
Mintel Menu Insights, May 2010  
NPD Crest, 2010  
Datassential Food Bytes, October 2010  
Technomic Consumer Food Trends, April 2010

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