



# PARENTS AS CONSUMERS

## 2019 - CONSUMER INSIGHT REPORT

Parents have been making food decisions for their kids since the first parents gathered and hunted. Current generations of parents are no different in their desire to nourish and care for their kids, but they are taking their own approach to providing and making meals, snacks, drinks and other forms of sustenance for their children, grandchildren and other youngsters in their care. That approach varies, as parenting circles widen and diversify.

What are today's parents like in terms of backgrounds and preferences and how does that influence their choices, including their choice to have their kids pick and cook some their own favorites? What are some of their other concerns as parents of the youngest consumers? Read on to get a flavor of real modern families.

# WHO THEY ARE: A LOOK AT TODAY'S PARENTAL TYPES

Given the fact that today's parents can range widely in age, it's safe to say that there are decidedly different household types and parenting styles with varying impacts on food decisions and consumption.



## TALKING 'BOUT MY GENERATION

- Millennials born roughly between 1977 and 1994 comprise the majority of parents today, with GenX parents ahead of them and GenZ behind them.
- Members of GenZ (also called the iGeneration) are just start starting to have families, with the leading edge born in 1995.
- The average age for first-time parents is 26 for women and 31 for men, an increase of four to five years compared to parents in 1972.

## BOOM TIME

Don't forget about Baby Boomers, many of whom are parents of Millennials. They are actively involved in their children's and grandchildren's lives, and are important buyers of foods and beverages consumed by youngsters.

## DAD DUTY

Younger fathers of the Millennial generation participate more involved in their kids' home life and activities than previous generations, and are comfortable with managing households and making decisions, including buying food and drinks.

## MILLENNIAL MAMAS

Millennials now represent **65% of moms** with children in the household. There are some notable differences in Millennial moms versus other age demographics: for example, compared to previous generations, Millennial mothers like to do things *with* their kids, not just *for* their kids. Millennial moms are keen on maintaining their sense of self and less likely to strive for constant perfection.

# FULLER HOUSE

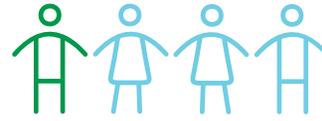
The model of Mom, Dad, and 1.2 kids in a single family home in the suburbs is becoming as outdated as a paneled station wagon.



78%

MARRIED OR PARTNERED PARENTS

Although 78% of parents are married or partnered, that percentage has declined over the years.



1 in 4

KIDS IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES

Today, one in four children live with a single parent.



20%

YOUNG FAMILIES RELY ON HELP

Extended family has become more influential and important, with 20% of all young families reporting that they rely on an adult relative for regular help with childcare. That's true among families of all racial and income backgrounds.

"A married couple with kids is no longer the majority definition of a 'traditional family'."

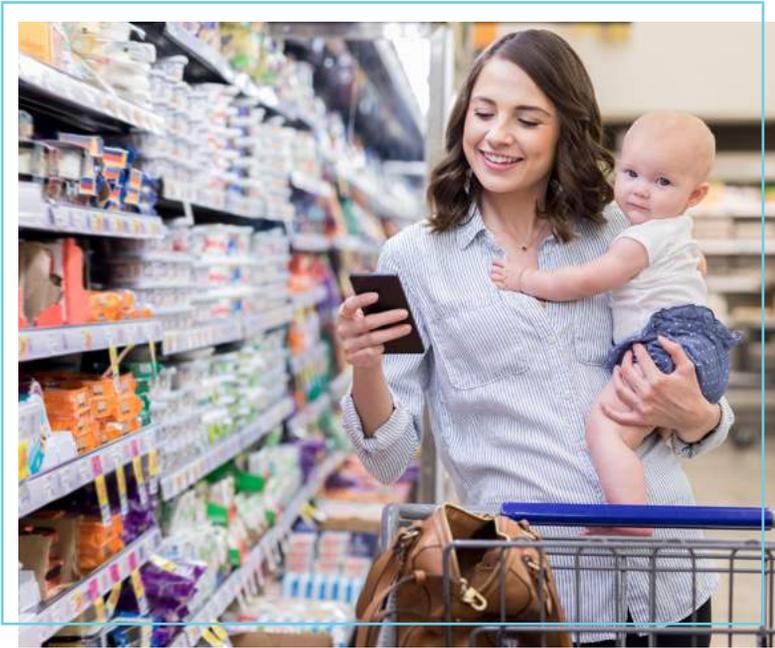
## DIVERSE DECISION-MAKERS

A quarter of younger children in the U.S. have Hispanic roots, and an increasing number are of two or more races. **More than a third of moms (37%) are multicultural**, defined as a minority female with kids under age 31 in the house. Multicultural parents have strong value sets, often passed on in their ethnic households and seek out products that acknowledge and appreciate diversity, from marketing message to flavors.

## A (MOSTLY) EMPTY NEST

While their adult children may or may not live at home, parents of grown children are still family influencers. This is a big group, too: **53% of all mothers have grown children residing outside their household and many are grandmothers.**

# ASK YOUR MOTHER



Even as stereotypes have been shattered or shifted over the years, mothers are still a big driver of purchase decisions. **Moms control up to 85% of household purchase decisions**, and have a whopping **\$2.4 trillion** in spending power.

To meet the interests and demands of these powerhouse-decision makers, it helps to understand that moms are busier than ever. **Half of all moms in young families are working full-time.**

Moms are not some monolith group, however. With different backgrounds, ages and preferences, appealing to mom consumers involves an understanding that mothers share many concerns (quality time with kids, safety, security, health and happiness) yet are unique in many ways.



MOMS CONTROL **UP TO 85%** OF  
HOUSEHOLD PURCHASE DECISIONS



With so much at stake, marketing leaders should frequently revisit their understanding of the moms they market to — reconsidering messaging, channels and products sold to meet their needs.

- Marketing to Multifaceted Moms, Iconoculture



# WHAT THEY WANT: DRIVERS INFLUENCING PARENT CONSUMERS OF FOODS & DRINKS

With cultural and generational changes impacting parenthood – and, in turn, today’s childhoods – there is an accompanying diversity in the factors influencing the choice of foods, drinks and flavors.



## PLEASING PINT-SIZED PALATES

Kids have long had a reputation for being picky eaters. Although the general move towards more adventurous eating extends to families, some youngsters are reluctant to try new flavors or may not like the taste of certain foods. Foods that appeal to both kids and adults – cutting down time spent making separate meals or infringing on enjoyable family time together – have an edge in the marketplace. That includes ingredients, packaged products, menu items and meal kits.

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE:



### ONE POTATO FAMILY FAVORITE MEAL KIT WITH BEEF TACOS WITH GUACAMOLE, PICO DE GALLO AND SLAW

This is one of One Potato’s family-oriented meal kits, described as “picky-eater approved dishes (that) are quick, easy and offered each week.” Another meal kit for families with youngsters is a Classic Burger & Fries package.



IMAGE CREDIT: DEL MONTE

### DEL MONTE BUBBLE FRUIT

With kid-appealing flavors and the all-important fun factor, these snacks combine a classic fruit cup with “bursting” tapioca balls known as boba. The new snacks, made with 100% real fruit with no artificial colors or sweeteners, come in Peach Strawberry Lemonade, Sour Apple Watermelon and Pear Berry Pomegranate.

# WHAT THEY WANT (CONTINUED)...

## MULTICULTURAL EXTENDS TO FOODS AND FLAVORS

With more multicultural families, it follows that parents are preparing meals that reflect their ethnic heritage. Many of today's kids have grown up with spicy and bold flavors that are a far cry from basic boxed mac and cheese and PB&J sandwiches.



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE:



GOYA MANGO SMOOTHIE

This 33.8 ounce smoothie is colorful and fruity, appealing to kids. The Goya brand is one of the largest Hispanic-owned food companies in the U.S.



GALLETAS CUÉTARA MARIA COOKIES

Maria Cookies are a staple in many Hispanic households for breakfast and snacks and these cookies, from a Mexican company, are in many pantries of households with children.



OCEAN'S HALO RAMEN NOODLE BOWL

Ramen has long been a kid favorite, and new versions like this are fun and easy-to-make. The brand also offers Pho and Miso bowls.

# TO THEIR HEALTH



“Eat your vegetables!” is not a new imperative to kids. While kids are eating more plant-based foods than before, parents want to ensure that their children eat healthy — or at least healthier. About 42% of moms say that “having healthy eating habits” is the biggest concern they have for their family.

**WHAT'S LACKING:** When dining out, three-quarters of parents feel there are not enough healthy meal options available for their children. Two-thirds of moms are not happy with the food

choices at their kids’ school, preferring to send their kids with something healthy from home, leaving open opportunities for developers of food and beverages that are kid-friendly and deemed healthy by parent gatekeepers.

**NATURE CALLS:** Tied to health is interest in natural and sustainable positioning.

**SURE, LET THEM EAT CAKE:** There is a place for snacks and treats that have long been associated with childhood. Parents might want to limit sugar and calories, but they still celebrate special occasions with desserts and treats, whether during the holidays or on birthdays.

“Marketers are positioning more indulgent food and beverage items as an act of love, to help win moms’ approval.”

- Marketing to Moms, Sept 2019

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE:

### CHOBANI GIMMIES

This new line of Greek yogurt snacks are said to be made with natural, non-GMO ingredients with no preservatives or artificial sweeteners and include a dual-compartment Crunch line, milkshakes, tubes and pouches, with fun flavor names like Choco Chunk Cookie Dunk and Bizzy Buzzy Strawberry.

### SERENITY KIDS BABY FOOD



IMAGE CREDIT: SERENITY BABY FOOD

The newest parents are often the most discerning, wanting to start their kids’ eating habits off in a healthy way. This line of low-sugar, high fat baby food includes varieties like Organic Sweet Potato & Spinach with Avocado Oil,

and are said to be made with organic vegetables and meat sourced from small family farms that use ethical farming methods.

### HORIZON ORGANIC GROWING YEARS MILK



Each serving of this new milk designed for developing kids from Horizon Organic contains DHA omega-3 to support brain health, along with prebiotics, vitamin D and calcium.

# EASY PEASY



With more moms working and both parents striving to spend as much time with families, convenience remains a top point of interest among parent consumers. Convenience is a factor behind the emergence of third party food delivery services, in-store restaurants and items like pre-packaged and frozen meals. Two thirds of moms say that weekday dinners are typical occasions for eating prepackaged meals.

Providing meals that are both convenient and healthy is a welcome

solution for many married parents. A recent study from the University of Wisconsin shows that the higher their stress level, the more unhealthy foods typically present in a home.

**SNACK PACK:** Parents not only tend to snack more themselves, based on their busy schedules, they also provide their kids with snacks that are portable, fun and often designed for the younger set.

Parents are only slightly more likely to give kids healthy snacks than they are to eat healthy snacks of their own. So, flavorful snacks that appeal to health-conscious parents and parents that are seeking taste and convenience first have their place.

I snack more than usual  
because I am eating them  
with my kids.

- Mom, 25-34, as quoted by Mintel

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE:

### PEAPOD AND NURTURE LIFE MEALS

Making it easier for health-conscious, time-strapped parents to provide their kids with good- or better-for-you meals is online grocer Peapod and food brand Nurture Life, who have teamed up to sell meals for babies, toddlers and kids through a subscription service. Options include Braised Chicken, Sweet Potato and Carrot baby food and Frittata with Cinnamon French Toast for toddlers and kids. The meal service is available in 24 Metro markets and in Peapod parent company's Ahold Delhaize stores including Giant Food and Stop & Shop, among others.

### WHOLLY GUACAMOLE BOWLS



Many kids today like guacamole, no matter the cultural background. Saving parents time making home-made guac, this ready-to-serve bowl is available in Classic and Chunky/ Homestyle flavors. Kids with adventurous palates can try the Spicy and Hatch Chile varieties.

### GRABEEZ RESEALABLE SNACK CUPS



These grab-and-go snacks are easy to bring to a soccer game or along on a family vacation, since they fit perfectly into cup holders. Said to appeal to all ages, the snacks are available in 15 varieties such as Banana Split and Gummy Bears.

# YOURS AND MINE

Parents are perennial gatekeepers and decision makers, but modern parents have shown greater flexibility in letting their offspring pick foods and prepare foods. As the largest group of parents with kids in the home, Millennials seek input for family purchases, especially smaller items like foods. More than half of Millennial parents of preschoolers include them in small spending decisions.

## I CAN DO IT MYSELF!

Many of today's children are interested in both eating and doing: the percentage of kids ages 6 to 11 who say they cook or bake as a hobby has increased seven percent in the past decade. Digital influencers and shows like "Master Chef Junior" and "Cake Boss" have helped fuel this interest. Meanwhile, the proliferation of social media sites accessed by older kids, such as Instagram, have also contributed to an interest in posting food pics and making food for images to share.



[My kids] have a lot of influence on electronics, what movies we watch and what foods we eat.

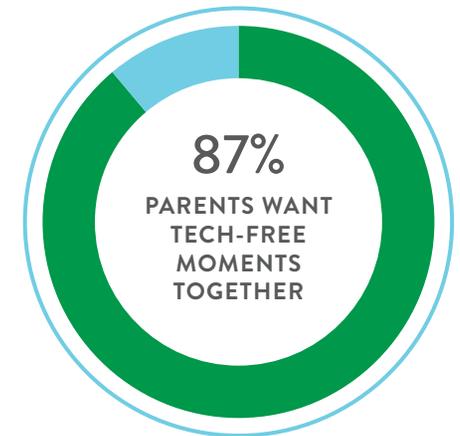
- Michelle, a Millennial mom of a child under six, as quoted by Iconoculture

# HIGH TECH OR COMFORT OF NEST?

As with other aspects of family life, advances in technology are impacting parents as consumers. Parents are using their mobile devices to order meals through restaurant delivery services and buying ingredients and products with a quick click. The “Instagrammable” appeal of food extends to both parents and kids captivated by interesting foodstuffs and regularly exposed to new and exciting dishes from all over the world.

## UNPLUGGING AND RECONNECTING

That said, there is recognition among many parents of the intrusion of technology on family life. A sizable 87% of parents agree with the statement, “It’s important for our family to have tech-free, unplugged moments together.” Device-free dinners or “technology fasts” are catching on in many households.



Eating dinner together at home remains a universal touchpoint for families. Nearly all young families from all backgrounds make a point to get some family time around the dinner table. Dining out at a restaurant together is also a fairly common family activity but does not occur with the same frequency.

- Mintel's "Lifestyles of Young Families", January 2019



## FAMILY STYLE



Family style: Although the TV show “Father Knows Best” may be a relic of the past, the family dinner is still an important part of American life. Nearly all families have dinner at home together at least once a week, which is a good opportunity to catch up, device-free.

# THE TAKEAWAYS

Parents today (many of them Millennials) are more often empowering their own children to have a say in food choices and meal preparation. They are mindful consumers who value their personal time, often seeking healthy choices and willing to pay more for what they view as high quality. Today's young parents also reflect the increasingly adventurous and multicultural population base, with an appreciation for traditional ethnic flavors and brands. We expect this attribute to increase even more in future years as members of the even more diverse GenZ become parents in the coming years. Although parents are digitally savvy and continually connect, there is a growing movement to unplug at mealtimes – how can your product help create the convenience and taste needed to savor those special family moments?

## SOURCES

- Gartner Iconoculture
- Mintel
- Northwestern University study
- Pew Research
- Nielsen
- University of Wisconsin-Madison study
- Y-Pulse



## YOU DESERVE MORE. LET'S GET STARTED.

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