



## CONSUMER INSIGHT REPORT: Millennials in a Changed World

They are a generation enormously impacted by the events of 2020. With 72 million in the U.S. in 2019, they've got strength in numbers, but are known for individualism. They are aggressively sought after by marketers while seeking out their own information to make choices. They make self-care a priority but are also passionate about doing good in a diverse, collaborative society. Born between 1980 and 1994, millennials are not easy to pin down as a big group, but that doesn't mean that researchers and marketers haven't tried to determine some their defining tastes, preferences and buying behaviors. Read on as we spill the tea on this much-talked-about demographic, from nuances within the generation to what and how they like to eat and drink.

# WHO ARE THEY?

Millennials, as their nickname suggests, came of age or grew up in the time of the third millennium in 2000. Born in the 1980s through the mid- to late-1990s, these consumers have also been called Echo Boomers, as the children of the Baby Boomers, and Generation Y, as the age bracket following Generation X. But make no mistake, they have carved out their own identities.



## HERE'S WHAT MAKES THEM A GROUP WORTH TRACKING:

Millennials now comprise the biggest living adult generation in the U.S, overtaking the previously prolific Baby Boomers.

- There were more than 72 million Millennials in the U.S. in 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Millennials are the largest generation in the full-time workforce in the U.S.
- This is a diverse generation, with household breakdowns of 20% Hispanic, 12% Black, 7% Asian and 12% other races.
- Millennials spend more per shopping trip on consumer goods than any other generation.

## THEIR BEST LIFE

Reflecting their tendency to buck tradition, Millennials have started and shifted lifestyle trends:

- A majority of Millennials are not currently married, representing a shift from past generations.
- Millennials founded the social media movement and are digital natives that interact online.
- In a fast-paced society in which they live and grew up, they often seek convenience.
- Millennials have a more progressive mindset with an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Those in this generation don't buy items like cars, music and luxury goods as often, instead using services that provide access to products without ownership.
- Store brands are not enough to lock in a retail sale with this group.
- Millennials are driven by convenience.

A man with glasses is looking down at a kitchen counter. The counter is filled with fresh vegetables, including a bowl of green salad, a bowl of cherry tomatoes, and a bunch of leafy greens. There are also lemons and a wooden cutting board visible. In the background, there is a guitar and some hanging clothes.

# MIND THE GAP

Millennials are not a homogenous group, something of which people in this generation are proud. They are also quite distinct from the generations that bookend their group, including Generation X and Gen Z.

While there's a temptation to lump Millennials and Gen Z together because they are a younger consumer base and share some commonalities in their progressive nature and social connectedness, there are key differences.

- Members of Gen Z tend to have more of a homebody nature: 62% of young adults between 18 and 22 say they like to cook international cuisines at home from social media compared to 46% of Millennials
- Gen Z consumers are less motivated by health and wellness than their Millennial counterparts and tend to have simpler palates.

# THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

They may be the subject of keen interest, but Millennials don't always feel the love: in fact, a series of challenges have left a mark on the generation impacting their purchasing habits and behaviors.

Millennials lived through the 2001 terrorist attacks and many began working in the recession that began around that time. A few years later, the Great Recession that cratered the economy in 2008 impacted their careers and stalled their home-buying and family plans. Even before 2020, 65% of Millennials agreed that life isn't what they thought it would be at this point.

Events in 2020 brought a bad sense of déjà vu for many in this generation.

- Since the pandemic and latest economic and social upheaval, 44% of Millennials say they're stressed all or most of the time, a new Deloitte survey on Millennials found. | Washington Post
- 77% say they have general financial concerns in the wake of the pandemic and economic fallout.
- 78% have taken new or different financial actions because of COVID-19.
- According to Acosta, Millennials were hit harder by the upheaval than other generations, with 43% "worse off" than before.



**"A different world, a different worldview. Millennials have grown up in a time of rapid change, giving them a set of priorities and expectations sharply different from previous generations."**

- GOLDMAN SACHS



# INTUITIVE FOODIES

## TAKING IT PERSONALLY

Shaped by challenges and raised by Baby Boomers who were dubbed the original “Me Generation”, Millennials are very individualistic. Although they often get knocked by other generations for being self-centric, their intuitive choices – including foods and flavors -- are often based on their focus on personal growth and development. Even as parents, they tend to combine activities, interest and meals/snacks with their children so they can still pursue their own hobbies, cravings and self-care practices.

## GENERATION FOODIE

They may be anxious and concerned about finances lately, but Millennials do enjoy eating and drinking and have a decided openness when it comes to trying new foods and flavors.

- 58% of Millennials consider themselves “foodies.” , according to a Mintel survey.
- 69% have posted photos of their food to social media in the past year.
- 57% think planning meals takes more time than they prefer and they like to eat out.



**“Millennials appear more engaged with food and drink than the average consumer, meaning brands have an opportunity to connect with these shoppers based on their interest in and passion for the category.”**

- MINTEL



## COVID-19 & CULINARY GOALS

In the COVID-19 era, eating out is the only activity that a majority of young people said they would willingly resume immediately after shutdown, compared to concerts, travel, sporting events or other large-scale events and festivals.

Regardless of their dining-in habits, many Millennials still enjoy food prepared by others. More than a third – 36% -- of Millennials want restaurants to offer more delivery options this year.

Being stuck at home during shelter-in-place orders sharpened their cooking and baking skills. As the pandemic has evolved, each month spurred all kinds of new food blogs, YouTube cooking videos and social media pages dedicated to recipes and tips for newbies and foodies alike, especially those in this generation who tend to chronicle and follow their foodie interests.

In the home setting, they appreciate a bit of help with online grocery shopping and delivery. Recent research reveals that shoppers between 18 and 34 are interested in as many possible functions associated with grocery shopping apps.



**“Cooking itself may be a solo activity, but during this period of social distancing, it has also served as a tool to bring communities together in new ways — even when they can’t gather together for a meal.”**

- VOX



# GET WELL SOON



While Millennials like to be out and about and savor good meals, their sense of culinary adventure is mirrored by a strong interest in health and wellness. It was that way even before 2020.

To Millennials, health and wellness isn't just about losing weight or preventing illness and disease. Compared to other age groups, they think about health in a holistic way: Millennials say that healthy eating extends beyond nutrition to mental wellness, stress management and resources.

- Millennials are two to three times more likely than older generations to change eating habits to manage mental health, finances and time.

With a holistic approach to health and wellness and in line with their individualistic, intuitive nature, Millennials focus on personalized nutrition, mental health and flexibility to change up their diets.

They are also expanding their palate while they seek to bolster their holistic way of eating healthy, according to a recent [survey of Millennials](#) conducted by FONA in 2019:

- 42% say they are increasing their intake of plant-based food and beverages in the past year.

- 40% are interested in intuitive eating.
- 37% are interested in trying low-carb eating.
- 30% are interested in trying intermittent fasting.
- 38% are taking a supplement or changing a consumption habit for energy support.

While they have a holistic philosophy, there are other noteworthy habits of this group when it comes to certain types of foods and beverages:

- 60% of adults aged 22-37 say they are more concerned about food additives and growth hormones than they were five years ago.
- Older Millennials and Millennial parents are buying organic more often now.
- 53% of young Millennials prefer drinking lower or non-alcoholic drinks or traditional strength adult beverages.



**“Millennials are different than generations prior and are taking a proactive approach with their health. This impacts their food shopping behaviors, product preferences and the brands they support,”**

- MINTEL



# THE COVID FACTOR

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, many Millennials' already-strong health and wellness vibe is getting more intense.

Interest in immunity-boosting foods and beverages, for example, is growing as a way to strengthen the body and mind to ward off disease.

Plant-based foods, driven by younger consumers over the past few years, are poised for even bigger growth in the current and post-pandemic world. New research shows that 25% of Millennials in the U.K. say that the pandemic has made a vegan diet more appealing.



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**LIFEWAY RASPBERRY CULTURED LOWFAT MILK KEFIR** contains probiotic cultures that may support immunity and healthy digestion. Made with milk from regional farms that has not treated with artificial hormones or antibiotics and fortified with vitamin A and D, this product sparked interest among 56% of consumers in a panel.



**BUSH'S BEST SRIRACHA LIME CRISP-ROASTED CHICKPEAS** are free from gluten, GMO, nuts, soy, dairy and artificial colors and is high in protein, with 100 calories per pack.

35% of consumers say they definitely or likely would buy this product.



**ELDERBERRY IMMUNE-BOOSTING COCKTAIL**, a popular Pinterest recipe, comes from the Silver to Sage Blog. While health experts have cautioned against drinking cocktails to avoid a novel virus, many bloggers and Millennials consumers have devised and drank cocktails and mocktails as a well to at least have some fun in the first half of 2020.

Photo Source: Pinterest; Silver Sage Blog

# SOCIAL CHANGE MAKERS

As a progressive group, Millennials are engaged in a host of issues. Although they are often driven by a sense of self, there is certain collectiveness to their mindset. From climate change to social justice to work-life balance, those in this bracket make their voices heard to effect change.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Millennials' concern about climate change has fueled their interest in sustainable products and brands, including plant-based foods and beverages and items that labeled as organic, natural or Fair Trade.

- About 75% of Millennials are changing their buying habits with sustainability and the environment in mind, compared to 34% of Baby Boomers.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many Millennials link personal social responsibility with the products they buy, often aligning themselves with like-minded brands.

- 75% of internet users between 22 and 37 say that more brands should take public stands on important social values.
- 59% of Millennials say they will stop buying certain brands and products if they think the brand is unethical.

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**BEN & JERRY'S EMPOWER MINT ICE CREAM** is made with non-GMO ingredients, Fair Trade sugar and vanilla, eggs from cage-free hens and milk and cream from "happy cows." Ben & Jerry's says the product is trying to deliver a message that "Democracy is in your hands".

61% of consumers said that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



**CLIF BAR DARK CHOCOLATE ALMOND ENERGY BAR WITH SEA SALT** contains 70% organic ingredients, is GMO-free, and retails in an FSC-certified recyclable pack made with 100% recycled paperboard with minimum 35% post-consumer fiber content. The package features the Clif Bar Family Foundation and Rainforest Alliance Certified Cocoa logos.

*Photo Source: Clifbar.com*



**PIPCORN TRUFFLE CRUNCHY & MINI HEIRLOOM POPCORN** from minority-owned snack brand Pipcorn, is a whole grain vegan product that is high in fiber and free from GMOs, gluten, preservatives, soy, cholesterol, trans fat and anything artificial. It retails in a newly designed 4.5-oz. pack, bearing the Certified B Corporation and 100% Whole Grain logos.

# THE TAKEAWAYS

When choosing flavors and developing products, food and beverage companies can keep generational preferences and habits in mind when targeting a particular group for consumption. Right now, the Millennials are the biggest and most influential generation in the marketplace, hungry for products that fit their interest in holistic health, immunity, adventurous flavor profiles, sustainability, social responsibility and value. In a time of uncertainty, they are certain about keeping themselves healthy and as happy as they can be.



## SOURCES

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- The Hartman Group
- Iconoculture
- Institute of Food Technologists
- Mintel
- GNPD Mintel Purchase Intelligence
- Goldman Sachs
- Nielsen
- Pew Research
- Sweet Earth Foods
- TruePublic
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Census Bureau
- VOX
- Whole Foods
- YouGuv
- Y-Pulse
- Cliffbar.com
- Pinterest
- Acosta/ FoodBusiness News

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

What does true partnership look like? You deserve a flavor partner ready to turn these trends into the tangible.

Let FONA's market insight and research experts get to work for you. Translate these trends into bold new ideas for your brand. Increase market share and get to your "what's next." Our technical flavor and product development experts are also at your service to help meet the labeling and flavor profile needs for your products to capitalize on this consumer trend. Let's mesh the complexities of flavor with your brand development, technical requirements and regulatory needs to deliver a complete taste solution.

From concept to manufacturing, we're here for you — every step of the way. Contact our sales service department at 630.578.8600 to request a flavor sample or chat us up at [www.fona.com/contact-fona/](http://www.fona.com/contact-fona/)

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