



Food & Beverage Convenience: HOW TO CAPITALIZE ON CONVENIENCE WITH FLAVOR

From the advent of single-serve, grab-and-go portions to meal kits in varying formats, convenience has been a driver of product development for the better part of 20 years. Although consumers' on-the-go lifestyle was disrupted by the global COVID-19 pandemic that dramatically impacted mobility and work-life schedules, the demand for convenience-oriented foods and beverages has shifted rather than abated. People still clamor for convenience, but the shortcuts are different at this fork in the road. Where does that leave convenience headed into a new year and changed marketplace? Let's take a look at convenience in the food and beverage space and see where you can find opportunity for your brand.

HOW CONVENIENT

CONVENIENCE *AND*

The change in consumers' lifestyles over the last year has been significant and certainly impacted the way they eat and drink. With fewer people commuting and shuttling to activities and events, the notion of convenience is less about cutting time and more about ease of use and meeting their concurrent interest in items that are flavorful, healthy and comforting.

Demand for time-saving solutions may swing back as restrictions ease and the crisis eases, but the push for ease of use and the marriage of convenience and other attributes is likely to be solid for the foreseeable future.



“To the pre-pandemic consumer, convenience was primarily about saving time and effort. That has changed. Contemporary consumers seek a convenience that is less about time and more about stress-free availability.”

-DELOITTE INSIGHTS



“Balancing personal lives, work life, wellness, indulgence and convenience is taking a toll on consumers. The search for solutions for easier living – and food/supplements to mitigate stress – is on the rise.”

-SCHIEBER RESEARCH



CONVENIENCE & TASTE

Whether people are trying to make convenient meals at home or ordering foods for pickup or delivery from restaurants and other places with to-go options, taste still tops. In its 2020 report, the International Food Information Council noted that taste and price are still the main factors in food decisions.

Products that provide an avenue for tasting new flavors in a convenient way are appealing to many people who have been largely stuck at home. For consumers, a virtual exploration of taste and flavor is enticing.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



TRUCO ENTERPRISES' ON THE BORDER SQUEEZABLE SALSA AND QUESO are flavorful dips available in a microwaveable BPA-free bottle with an easy-to-use and control lid.



CONVENIENCE & EASE OF USE

The on-the-run aspect of people's lives may have been interrupted, but Americans are still busy as many work from home and learn from home. This different schedule impacts all dayparts, with breakfast lunch and dinner often consumed in the home setting. And while ease of use and convenience are important, taste and flavor remain key in providing a product consumers will love.

- Breakfast formats that can be eaten quickly gained in importance, from 21% in spring 2020 to 27% in summer 2020.
- 45% of lunches are being consumed alone, mostly at home.

As for dinner, ease of use can help alleviate cooking fatigue that has set in after months of eating more at home instead of away from home.

- The need for convenience to curb cooking fatigue increased to 51% in summer versus 41% last spring.
- 25% of consumers say their main cooking priority is to spend as little time as possible on cooking or food preparation.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



SMITHFIELD POWER BITES MEAT LOVERS BITES, made with premium pork sausage, real bacon, ham, eggs, cheddar cheese and breadcrumbs, is a fully cooked, microwavable breakfast that can be made in 45 seconds. It is free from artificial ingredients, can be enjoyed with no fork required, and retails in a 4-oz. pack.

27% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



GREAT VALUE TIKKA MASALA SAUCE KIT is said to provide a vibrant and lightly spiced dish. This economical product requires the addition of oil, diced chicken and basmati rice, and is also great with beef, pork or vegetables. It can be prepared in 30 minutes, serves four people and contains a sauce, a paste and a spice mix and cooking instructions.

32% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



WAYNE FARMS CHEF'S CRAFT GOURMET CHICKEN is a minimally processed line of frozen gourmet products that is gluten- and preservative-free and all natural. Choices include seasoned, grilled and sous-vide prepared Chicken Breast Fillet, Breaded Chicken Breast Chunks; and bite-sized Grilled Chicken Breast Chunks.

CONVENIENCE & HEALTH/WELLNESS

The onset of the coronavirus only fueled an already-strong push towards eating for health and wellness. Foods and beverage products that help consumers boost their well-being, health and immunity in a convenient way while also providing great taste are a win for product developers.

- 6 in 10 global consumers are looking for foods and beverages that support their immune health, with 1 in 3 reporting that concerns about immune health increased in 2020.
- 2/3 of consumers view foods as “medicine for their body.”

While nutrition, immunity and medicinal properties are important, consumers still have high taste expectations. It may not take a spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down, but flavor is still paramount in convenient, health-oriented foods and beverages, like plant-based and functional foods that need some kind of masking of “off” flavors.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



BETTER FOODS ENLIGHTENED FRUIT INFUSIONS are a new line of take-and-eat, individually-wrapped frozen bars that include flavors like Coconut + Immunity.

Source: [Eatenlightened.com](https://eatenlightened.com)

“Consumers are becoming more experimental and wanting to try new flavors that allow them to experience new cultures. Sensory appeal is key, although consumers are looking for healthier alternatives. This means brands must create new, conveniently nutritious products where consumers do not feel they are giving up their moments of indulgence”

-FOOD & BEVERAGE INSIDER

CONVENIENCE & INDULGENCE

There's nothing like a bowl of ice cream for comfort, unless there's a more convenient option, like a novelty bar or a single serve container of ice cream, preferably packaged in a more sustainable way. Indulgence and convenience are a one-two combo that packs a punch.

- Although 2/3 of shoppers say want to see healthier choices at c-stores, foods including ice cream, doughnuts, pizza, and cookies comprise a greater share of sales.
- A recent survey from The Hartman Group showed that consumers are looking for functional foods and beverages while sometimes indulging in comfort foods to help them deal with stressful times.
- 3/4 of respondents in a recent poll said they are eating more comfort food now than they ever have.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



MARIE MORIN CRÈME BRÛLÉE is available in a recyclable pack containing eight single-serve containers of a classic creamy vanilla custard with a crunchy caramelized sugar topping. It can be heated or can just be sprinkled and eaten quickly.

34% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product,



CONVENIENCE & EXPERIENCE

At least in the short term, those who are spending more time within their own four walls are living vicariously through foods and flavors. And while people may want to try new cuisines or recreate their favorite restaurant meal, they may not have the cooking prowess or the desire to pull it off in their home kitchen. That's where convenience comes in.

The desire for experiences without the hassle is evident in the beverage market, too, with things like cocktail kits and coffeehouse-inspired coffee concentrates.



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



MORE THAN GOURMET CLASSIC FRENCH DEMI-GLACE GOLD is available in 1.5-oz. package and is made with beef and veal stock and is free from MSG and preservatives.

38% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



STEEPED COFFEE SINGLE-SERVE COFFEE BAGS are filled with hand roasted specialty coffee and nitro sealed for freshness in packaging made with compostable and renewable materials.

Source: Steeped Coffee Store



SUGARFINA LYCHEE MOJITO COCKTAIL KIT is refreshing, non-alcoholic juice-free lychee mojito with juicy lychee gummies. 39% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



FRATELLI BERETTA OFFERS LA DOLCE VITA CHARCUTERIE ENTERTAINMENT TRAYS with four 12-oz. assortments, such as an Aperitivo Platter with prosciutto, soppressata, dry sausage, roasted almonds, mixed pitted green olives and mild provolone.

Source: Progressive Grocer Magazine

READY, SET

There is also a sizable part of the population that doesn't want to do any of the work to make a meal, whether that's all the time or just on occasions when they are tired or busy. Here, too, the longstanding fully-cooked, heat-and-eat meal solution is evolving from past iterations, with meals that taste homemade and include authentic ingredients and interesting flavors.



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



THE BLOUNT'S FAMILY KITCHEN LINE FROM BLOUNT FINE FOODS has been expanded to include microwavable Chicken, Bacon & Noodles in a Ranch Style Sauce, consisting of chunks of chicken and curly noodles in a creamy white sauce with bacon pieces and flecks of dill, and Chicken & Penne with Marinara Sauce, featuring white meat chicken and penne pasta in a creamy parmesan tomato sauce with hints of basil and oregano. The meals are available in single-serve bowls and can be heated in less than three minutes.

Source: Blount's Family Kitchen

“Cooking from scratch has lost its luster and shoppers are looking for ideas, convenience, shelf life and more”
-NATIONAL PROVISIONER

WHAT ABOUT SNACKING?

With less commuting and generally less hectic schedules, the push toward constant, in-motion snacking has been tempered a bit. People are still snacking, especially younger consumers, and still seek convenience, but it's not all focused on mobility.

- 2/3 of Americans are snacking at home more
- More than 3 in 5 say they are choosing better-for-you snacks more often



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



VEGKY MUSHROOM JERKY IS A GOURMET SHIITAKE MUSHROOM JERKY SNACK available in Original, Spicy, Pepper, Wasabi and Curry flavors and available in a 2.46-ounce resealable bag.

Source: Vegky



WHOLLY GUACAMOLE FROM THE WHOLLY BRAND now offers a Wholly Avocado Diced Avocado and single-serve Smashed Avocado products for convenient snacking.

2/3

2/3 of Americans are snacking at home more

3/5

More than 3 in 5 consumers say they are choosing better-for-you snacks more often

THE TAKEAWAYS

In a different market that has been shaped by world events, convenience is back to being a big umbrella term that covers more than time savings and portability. For the consumers of today and into the next year or beyond, convenience includes foods and beverages that make life easier in some way, yet also provide a flavorful experience for the consumer. It could be a convenient way of sneaking in some nutrition, or it might be a solution for indulging in comfort fare, but not too much comfort fare. It might involve novel flavors that allow people to explore other cuisines at a time when they can't yet traverse the world. Or it could be a solution that is customizable, for a more personal taste and flavor experience. Whatever convenience may mean for your consumer, we can help find your "what's next".

SOURCES

- FMCG Gurus
- FMI
- FoodDive
- The Harris Poll
- The Hartman Group
- IFIC
- IFT
- Innova Market Insights
- Mintel
- National Provisioner
- Nielsen
- OnePoll
- Technomic

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