



WHAT'S NEW IN SNACKS? 2021 Category Insight

It's no secret that Americans love to snack, and for many consumers, that increased during the pandemic when opportunities for eating out were severely curtailed. Opportunities for snacking abound, from mid-morning pick-me-ups to post-workout protein boosts and evening indulgences — there's a snack to suit every kind of craving. So what's working in this exciting, expanding space? And what flavors are customers gravitating toward? Read on to find out how the snack food explosion can fit into your brand's future.

SNACKING TODAY AND TOMORROW

According to the annual Mondelez “State of Snacking” report, more than half of adults considered snacking a “lifeline” during the pandemic. But Covid-19 also changed the way consumers buy snacks — with browsing all but eliminated, impulse purchases decreased dramatically. Thankfully, with the arrival of vaccines, people are beginning to return to work and out-of-home activities. As things return to some level of normalcy, Mintel predicts, “a reduced tendency to stockpile and more access to foodservice operations [will] lead to more impulse buys and on-the-go consumption,” allowing portable snacks to regain their market share.

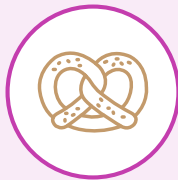
Regardless of Covid, however, snacking has been on the rise for years. A report from the NPD Group found that Americans added 25 between-meal snacking occasions per capita over the past five years, and the market is only expected to keep growing post-pandemic.

SNACKS SHOWING GROWTH

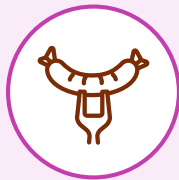
Total U.S. retail dollar sales growth of salty snacks, by segment, 2020 -Mintel



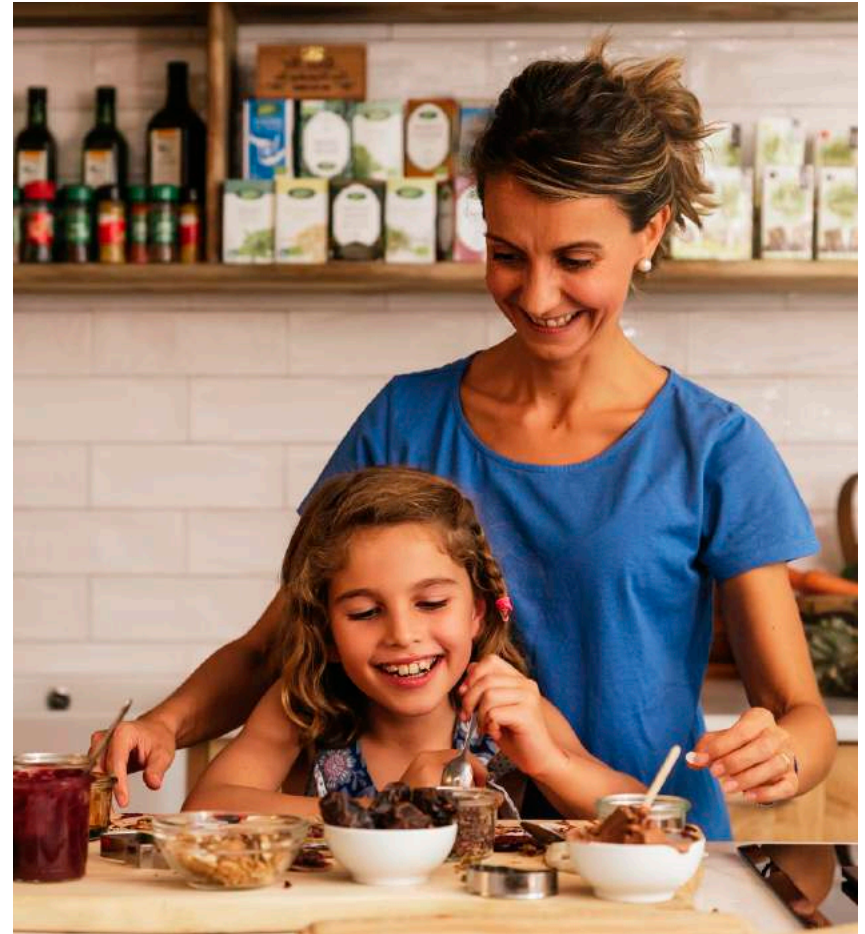
POPCORN
14.2% GROWTH



PRETZLES
11.5% GROWTH



MEAT SNACKS
9.7% GROWTH



More than half of adults considered snacking a “lifeline” during the pandemic.

-MONDELEZ

WHY SNACK?

By and large, consumers snack as an indulgence; Mintel reports that 60% of people say they snack to “treat myself.” But don’t discount the importance of flavor — one-third of snackers are motivated by the search for a new flavor.



THERE ARE 3 MAIN SNACKING OCCASIONS:

Small Meals:

Consumers reach for yogurt or protein shakes when they need a light, quick meal.

Fulfilling a Need:

From post-workout protein bars to energy bars when they’re feeling low, people turn to snacks to fulfill a need.

Indulgence:

Ice cream, cookies and other sweets are what snackers seek out when they want to indulge.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



PRINGLES WAVY DEEP FRIED PICKLES

are a snackable take on the classic Midwest menu item, deep fried pickles. The tangy flavor is available exclusively at Dollar General.

Photo Source: Delish.com



HILLSHIRE SNACKING BISTRO BITES

feature Genoa salami, gouda cheese and salted almonds. The product contains 18g protein per serving for 330 calories.

47% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



YASSO GREEK YOGURT BARS

bridge the gap between breakfast and dessert with a protein-packed sweet treat that can be enjoyed any time of the day. They include flavors like cookie dough, chocolate chip, and butter pecan and each bar is only around 100 calories.

Source: Yasso.com

A quarter of respondents who increased salty snack consumption during the pandemic credit a better variety of flavors.

FUN WITH FLAVORS



Since snacks are often consumed in smaller quantities than other foods, they also present the perfect opportunity to experiment with new flavors, both for consumers and producers. Interest in unique or global flavors has been growing across all segments, including snacks, with nearly two-thirds of American consumers reporting that they love discovering new flavors according to Innova Market Insights. Bold, creative flavor profiles, like smoky-sweet or fruity-spicy, are a great way to try out new ingredients and combinations.

TOP SNACKING FLAVORS

North America – Past 3 Years

- Salt (Sea)/Fleur de Sel
- Roasted/Toasted & Salt/Salted
- Cheese (Cheddar)
- Chocolate
- Roasted/Toasted
- Salt/Salted
- Peanut Butter
- Beef
- Barbecue/BBQ/Barbacoa
- Cheese (White Cheddar)

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



JENI'S EVERYTHING BAGEL ICE CREAM is a surprising combination of sweet and savory, with a cream cheese base and "everything gravel," including garlic and sesame seeds.

Photo Source: Jenis



BRAVE GOOD KIND TENDER CHICKEN BARS are jerky snacks that come in fun varieties like Hot Honey for a protein boost combined with the creative flavors that consumers crave.

Photo Source: Brave Good Kind

Extruded snacks like "puffs" are perfect for experimenting with flavors and healthy ingredients. Because the ingredients are thoroughly combined prior to the extrusion process, a wide variety of ingredients can be incorporated.

HEALTHY SNACKING

Many consumers are looking for better-for-you snacks that fit into a variety of specialized diets. Products that target specific lifestyles have been steadily growing.

In 2019, Innova Market Insights reported that paleo products grew 31%, vegan products grew 20% and high-protein products grew 16% on a global basis.

When it comes to the perception of health, ingredients are essential. Mintel reports that in the U.S., “more than six in ten consumers consider chips made from all-natural ingredients healthier than other chips.” Consumers are also seeking out snacks that have functional health claims, including immunity, gut health, mental wellbeing and increased energy.

SALTY SUBSTITUTES

Many consumers are looking to reduce salt and/or sodium intake, but 94% of U.S. households eat salty snacks.

- Himalayan sea salt is a popular ingredient due to its reduced sodium levels.
- Potassium chloride, often used to replace sodium in other products, is under-utilized in salty snacks.
- Salicomia or “sea asparagus” contains high amounts of minerals and fiber, making it a healthier replacement for salt.

COMBINING FLAVOR AND FUNCTION

Better-for-you snacking doesn’t mean missing out on flavor. In fact, many functional ingredients’ natural flavors can provide inspiration.

- Fermented flavors like kombucha or kimchi can be a stand-in for traditional tastes like lime, and can also be a sensory cue to remind snackers of gut health.
- Many functional ingredients are naturally flavorful and enjoy associations with health, including ginger, mushrooms, coffee and green tea.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



S. PELLEGRINO ESSENZA COFFEE-FLAVORED SPARKLING WATERS combine the functionality of caffeine with the perceived health benefits of mineral water. The range includes flavors such as Delicious Cocoa and Coffee, Exotic Vanilla and Coffee and Smooth Caramel and Coffee.

Photo Source: Thrillist.com



CATALINA CRUNCH KETO SANDWICH COOKIES pack in 4g plant protein, 2g sugar and only 5g net carbs. The product is vegan and comes in a variety of flavors like peanut butter, vanilla creme and chocolate mint.

Photo Source: Catalina Crunch



NUT-RITITION IMMUNE SUPPORT POWER SQUARES are nut clusters with cashews, pecans, cranberries, pumpkin seed kernels and sunflower seed kernels. The product is said to support immune health with vitamin E, zinc, copper and selenium.

39% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

SNACKING & SUSTAINABILITY

Health claims aren't the only thing driving consumer snacking behavior — sustainability is also key to many snackers.

People who are seeking out better-for-you snacks are also interested in “future-friendly” ingredients that “deliver on taste, health and address key sustainability issues such as climate change or food waste,” reports Next Frontier.

They also note that by making their full commercial cycle sustainable, snacks can be leaders in environmentalism; many snacks can be utilized to help address complicated issues such as food waste. Imperfect vegetables spent grains and more can easily be repurposed into snack foods. And consumers are responding: the number of better-for-you snacks claiming to be sustainable has doubled in the past few years. And don't forget packaging — the more sustainable, the better.



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



DINO BARS are organic and full of delicious, functional ingredients like bananas, hemp hearts and coconut oil. The product is also super-sustainable featuring colorful edible wrappers.

Photo Source: Dinobars



THE SOULFULL PROJECT CRISPY GRANOLA is a snack with a mission. In addition to including whole grains like quinoa, steel-cut oats and brown rice, the company is also combatting food insecurity by donating to food banks for every bag purchased.

Photo Source: The Soulfull Project



GOMACRO KIDS OATMEAL CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE MACROBARS are said to be made with clean, responsibly and sustainably-sourced ingredients. The product is said to be chewy and delicious featuring 4g protein and 6g sugar per serving.

28% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



UGLIES JALAPENO KETTLE COOKED POTATO CHIPS are said to be imperfectly delicious chips that are crafted from potatoes with minor cosmetic imperfections. The manufacturer claims to be an environmentally-friendly and sustainably-responsible company and to financially support Viva Kids to help fight hunger.

42% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

PLANT POWER



In keeping with trends across all categories, plant-based proteins are becoming increasingly popular in snacks. These proteins are often healthier and more environmentally friendly than animal-based ingredients, so snacks that contain plant proteins and whole grains should make sure to emphasize that fact. Plant-based snack foods grew 55% in 2019 according to Food Business News. And plant-based no longer means not-indulgent: vegans and omnivores alike are reaching for meatless versions of popular snacks like jerky and “pork” rinds. And according to Mintel, the segment is only expected to grow as people return to their post-pandemic fitness routines.

TASTE CHALLENGES: Common plant-based ingredients like pea protein don’t always taste very appetizing. Producers should consider incorporating a naturally tasty, functional ingredient like turmeric or ginger, or use a masking agent to optimize flavor.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



MIGHTY LIL' LENTILS FROM SEAPOINT FARMS

pack plenty of plant-based protein into a crunchy on-the-go snack that comes in fun flavors like cinnamon-sugar, falafel and pink Himalayan salt.

Photo Source: Seapoint Farms



LOUISVILLE VEGAN JERKY

utilizes plant protein to make a chewy, satisfying snack that appeals to jerky fans of all diets. Bold flavors like buffalo-dill and smoked black pepper plus 18g protein in each 3 oz bag make for an irresistible combination.

Photo Source: Amazon



ONE PLANT BANANA NUT BREAD FLAVORED PROTEIN BAR

is suitable for vegans and is a plant-based product free from GMO and gluten. The banana nut flavored product features 12g protein and 1g sugar per bar.

36% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



MORNING STAR FARMS VEGGITIZERS VEGGIE PEPPERONI PIZZA BITES

are said to be suitable for entertaining, as an after school snack, or as an anytime meal. The vegan product is made from 100% plant protein and is a good source of fiber.

40% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

THE TAKEAWAYS

Snacking, which saw growth during the pandemic, doesn't show any signs of slowing down. The category reflects many of the trends popping up in other segments, including bold, unusual or international flavors, as well as an increasing interest in plant-based offerings.

Consumers are looking for more from their snacks, whether that means an energy boost or an indulgent break from the everyday. Regardless of the reason for snacking, though, flavor always comes first, and people are more willing than ever to try something new. If you're thinking about breaking out of the same-old-snack mold, the time is now! Let us help you find your "what's next."

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](tel:630.578.8600) to request a flavor sample or [chat us up at www.fona.com/contact-fona/](https://www.fona.com/contact-fona/)

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