THE SNACK MARKET

The snackification of meals is fundamentally changing the snack foods industry. With multiple snacking occasions per day and the rise in snacks replacing meals, consumers’ expectations in snacks have expanded beyond indulgence and satiety. This year’s snack trends include a new health focus, new ingredients and some serious flavor exploration.

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Snack Trends for 2021 and Beyond
While the definition of a snack may vary, from country to country or by generation, the snacking occasion is growing. The pandemic may have affected where global consumers eat snacks, but the occasion continued to thrive in the home and around the world. Over half of global consumers consider a snack to be either single serve or something that offers a nutritional boost. So snacks that offer a health benefit like protein or provide upscale ingredients and are convenient are the future of snacking.

Drivers of Snackification

The Hartman Group identified “a cultural shift toward regular and frequent snacking sprung from a variety of factors”, including:

- New time pressures and the upending of daily food rituals
- Broadening diversity and accessibility of cuisines & foods
- Increasing attention to food & beverage solutions to support wellness
- Heightened awareness of sustainability

Snacking Occasions

Marketers and product developers of snack foods may wish to tailor their products to specific snacking occasions to ensure the ingredients and messaging are on target with consumer needs for that time of day. The main snacking occasions have been identified as:

- Early morning
- Mid-morning
- Afternoon
- After dinner
- Late night

For example, a high-fiber, milder flavored snack may work well as an early morning snack, whereas a sweet snack may be a better fit for the late-night snacking occasion.

Nutrition Trends

Protein

The popularity of high-protein snacks is a top trend, with 51% of global consumers stating they’ve switched from traditional snack products like chocolate and confections to high protein/low sugar alternatives. Millennials are driving this interest in high-protein snacks which provide satiety and work well as meal replacements. The bar category continues to be strongly affected by this trend, with protein bars leading category growth. Of global snack bar launches in 2020, nearly 1 in 3 featured a high protein claim.

Chips, puffs and popcorn have been getting protein makeovers in the last few years. Market leader Quest Nutrition Protein Chips offer 19g of dairy-based proteins with nine essential amino acids and 4g of net carbs per serving. Icon Meals Protein Popcorn comes in a variety of flavors from Peanut Butter Vanilla to Orange Creamsicle and Canadian Maple. One cup of their popcorn contains 10g of protein.

Protein balls, which are a bite-sized alternative to bars, offer a new format for snackable protein.

Functional

As concerns over health increase, functional snacks are also expanding. Fortified vegan snacks that contain ingredients like turmeric and probiotics to inherently good superfoods, snacks that offer functional nutrition represent the next frontier in healthy snacking. Leading functional snack trends include energy, focus, and calming/relaxation. Functional foods and beverages especially popular as snacks include bars and ready-to-drink beverages. Clear messaging around the product’s benefits is key as consumers may not always be familiar with the individual ingredients.
Adding a custom nutrient premix is a fast way to incorporate healthy nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, amino acids, vitamins, minerals, botanicals, and even probiotics into a snack food.

“Although consumers are not adding new snacking occasions to the day, there is a shift in what’s eaten at main meals and how snacking is viewed. Consumers today expect snacks to work for them; the snack is no longer just a reward.”5

-David Portalatin, VP, Industry Analysis, The NPD Group

Sugar Reduction

The lower sugar trend is showing up across multiple food categories with claims that include reduced sugar, low sugar, no sugar, and no added sugars.

While savory snacks—such as roasted chickpea snacks, ancient grain crackers, and veggie chips—have an inherent advantage here, great strides are being made in creating delicious, low and no sugar nutrition and snack bars, as well as sports nutrition and meal replacement beverages.

Consumer preference for clean label has made stevia a go-to ingredient for manufacturers working to meet the growing demand for lower sugar snacks.

Trending Ingredients

Legumes

Legumes, pulses, beans—whatever you prefer to call them—are everywhere this year. It’s easy to find legume snacks in traditional savory snack flavors such as cheese, ranch, barbeque, and sriracha.

According to a study by Mintel, 21% of US consumers are interested in trying lentil snacks. This jumps up to 33% for chickpeas and 25% for edamame.5 In many cases, legume snacks are actually blends of legumes and grains, especially rice.

Manuka Honey

From the Mori name of the tree, manuka honey is produced by European honey bees. This specialty honey has a strong, aromatic flavor. Product launches globally with manuk honey or manuku honey flavor has grown annually at an average of 47% since 2016.6
Cheese

Cheese is having a revival in the snacking space. Not only as a stand-alone product or in a healthy snack kit like Sargento Balanced Breaks, but globally as a flavor or ingredient. European varieties of cheese are popping up in Asian snack brands including Bourbon Cheese Jaga Camembert Cheese Potato Chips (Japan), Sunbites Italian Parmesan Cheese Baked Multigrain Snacks (Thailand), and Homeplus Signature Gorgonzola Shrimp Snack (South Korea).

Favorite Flavors

Indian

Globalization of flavors is on the rise, and Indian flavors are spicing things up. Indian-spiced snacks like Garam Masala, Tamarind Sesame, and Chai Masala are showing up in snacks globally. Indian flavor combinations present an opportunity to combine sweet and savoury which may entice consumers to try a new product. According to a survey by Mintel, 41% of UK snackers agree that sweet snacks containing spices are appealing.  

Truffles

The distinct flavor of fresh, shaved truffles or truffle oil over a dish is a widely celebrated culinary delight. This year, the taste of truffles has expanded beyond fine dining into retail packaged products, including snack foods. In 2020, Nestle introduced three new Quality Street truffle boxes in Europe, called Intrigue, to add a premium line to their confection brand. Waitrose in the UK featured a limited time offering for the holiday season of Black Truffle Hand Cooked Potato Crisps.

Trends in Blends

Snackfections

“Snackfections” is a term coined by the Hershey Company a few years to describe a new hybrid category that combines traditional confections with snacks. Several confection companies have pursued product innovation in this area in response to slowing growth in confections, with impressive success. Consumers looking to find snacks that allow for a conscious indulgence is helping to drive brands not only in confections but in the health & wellness category as well. Globally, 64% of consumers believe it is okay to enjoy indulgent treats as part of a healthy diet, while 54% indicate they expect snacks to offer a nutritional boost. The overlap of these two trends has created a space for a hybrid snacking category that combines indulgence with convenient nutrition.

Snackfections often blend indulgent ingredients and flavors like chocolate or carament with nuts, seeds, fruits, cookie pieces, or pretzels, which can be combined in a variety of ways beyond snack mixes.

Snackfections also provide an opportunity for snack companies to incorporate a little indulgence, especially via chocolate, into their products.
‘Fusebiquity’

A new term coined by Datassentials, “means combining early stage flavors that may be a little too new for consumers with dishes and flavors that they know and love.”

Providing the path to an approachable adventure, many brands are choosing to featuring novel flavors with ubiquitous formats or flavor combinations to ease consumers into authentic regional flavors.

This is particularly appealing to younger consumers globally. In the US, Millennials are more like than other generations to go out of their way to try new flavors, according to Mintel, even more so than Gen Z.

Some examples of this include in Japan Pringles London Fish & Chips Potato Chips or Frito Lay Premium Popcorn with Lipton Milk Tea, in China Lay’s Refreshing Lime Flavoured Taro Chips, in Canada ActivPop! Sweet ‘n’ Salty Organic Popcorn with activated charcoal and Honest Artist Range 70% Chocolate with Miso and Tamari Sunflower Seeds in South Africa.

Looking Ahead

It’s no surprise that consumers look forward to new flavors and sweet treats, but what stands out the most this year is the interest in healthier snacks. When that snack attack comes, increasingly, people want to feel good about their choices. Keep reading for more ways to appeal to the convenience-driven, health and wellness snackers.

References

5. Mintel, Trending Flavors and Ingredients in Snacks- US, March 2021
How to Delight the ‘Grab-and-Go’ Consumer
While the typical on-to-go lifestyle may have gone on temporary hiatus, time pressured lifestyles of consumers around the world endured. Grab-and-go meals and snacks, whether consumed in or out of the home, are a way to meet consumers’ needs for convenience, portability, and nutrition—whether at your desk, at the gym, in the car, or at your kitchen table. Learn which types of foods, packaging, and nutritional benefits are attracting the attention of today’s grab-and-go consumer.

The Grab-and-Go Consumer

Grab-and-go foods and beverages are a way of life for many consumers. Drivers include on-the-go lifestyles that require portable meals and snacks, as well as the anytime convenience of ready-to-eat and heat-and-eat foods. While the pandemic may have lead us to the next normal, most consumers eating patterns were not significantly affected.

As was prevalent before the pandemic, the line between meals and snacks continues to blur. According to the Hartman Group, 70% of Americans snack on an average day. In China, consumers snacked more frequently in 2020 than 2019, according to Mintel. In Ireland, 84% of consumers say they snacked at least once per day.

Popular Grab-and-Go Products

Grab-and-go products can be shelf-stable, fresh, or frozen and range from soup cups to fresh salad bowls to frozen handheld meals like breakfast sandwiches. Popular grab-and-go products include:

- Chips, crackers, and cookies
- Trail mix and nut packs
- Roasted bean snacks
- Granola bars, nut bars, and nutrition bars
- Jerky
- Hummus or cheese dip with pretzels or crackers
- Protein packs with jerky, nuts and dried fruits
- Squeezable fruits and nut butters
- Cereal and oatmeal cups
- Soup cups
- Fresh fruit cups and sliced produce snack packs
- Deli and produce department prepared meals
- Yogurt
- String cheese
- Frozen wraps, burritos, sandwiches, and savory pastries
- RTD single-serve beverages and drinkable soups

Designing for Grab-and-Go

Packaging, marketing copy, and nutrition labels are key elements to consider before launching a grab-and-go product or repositioning as grab-and-go.

Packaging

Besides being sustainable, packaging material, closures, size, and weight become especially important considerations for grab-and-go products. Packaging should be small, lightweight, and portable, and ideally, contain a single serving. Popular containers and closures include cups with peelable lids, especially for yogurts, soup cups, and oatmeal cups. Even cookies and crackers can be packaged in cups to make them cupholder friendly.
Easy tear pouches work well for products like trail mix and squeezable nut butters. When a product contains more than one serving, resealable packaging (like a ziplock pouch) is key. Grab-and-go beverages with more than one serving should be in bottles to allow for resealing.

Pack size should be guided by the type of retail outlet, e.g., single-serve packages for convenience stores and multi-packs of single-serves for club stores. Variety packs, especially for bars and chips, are increasingly popular at supermarkets.

**Marketing Copy**

Clear communication can help to identify the product as grab-and-go. Simplified language is often necessary due to the smaller principal display panel. Claims being used in the market include:

- Grab-and-go
- On-the-go
- Portable
- Snack size
- Snack packs
- Lunch packs
- Lunchbox ready

**Nutrition**

Nutrition plays an important role in grab-and-go products, with the top concerns being satiety and calorie control. Increasingly, consumers expect their grab-and-go snacks to provide satiety and are checking nutrition labels for nutrients like protein and fiber. This becomes especially important when snacks are used to replace meals. Jerky, yogurt, nut snacks, protein bars, and RTD protein beverages deliver on protein, whereas oatmeal cups, cereal cups, and fiber bars can provide high amounts of fiber.

Another consumer segment is focused on calorie and portion control. These consumers are checking nutrition labels first for total calories. For grab-and-go snacks, formulating to achieve a consistent calorie target across the product line (e.g., 100 calorie packs) is a way to build trust and loyalty among calorie-conscious consumers.

**References**

The State of the Healthy Snack Market in 2021
With the majority of global consumers expecting snacks to offer a nutritional boost, healthy snacking is no longer a niche corner of the snacking universe. The types of snacks global consumers are choosing is evolving and disrupting the traditional snack market. From plant-based jerky bars to oat milk yogurt to flavored almond butter squeeze packs, healthy snacks are in high demand. Learn which ingredients, nutrients, and claims are drawing consumers to healthy snacks.

Healthy Snacks Driving Snack Market Growth

The global health & wellness snacks market is forecast to reach $98 billion by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 5.8% between 2020 and 2025, according to Euromonitor. Nuts, seeds & trail mixes continue to lead the market, with a revenue share of 41%, followed by snack bars with 20% share.

While North America is currently the largest market for healthy snacks, consumers in emerging economies in Latin America, Asia Pacific and the Middle East & Africa, are experiencing a shift in consumption patterns and increasing disposable incomes that could lead to high future growth in healthy snacks.

Clean label, sustainability and functional ingredient claims are driving snack food sales. According to Mintel Global Product Launch database, in the previous five years, snacks with a vegan/no animal ingredients claims grew by 11.8% annually, environmentally friendly packaging grew 7% annually, snacks with high or added protein grew 11.5% annually, and those with no or reduced sugar grew by 13.4% annually.

So What Makes a Snack Healthy?

As consumers scan the shelves for snacks that they can feel good about, they look for cues such as claims and ingredients to help guide their purchasing decisions.

Top Claims

Popular front-of-package claims on snack foods that consumers associate with better-for-you include:

- Protein
- Whole grain
- Fiber
- Natural
- No artificial colors
- No artificial flavors
- Non-GMO
- Organic
- Gluten-free
- No added sugar
- Reduced sugar
- 100 calories
- Probiotics and prebiotics
- Antioxidants
- Vitamins and minerals

Top Ingredients

Consumers also understand certain ingredients to have inherent health and nutrition benefits, and often expect them in their healthy snacks. Today’s healthy snacks are typically based on or include ingredients such as:

- Whole grains and ancient grains
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Lean meats
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Low fat and no fat dairy
Functional Food and Beverage Snacks

In addition to formulating snacks with macronutrients in mind—such as keeping protein and fiber high, while ensuring fat and sugar are low—adding functional ingredients is now a popular way for manufacturers to create a healthy snack. For example, bars may contain added vitamins and fiber, plant-based yogurts may be fortified with calcium, and beverages may include botanicals such as turmeric.

Other functional ingredients that can work well in snacks are amino acids, omega-3 fatty acids, and probiotics. Functional ingredients can be easily added to a food or beverage through a custom nutrient premix. Moreover, combining multiple functional ingredients into one custom nutrient premix streamlines several business operations including purchasing, warehousing, quality control, and production.

A custom nutrient premix can also be developed to meet the health and nutrition needs of specific consumer segments. It could address stage-of-life needs and be customized for growing kids, teens, or seniors. Or it could address health concerns, such as digestion, immunity, cognition, energy, or weight loss. For example, a custom nutrient premix containing calcium, vitamin D, and boron could be used in a product that supports bone health and targets senior women.

Trends and Innovations in Healthy Snacks

Consumers’ preferences for snacks that deliver on health, convenience, and taste have sparked recent innovation in several of the healthy snack segments.

Bars

Bars continue to be at the forefront of functional foods. A variety of protein, fiber, and micronutrient fortified bars are in the market, as well as keto options formulated to be extremely low in carbohydrates and fortified with medium chain triglycerides.

Protein levels are rising in bars, often with traditional whey and soy proteins, but increasingly with pea protein.

Whole grains, ancient grains (especially quinoa), cashew and almond nut butters, and chia seeds have expanded in bars. Bars are available that meet a wide variety of needs, but protein, fiber, and all natural remain common themes. thinkKIDS line of bars with protein, fiber, and kid–friendly flavors is a good example.

Never before have so many all natural, made with whole grain, baked not fried, and reduced sodium chips been on the market. Chip manufacturers have been extremely responsive to consumers’ needs for healthy snacks.

Newer developments include chips made from legume flours (such as pea, chickpea, and black bean flours,) and more chips made from vegetables and ancient grains. Functional chips are also available. Vegan Rob’s chips contain ingredients such as turmeric and probiotics.

Jerky

Krave virtually created the healthy jerky market. With claims that include all natural, gluten free, good source of protein, and low fat, Krave Beef Jerky easily catches the eye of the healthy snack consumer. Krave has set the standard with gourmet flavors such as Chipotle Cherry, Cranberry Thyme, and Mango Jalapeno.

Innovations such as Krave Bars, made from beef, turkey, pork, dried fruit, and quinoa, will expand this segment further and inspire competition. Several vegan jerky products have already entered the market.
Nuts and Seeds
Almonds, cashews, and peanuts continue to be staples of nut snack packs, trail mixes, and nut bars.

Justin’s Nut Butter have expanded beyond their line of squeeze packs including almond butter, cashew butter, peanut butter, hazelnut butter, and flavored varieties, such as cinnamon almond, maple cashew, and chocolate hazelnut, to nut butter cups and protein bars. Flax, chia, and hemp seeds are popular in nut bars, chips, and snackable granola clusters. Given the success of nut butter squeeze packs, there’s big potential for the expansion of seed butters, such as sunflower seed and pumpkin seed butters, especially as they would be suitable for those with nut allergies.

Legume Snacks
Legumes as snacks are taking off. Legume snacks include roasted legumes and legume puffs, but nearly any legume can work as a savory snack.

Roasted legumes and legume flours are also easy to include in chips, crackers, and bars for a boost in fiber and plant protein. Millennials particularly are interested in legume snacks, compared to other generations. Their interest outpaces Gen Z, Gen X and Baby Boomers in chickpea, black bean, edamame and lentil as snack ingredients.  

Protein Balls and Bites
A fun new alternative to protein bars is protein balls and bites. These mini versions allow for better portion control than bars, and their size makes them even more snackable.

From mini flaxseed crisps to seed cubes to superfood bites, tiny snacks offer consumers a new way to experience some of their favorite foods. Snack bite offerings continue to expand with options such as energy bites, paleo bites, breakfast bites, and of course, protein bites. With their high protein, indulgent flavors, and built-in portion control, protein bites are checking all the boxes.

Beverages
Beverages as snacks are more than just smoothies and shakes. Kombucha, a fermented tea naturally rich in probiotics, continues to expand. Kombucha is becoming more sophisticated with a variety of tropical fruit and herbal flavors available.

Low sugar and no sugar beverages are expanding due to consumer interest. Botanical waters are well-suited to this trend. Coconut water is facing competition from birch water, maple water, and aloe water. The functional ingredients on trend in beverages include turmeric and cannabinoids.

References
Top 5 Factors Behind the Rising Demand for Food Fortification
The global food premix market is forecast to grow at an impressive CAGR of 5.9% between 2020 and 2025, reaching $2.3 billion in 2025. While vitamins & minerals make up the largest share of nutrient premixes, other fortifications in demand include amino acids, fibers, and nucleotides. Here, we’ll examine the top reasons that demand for fortified foods and beverages is on the rise, with a look at demographics, regions, and popular products for fortification.

The top reasons for growth in fortified products are:

1. Rising awareness of micronutrient deficiencies

Consumer awareness of the risk and prevalence of nutrient deficiencies (especially in iron, folic acid, vitamin A, iodine, and zinc) continues to grow, along with the understanding that these deficiencies can be easily corrected through supplementation.

Iron deficiency anemia is of particular concern, especially for children and pregnant women.

2. Growth of the middle class in emerging markets

As incomes grow in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa, millions of consumers are able to choose fortified products for themselves and their families. The Asia Pacific region is experiencing the fastest growth in fortified products.

Continue growth in this region is expected, largely due to China’s latest National Nutritional Program, which strongly supports the use of fortified foods, including those fortified with iron, folic acid, and iodine.

3. New government fortification programs

Consumers in developed markets, such as North America and Europe, have long been accustomed to government efforts backing fortification, based on the unique needs of their populations.

Some of the developing countries are starting down this same path, in part due to the promotional efforts of organizations like the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the Gates Foundation—all proponents of micronutrient fortification. Government milk fortification programs will contribute to the continued expansion of the fortified products market.

Growing Demand for Fortified Products

Consumer demand for fortified foods and beverages shows no signs of slowing down. This previously niche market—once reserved for infants, the elderly, and the most health-conscious of consumers—is now mainstream in developed countries, while rapidly expanding in emerging markets.
4. Unprecedented growth of the world’s older population

By 2050, the percentage of the global population over age 60 will reach 22%—almost twice what it was in 2015. Aging brings with it a variety of health conditions that motivate consumers to purchase supplements and fortified products.

Products that support heart, bone, eye, and brain health are especially important to the older population. Appetite loss associated with aging, which can reduce daily caloric intake and therefore micronutrient intake, is another purchasing driver for this group.

Fortified foods provide reassurance to families that they’re still eating healthy.

5. Growing interest in health and wellness

It’s no secret that health and wellness have been unstoppable trends in the U.S. food industry. But just as Western diets have expanded across the globe, so too has an interest in healthy foods. The rise in disposable income occurring in parts of Asia, Latin America, and Africa is allowing people to spend more on foods that are healthier.

Furthermore, increasingly busy schedules have made convenience foods, like fortified ready-to-eat cereals, especially popular.

Although less time may be devoted to preparing meals, fortified foods provide reassurance to families that they’re still eating healthy.

References
1. Industry Arc, Premix Market Size, March 2020

Fortifying for the Future

The global growth of fortified foods and beverages signals an exciting time. Incomes are increasing, and people are living longer, healthier lives. Consumers are becoming more educated in how to take care of their health and are becoming more proactive.

With these changes come changing consumer expectations for foods and beverages. Fortified versions (especially of milk and dairy products, cereals, fats and oils, and beverages) will become more than just a point of differentiation. In many cases, they’ll become an expectation.
Consumers Crave ‘Conscious Indulgence’ in Snacking
The trend in conscious indulgence continues to shape snacking preferences, with 64% of global consumers believing it’s okay to enjoy indulgent treats as part of a healthy diet.1 Explore how consumers are satisfying their cravings for both enjoyment and nutrition and what this means for food and beverage companies.

The Shift Toward Conscious Indulgence

The craving for a decadent treat now and then, whether it’s cookies after a long workday or ice cream as a bedtime snack, is familiar to most of us. Even among the healthiest eaters, moments of feeling good matter. As more consumers seek to balance the desire for indulgent treats with healthy eating, what they’re looking for in a snack is shifting.

The trend in conscious indulgence represents the growing demand for indulgent treats that are healthier in some way than the traditional versions. This includes indulgent high-protein snacks such as protein cookies, muffins, and brownies, as well as ready-to-drink shakes and lattes that offer functional nutrition. Even smaller portions meet this trend—for example, protein or energy balls in decadent flavors.

Just Add Protein

Adding protein to an indulgent snack is a clear opportunity to achieve better-for-you positioning. Protein cookies, brownies, and snack cakes are all examples of products found in the sports nutrition section that have enormous potential to engage mainstream consumers. Like the wildly popular protein ice cream, these decadent protein-fortified bakery products are also lower in sugar and calories than their traditional counterparts. The COVID lockdown has made indulgent high-protein snacks especially appealing due to their dual role in providing comfort as a sweet treat and supporting efforts toward healthy nutrition. According to Glanbia Nutritionals’ recent consumer survey, 29% of US consumers indicated they increased their consumption of protein cookies and brownies at the end of 2020.2 Protein-fortified brownie and muffin mixes are alternatives to ready-to-eat versions that work perfectly with the trend in home baking.

Functional Benefits

The indulgent treat that provides functional nutrition is another strategy to grab consumers’ attention. Functional foods and beverages that can offer an indulgent experience range from ready-to-drink coffee beverages to shake mixes to bars. Bars in particular are known for their variety of decadent flavor options, with chocolate fudge brownie and peanut butter cup the top two preferred flavors, according to a Glanbia Nutritionals survey.3 Due to recent innovations in texture around layers and fillings, some of today’s bars can even compete as healthier alternatives to snackfections. Top-of-mind functional benefits for consumers include immune support and weight management, driven by the COVID situation. There is also an emerging interest in products with calming, focus-enhancing, and energy-boosting ingredients. Regardless of whether snacking is driven by health or indulgence reasons, taste is the thing to which most US consumers pay attention.4

As more consumers seek to balance the desire for indulgent treats with healthy eating, what they’re looking for in a snack is shifting.
Snacking Made Delicious and Nutritious

These healthy snacking trends can help guide manufacturers in creating snacks that offer consumers the balanced approach to snacking they're looking for—snacks that provide a moment of bliss but still fit within a healthy lifestyle. Manufacturers of indulgent snacks can meet this growing demand by adding ingredients and nutrients that elevate their products to better-for-you snacks, while sports and functional nutrition companies can be mindful of flavor and texture choices to create a decadent experience consumers crave.

References
Exploring Cereal’s Transition From Breakfast Table to Snacking Staple
With the rise of snackification, ready-to-eat (RTE) cereal has expanded beyond the breakfast bowl to an anytime, anywhere treat. Designing RTE cereals to be more snackable may be the perfect opportunity to reinvigorate cereal sales amidst breakfast time competition like yogurt, bars, and on-the-go breakfast sandwiches.

### The Most Important Meal of the Day

While RTE cereal is known for its almost universal household penetration, the $70.2 billion global market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 2.5% to 2021. Increasingly, consumers are turning to alternative breakfast options with better portability and satiety.

For many consumers, cereal for breakfast doesn’t provide enough energy or keep them full for long enough. Savvy consumers know to check the nutrition label for nutrients like protein and fiber. Greek yogurt scores high on protein, while cereal bars do well on fiber. And both are portable, unlike a bowl of cereal with milk.

### The Growth of Snackable Cereal

Though the breakfast meal may be evolving, there’s no reason for cereal to be left behind. The popularity of Cheerios as one of baby’s first finger foods shows that cereal is ideal for snacking. Cereal is already bite-sized and can easily be made portable by packing it into a Ziploc bag to take to school or work. Considering most consumers in developed countries snack frequently and there was an increase in global breakfast cereal launches of 3% between 2019 and 2020 promoting cereal as a snack food represents a valuable opportunity.

According to Mintel, 38% of US cereal consumers eat cereal for a snack, while 28% of US cereal consumers eat RTE cereal at non-breakfast occasions. Providing post-pandemic snackers with consciously indulgent options made with all-day snacking in mind, cereal brands can grow their appeal.

### How to Make a Cereal More Snackable

#### 1. A Hint of Sweetness

Across the food and beverage industries, reduced sugar products have been trending. Cereal brands have been making the effort to find the balance between health and enjoyment by improving their formulations.

The popularity of lightly sweetened cereal indicates not just a health preference but a taste preference, as well. A snackable cereal that tastes either bland or as sweet as a confection is unlikely to meet consumer expectations.
2. Bigger Pieces

The ideal snacking cereal should be as easy to eat as chips or crackers. Clusters and large individual pieces both work well for this. A number of granola manufacturers have developed granola clusters that are advertised as both a breakfast cereal and a snack. The innovative size of granola clusters positions it between traditional granola and granola bars.

3. Portable Packaging

To make cereal truly snackable, packaging matters. Single-serve packaging and resealable pouches ensure consumers can just grab-and-go.

4. Healthy Nutrition

When consumers choose cereal as a snack, the perception is that it’s a healthier, more nutritious choice than traditional snacks (like candy or potato chips) that can have a nutrition label high in sugar, salt, or fat. Also, consumers are increasingly looking for fiber and protein in their cereal.

A healthy immune system has never been more important to consumers now. According to Mintel, between 2016 and 2020, only 3% of all global cereal launches featured immune health claims. According to Mintel, “to provide enhanced immunity benefits, cereal brands can enrich their formulations with proven nutrients that support immune health. In Europe, these can include copper, folate, iron, selenium and zinc as well as vitamins A, B12, B6, C and D, as authorised by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).”

Consumers typically expect their cereal to contain vitamins and minerals, as well. Using a custom nutrient premix is a simple way to add, increase, or customize vitamin and mineral levels to meet the needs of different consumers, such as children or athletes.

Manufacturers should be sure to use marketing copy and front-of-package claims to promote their cereal as a health snack.

References

1. Statista, Global Breakfast Cereals, March 2021