

MAINESENSE

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR FOODSERVICE BUSINESS

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Snack Culture
- Snacking in Style

The Snack Culture

How Restaurateurs Can Increase Revenue as a Result of the Changing Times





A New Way of Life

It's called grazing. Or snacking. And Americans are developing a chronic case of it. But this nontraditional eating habit is more than a phase. Snacks are perfectly sized and priced for today's slow-moving economy, changing employment landscape, healthy-eating awareness, and of course, hunger. While some worry snack culture will negatively affect lunch and dinner profits, others are reaping the benefits of offering snack menus for off-peak hours.

Do the Snack Math

According to Technomic's Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report, 48% of consumers are snacking at least twice a day, up from 25% in 2010. As restaurants have adapted to this trend, their share of the snack market has increased from 17% in 2010 to 22% today. 30% of consumers are snacking away from home, up from previous years, which is good news for food establishments. The group forecasts rapid growth of 23.8% in this market from 2012 to 2016, due to a strengthening economy and changing consumer attitudes toward snacking. In total, snacking sales are expected to reach \$22.9 billion in 2016. The Snack Culture is on a steady incline, and it looks like the next generation may mark a permanent change. A 2010 study showed that children in the United States snacked on average six times per day, approximately twice as often as American children in the 1970s.



What Do Snackers Want

Consumer habits have evolved. Not only are people eating more sporadically throughout the day, but they are eating smaller portions and lighter carb-conscience meals and taking advantage of dollar menus and promotional ploys. Snacking is also a social activity people can enjoy with their peers. It is often a means to reward themselves and take a break from boredom. 37% of consumers have broadened their definition of snack to include a wider variety of food and beverages. What do those include? Honestly, anything. The “snack waters” are largely uncharted, although there is a definite trend toward snacks rich in protein. 85% of consumers agree cheese makes for a great snack.

Snacking Comes out of the Health Closet

Our grandmothers warned us to stop snacking or else we would spoil our appetite. Truth is, snacking tames our appetite. Recent studies dispel the myth that snacks inevitably lead to weight gain and prove that snacking is an effective way to fit extra nutrients into our diets and prevent overeating at mealtimes. A study, published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, looked at 250 people for one year and noted that those who were overweight ate fewer snacks. Healthy snacking helps keep blood sugar levels even, especially if you eat a consistent amount of carbs at each meal or snack. So, are we excited that snacking is staving off intense hunger? No, we work in the restaurant industry after all. What we are happy about is that there are now four and five meals in a day, instead of two or three. If operators can meet this growing demand, they will and attract snacker traffic and stimulate daily sales.

Keep in Mind

- 1 It Adds Up:** Snack menu prices may seem to drop check averages, but remember that guests will be prone to buy multiples of them. They're also likely to add a cocktail or glass of wine with them. It'll add up.
- 2 Capitalize Off-peak Demand:** You own the restaurant 24/7. Get more out of that 24! Snacks draw in crowds you otherwise would not have during that awkward time between lunch and dinner, 2pm–5pm. You're not losing customers by adding a snack menu, you're winning them. It a low-risk, high-reward proposition.
- 3 “All Things to All”:** Off-peak hours include late night, midmorning, midafternoon, happy hour, and dessert only. Off-peak diners will become regular customers during other daily meals if they feel accommodated.
- 4 Be Nontraditional:** Build a strong snacker base with a snack menu that is well rounded, carefully crafted, and nontraditional. People are eating during nontraditional parts of the day, so cater to their taste, don't just reduce the price and size of traditional meals.
- 5 Boost Kitchen Creativity:** Bar snacks/bites/snack menu items are a great way for chefs to get creative and train newer line chefs. Not to mention, snack menus by nature have smaller portions, which means smarter ingredient economy. Use up the last of what's in stock that would otherwise go to waste.
- 6 Share the Good News:** Use all channels of communication and social media to share the word. Don't forget that you are targeting a new and emerging audience that is craving this type of thing. Here's an example...



NEW! Katie Krave's pub tables open 2pm–5pm for snack menu and cocktails. Take a short break and come in with your colleagues for quick service and delicious munchies!

Snacking in Style

We've been New Year's shopping and have come up with our 2014 Snack Menu Serveware Wish List. Here are our top picks for your tabletop.

- 1 Conical Baskets:** These have an awesome way of making less look like more. Pile in kabobs, fries, and other finger foods to create an appetizing array of food but with less negative space. You can also order basket styles with ramekin holders for dipping sauces.
- 2 Decorative Wrought Iron Baskets:** We love that you can line sliders in a row on these without the tray looking looking strange or empty. The dark wrought iron frames the food and draws guests' eyes in, making food look larger and more inviting.
- 3 Mini Cast Iron Pots:** Now mac and cheese or warm dips can make it to the snack menu and not only be delicious but also adorable and practical. Serve it hot in a mini cast iron pot.
- 4 Chip and Dip Basket:** It'll be hard for guests not to notice this very cool chip and dip basket on another table or being delivered by a server. It makes regular (or not so regular) chips and dip seem that much more exciting.
- 5 Fry Cups:** Side of fries? Breaded shrimp? Jalapeño poppers? Pop-corn? Why not present them in a stainless steel cup or some other stainless steel receptacle that is different, fun, and scaled down to the perfect size?
- 6 Serving Boards:** A serving board automatically graces food with a rustic and artisan feel. American METALCRAFT has several styles, some of which can hold ramekins or small serving bowls. Have fun with these, whether you put dishes on them or place your snack on them directly.
- 7 Testing Dishes, Stainless Au Gratin Dishes, and Mini Cook-ware:** These dishes are wonderfully sized and shaped for snacking portions. Even pasta dishes can become a snack item when served in miniature tableware like this. Create a combo snack item with various and stylish receptacles.



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