

Five Food Trends Driven by Millennials

The influence of foodie culture on younger consumers is an opportunity for foodservice operators.

Y-Pulse has released a study examining dining experiences of Millennial consumers (18-34 year olds), and what drives these same consumers to very different types of food experiences outside the home.

To craft the survey, the Y-Pulse team engaged with foodservice experts who regularly participate in trends surveys, but also included creative experts who work in important lifestyle industries such as fashion, architecture and fine arts.

What emerged from the study was a richly detailed and insightful picture of dining trends driven by the younger, modern consumer (18-34 years old), as well as the degree that they diverge from overall consumer preferences.



“We found that young consumers, between ages 18 and 34, are greatly influenced by the foodie culture that surrounds them,” says Sharon Olson, executive director of Y-Pulse. “These trends highlight the direction of the foodservice industry in future years,” adds Olson.

In this study, titled **“The Modern Consumer: Understanding Tomorrow’s Tastemakers Today 2017,”** questions covered a range of topics from ingredient transparency to exploration through international cuisines. Here are the five trends that Millennial consumers will continue, and even further, in today’s marketplace:

Influential Foodie Culture – Today’s food-centric culture has given rise to food halls, fancy food emporiums and food festivals that offer fully immersive experiences. Young consumers are eagerly pushing this trend forward with 71% of Millennials saying they love to attend food-focused events and **81% stating that they enjoy exploring new cultures through food.** Foodservice operators will see a continuation of this trend, both in dining experience and innovation in global flavors.

Memorable Tasting Experiences – Memorable food experiences drive today’s dining decisions and young consumers are going to continue to accelerate this trend. For example, 48% of young consumers surveyed say they seek out restaurants run by critically-acclaimed chefs and 69% said they love restaurants with chef’s tasting menus. 61% of consumers surveyed wished they could dine on more foods that remind them of their grandmothers’ cooking and 69% wished for foods that remind them of their childhoods. Whether they target the nostalgia or provide sophisticated tasting adventures, **foodservice operators need to aim for “unforgettable” experiences.**

Speed Versus Savoring – Conveniently packaged food is important to younger consumers, as 48% of them say they prefer eating meals on-the-go and **44% say that convenience is more important than cuisine**. In the future, many foodservice menus will need to expand, or give special attention, to their grab-and-go offerings.

Food Trust – Consumers of all ages wish to establish trust with food providers, and young consumers are expected to continue this trend in future years. **68 percent of millennial consumers prefer local sourcing of ingredients** and 66 percent of them are willing to pay a little more for food that comes from local producers.

High Expectations – Today’s consumers want it all and it’s a trend that’s here to stay. 67 percent millennial consumers said they love ordering healthy options offered at a restaurant. Yet, **63 percent of millennial consumers also say they love restaurants that offer “over-the-top” menu items**.

This study highlights that food experiences away from the home are an important part of modern consumer lifestyles, but it is essential to recognize the trends that younger consumers want to continue, or even further. For example, the increased influence of foodie culture on younger consumers is an opportunity for foodservice operators to customize both experience and cuisine for future consumers. At a time when consumer mistrust of government and mega-business is high, **foodservice professionals will have to expand their role as trusted advisors and suppliers of new products and adventurous food experiences**. Recognizing the desire of the same consumer to have vastly different types of food experiences at different times—such as healthy and “over-the-top” and convenient—will be key to future success.

The 2017 Y-Pulse Modern Consumer: Understanding Tomorrow’s Tastemakers Today Study surveyed 884 US consumers, between the ages of 18 and 34, about their attitudes, expectations and tendencies dining outside the home. More than one-third (36 percent) of the consumers were between the ages 18 to 25, while the rest were between 26 and 34. This survey is a follow-up study of an earlier survey carried out in Culinary Visions Panel’s 2016 Modern Consumer Dining Study. The latter covered the same scope of inquiry but surveyed 2000 US consumers of all ages.