

How Millennials Snack

May 14, 2014 — Members of the millennial generation love to snack, and catering to them is a great way to increase traffic and sales in foodservice operations.

However, don't assume that this huge group of 20- and 30-somethings—Pew Research Center pegged their numbers at 77 million—snacks the same way as other generations. Understanding the needs and behavior of millennials is essential to the success of your snack program.

It's important to realize how severely millennials have been affected by the Great Recession—and the stagnant economy and high unemployment left in its wake. Many are saddled with large student loan debt. A sizable number reside with their parents. Compared to the well-established and more secure baby boomers, millennials are necessarily more careful about parting with their disposable income.



Even though they may not spend as freely as they might wish, millennials still enjoy going out and socializing with friends. Millennials are also more likely to dine out than previous generations.

Understanding the snacking patterns of millennials is also important for tailoring your selection. According to a new study by Y-Pulse and the Culinary Visions Panel, younger millennials (ages 19 to 25) snack more often in the past year and favor a “snack throughout the day” lifestyle. Middle millennials (ages 26-30) are snacking most during the late afternoon and before dinner. Older millennials (ages 31-36) are snacking in the mid-morning and late afternoon at about the same amount as they did a year ago.

Speaking of sales opportunities, consider offering grab-and-go snacks as breakfast substitutes. Millennials on the whole, especially those in college, are not particularly fond of breakfast as a formal, sit-down meal early in the morning. They often prefer to pick up a package of crackers, cookies, muffins or breakfast biscuits and a coffee or bottled beverage on the way to class or work.

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