

Younger Consumers Show Growing Interest in Culinary Efforts

Y-Pulse: More than half of young consumers between 8 years old and 18 years old enjoy preparing a meal for their family.

CHICAGO — Younger generations are exhibiting culinary confidence and are becoming discerning diners and self-assured cooks, according to the latest Y-Pulse Youth Lifestyle Monitor report.

The report cites food media, chefs, food and nutrition professionals, and parents as important influences and delves into the perspectives of millennial and Generation Z survey participants on cooking at home and dining away from home.

“When we first began studying kids and their eating habits more than a decade ago, favorite foods and treasured family recipes that evoked positive flavor memories were very often attributed to grandparents,” said Sharon Olson, executive director of Y-Pulse. “Today’s food savvy millennial moms are influencing a new generation of kids who are self-assured when it comes to cooking and critiquing food.”

Insights from the report include:

Cooking As Creative Expression

In a recent nationwide Y-Pulse study the majority of moms of 4- to 17-year-old children (94%) said they enjoyed cooking. Cooking is a creative expression for many of those surveyed, with 91% agreeing that they enjoy being creative with ingredients in the kitchen.

Although they welcome recipes, 94% said they like following recipe suggestions that allow them to put their own spin on dishes. Additionally, the research found nearly three-quarters (74%) of modern moms agreed that they like to be challenged in the kitchen.

In a Y-Pulse survey of 8- to 18-year-olds, the majority (85%) reported that a parent in the household prepares most of the meals. Yet, more than half (56%) reported that they enjoy cooking for their family.



Entertainment As Education

The Youth Lifestyle Monitor reports more than half (56%) of K-12 kids are watching the Food Network and “Tasty” style videos for entertainment. Nearly half (46%) said they tried to cook some of the meals they saw on videos and social media platforms, and 58% liked to cook for themselves.

Kids have become more than the audience for cooking shows; they have become the talent, according to the market research firm. A review of social media platforms shows a growing trend of cooking shows hosted by kids, for kids on various platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. These shows often focus on simple and fun recipes that children can easily follow and recreate at home.

Culinary Criticism As Conversation

Flavor exploration and reviewing food venues have become popular diversions with consumers of all ages. Young consumers have increasingly taken on the role of influencer as well in today’s food culture expressing their experiences and opinions on social media platforms.

The Youth Lifestyle Monitor found almost half (49%) of 8- to 18-year-olds reported that they liked to post about their restaurant experiences on social media. Among 15- to 18-year-olds, 62% reported posting about their experiences, while the 8- to 14-year-olds in the study were more likely to be restricted on their phone use in restaurants when dining with parents.

According to Y-Pulse, successful food industry professionals understand the importance of engaging these discerning young tastemakers in many segments of the food industry from school nutrition to senior dining. For example, a Y-Pulse survey of school nutrition professionals found 40% offered kitchen tours and 38% had active student advisory panels.

Additionally, dining in senior residential communities is not as unlikely a place as one would expect to find foodservice professionals creating events designed to encourage families and grandchildren to visit and share experiences, the report added. Some examples include food tastings, family dining events and gardening programs.

Founded in 2004, Chicago-based Y-Pulse is a division of Olson Communications. The research and consulting practice specializes in helping companies in the food business better understand tomorrow's tastemakers today.