

# "New Seniors" Redefining Deli Opportunities



By  
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**E**arly Baby Boomers are collecting their first social security checks, yet they are showing no signs of diminishing their expectations for food and experiences. Their zest for culinary adventure and quest for no-compromise convenience can mean significant opportunities for the deli.

Today's "new seniors" were the subject of a recent nationwide study of 500 consumers over the age of 55 by Culinary Visions® Panel. Of those surveyed, 90 percent were currently living independently. The results of this food and lifestyle study made it clear that this large demographic has no intention of compromising their quality of life or their culinary expectations.

## The Fresh Experience

Fresh has become one of the most powerful adjectives in food marketing today, and there are few food venues as well positioned as the deli to deliver freshness. Cross merchandising programs

with produce hit the sweet spot with today's seniors. Among the most important characteristics desired by seniors was "real food, no artificial ingredients," noted by 87 percent of respondents.

## Restaurant Quality Dining

Ambiance is an essential part of the dining experience to "new seniors" who defined the restaurant industry in its growth years. In fact, quality of food and quality of atmosphere ranked of equal importance to those who participated in this study at 87 percent.

Of those who had explored the idea of a senior community for themselves – 83 percent said it was important to have a chef on staff. Today's chef-inspired meal kits and chef-ready foods help seniors create an experience at home. Unlike younger consumers who are often happy to enjoy their meals straight from the takeout container, meal components that can easily be prepared, finished or reheated and served on dinnerware can

appeal to seniors.

## Time to Entertain

After retirement, there is more time to enjoy life, which often includes entertaining. Of seniors considering a senior community for themselves, 75 percent said that a private dining room where they could entertain family and friends was important and 92 percent said it was important to have food that they are proud to serve. With the rise of in-store restaurants, the resources to build an enhanced catering menu are often in place. Offering a wider variety of catered options can encourage seniors to pick up a delicious and imaginative offering for social occasions at home.

## Balancing Health and Indulgence

Comfort foods satisfy every generation, yet they are often synonymous with indulgence and descriptions, such as hearty and creamy. Balancing healthfulness with indulgence is something that the deli is uniquely qualified to offer. This is especially true, if your store has a dietitian who is connected to your customers. Of seniors surveyed, 77 percent of those considering a senior community said it was important to have a registered dietitian on staff, and 79 percent said it was important to have menus for special diets.

## Considering Convenience

In today's fast-paced world, convenience is more important than ever, and it's no different with seniors. When asked about the type of meal service that would be important to everyday life in a senior community, a convenience retail market was the number one type of venue noted by 95 percent of seniors considering a community for themselves. All day snacking has become part of today's food culture, and seniors enjoy on-demand access to their favorite foods and beverages as much as any other demographic.

It's often said that Baby Boomers will die before they admit to being old. The deli is ideally positioned to feed the youthful exuberance of "new seniors."

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