

New Study Shows Veg-centric Sandwich Popularity Rising

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Healthier Ingredients Define this Segment

(Chicago, September 8, 2015) – Veg-centric sandwich concepts take center stage with Millennial consumers according to a new study by Culinary Visions® Panel. This exclusive online consumer research study explored more than 1,000 consumers' sandwich habits, attitudes, preferences and willingness to try new concepts.

Culinary Visions Panel developed 10 next generation sandwich concepts exclusively for this study to find out how adventurous consumers are when it comes to trying new sandwich ingredient combinations. Four of the top five sandwich concepts preferred by Millennials were veg-centric in nature.

Veg-centric – not vegetarian – is a macro trend influencing menus across all segments of the foodservice industry. **Vegetables are moving from side dish to center of the plate with new and interesting techniques.** Most of these new menu items use protein sparingly to provide layers of craveable flavor. The next great sandwich concept could incorporate a unique mix of vegetables, with a protein garnish.

"Innovative vegetable preparations are finding their way onto more parts of the menu in all segments of the foodservice industry, and that's what inspired our culinary ideation of sandwich concepts where vegetables are star ingredients," said Sharon Olson, Executive Director of Culinary Visions Panel. "We believe they have real potential to delight a wide range of customers because some concepts may be vegetarian and yet many include meat as well. I think consumers are telling us they are ready for delicious, flavorful and craveable veg-centric sandwiches."

Millennials may be a good target, as more than one-third of these consumers would try the Vegetable Sandwich, while only a quarter of those ages 35-54 would choose the meat-free option. The Vegetable Sandwich, which ranked second overall with Millennial consumers, included ingredients like arugula, tomato, avocado, caramelized onion and melted cheese between crispy plantains.

The veg-centric theme continues, with a third of respondents interested in the Omelet Sandwich, which was rated third among the 10 concepts tested. This combines spinach, pepper jack cheese, roasted red peppers, and a sprinkling of bacon in an egg wrap.

Also highly rated with Millennials was the Salad Cone, a salad-as-a-sandwich concept that combines grilled chicken, romaine lettuce, onion, tomato and ranch dressing in cone-shaped brioche. And rounding out the top 5 was the Paleo sandwich with avocado spread, romaine lettuce, peppers, fresh herbs and accents of garlic marinated shrimp, enrobed in an almond flour wrap.

About Culinary Visions® Panel

The Culinary Visions Panel is a research and trend forecasting firm that explores a wide range of culinary topics with food industry professionals and consumers. *Culinary Visions Panel is a division of Olson Communications, a certified Women's Business Enterprise, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. For more information on Culinary Visions Panel, please contact info@culinaryvisions.org or 312.280.4757.* Culinary Visions Panel is a registered trademark of Olson Communications, Inc.

About the Survey

Culinary Visions Panel surveyed 1,014 adults ages 18-55+ with access to the Internet about sandwich habits, attitudes, preferences and willingness to explore new concepts. Sandwich concepts were developed exclusively for this study by Culinary Visions Panel. The study, entitled Next Gen Sandwiches: Consumers' Interest in New Sandwich Concepts, was released in July 2015. Topics included sandwich habits and attitudes, next generation sandwich concepts and dream sandwiches.

Culinary Visions Panel Next Gen Sandwich Concepts Tested:

- **Omelet Sandwich:** Bacon, spinach, pepper jack cheese, and roasted red pepper in an egg wrap.
- **Stuffed Hoagie:** Black Forest ham, Gruyere cheese, and chopped fresh chives stuffed into a hoagie roll.
- **Vegetable Sandwich:** Arugula, tomato, avocado, caramelized onion, and melted cheese sandwiched between crispy plantains.
- **Sandwich Fries:** Cheddar cheese, BBQ pork, and scallion wrapped in crispy sweet potato.
- **Sandwich Cone:** Grilled chicken, romaine lettuce, onion, tomato, and ranch dressing stuffed into a brioche "cone".
- **Vietnamese Bahn Mi:** A combination of pickled veggies, pork belly, fresh herbs and crispy baguette.
- **Pot Pie Sandwich:** Warm creamy chicken pot pie filling, carrots, and celery stuffed inside a buttery, flaky biscuit.
- **Torta:** Juicy carne asada, avocado, green chili, and cheese all stuffed into the classic bolillo bread.