

Redefining health and wellness for 2019 and beyond

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CHICAGO — For a growing number of consumers, it's not enough for food to simply satiate the appetite and satisfy the senses. They want breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks to contribute to longevity and well-being. Food trend forecasts show natural energy, probiotics and plant-based foods will be the three sectors fueling the health and wellness trend in 2019.

"Instead of thinking in terms of nutritional requirements or a diet, which people view as rigid, today's consumer prefers to think in terms of lifestyle choices," said Shayna Snyder, account director, **Culinary Visions**, Chicago. "Health-conscious consumers are seeking out products that help meet their wellness goals."

Laurie Demeritt, chief executive officer, The Hartman Group, Bellevue, Wash., said, "Healthy eating remains at the center of most consumers' beliefs about health and wellness and is central to achieving their lifestyle goals. While still a major health and wellness concern, consumers today are more reluctant to claim weight loss as the sole end goal of health and wellness change. Rather, weight loss should be one benefit of a lifestyle that promotes feeling better and having more energy during a longer life."

Ms. Demeritt cited the example of the recent name change and rebranding of Weight Watchers to "WW International" with the tagline "Wellness that Works."

"The diet is no longer a tacit remedy for mainstream-consumer concerns for health issues," she said. "While Weight Watchers has profoundly shaped the culture of dieting in the U.S. for half a century, contemporary health and wellness notions have moved beyond weight loss and management."

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It is common for today's consumers to practice some kind of dieting ideology, anything from gluten free to paleo. They are embracing personal responsibility and recognize the choices they make in terms of food and beverage impact the balance in their body. They prioritize "feeling good" over "looking good."

"American eating habits are much more nutritionally intentional than in a former era composed largely of short-term crash diets, silver-bullet products and eating to look good," Ms. Demeritt said. "Contemporary diets are personalized and all about balance, wellness and energy. Wellness and energy are shorthand for feeling lighter, better digestion, reducing inflammation and ultimately feeling good and being happy."

Many consumers correlate quality of food with quality of life. The challenge is consumers vary in their definition of quality of food, but in general, fresh and less processed are markers of quality, and thus associated with improved health.

"Consumers continue to avoid markers of processed foods and their key 'red flag' ingredients, namely sugars, sodium and bad fats," Ms. Demeritt said. "While sodium is still heavily avoided due to its connection to heart health, consumers also see it as an indicator of 'more processed' foods."