

# FLAVOR & THE MENU

Say it with  
SALT

Even among consumers with a declared salt preference, what appeals varies. Olson Communications' Culinary Visions Panel recently conducted consumer research on the salty taste preferences among a group of over 500 consumers. The results showed that, while consumers might express preferences for various flavors, like "salty," when presented with specific recipes or menu descriptions, reactions will vary depending upon how flavors are combined and balanced.

"Salt-loving consumers don't always prefer salty menu items," says Olson Communications' Rachel Tracy. The time of day and the meal also has an impact on preferences - lunch was the only daypart in which the salty item scored highest. At dinner and breakfast, sweet, umami and sour concepts scored better than the salty choice.

Olson's report also suggests that a salty taste preference does not always translate into an understanding of what foods contain large amounts of salt. Although consumers identified french fries, tortilla chips and nuts as salty, fewer than 15 percent perceived saltiness when used as a flavor enhancer, as in cold cuts or prepared Italian salad dressing. This implies more consumer education is needed to raise awareness of hidden sodium in foods.