

Meat and veggies can co-exist, and other major food predictions

Consumers are gravitating toward a plant-based diet -- without cutting out the meat they love.

Efforts to put more plants on the plate are driving the veg-centric food trend, but veg-centric does not necessarily mean vegetarian, says food-focused research firm **Culinary Visions Panel**. While 88 percent of consumers in a survey said they want their diets to include more fruits and 87 percent said they want more vegetables, 82 percent of the same consumers still said they love meat.

The firm has identified **five big product development trends for 2019**, based on insights from culinary professionals, trade conference speakers and a survey of over 5,000 consumers:

Replenishing with Purpose: Consumers who want to get more from their meals are looking for functional foods that both satisfy their hunger and pack a nutritional punch. Of consumers surveyed, 73 percent said they enjoy eating superfoods that serve specific functional purposes. Whether seeking a powerful protein boost or a healthy dose of antioxidants, consumers are setting high ingredient expectations.

Ethical Concerns: Consumers are looking to leave a light carbon footprint. Efforts that result in reduced packaging, as well as ethical ingredient sourcing, help alleviate their concerns about ethical food. The study found 83 percent of consumers wish restaurants would use more environmentally friendly practices, and 66 percent said they care about ordering protein that is sustainably raised or caught.

Beyond Dietary Restrictions: Rather than following regimented diets, consumers are limiting certain ingredients in their dishes. The study showed 76 percent said they avoid ordering menu items with certain ingredients that do not agree with them. Sixty-six percent said eating foods they feel good about is more important than watching their weight.

Healthful without Compromise: Expectations for grab-and-go foods with better-for-you ingredients are now the norm. Retail stores are experiencing a frozen food renaissance as healthier and flavorful choices offer appealing alternatives to pricey meal kits. Yet consumers don't like to compromise when it comes to taste; only 25 percent were willing to compromise on taste if they are eating something healthy.

The Quest for World Flavors: Consumers are expanding their appetites with a deeper exploration of Latin American, Asian and Mediterranean flavor profiles from Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Korea, Philippines and Morocco. Ingredients once considered exotic are now being sold in dry and paste formats optimal for high volume kitchens.

"Today's consumers have growing expectations that the food industry will continue to feed their desires for healthful, affordable and delicious food choices on demand," said Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel.

For more information or to purchase a complete copy of a report, contact info@culinaryvisions.org.