

Refrigerated & Frozen Foods

Study finds Millennials want more ethically-sourced foods on the go

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Younger consumers revealed increased expectations for ethical snacks and grab-and-go foods, according to **Ethics On the Go**, a new report from Culinary Visions Panel's Mindful Dining Initiative project.



The study surveyed 1,500 U.S. consumers about their attitudes toward ethically-sourced foods and how it impacts their dining choices of portable and grab-and-go foods outside the home. The study finds that while all consumers care about ethical eating, consumers under 35 years pay the closest attention to responsible practices behind menus.

"From sustainable farming to free-range eggs, consumers do not want their dining choices to have unintended negative consequences," says Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel, Chicago. "Whether it's rewarding a company's fair trade labor practices or their zero-waste policies, we found that Millennials are the most serious about ethically-sourced grab-and-go foods."

Ethical as a shortcut to younger consumers

The report found that the 18- to 34-year demographic valued ethical eating choices much higher than any other demographic. Where 50% of general consumers agreed organic foods tasted better, 60% of consumers under 35 equated organic foods with better taste.

Ethical food options are "trendy"

Ethical efforts made in foodservice - from vegan food options to composting on-site - is the new cool "it" factor for Millennial consumers who have to navigate multiple dining options. In fact, 76% of consumers under 35 equated ethical efforts made by restaurants as trendy.

Shortage of ethical grab-and-go options

Millennials don't want to choose between their love of quick, grab-and-go foods and their desire to eat more responsibly. Compared to 57% of overall consumers who said there are not enough ethically produced snacks available to them, 64% of consumers under 35 said the same thing.

Willing to pay premium for ethical grab-and-go

Consumers under 35 are willing to pay extra to eat more ethically while on-the-go. The study reported 67% of consumers under 35 would be willing to pay more for ethically produced food that they can grab on-the-go, compared to 55% of overall consumers.

Omnivorous cravings for grab-and-go

While consumers said that they love meat, many are also hungry to get more plants into their diets. And, 88% of all surveyed said that they were keen to add more plant-based foods and ingredients to their meals.

While ethical grab-and-go foods may seem a niche concept for foodservice operators, it highlights the high expectations consumers under 35 have for dining outside the home. Consumers are not limiting their concerns to ethically-sourced food ingredients, but also to the operations on-site. For example, 82% of the consumers surveyed say they wished establishments would use more environmentally friendly business practices and 65% say the environmental impact of take-out containers and to-go packaging concerns them.

From eco-friendly utensils to partnerships with local farms, foodservice operators should consider how to introduce and communicate ethically-sourced ingredients, menu concepts and business practices to keep up with evolving consumer expectations.