

RETAIL

Foodie Culture Fuels Retail Trends

SHARON OLSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CULINARY VISIONS PANEL

Foodies and food traditionalists may share the same demographic profile, but they have very different relationships with food. Gone are the days when foodies were considered food snobs. Today's foodie is enthusiastic about trying new foods and genuinely interested in understanding the provenance of their meals.

Surveys of more than 3,000 foodie consumers provide insight into the trends and implications for the refrigerated and frozen food business. Foodies are all about flavor experience. That's why they are driving the



Foodies want better-for-you, allergen-free products that contain sustainable ingredients.

trend toward more healthful foods and scrutinizing value in a whole new way.

The Culinary Visions Panel, a Chicago-based food-focused consumer research firm, regularly studies foodies and food traditionalists. Foodies are important because they are going to be the first to try something new and tell their friends and family about the experience. Food traditionalists are also important because their inclination is to stick with the tried and true, which can make them some of the most loyal customers.

In surveys of consumers—from grade school children to active seniors—the word most often used to describe food quality is “homemade.” The allure of the home kitchen remembered from childhood right here at home or in Latin America, North Africa or Asia is in demand. Homemade, or made easy, is the key to success for prepared food manufacturers.

The pursuit of wellness is also an inescapable part of the busy, time-starved American lifestyle. Consumers want wellness on their terms with healthful and delicious foods that carry credible better-for-you claims and clean ingredient statements.

With a greater mindfulness toward healthful eating, there is also more interest in vegetables at all meal occasions. Products that incorporate colorful vegetables in delicious new ways are sure to gain trial.

Foods that are free from major allergens and still taste great are also growing in demand, as more and more



consumers discover they have allergies or intolerances that make them feel better when they eliminate certain ingredients from their diets. Just as important as free-from foods are fortified foods that make it easier to get that delicious nutritional boost.

Consumers are redefining the way they look at value, with foodies in particular. Value is about a lot more than price. A delicious healthful entrée where the provenance of the ingredients feeds body and conscience is sure to appeal. Luxury for its own sake is out of style, and responsible consumption is more on trend.

When it comes to ingredients, a special ingredient grown sustainably from some corner of the globe can be just as appealing as something closer to home that allows the customer to connect with the farmer or fisherman responsible for the quality of the ingredient. The new understanding of local is that it's made in the United States by someone the consumer can trust.

When developing the right products for the right customers, understanding the consumer's relationship with food can be more important than just knowing their demographics. **RFF**

To read about foodservice trends, go to www.refrigeratedfrozenfood.com/foodservicetrends.

