

Cottage cheese is cool again

CHICAGO — While conscious aging — growing into your best self over the years — may help hide wrinkles and reduce ailments, certain food perceptions are a giveaway of one's generation. If you are over 50, there's a good chance you think of cottage cheese as something your mom, aunt or grandmother ate with canned peaches and a slice of Melba toast. Younger consumers have no recollection of this mash up and positioning, and as a demographic that craves clean, simple, high-quality protein, many are finding cottage cheese to be delicious and satisfying.

The cottage cheese category is ready for a comeback, according to a study from **Culinary Visions, Chicago**. The survey presented 2,000 consumers across the United States with 25 chef-inspired recipes featuring cottage cheese and discovered high interest in concepts that reimagined cottage cheese with a contemporary twist.

"Despite its old-school reputation, our study found that **creative cottage cheese recipe concepts held major appeal for consumers of all ages**," said Sharon Olson, executive director. "In fact, younger consumers ages 18-34 actually expressed more interest in the presented concepts than any other age group. **Modern takes on cottage cheese meet the needs of today's consumers' demanding lifestyles**, who seek products that are simultaneously healthful, convenient and delicious."

That is something several new players in the cottage cheese space are banking on, including New York-based Muuna Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Israel's largest food manufacturer, Tnuva. So are generations-old dairies across the country. Many longtime players in the cottage cheese space are giving new life to cottage cheese with snack pack sizes and new flavors.

"Cottage cheese has been around forever, and mainly thought of as a diet food," said Gerard Meyer, chief executive officer of Muuna. "The same was true for yogurt, but yogurt innovated while cottage cheese remained stuck in the past. At Muuna, we decided to reimagine cottage cheese, inside and out, down to our unique, beautiful cup. Today's consumers want good food that tastes delicious, but DairyPure Mix-Inscottage cheese has developed a reputation as boring and bland. So, we spent years creating a proprietary recipe that delivers a melt-in-your-mouth, creamy cottage cheese combined with premium, real pieces of fruit, which will surprise and delight your taste buds."

Joe Reske, senior director of marketing at Dean Foods, Dallas, said, "We saw an opportunity to shift the perception of cottage cheese as old-fashioned and provide exciting options in a category that has long suffered from a lack of innovation. Our new line of Mix-ins does just that. Our campaign highlights the nutritional benefits of eating cottage cheese, as well as the convenience and innovative flavors Mix-ins offers, all aimed at helping consumers maintain an active and flavor-filled lifestyle, while mixing up their snacking routines."

With innovations alive and thriving at retail, the **Culinary Visions' research** shows promise for cottage cheese in food service. The survey showed cottage cheese may be served on all types of menus. Nearly two-thirds (**64%**) of those surveyed said they were likely to try a warm queso dip described as a melted cottage cheese and cheddar base with fresh pico de gallo. The same number of respondents found the concept of a cottage cheese salad bar favorable. This was described as featuring a variety of flavored cottage cheese options in addition to favorite fruit and vegetable choices. A cottage cheese-based dip described as a creamy dip with fresh herbs and spices was found appealing by **62%** of respondents. **These top concepts fared best among consumers ages 18-34.**

Younger consumers also led in adventuring into more creative territory. Detailed descriptors with on-trend whole foods were compelling to young diners, with **68%** saying they would likely try a Southwest chicken salad described as grilled chicken, fire-roasted corn and poblano pepper relish, avocado and tomatoes, over a bed of lettuce with pureed jalapeño cottage cheese dressing. **Two thirds** said they would likely try a protein snack box described as a serving of creamy cottage cheese, slices of smoked turkey jerky and unsalted toasted almonds.