

The National

Culinary Review®

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION



millennials
worth wooing

let's share
appetizers

cabernet franc
planting new roots

Given the wide age span of millennials, it's time to stop thinking of them as "those kids," says Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions™ Panel owned by Olson Communications, Chicago. The company published "Mindful Dining: How Consumers' Values Influence Their Menu Choices," in January 2015.

The life stage of a 19-year-old is different than that of a 36-year-old with a family. "They behave differently in the marketplace because of financials," Olson says. "But they are holding true to values. Millennials are the ones driving the mindful-dining movement."

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When they want to learn more about a restaurant's reputation, 63% of millennials are most likely to trust the recommendation of friends and family, according to the Mindful Dining report. "Today, that word-of-mouth is delivered electronically," Olson says. "Not having a website is not an option if you want to engage a larger audience."

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Restaurants that support the local community also appeal to millennials. Some 76% of millennials say they choose to patronize restaurants that support their local community over those that don't get involved, says Olson. The Mindful Dining report survey asked respondents to write in what they would like to see their favorite restaurant support. The top categories, in order, were hunger, animals, cancer, children and local farmers.