

Gen Z & Five Key Future Dining Trends

CHICAGO — Children that are members of Generation Z may not be as absorbed in their smartphones as people might think, according to **Y-Pulse's new 2018 Kids Dining study**.

According to the study, today's tech-savvy, food-loving youngsters are discerning consumers who will be influencing tomorrow's dining trends from shareable menu items to healthy options from vending machines.

The report, titled Understanding **Tomorrow's Tastemakers Today**, explores the dining culture, attitudes and behaviors of more than 900 K-12 consumers, ranging in age from 8 to 18, toward traditional foodservice segments.

"Today's kids' expectations for dining outside the home are extremely high and will continue to increase as they become young adults," said Sharon Olson, executive director of Y-Pulse. "Certain trends, such as culinary adventure and healthfulness in food, typically accelerate as younger consumers grow older."

Food media, peers and the need for community heavily influence the current food culture in young consumers, according to the study. It identified five things food companies and restaurants need to know about **Gen Z consumers' dining preferences**:

- 1. They enjoy contradicting food trends.** Young consumers enjoy culinary adventure and comfort foods with equal zeal. Seventy-one percent of those surveyed like trying new dishes and flavors at restaurants, while 91 percent of kids like ordering their favorite foods or foods that they are familiar with.
- 2. They want the feeling of community.** Despite their love for smartphones and convenience, young consumers are not immune to the need for community feeling. Their choices in restaurants reflect this priority. Two-thirds (66 percent) surveyed like restaurants that offer shareable food and three-fourths (76 percent) of kids said they like to hang out with their friends at a restaurant.
- 3. They are heavily influenced by food media.** Young consumers have a healthy appetite for food media consumption, as 56 percent said they like to watch the Food Network and 52 percent of these consumers said they like to watch "Tasty" style videos on Facebook and Instagram.
- 4. They are influenced by perceptions of healthy food.** Much like their predecessors, Gen Z consumers care very much about eating healthy food and are influenced by perceptions of healthy eating. When asked about their perspective on eating healthy, 40 percent said that the snacks offered in school vending machines are healthy.
- 5. They crave independence in food.** When it comes to the Gen Z consumer segment, kids are growing up with a strong sense of independence and decisions in food. Fifty-eight percent said they like to cook for themselves and 50 percent of them said they like to get snacks from the convenience store.

As the foodservice industry shifts its focus from millennials to Gen Z consumers, it is important to understand what this incoming generation prioritizes, Y-Pulse said. The good news is that restaurants and foodservice outlets can adjust their offerings to the needs of this consumer segment and build a loyal customer base that they can service for many years.

Y-Pulse, a division of Olson Communications, is a research and consulting practice that specializes in helping companies in the food business better understand tomorrow's tastemakers today.

www.csnews.com

March 30, 2018