

Food for Thought

Snackification: The way we eat is changing

Snacks have always been a time saver. No time to eat? Grab a snack. Hunger pangs strike and the next meal is hours away? Snack time! But as consumers are increasingly time constrained and convenience becomes more imperative, snacks are becoming integral to a complete and balanced diet. So much so, in fact, there's a whole new term for health and wellness practitioners, influencers, retailers and wholesalers to digest. Snackification is here to stay.

The South African market for traditional snacks and treats, as well as nostalgia and comfort, provide the perfect balance to consumers' thirst for the new, the exotic, and the exciting.

The snacks and treats category is buoyed by brand loyalty and product preference and driven by product development and innovation. South African consumers love to try new things, but they often make their way back to firm favourites. This makes the snacks and treats category a fluid, challenging, and exciting one. It demands flexibility, real-time management, and the quick adoption of new trends and flavours to meet the consumer's ever-evolving needs and wants.

Sweet temptation

Consumers expect to be thrilled and delighted by product offerings. Instant gratification and



Image courtesy of www.astralchicken.com/

the excitement of trying something new cannot be overstated, which is why so many manufacturers and suppliers continue to invest in product development, innovation, and new product launches.

As consumers continue to embrace at-home entertaining, so the need for upscale snacks increases. Canapés, mezze, finger foods, and sweet delights all lend themselves well to a more sophisticated snacks and treats category for higher income consumers.

The FMCG industry has seen an increased demand from consumers for experiences – and the snacks and treats category is no different. Shoppers – particularly Millennials and Gen Z – are looking for products that offer more than just 'nutrition'. They want their senses to be excited, they want transparency regarding ingredients and origins, they want appealing packaging that doesn't harm the environment, they want to know the story behind the product, and they want more than just a commercial transaction. They want to invest in a brand they believe in, as well as in their health and wellbeing.

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Serves: 4
Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 15 minutes

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Drumsticks

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

1 ripe mango, peeled, pip and skin discarded
2 red chillis, deseeded and stalks discarded
¼ cup (60ml) lime juice
2 Tbsp (30ml) soy sauce
2 cloves garlic
½ cup (125ml) coriander
1 Tbsp (15ml) olive oil
1 x pack County Fair Drumsticks

For the salad:

1 mango
½ red onion, finely chopped
10g mint
30g rocket
Juice & zest of 1 lime

MANGO CHILLI CHICKEN WITH A MANGO & HERB SALAD

Fresh, light and delightful – mango adds a tropical twist fit for summer days.

Method:

Prepare the chicken: Place the mango, chilli, lime juice, soy sauce, garlic, coriander and olive oil into a blender. Blend until smooth then pour into a bowl with the chicken.

Toss until well combined and place in the fridge to chill for a minimum of 4 hours, ideally overnight. Heat the grill to a medium heat. Cook the chicken pieces until nicely charred and cooked through about 15 minutes.

For the salad:

Cube the mango and mix with the finely chopped onion, mint and rocket. Add the juice and zest of a lime and toss well.

Serve the fresh salad with the warm chicken.



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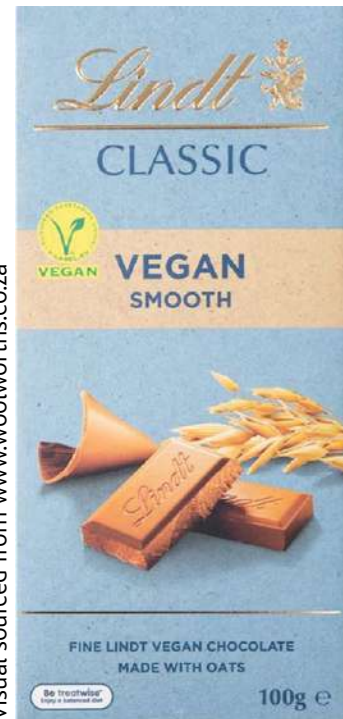
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Nutritious, delicious, good-for-you goodies

The rise of the humble chickpea (and other legumes) has had an undeniable impact on the snacks and treats category and shouldn't be ignored. Nor should the protein revolution as a whole.

With big brands embracing this trend – for example, Snickers and Mars Hi-Protein Bars pack 20g of protein per bar, while the M&Ms Hi-Protein Bar offers 15g – there are opportunities to grow sales.



Visual sourced from www.woolworths.co.za

Baked veggie crisps are delicious, but there's a lot more to the plant-based sub-category than snack replacements. Plant-based eating continues to grow in popularity, and this has been noted and actioned by several big brands such as Cadbury and Lindt, as well as local retailers who have begun adding new products to their private and white label ranges.

Fruit and veg snack combos are big business, as are trends that include functional foods, meal replacements in the new hybrid lifestyle, permissible indulgence, and conscious shopping. All are affecting the snacks and treats category to an extent and should be considered when making merchandising decisions and stocking shelves.

Image courtesy of www.astralchicken.com/



The snackification of meals

Millennials and Gen Z-ers have taken snacking to a whole new level. Writing for Wellness 360 Magazine (wellness360magazine.com), Tracy Wright says, "Snackification means choosing larger-sized snacks over sit-down meals in the mornings and afternoons." These snacks are typically nutritious, filling, and fit into a balanced diet. Sometimes they are simply smaller, often deconstructed, versions of regular meals. Snackification is also on the rise as a consequence of busy schedules.

According to registered dietitian, Merve Ceylan (health-news.com), "People tend to eat snacks in place of proper meals, shaping new eating habits." Consumers are running out of time to sit down and eat, it's as simple as that.

Amid the morning rush of school runs or pre-office workouts, early morning Zoom or Teams meetings and deadlines, breakfast as a sit-down meal is falling away. Add to that skipped lunch breaks in favour of working through, the after-school run, nipping out to run errands, or simply not having the energy to eat a proper meal, and that's two missed meals in one day. Of course there are easy breakfast

and lunch options available, but a mid-morning snack is often the answer for many people.



Snacking for health

In an increasingly health-conscious world, consumers are looking for snacks and meal replacements that meet strict criteria. This is one of the areas where innovation and product development can really impact sales and affect purchase decisions. The way people eat is changing, and they are looking for foods and products that can make that easier, tastier, and healthier.

Nutritious snacks and meal replacements are packed with important nutrients and are often fortified to add a little extra goodness. From protein and fibre to probiotics, added vitamins, low salt and low or no sugar, or reduced calorie offerings, these items are designed to be filling, nourishing, and part of a well-balanced diet.

But taste is still key. Today's consumer no longer accepts healthy food that doesn't meet their taste expectations. Delicious and nutritious are not mutually exclusive, so category managers need to ensure their products meet the expectations of their target market

And of course, as always, convenience is king. Snacks must be quick and easy to eat. Any preparation needs to be simple, such as adding boiling water from a kettle or a quick warm up in a microwave.

Packaging that lends itself to being used as a plate or bowl and includes eating implements is a bonus. In this instance, meal replacement drinks, shakes, and juices are the ultimate convenience snack.



Image courtesy of Pixabay, canva.com

Girl dinner is a thing

Users of social media know that #girl dinner is making waves. Exhausted mums, single girls, and anyone who doesn't feel up to making a full meal for one knows that 'girl dinner' is often the perfect solution. This encompasses snackification, but also moves beyond it.

“ English food writer and television cook Nigella Lawson says the Brits call it 'picky bits' but whether you want to use the terms tapas, charcuterie, smorgasbord, antipasti, grazing table, harvest table, or anything else, the concept is the same. ”

Small helpings of this and that, a mix of sweet and savoury, meats and cheeses paired with fruit and carbs, vegetables, pickles, bits of leftover – these

meals are made with whatever is easiest and most convenient. And as such, they often include several typically snack foods. In all honesty though, #girl dinner can just as easily be an 'everything left in the fridge' frittata, a slab of chocolate, or a bowl of children's cereal.

The key here is cross marketing and cross merchandising.

Creative pairings and strategic placement of products that wouldn't traditionally work for meals can be hugely successful when it comes to girl dinners and snackification. Keeping abreast of current trends and a comprehensive understanding of your customer base is essential for this strategy.

Treats: back on the menu

Treats are back on the menu, and consumers are embracing this newfound food freedom enthusiastically. After years of consumers being told that treats are 'bad' and should be avoided at all costs, savvy shoppers have come to realise that everything has its place.

Mindful indulgence is the practice of indulging yourself thoughtfully, deliberately, and intelligently.

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Treats are considered and consumed purposely rather than mindlessly. The smaller the better as bite-sized or miniature portions are preferred – it is about mindful indulgence, after all. Quality trumps quantity and consumers are more inclined to splurge on something decadent or extravagant if it fits their needs.

Treats are also still popular for the back-to-school brigade and as a pick-me-up for those who want a change from more healthful snacks. Here again, smaller is better, although bulk buying of individually wrapped servings is increasingly popular for both portion control and convenience. And for those consumers at work, packed lunches are growing in popularity, even if those lunches are less meal and more snack.

Packed lunches and back to school

Lunchboxes aren't just for children. From university students to corporates, consumers looking to control their eating habits, manage their budgets, or fulfil specific dietary requirements are turning to packed lunches.

For adults and children alike, lunchbox snacks and treats need to meet size, taste, and health requirements, which can include a range of attractive options, such as:

- Low salt, sugar, and fat
- Added nutrients and fortified snacks
- Products that boost immunity or cognitive function
- Nostalgia, brand loyalty, and old favourites for back-to-school treats

Image Sparkle Things's, canva.com



- Innovative products that marry health and 'treat' concepts, such as chocolate coated chickpeas or comfortingly salty veggie crisps.

While consumers are often prepared to pay more for healthier foods, budgets are increasingly constrained for many shoppers. Price points, value for money, and serving sizes are all purchase drivers that are relevant for local consumers in the local market.

Trends to watch in snacks and treats

Novel and nostalgic. The times they are a-changing. The 90s are considered nostalgic. According to Food Business News (www.foodbusinessnews.net), "Flavours such as birthday cake, cotton candy and strawberry lemonade are some of the fastest growing [flavours] on dessert menus, according to Datassential, Chicago." In another example, Starbucks Malaysia launched their new Pineapple Cake to much fanfare on social media. It's a novel product with a strong hint of nostalgia – perfect for 2024!

Plant-based. Good for you, good for the environment. Plant-based products continue to attract attention and producers are putting real effort into product development, innovation, and market research in this category.

High protein. Protein and fibre are two major nutrients, and snacks and treats packed with added benefits (plus great taste, less sugar, lower calories) are gaining traction with consumers globally.



Starbucks Malaysia: Pineapple Tarts ...
Chocolate Strawberry – rich chocolate crust, strawberry flavoured pineapple paste
Green Tea Blueberry – matcha/green tea crust, blueberry flavoured pineapple paste
Classic – buttery crust, tangy pineapple paste
<https://www.rebeccasaw.com/>



Fruity flavours. Calamansi and tamarind are two unusual fruit flavours predicted to burst onto the flavour scene this year as they intrigue consumers and provide a fresh twist on old favourites.

Snackable desserts. Snackification and mindful eating really do go hand-in-hand as delectable and extravagant desserts become snack-sized.

Food technology. Innovative production techniques, ingredients, and recipe development paired with food science applications are altering the way foods are produced, manufactured, and packaged. As consumer needs and expectations shift, the way we think about snacks and treats also evolves.

Back to basics. Snacks and treats can still be sweet, sugar-packed, salty, and not-so-nutritious, but on a shoestring budget, these are still more accessible for many families in South Africa.

Good for you. Consumers are conscious of how they eat, what they eat, and when they eat – snacks and treats that offer good nutrition, satiety, and added benefits are seeing strong growth, particularly among Millennial, Gen Z, and other health-savvy shoppers. **SR**



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