

Let's Chat Snacks

4 Trending Ways to Elevate Snacks



Consumers have been eating more frequently throughout the day; 64% regularly replace at least one meal with a snack, according to Mondelēz International's annual State of Snacking™ report.

About 47% of consumers say they enjoy snacks that are recognizable, yet feature a twist. As a result, operators may be able to increase sales by serving a variety of hardy, small portion items and desserts that feature unique formats and flavors, said Arlene Spiegel, president of restaurant and hospitality consulting firm Arlene Spiegel and Associates.

"Snacks have become a really important part of the mainstream diet," Spiegel says. "There's an opportunity to have more people come in during the slow times, if they have a compelling appetizer or small plates menu — [such as] from 2:30 until 4:30, there's great charcuterie platters, or a hot chocolate beverage bar. Even doing a snack and wine pairing could bring people in at different dayparts than the traditional lunch and dinner."

Infusing familiar dishes with appealing elements — such as an array of flavored marshmallows to add to hot cocoa — can help build excitement and, in turn, attract customers. Here are four ways operators can elevate offerings and capitalize on snacking occasions.

Adding Global Touches

The interest in trying new globally based foods and beverages has grown in recent years; 27% of consumers are now eating those items more than they did two years ago.

A third — particularly Gen Z members and millennials, which Spiegel describes as "an audience hungry for adventure" — feel snacks are a stellar way to sample cuisines from other countries. Some, such as African, Jamaican and Indian cuisine, were included more frequently on menus between 2018 and 2021.

"Snacks have become a really important part of the mainstream diet."

ARLENE SPIEGEL

Authentic street fare, too, can resonate with customers. With Mexican food ranked as the top international cuisine consumers would like to try in a snack flavor format, restaurants may find there's interest in items like elote, corn traditionally sold by street vendors that's topped with savory items like a mayo-based sauce, cotija cheese, lime juice, chili powder and cilantro.

Dishes that are inspired by certain components in specific types of international cuisine — such as sesame, miso and nori, often found in Japanese street food items — may also intrigue customers.

"They're looking for a Korean barbecue flavor on top of their mashed potatoes, instead of just regular gravy," Spiegel says. "They're looking for a kimchi that would be used instead of coleslaw to enhance a sandwich. It's taking the ordinary and then literally elevating it." ●