



Five Takeaways from Hartman's ACT Food Culture Forecast



Once again this year, the recent Hartman's ACT Food Culture Forecast 2018 event in Miami Beach navigated today's complex culture of eating and drinking occasions. The summit is an experiential, educational platform focused on culture as the pathway for companies to understand the broader contexts that create consumer desires. If you didn't have a chance to attend Food Culture Forecast 2018, here are five key highlights:

1. Mealtime now resembles how most consumers grew up, not the ideal. Most consumers' eating routines are still defined by breakfast, lunch and dinner. Most also have the ideal meal in the back of their mind for these three meals, though it matters most at dinner. In reality, consumers adapt their mealtime priorities to fit their needs, which vary by individual, household and even by the day.

2. The desire for convenience is today's number one single need state. The desire for convenience is a key trend just like other trends (e.g., simple ingredients, unique flavour, positive nutrition), if not a cultural value. But not convenience just for the sake of convenience, but as something in service of other food and lifestyle aspirations.

3. A new continuum for procuring food and beverage is emerging. We introduce a new continuum of procurement. On one end is transactional, which is about convenience and price. On this side of the continuum, the act of purchasing is work. It needs to be done quickly and conveniently. On the other side of the continuum is experiential. This is journey-focused. It is about fun, play, discovery and customization.

4. Food is our greatest cultural expression. We interpret through procuring, cooking, plating and eating. Shifts in food culture are happening so swiftly, yet as we evolve, so does our food and many of its associated rituals. Culture is not a product fixed in time. It is a vigorous and ongoing process that must be distilled and interpreted to best understand where we are headed in today's ever-evolving food and beverage industry.

5. Technology has revolutionized the importance of customization in American food culture.

Personalizing is in our DNA. The desire to be unique is part of the broader cultural context in which we all live. We like to "chef-up" our orders. All this "cheffing" is about freshness aspirations. Sauces, toppings and condiments actually make us feel like we are having an elevated eating/drinking experience. And now, having it your way is becoming more seamless, thanks to technology.



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