

Slideshow: Dairy central to snack innovation

Product developers use dairy to differentiate snack concepts and meet consumer expectations for health, satiation and indulgence.

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[Slideshow: Dairy snack innovation](#)

CHICAGO — Ninety-one per cent of consumers snack multiple times throughout the day and 8% of these consumers forgo the traditional three-square meals in favor of all-day snacking, according to research from The Hartman Group, Bellevue, Wash.

Food and beverage marketers are down-sizing packages, getting creative with flavors and nutrition profiles to get the snacking consumers' attention. Dairy foods manufacturers are no exception.

The eating occasion also has evolved into mindful snacking, with nutrition and health, or what the snack provides, increasingly important. This prioritization makes nutrient-rich dairy foods attractive to daily snack eaters.

Dairy Farmers of America now offers Borden Cheese Snack Bars in Colby Jack, Gouda, mild cheddar and pepper Jack varieties.



some shoppers need to be told that a food is intended for snacking.

Costco Wholesale, Issaquah, Wash., labels its new 0.75-oz individually wrapped organic cheese medallions sold in packs of 32 as cheese snacks, with each snack providing 5 grams of protein.

Others have been following suit. Dairy Farmers of America, Kansas City, now offers Borden Cheese Snack Bars. Sold in packs of 10, the individually wrapped bars come in Colby Jack, Gouda, mild cheddar and pepper Jack varieties.



Philadelphia Cheesecake Cups contain about 200 calories and come in cherry, milk chocolate, salted caramel and strawberry varieties.

Both cheese snacks contain 70 calories each. In general, most snack packs are designed to deliver around 100 calories, with 200 calories considered the fine line between snack and meal.

Le Mars, Iowa-based Wells Enterprises Inc. wants to ensure shoppers recognize ice cream as a sweet snack. The company's new Blue Bunny Bunny Snacks come in a resealable stand-up pouch, with each pouch containing six individually wrapped 2.4-oz ice cream treats. The snack comes in four varieties, including chocolate chip cookie, chocolate vanilla twist, cookies and cream and salted caramel pretzel. Each serving contains less than 160 calories.

Chicago-based Kraft Heinz Co. offers refrigerated Philadelphia Cheesecake Cups. The 3.25-oz clear-plastic single-serve cups contain about 200 calories and come in cherry, milk chocolate, salted caramel and strawberry varieties. Cheesecake filling is the first ingredient, with cream cheese the first component of the filling.



Prairie Farms Dairy's Milk Snack Bars are two-layer whole milk crème-filled chocolate cake bars dipped in chocolate.

Outside the box ideas

Not all dairy-based snacks fall into familiar, easy-to-define categories. Prairie Farms Dairy Inc., Carlinville, Ill., recently introduced Milk Snack Bars. The new refrigerated snack is a two-layer whole milk crème-filled chocolate cake bar dipped in chocolate. When compared to conventional shelf-stable chocolate snack cakes, the perishable bars have a short, simple ingredient list and do not contain artificial colors or preservatives. They are available as a single bar and in four-count boxes. Each 1-oz bar contains 140 calories.

“Prairie Farms is committed to innovation, and we’re excited to introduce Prairie Farms Milk Snack Chocolate Cake Bars into dairy cases and refrigerated grab-and-go sections in over 15,000 retail outlets throughout the U.S.,” said Rebecca Leinenbach, vice-president of marketing and communications. “Taste, convenience and nostalgia weigh in on purchase decisions for snack cakes, and these bars deliver on all three, along with permission to indulge.”

Another new concept is Jouzge, a line of dairy-based shelf-stable snack bars developed to promote healthy eating and a healthy self-image among young women. Created by University of Wisconsin — Madison alumnus and Oregon, Wis., resident Dana Wendt, with formulation assistance from the Center for Dairy Research (C.D.R.), Madison, Wis., Jouzge bars were born out of Ms. Wendt’s desire to create a dairy-based snack for young girls that would fuel their self-love, rather than undercut it.



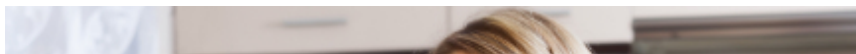
Jouzge dairy-based shelf-stable snack bars were developed to promote healthy eating and a healthy self-image among young women.

“Years ago, I was eating a particular bar that had a weight management message attached to its name and marketing,” Ms. Wendt said. “My daughter saw me eating this bar and asked if she could take it to school as a snack. While the nutrition was acceptable, I began to worry about the message the bar was trying to send to my daughter. It basically said, ‘you’re not the right size, but if you eat this, you’ll be better.’”

Growing up in the dairy industry, Ms. Wendt was aware of the health benefits of milk and milk products, so she set out to create a dairy-based bar. Utilizing dairy proteins was an important part of the formulation process, which included the use of whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolate, milk protein isolate and whey protein crisps, which created a crunchy texture in some of the bars.

“Dairy proteins are high-quality complete proteins that contain all the essential amino acids,” said Susan Larson, associate researcher at the C.D.R. “Essential amino acids are ones that must be provided by your foods as your body cannot make them. Specifically, whey proteins have an especially high concentration of branched chain amino acids — leucine, isoleucine and valine — that are used for building and maintaining lean body muscle.”

The C.D.R. team helped Ms. Wendt create three flavors: chocolate peanut butter, chocolate mint and chocolate chip cookie dough. Each bar contains no more than 130 calories and 7 grams of sugar, along with 7 to 8 grams of dairy-based protein.



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optimization in order to satisfy physical and mental performance demand.

Understanding consumer need states

The bars meet several of the drivers for snacking, as identified by The Future of Snacking survey from The Hartman Group. Fifty-six per cent of the survey respondents said they snack for needs related to nourishment. Specific qualities sought include hunger abatement, hydration management, health and diet conditions, as well as snacking for energy sustenance. Other motivators include seeking satisfaction and performance optimization.

“Forty-nine per cent of respondents said they snack for needs relating to pleasure, which fulfills emotional desires for enjoyment, craving, variety and comfort,” said Laurie Demeritt, chief executive officer at The Hartman Group. “Snacking for pleasure also includes satisfaction of needs for discovery when consumers want to explore food types, tastes, provenances, preparation methods, food purveyors and new products.”

One-third of the respondents indicated they snack for needs relating to optimization in order to satisfy physical and mental performance demands.



Yooli Foods offers a line of namesake smart snacks that combine artisan-style farmer's cheese with honey lemon zest, strawberries or vanilla.

“Optimization snacking might be for quick energy, or to recover and rejuvenate,” Ms. Demeritt said. “It is also undertaken to help mental focus and manage stress.”

It is important to note that snacking drivers change throughout the day, as do snack formats, flavors and even nutrition profiles. Morning snacks may be consumed for satiation and nourishment to get through a hectic start. An afternoon snack might be for energy or to satisfy
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Shoppers may be concerned to get calcium and nutrients to get through a hectic start in the morning, might be for energy or to satisfy a sweet craving. For the evening snack, maybe it's about relaxation and pleasure.

Thus, to attract shoppers, dairy processors are exploring better-for-you formulations, bold flavors and convenience in order to grab share of the snacking dollar. Products are designed to meet the varied needs throughout the day.



SmithFoods' Artisa high-protein dairy snacks feature fine-curd, smooth and creamy cottage cheese with real fruit.

Soft cheeses such as cottage, farmers and quark are gaining notice as satiating and flavor-satisfying snack foods when they are paired with other ingredients. Yooli Foods, Irvine, Calif., for example, offers a line of namesake smart snacks that combine artisan-style farmer's cheese with honey lemon zest, strawberries or vanilla.

Orrville, Ohio-based SmithFoods is finding success with Artisa high-protein dairy snacks, which feature fine-curd, smooth and creamy cottage cheese with real fruit. Varieties are apple cinnamon, peach, pineapple, strawberry and wild berry.

Kraft Heinz's Breakstone's and Knudsen brands of Cottage Doubles recently added honey vanilla and mango habanero to the lineup, along with 20% more product, increasing the pack size from 3.9 oz to 4.7 oz. The new pack delivers 9 grams of protein with fewer than 130 calories.



Taste'n Time from the Thailand-based namesake company is a line of shelf-stable dairy-based puddings in recloseable pouches.

A global perspective

The dairy-based snack movement is taking place around the world. Taste'n Time from the Thailand-based namesake company is a line of shelf-stable dairy-based puddings in recloseable pouches. They may function as a snack or meal replacement.

Lactinov of France is introducing Milk Kiss dairy snack pouches. The shelf-stable 80-gram snacks are made with yogurt, milk and fruit and come in peach, raspberry, strawberry and vanilla flavors.

DMK Group, Germany's largest dairy cooperative, now offers retailers and food service operators Milram Frischer Genuss. The on-the-go snack assortment features three products: quark-creme, classic rice pudding and skyr. Each Milram-branded 185-gram clear plastic cup is filled half way with one of the dairy products. The cups are sealed to maintain freshness for about three weeks. Retailers receive the sealed cups, along with dome lids and sealing tape, so they can turn the product into fresh parfaits with fruits, nuts, granola, etc., on an as-needed basis. This feature cuts waste in terms of on-site scooping of product into cups as well as reduced shelf life because of opened perishability.

"Ready-to-eat snacks with fresh ingredients are totally on-trend," said Matthias Rensch, chief operating officer at DMK Brand. "Consumers expect ultra-fresh products with a hand-made character in this segment. With Milram Frischer Genuss, our retail partners can respond to their customers' continuing demand from now on and give sales an added boost."



Lactinov of France is introducing Milk Kiss dairy snack pouches, made with yogurt, milk and fruit.

Switzerland Cheese Marketing offers a new flavorful way to enjoy original Swiss Emmentaler raw milk cheese. New Smart Snack is a 178-gram upscale package that contains two slices of the cheese, two slices of bread, a jar of spread and a knife.

Italy's Granarolo Group is making ricotta cheese a convenient snacking product by packing it in single-serve cups. The product is lactose free and marketed as a high-protein food. The company also introduced baked cheese snacks. Granarolo Cheese Crisps are 100% Italian cheese snacks that are gluten, lactose and carbohydrate free. High in protein, the shelf-stable cheese snacks come in black olive, classic, onion, paprika and pizza flavors.

Such baked cheese snacks, which have been around in the United States for the past few years, are gaining momentum throughout Europe, so much so that non-dairies want a piece of the action. Hungary's Felfoldi Confectionery Ltd. will be rolling out Let's Cheese in the next few months. These 100% cheese oven-baked snacks are marketed as rich in protein and calcium.



Switzerland Cheese Marketing's new Smart Snack is a 178-gram upscale package that contains two slices of the cheese, two slices of bread, a jar of spread and a knife.



Emmi, with global headquarters in Lucerne, Switzerland, appeals to indulgent snacking times with new Ooola Secrets. This range of mousse desserts was developed in response to a trend for sensible indulgence and time-saving convenience products. The desserts come in 60-gram clear plastic containers in two 85-calorie flavors: chocolate and raspberry mouse with chocolate chips and chocolate mousse trio with caramel.

In the U.K., Yoplait is rolling out Petits Filous Dairy Bar, which is a first-of-its-kind refrigerated high-protein snack that is a cross between cheese and yogurt. It is based on fresh cream, milk protein and egg yolk powder, enabling each bar to provide about 3.5 grams of both fat and protein along with less than 60 calories.



Naturipe Snacks pair fresh berries or grapes with cheese and nuts in a variety of flavor combinations.

Cheese snack packs with a premium twist

Cheese is showing up in all types of perishable snack packs, many marketed by non-dairy companies. Multi-component containers include cheese cubes with hard-boiled eggs, meats, nuts or fruits. The latter may be dried or fresh. Other formats have cheese slices rolled with charcuterie, with everything from prosciutto to salami.

Naturipe Snacks from Naturipe Farms, Salinas, Calif., pair fresh berries or grapes with cheese and nuts in a variety of flavor combinations. The product line includes a bold and spicy variety, which is grapes, chili mango cashews and pepper Jack cheese, and sweet and crunchy, which is strawberries, blueberries, cinnamon almonds and white cheddar cheese.

The Hillshire Snacking Small Plates line from Tyson Foods, Inc., Springdale, Ark., combines meat (salami slices, spicy pork chunks or grilled chicken chunks), cheeses, crackers, crisps and nuts. The latest addition includes alcohol flavor-infused meats, such as apple chardonnay, smoky bourbon and whiskey brown sugar.



Sargento has an extensive range of Balanced Breaks dual-compartment packs.



Austin, Minn.-based Hormel Foods has Hormel Natural Choice Snacks. Combinations include honey ham chunks with cheddar cheese cubes and dark chocolate-covered pretzels and turkey breast with pepper Jack cheese and dark chocolate-covered blueberries. For the holidays, the company rolled out Hormel Gatherings Culinary Pairings, which is actually a snack kit designed for entertaining, as it contains two to four servings. The pack combines charcuterie with cheese and flatbread crackers.

Sargento, Plymouth, Wis., has an extensive range of Balanced Breaks dual-compartment packs. Some are savory while others are sweet. Varied flavor combinations also may be found in the Snack Trios line from Chicago-based Kraft Heinz Co., which features a three-compartment pack.