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The Future Of Snacking, According To Frito-Lay



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I write about the big business behind food & agriculture. [FULL BIO](#) ▾

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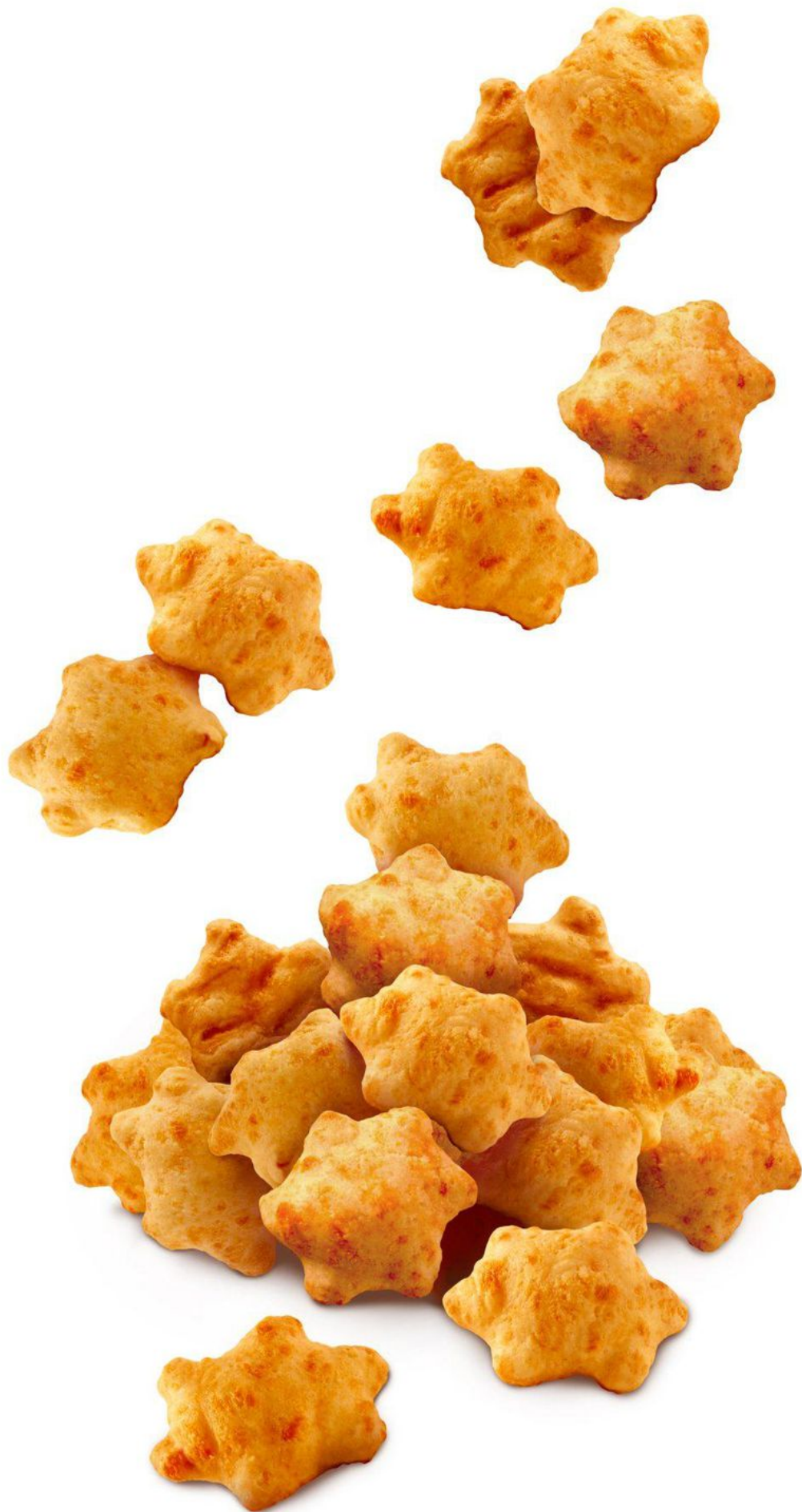
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"The way we need to think about this is: what problems would insects actually solve in our food systems?"



Frito-Lay

Few food companies can claim such a salivation-inducing and highly recognized product portfolio as Frito-Lay. Frito- [+]

Few food companies can claim such a salivation-inducing and highly recognized product portfolio as Frito-Lay, PepsiCo's snack food subsidiary. Its products are synonymous with snacking, and **include** heavy hitters like Cheetos, Doritos, Lay's, Baked, Sun Chips, Smartfood, Ruffles, Rold Gold, Walkers, Cracker Jack and Funyuns.

Frito-Lay has maintained its status the **largest** global distributor of snack foods through not only its strategic acquisitions of now iconic food brands like **Smartfood**, but also its ability to anticipate changes in consumers preferences with its evolving product portfolio. For example, Frito-Lay stated its commitment to cut trans fat from its products in **2002**, which was well ahead of the **2015 FDA** announcement that food makers had three more years to remove partially hydrogenated oils from their products. The company has also taken **bold bets** in the past which have largely **paid off**.


At the helm of Frito-Lay's vision of the future of snacking is **Dr. Christine Cioffe**, Senior Vice President of PepsiCo Sustainability and Global Snacks R&D, and **Jennifer Saenz**, Chief Marketing Officer of Frito-Lay. The pair explained some of the emergent snacking trends on Frito-Lay's radar.



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1. Consumers are moving away from 3 discrete meals while moving towards 6-8 consumption occasions

"We've been seeing an increased blurring between how consumers partake in meals and how they partake in snacks," explained Dr. Cioffe. "More and more consumers are moving away from three discrete meals a day and snacks as being something you do in between meals  . Instead, we're seeing six to eight consumption occasions over the course of the day."

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The imminent demise of the traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner routine is seemingly related to changes being observed in the **typical** American lifestyle. In a **study** led by the Hartman Group, the declining meal ritual is attributed to the pace that advances in technology have yielded across other aspects of life. This study also found that **46%** of studied consumers report eating alone more often, alongside **53%** who claimed their dinners were planned within only an hour of eating. This trend is curious considering that Americans are watching more cooking shows than ever.

"We're evolving our food portfolio to reflect these types of consumer preferences," added Dr. Cioffe. For example, Frito-Lay looked at the types of foods that mothers fed their children when on the go, which typically included foods like cheese, yogurt and milk. In response, the company is rolling out its line of Imagine products, including yogurt-based crisps.



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2. Consumers want plant-based snacks, but only if they're actually delicious

"Our fundamental rub as an organization is finding ingredients that are both healthy as well as delicious," explained Dr. Cioffe. While consumers are increasingly

gravitating towards high protein and fibrous plant ingredients like peas, Dr. Cioffe warns that some consumer-preferred plants can present challenges when it comes to their flavors and textures.

"For example, peas are very polarizing for consumers flavor-wise. They either love it or hate it. There is no middle of the road with peas," she added. Frito-Lay has been able to incorporate trending plant-based ingredients into its latest products by carefully blending grains to minimize polarizing flavor profiles while still appealing to mindful consumers.

Moreover, pulse grains like chickpeas and beans may present textural issues as they contain complex starches. Frito-Lay has relied on starch chemists to mix these grains with other ingredients to avoid a glue-like or brick-like texture that can inadvertently occur when using these ingredients. For example, its new Off The Eaten Path line uses a blend of rice, peas and beans that both minimizes these extreme flavors while avoiding difficult textures.

"People might change their behavior for something with a functional benefit, but overtime will fall off if it's not flavorful," added Saenz.