



NATIONAL REPORT — Gone are the days of a one-sided definition of "healthy." Today, healthy can mean many different things to different consumers, like high protein, gluten free, keto, paleo, vegan, organic, local, fresh, all-natural, free from artificial ingredients, preservative free and non-GMO.

As health and wellness takes on a larger role in consumers' day-to-day lives, their snack choices are evolving to match their lifestyle needs. In fact, 41 percent of consumers want snacks to provide an energy boost, while 80 percent are willing to pay more for snacks with health attributes, according to The Hartman Group's *The Future of Snacking* study.

"We've seen changes in the industry as certain fads have come and gone, [but] we are also seeing a trend that consumers are willing to spend more money on great-tasting, high-quality, healthy snacks, and manufacturers are filling that demand," said Paige Brown, director of marketing at Stryve Biltong Snacks, a maker of meat snacks.

Just as today's definition of healthy continues to evolve, so does the demographics of the healthy snack consumer. Healthy eating is becoming the new norm for men and women, both young and old, as they grow more mindful of nutrition and the role it plays in their everyday lives.

However, if there is one thing that rings true across healthy snack consumers, it is that they'll flex different food values at different occasions.

"In terms of pre-packaged snacks, you see a lot of different need states represented in different ways than in the past," said Betsy Frost, director of platform marketing innovation at General Mills Convenience. "'Healthy' snacking was for a time about low-calorie options, where you often traded taste or texture of the 'real thing' for a lower calorie option or portion-controlled 100-calorie pack. Now, we see healthy snacking mirror the core values of the consumers."

As shoppers seek out brands that align with how they see themselves, more and more healthy snack brands are emerging in the packaged snacks categories. Three macro trends that are driving this, according to Minneapolis-based General Mills Convenience, are:

1. **The changing of food values.** Consumers are looking for more real food experiences.
2. **Consumers' changing eating habits.** "People snack more throughout the day and are looking for snacks to do more jobs for them than they have in the past, such as a meal replacement or mini-meal, a before- or after-workout supplement, or a mental or energy boost," Frost explained.
3. **The boom of the food entrepreneur.** "With more snacks being in more non-traditional outlets, food entrepreneurs have found it easier to turn a home hack that served their personal needs into thriving, purpose-driven organizations," she added.

Kirk Bailey, product director of grocery and snacks at convenience distributor McLane Co. Inc., identifies an additional trend he finds to be relevant to the topic: an increase in the amount of awareness of how someone's diet can directly correlate with their health.

"As these health-conscious consumers become more educated on how to live a healthy lifestyle, they will continue to seek items that have simple ingredients and attributes that have a positive effect on their health vs. just grabbing anything to hold them over until their next meal," said Bailey.

Amid this continuing shift, convenience store retailers shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to serve healthy snack consumers — across all of their varied need states.

So, what's the best way for c-store retailers to offer healthier snacks to their customers?

McLane's Bailey suggests they incorporate a small section within their salty snack set that includes six to nine items that are in a highly visible area of the set, such as the top right corner.

Then, if retailers find these items do well for their stores, they should consider expanding to a three-foot "Better-for-You" endcap, preferably in a prime location within the store that lets customers know these healthier items are available.

[Click below to download our full report, "Capitalizing on the Modern-Day 'Healthy Halo.'"](#)