

Fresh Cut/Value-Added

# Marketers see opportunity in snacking market

By **Jim Offner** March 16, 2017 | 7:30 pm EDT

COMMENTS



Consumers looking for nutritious health options are the sweet spot for fresh-



**CarrieAnn Arias, vice president of marketing with Westlake Village, Calif.-based Dole Food Co., says fruit remains the top “daytime snack choice” in the U.S., citing research from the Hartman Group. With that in view, Dole developed its Go Berries! snack packs, with 4 ounces of strawberries in three snap-off clamshells, Arias says.**

Photo by Dole Food Co.

## Snacking attitudes

She cited a Mintel Report on Snacking Motivations and Attitudes from April 2015, which said 36% of snacking happens on-the-go — 30% of which is in the car.

Duda has responded in kind, Towell said.

“Our Dandy Snack Packs and Snack Cups support consumer lifestyles by offering

cut/value-added produce marketers.

“We believe that consumers appreciate finding fresh-cut snacks that are also paired with their favorite sides and dips to create an all-in-one snacking experience without having to shop all aisles of the store,” said Nichole Towell, director of marketing at Salinas, Calif.-based Duda Farm Fresh Foods.

celery sticks with peanut butter, ranch or chipotle ranch in one package for easy grab-and-go options,” she said.

The trend toward higher sales of fresh-produce snack food is all about convenience and health, said David Bell, chief marketing officer at the Camarillo, Calif.-based Houweling’s Group, a network of greenhouse vegetable grower-shippers.

“Today’s consumer in general is much more focused on what they are putting in their bodies along with what their families are eating,” he said.

Fruit remains the top “daytime snack choice” in the U.S., said CarrieAnn Arias, vice president of marketing with Westlake Village, Calif.-based Dole Food Co., citing research from the Hartman Group.

## **Snack packs**

To address that appetite, Dole developed its Go Berries! snack packs, with 4 ounces of strawberries in three snap-off clamshells, Arias said.

She described the product as “the smart solution for busy strawberry lovers looking to enjoy their favorite fresh fruit snack on-the-go.” She noted that the ventilated clamshells are easy to rinse, enhancing convenience.

Produce suppliers can thrive in the snack food arena by doing what more traditional snack foods have done, the Houweling’s Group’s Bell noted.

“If a consumer buys their favorite chocolate bar or bag of chips, it is the same experience every time,” he said. “Consumers expect this and will not pay a premium on produce snacking if the bandwidth of quality and flavor is wide and inconsistent.”

A major target market for snack foods is kids, but baby boomers are a key demographic, too, said Terry Feinberg, principal with Salinas-based Moxxy Marketing.

“There certainly is a much-heightened health consciousness across the age spectrum, so people are looking for the healthy aspect of fresh fruits and vegetables and produce and you combine that with how busy everybody seems to be,” he said.

The snacking category doesn’t have to be limited to a finite number of items, said

Doug McFarland, marketing director with Salinas-based Andrew Smith Co., whose new sprout grower-shipper Rä Foods LLC has rolled out a snack-sized pack of Cold Grown Rä Nanoshoots.

“Some people on the go do enjoy taking the 3-ounce package of Nanoshoots in their lunch pack as a convenient and healthful snack,” McFarland said.

## **On-the-go**

Salinas-based Mann Packing Co. recently launched a line of snacking trays for on-the-go consumers, said Jacob Shafer, company spokesman.

“These mini-meals have enticing combinations of premium ingredients and a great variety of flavor options, Shafer said, noting that Mann’s Snacking Favorites Vegetable Trays product line includes Veggie Ranch, Veggies 4 Kidz, Cheddar Trail, Veggie Hummus, Organic Veggies, Cheddar Pretzel and Honey Turkey Cheddar.

Consumer buying behavior drives the snacking trend, given the way diets have developed to include more snacking and frequent eating throughout the day,” said

Diana McClean, marketing director with Castroville, Calif.-based Ocean Mist Farms.

“While Ocean Mist Farms does not currently have individual-sized snacking options, the industry as a whole is responding with endless ways to enjoy fresh-cut and convenient snacking items,” she said.

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