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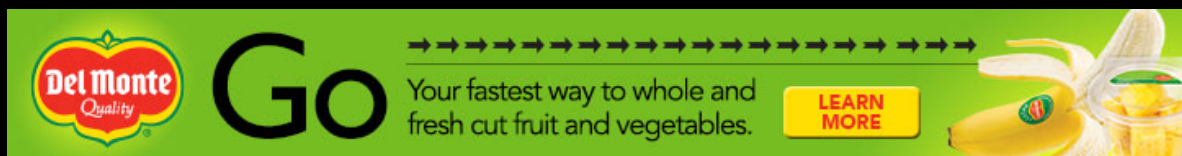
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How Digital Is Morphing Food Culture

Mindsets, behaviors changing as technology creates accessibility, awareness

By [Angel Abcede](#), Senior Editor/Content Development Coordinator, CSP

June 21, 2016

GRAPEVINE, Texas -- The digital age is reshaping the way Americans eat, what they want and where they have their meals, diverting old mindsets onto new paths toward perceived freshness and convenience, according to a panelist at this week's FARE Conference.

About 90 attendees at a breakout session on food trends listened to June Jo Lee, vice president of strategic insights for The Hartman Group, Bellevue, Wash., talk about emerging trends, everything from home delivery to evolving tastes. She focused largely on emerging consumers such as Gen Z, which is just entering the age of independent buying, as well as millennials and



June Jo Lee

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young working families.

Through information gathered from numerous one-on-one interviews, site surveys and her company's own research, she revealed several insights:

- Consumers are more interested in “fresh” as a sign of healthier eating, even though their definitions of fresh are evolving. Lee said ingredients put together recently to create a meal is becoming more of a standard of freshness and health, as opposed to calorie counts or processed foods.
- Time is increasing in value as consumers give up more traditional meal time in favor of snacking opportunities. People are also using online and mobile delivery services to save time and still eat healthier.
- Dining alone outside the home is becoming more of a norm as people use mobile phones to connect with friends or play games.
- Consumers are using food to learn about the world, support sustainability and as a social talking point. They prefer customization and personalization.
- Allergies and dietary restrictions are becoming a mandatory part of foodservice delivery as health concerns become more documented and people become more educated on living healthier lives.

One of Lee's personal goals as a researcher is to ask people the question of how to redirect resources from health care to what she called “food care.” She said it's a critical step in preventing illness at the point of consumption: “How do we create [that quality of diet] in our institutional food, at our school cafeterias and in the military?”

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