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## BONUS CONTENT: There Are No Rules When It Comes to Snacking

### The “snack” category continues to broaden.

July 13, 2016, 04:20 pm By Tammy Mastroberte, *Convenience Store News*



**NATIONAL REPORT** — As consumers change their health and wellness preferences, their food and beverage choices are changing as well. They are looking for healthier options, whether for meals or snacks, and they are also snacking more today than in the past, according to The Hartman Group, a food and beverage consultancy based in Bellevue, Wash.

“Part of the major shift we see in the food and beverage market is the emergence of new, more nuanced health and wellness goals within the everyday American diet — and this would include snacks,” Melissa Abbott, vice president of Hartman Retainer Services at The Hartman Group, told *Convenience Store News*. “Consumers are definitely snacking more today than in the past. Snacking is now so entwined in our food and beverage culture that it makes up fully half of all eating occasions.”

Additionally, snacking is no longer about a specific product category. It is more about a set of behaviors or a new way of eating and drinking. Today, any type of food or beverage can qualify as a “snack” and has more to do with how the food or drink is consumed, Abbott explained.

“Snacking is not about types of food or beverage, but how that food or drink is consumed. The word ‘snack’ has been broadened to include much more than the traditional sweets or salty

crackers,” Abbott noted. “Now, even a slice of pizza or a smoothie in between meals might be described as a snack. While a ‘meal’ still requires chewing, a snack no longer does.”

Mealtimes are also changing along with the snacking culture. While dinner remains an important “social meal occasion,” both breakfast and lunch have become “snackified,” especially Monday through Friday, according to Abbott. This is when consumers are eating yogurt cups, sandwiches, fruit, etc., in place of full meals.

“Rules no longer really apply for eating occasions, especially when it comes to snacking,” she said. “Many companies continue to market to family occasions and iconic meals of the past, missing the opportunity to market to the vast number of adults who are increasingly snacking.

“Within food retail, significant opportunities exist to develop single portion-oriented, baked, prepared and refrigerated stations that enable those shoppers assembling snacks to mix and match new tastes and cuisines,” she continued.

Through marketing and product innovation, including portable products for immediate consumption that offer the healthy angle consumers are looking for, convenience store retailers and suppliers can help each other increase sales. Manufacturers need to create new forms of packaging and ingredients that hit the mark for health-conscious consumers, Abbott said.

**Editor’s note:** Look in the [July issue of \*Convenience Store News\*](#) [2] for more on the rise of snacking, particularly the demand for better-for-you alternatives.

By Tammy Mastroberte, Convenience Store News

-  *About Tammy Mastroberte Contributing Editor Tammy Mastroberte is an award-winning writer, with more than 16 years of experience in the magazine publishing industry. She writes on a variety of subjects, including retail technology. Mastroberte previously served as executive editor of Stagnito Business Information’s Convenience Store News.*

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