



Food & Technology 2025: Digital Food Life 2.0

A Hartman Group syndicated research study

Fielding September-October 2025
U.S. market coverage

Digital Food Life 2025 seeks to understand how the evolving and fragmented landscapes of social media and digital technology are shaping food culture and consumers' food lives

In 2014, Hartman Group's *Digital Food Life* syndicated study explored the "path of digital influence" to understand the impacts of digital transformation on the way consumers share, create, learn about, purchase and consume food. In that study we noted a cultural shift from *consumption* to *participation* as consumers became more active participants in creating, sharing and shaping food culture, content and products.

Over a decade later, this landscape has rapidly evolved and fragmented and two generations of digital natives have come of age in a digitalized food culture. The COVID pandemic boosted online ordering and food delivery and paved the way for the rise of DTC brands and live-stream and social media shopping. Digital platforms continue to drive inspiration, learning, expression, community and decision-making. Social media continues to accelerate the speed of food trends, shaping expectations around food's appearance, taste and consumption and even serving as a retail channel and site of new product incubation.

34% Learn about new products through social media (NET)*

{ **58%** Gen Z
47% Millennials

Now, generative AI is introducing new tools and forms of engagement for consumers and brands, with impacts still unfolding. Together, these changes may mark a phase of food culture dominated by data, digital platforms, algorithms and simulated content. **For the food industry, understanding how consumers think about and use today's technologies and digital media in their food lives is crucial for staying competitive, effectively engaging with consumers and future-proofing their brands in a fast-moving market.**

Digital Food Life 2025 will provide food and beverage brands, retailers and food service providers with crucial insights on:

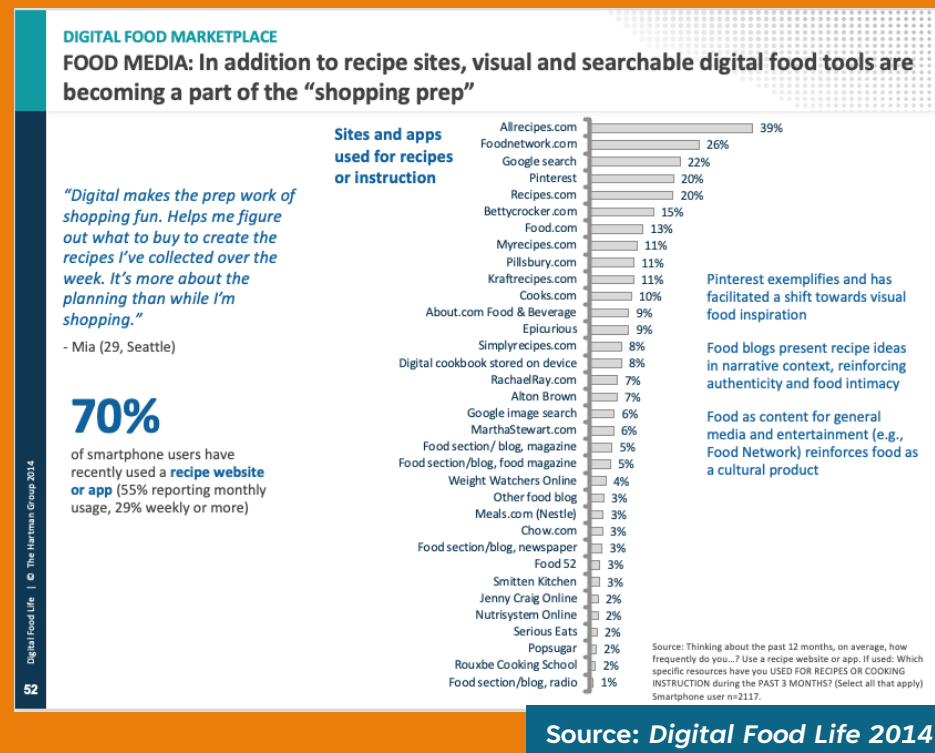
- **CULTURAL CHANGE:** How have consumer values, needs, priorities and behaviors changed (or endured) in today's digital food culture?
- **PATHS OF DIGITAL INFLUENCE AND PURCHASE:** How is digital technology shaping the ways consumer discover, learn about, share, plan and prepare food?
- **BRAND EXPECTATIONS:** How do consumers want and expect brands and companies to show up and engage with them across digital platforms and spaces?

The report will provide meaningful guidance and recommendations to future-proof your business, aligning with today's discerning consumer in an increasingly disrupted and fragmented marketplace.

Understand how to activate on the shifting cultural currents and market dynamics of a rapidly changing and fragmenting digital landscape

Through a national online survey, in-depth qualitative interviews and benchmarking against prior Hartman Group research, the report will examine how consumer perspectives on and engagement with the following topics have evolved and are shaping food culture and the marketplace:

- **How are digital technology and platforms shaping and changing consumers' relationships to food, food companies and the broader food system?** What are the relationships between digital/online and analog/offline food worlds and behaviors?
- **How do consumers decide who to trust in the digital landscape?** What do notions such as *expertise, community, quality, ethics* and *transparency* mean — and how do consumers evaluate them — in today's digitalized food culture?
- **What are the (new?) rules of engagement for AI?** Do consumers perceive and use AI differently than other digital technologies and platforms? What roles can and should AI play in helping consumers meet food-related needs? What are consumers' expectations of brands using AI to engage with them?
- **How do consumers want and expect brands to show up and engage with them across digital platforms and spaces?** What kinds of digital experiences feel authentic, nourishing and empowering? What feels manipulative and “cringe?” How do consumers think about the roles and limits of digital platforms, algorithms and automation in shaping food culture and their food lives?



The final report will include an **executive summary, strategic implications, and actionable recommendations, supported by a comprehensive analysis of trended key data, robust charts, and visuals.** Consumer quotes woven throughout will add real-world context and bring the insights to life.

Detailed Excel data tables from the study questionnaire accompany the report, allowing for flexible analysis with key demographic breakdowns, including generation, regionality, education, income, and **orientation to technology.**

Understand HOW and WHY consumers use digital technology and social media to effectively engage with them and influence the digital paths to purchase

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Digital disrupts traditional food relationships and enables consumers and companies to [Trade](#), [Discover](#), [Share](#) and [Make](#) food as a cultural product



Source: Digital Food Life 2014

Focusing on technologies such as smartphone apps, social media and artificial intelligence, this report will cover actionable topics such as:

- How are consumers learning about, discovering, sharing and participating in food trends and products? How do these processes influence consumer expectations, needs and consumption?
- How are consumers using digital tools such as smartphone apps, voice-controlled assistants (e.g., Alexa, Siri) and social media in planning and preparing food? Where do consumers want more (and less) digital tools, services and platforms in their food lives?
- How are expectations and needs around personalization, curation, control over information flow and privacy shifting in today's digital food landscape? Where do consumers want "real" human engagement and curation? Where do they want automation and algorithmic curation?
- How are consumers using social media to purchase products? How do they feel about buying through social media platforms vs. in-person?
- How are consumers using (and how do they want to use) AI in their food lives? What are consumers' concerns about privacy, ethics, trust and transparency in relation to AI?

Additionally, the report will provide an update on key questions explored in our *Food & Technology 2023* syndicated study:

- How has awareness of tech-forward methods of food production (e.g., precision fermentation, cultivated meat) changed over the past two years?

Gain primary qualitative and quantitative insights with actionable guidance to inform your sales strategy—without the financial or time investments of custom research

Robust integrated methodology

Quantitative research: Nationally representative online survey of U.S. food shoppers aged 18-79, with a minimum total sample of n=2,000 and readable samples of demographic audiences such as age cohorts, race/ethnicity and income tiers. Select data will be trended against similar questions fielded in 2023 and 2014.

Qualitative research: Literature review of marketing, consumer publications and discourse on food and beverage sourcing and quality; engagement with writings/podcasts by cultural informants; social listening on key consumer platforms; virtual interviews with consumers as well as benchmarking against prior research.

Final report available January 9, 2026

Report Price: \$12,500 (until September 30, 2025; \$15,000 starting October 1, 2025)

An in-depth PowerPoint report will include an executive summary, implications and strategic recommendations, with a complete analysis of relevant data supported by robust charts and visuals.

A supplemental set of Excel data tables with a breakdown of key demographics will accompany the report.

Proprietary categories, questions and/or custom data cuts may be available. Requests are handled on a first-come, first-served basis.
Contact us for a quote and for feasibility by September 5, 2025.

Turning insights into action: Activation Sessions

Please contact Melissa Abbott to learn more about how you can take your strategy to the next level with the insights from the *Food & Technology 2025* report: melissa@hartman-group.com.

Pre-order the *Digital Food Life 2025* report now

Report Price: \$12,500 (until September 30, 2025; \$15,000 starting October 1, 2025)

To purchase, please email: melissa@hartman-group.com

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ABOUT HARTMAN GROUP

Our mission is to translate consumer behavior and food culture into strategic growth opportunities for our clients.

Since 1989, Hartman Group's anthropologists, social scientists and business analysts have been immersed in the study of American food and beverage culture, using ethnographic observation, quantitative tracking surveys and deeply studying trends. What we have learned and continue to uncover allows us to upend many notions of our traditional American eating and drinking patterns, identifying unique opportunities and winning strategies for our clients.

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