



# Snacking 2026

Balancing Purpose and Pleasure

# Why snacking requires a new strategic lens

Snacking isn't merely a way to describe half of all eating occasions—it has become a flexible tool consumers use to navigate daily life. As routines fragment and traditional meal structures loosen, snacks increasingly serve multiple roles: providing nourishment, supporting productivity, delivering comfort and creating moments of enjoyment.

The implications extend beyond the snack aisle. Consumers are turning to snacks as versatile solutions that fit changing schedules, priorities and need states throughout the day.



## Explore:

- How changing routines are reshaping the role of snacking
- Why meal and snack boundaries continue to blur
- How consumers balance nourishment, convenience, enjoyment and functionality
- Where the greatest opportunities exist for future innovation and growth

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**Report length: 84 slides**

**Format: PowerPoint, Executive Report, PDF and Excel data tables**

## *Snacking 2026: Balancing Purpose and Pleasure*

interprets how “snackification” is reshaping the food landscape, along with the expanding role of snacking in everyday life

At its core, this report reframes snacking as an adaptive eating behavior—creating new opportunities for brands to deliver relevance, value and differentiation in a rapidly evolving food culture.

### Table of contents:

- Executive Summary
- Snacking Landscape: What is the overall direction of snacking?
- Snacking Considerations: How do considerations differ at home and away?
- Snacking with Kids: How do priorities change with kids in the household?
- Snacking Framework: Why do people snack?
- Discovery and Sourcing: What's next with snacking?
- Findings and Recommendations
- Appendix: Product Scorecards

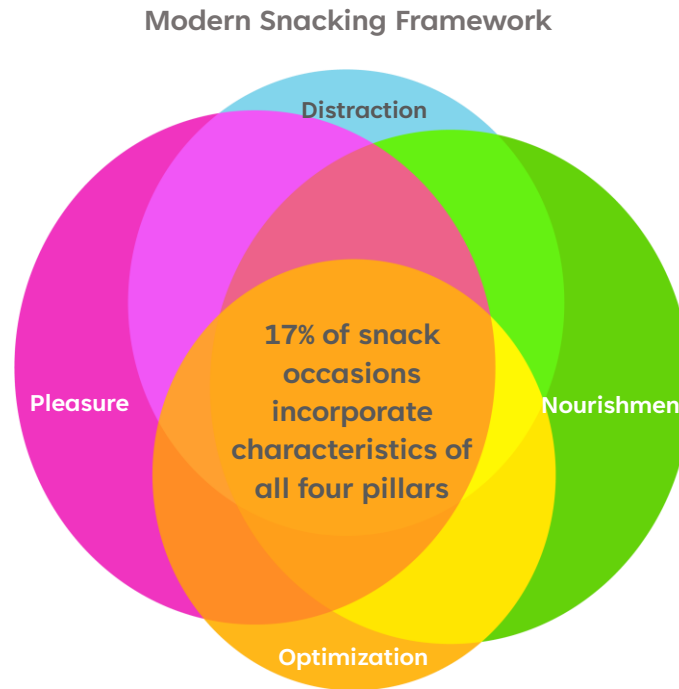
# Understand the multiple roles snacks play in consumers' lives

Consumers no longer evaluate snacks through a single lens. While taste remains foundational, snack choices are increasingly shaped by a broader set of overlapping considerations, including health, functionality, convenience, emotional satisfaction and value.

The report reveals that successful snacks are increasingly expected to deliver against multiple needs simultaneously rather than excel at only one.

## Discover:

- Which attributes consistently drive snack appeal across categories
- How purchase criteria shift by need state, context and occasion
- Why purpose and pleasure are becoming complementary expectations
- How brands can expand relevance beyond traditional category boundaries
- Where future whitespace opportunities exist across the four pillars



Hartman Group's Modern Snacking Framework provides a powerful lens for understanding both the shared and distinct roles snacks play throughout the day:

## Pleasure



Snacks chosen for enjoyment, indulgence, reward and craving satisfaction

## Optimization



Snacks selected to support energy, focus, performance and immediate functional needs

## Nourishment



Snacks that help consumers feel physically and emotionally sustained, balanced and supported

## Distraction



Snacks that create pauses in the day, provide comfort and help consumers manage stress, boredom or routine

# Brand success in snacking means designing for need states—not just occasions

## Offer convenience and adaptability

Products designed around a single use case may struggle to remain relevant in a marketplace where flexibility and adaptability are increasingly valued.

27%

say single-serve portions provide good value when purchasing snacks

## Deliver meaningful nutrition and functionality

Consumers expect products to seamlessly move across moments—fueling energy in one context and providing comforting nourishment in another.

30%

snack to get a quick boost of energy

## Provide enjoyment without compromise

Consumers prioritize snacks that deliver both emotional satisfaction and practical benefits—without forcing tradeoffs between enjoyment, convenience or quality.

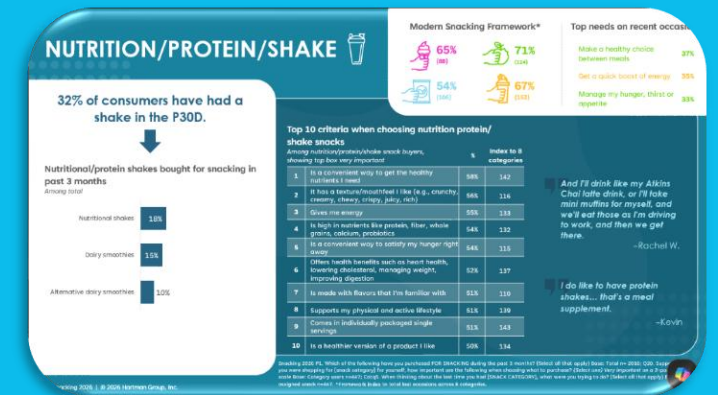
35%

snack to reward or treat themselves

Growth will favor brands that align with the evolving roles snacks play in consumers' lives.

Leverage the report's Modern Snacking Framework and Category Scorecards to guide strategic action.

### Category Scorecard example\*



### \*Categories included:

Sweet snacks, salty snacks, frozen snacks, dairy and dairy alternatives, juices, energy/nutrition/protein bars, nutrition/protein/shakes, fresh snack packs

# Access powerful insights (qualitative and quantitative) with actionable guidance—without the cost or time of custom research

## Robust integrated methodology

**Quantitative:** Online national survey fielded April 14–21, 2026, n=2,016 U.S. adults aged 18–80. Margin of Error (MOE)  $\pm 2.2\%$  at 95% confidence level.

**Qualitative:** Digital ethnographies: n=13 participants. Multi-day immersive engagement (journaling, prompts, photos and videos) via asynchronous virtual platform. Follow-up in-depth interviews: n=6 selected from digital ethnography participants for 60-minute follow-up 1-on-1 interviews.

## Turning insights into action: Evolving role of snacks

A customized Activation Session helps clients turn Snacking 2026 insights into growth strategies rooted in the evolving role snacks play in consumers' everyday lives.

For more details or an example of a session agenda, contact Melissa Abbott: [melissa@hartman-group.com](mailto:melissa@hartman-group.com)

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Report Price: \$15,000\*

*\*included in all Hartman Retainer Services packages*

An in-depth PowerPoint report includes implications, strategic recommendations and a complete analysis of relevant data supported by robust charts and visuals.

An **Executive Report** is also included with purchase to help extend the impact of the research and support informed decision-making at the executive level.

Accompanying the report are detailed Excel data tables that enable flexible analysis with key demographic breakdowns.

# Order your copy of *Snacking 2026* now

To align with today's evolving snack consumer, contact us:

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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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