

Snacking 2026:

Balancing Purpose and Pleasure

A Hartman Group syndicated research study

Fielding April-May 2026
U.S. market coverage

Decode how purpose and pleasure drive snack choice across occasions

Snacking matters more than ever

Snacking now accounts for half of all eating and drinking occasions—making it a dominant food and beverage behavior. But even with its significant role, snacking culture is evolving rapidly:

- **Purpose and pleasure** increasingly coexist on the same occasion
- **Personalized intentions**—from quick energy to wellness goals—are fragmenting the market
- **Gen Z and GLP-1 users** are driving distinctive consumption patterns

Uncover emerging consumer priorities in snacking

Snacking 2026 will explore the shifting benefits and motivations behind snack choices, guided by our proprietary **Modern Snacking Framework**.

Those who want to change how they snack*

34% want to eat more snacks that keep them fuller longer

49% want to eat more healthy snacks (less sugar, low-fat, etc.)

What you'll discover

- **Emerging consumer priorities:** Health, indulgence, convenience and sustainability investigated by varying degrees of importance
- **The Modern Snacking Framework:** Your resource for identifying white-space opportunities
- **Demographic deep-dives:** Gen Z, Millennials, GLP-1 users and other high-value segments
- **Occasion-based insights:** How the purpose-pleasure balance shifts throughout the day
- **Macroeconomic impacts:** Value expectations, up- vs. down-trading patterns and premiumization trends across categories

Backed by 35+ years of consumer expertise

Hartman Group has tracked the evolving ways Americans eat since 1989.

What you'll gain

Snacking 2026 equips you with strategic insights to innovate, position and grow:

- **Cultural forces:** Macro shifts driving health and value expectations
- **Occasion dynamics:** How context shapes snacking needs throughout the day
- **Category differentiation:** Emerging priorities across 8 snack categories: salty snacks, sweet snacks, dairy/dairy alternatives, energy/nutrition/protein bars, frozen snacks, fresh snack packs, nutritional/protein shakes, juices

Snacking 2026 draws on:

- Quantitative survey with over 2,000 consumers
- Qualitative interviews and ethnographic research
- Trended data
- Proprietary framework proven to guide CPG, retail and foodservice innovation

***Snacking 2026* is your roadmap to relevance in the evolving snack market.**

Understand needs and snack behaviors from the consumer perspective

Grounded in Hartman Group's deep understanding of snacking culture—and backed by a nationally representative survey and qualitative interviews—**Snacking 2026** delivers answers to the questions shaping your strategy:

Market forces

- **How is "snackification" reshaping the food landscape?**
Understand how consumers seek functional benefits and health positioning—without sacrificing flavor, texture or indulgence.
- **Which channels and trends are winning?**
From e-commerce to private label, discover what's driving growth in today's snack market.
- **How do economic pressures influence purchase decisions?**
Map where consumers trade down, trade up, or hold firm on priorities like organic and why.

Product strategy

- **How do consumer motivations and expectations vary by need state?**
Understand both the needs and benefits consumers seek when snacking.
- **What's gaining traction vs. losing resonance?**
Pinpoint which product attributes and certifications matter most across categories to today's discerning shoppers across retail and foodservice.
- **How do generational differences shape snacking?**
From Gen Z's identity-driven choices to parents with kids (ages 0-12 and 13-17) and Boomers' longevity focus, uncover how need states differ by age cohort and occasion.

Consumer insights

- **Which consumer segments represent the biggest opportunities?**
Identify high-value targets based on frequency, willingness to pay and alignment with your innovation pipeline.



Hartman Group's **Modern Snacking Framework** is a proprietary tool for identifying product innovation and positioning opportunities based on consumer motivations.

Four pillars capture the distinct intentions—or lack thereof—that guide snack choices across occasions. Understanding these motivations reveals where to compete and how to differentiate.

The Modern Snacking Framework helps you:

- Identify white-space opportunities in product development
- Sharpen brand positioning and messaging
- Align innovation with high-value consumer need states

Gain primary consumer insights and strategic guidance at a fraction of custom research costs

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. Includes trend data against similar questions fielded in 2024.

Qualitative research: Multi-day engagement (journaling, prompts, photos and videos) with demographically and regionally diverse consumers. Research will involve a dynamic online qualitative research platform paired with in-depth, virtual interviews with a subset of participants.

Cultural analysis: Literature review of marketing, consumer publications and discourse in food and beverage sourcing; engagement with writings/podcasts by cultural informants; social listening on key consumer platforms.

Final report available June 30, 2026

Report price: \$12,500* (until 3/31/2026; \$15,000 starting 4/1/2026)

**included in all Hartman Retainer Services packages*

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. Consumer quotes throughout will add real-world context.

A standalone **Executive Report** (included with the purchase) will provide a concise, strategic summary of the full report for internal stakeholders.

Detailed **Excel data tables** will accompany the report, enabling flexible analysis with key demographic breakdowns.

Proprietary categories, questions and/or custom data cuts may be available. Requests are handled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Contact us by 3/23/2026 for a quote and feasibility assessment.

Turning insights to action: Team Activation Sessions

Contact Melissa Abbott to learn how to take your snack strategy to the next level with tailored insights from the *Snacking 2026* report: melissa@hartman-group.com.



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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Pre-order Snacking **2026** now

Final report available June 30, 2026

Deliverable includes:

- Full report (PPT and PDF)
- Executive report summary
- Excel data tables (with full cross tabs)
- Modern Snacking Framework
- Strategic recommendations
- Presentation-ready charts and visuals
- Optional custom category question(s)—purchase by 3/23/26
- Optional webinar or client briefing

Report Price: \$12,500 (until 3/31/2026; \$15,000 starting 4/1/2026) *included in all Hartman Retainer Services packages*

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

Questions? Schedule a brief consultation to see how **Snacking 2026** fits your needs.

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