



Snacking Trend: An Opportunity for Restaurants

By Jeewani Fernando

Introduction

Many researches including TECNOMIC have revealed that more consumers are ordering snack items off restaurant menus. According to TECNOMIC Continuing Research, the data shows that more snacks were sourced from restaurants in 2012 (29%) than in 2010 (22%). The menu items containing the descriptors “snack”, “snackable” or “snacker” have increased considerably. This situation provides huge opportunity for restaurants ranging from quick/limited service (LSR) to fine dining/full-service restaurants (FSR). Restaurants can capitalize on this opportunity by innovating menus with various snacking options. In addition, restaurants can boost sales throughout the day and drive guest traffic during non-peak hours.

Source: Canadian Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report, 2012.









The above report is based on two TECNOMIC sources: TECNOMIC MenuMonitor database and Consumer survey with 1000 consumers.

Publisher/contact information

Magda Beranek
Economics and Competitiveness Division
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
magda.beranek@gov.ab.ca
Phone: 780-422-7101
Fax: 780-427-5220

Menu Insights

The TECHNOMIC MenuMonitor database, identified number of snacks offered in restaurants .These include appetizers, small plates, ethnic snacks, sides, desserts, healthy snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.

Restaurant Snack Offerings	Key Findings
Appetizers 	Soup leads all other appetizer categories in both the LSR and FSR segments, but fried and/or breaded appetizers—such as wings, fries, chicken tenders and crispy vegetable offerings—stand out as popular snack options on appetizer menus.
Small Plates 	Small plates present a creative way for operators to position signature items like sliders, bruschetta and various tapas as snacks. These small plates are often known as “bites” or “mini” and they put the emphasis on big flavours, rather than big portions.
Ethnic Foods 	Asian and Pan-Latin snacks, including steamed dumplings and buns, various rolls and mini tacos, continue to find a home on menus as consumers indicate a greater comfort level with emerging international cuisines.
Healthy Snacking 	Operators are largely using fruits and vegetables described as “fresh” to market healthy snacks. Also notable are new snacks that tout contemporary health claims, such as gluten-free, in the menu description.
Sides 	Side items with a craveable or indulgent positioning, including breads, french fries and crispy breaded vegetables, such as onion rings or fried zucchini, are appealing as snacks.
Desserts 	Baked goods and ice cream are, by far, menued more than any other dessert at both limited- and full-service restaurants
Baked Goods 	In developing baked goods as snacks, most LSR chains take the approach of promoting signature cookies more than any other item, while full-service chains can successfully position fruit pies as a snack.
Non-Alcoholic Beverages 	Specialty coffee has emerged as a hot or iced beverage of choice across restaurant segments; look for operators to continue to innovate with new flavours and customization opportunities for customers choosing specialty coffee as a snack.

Consumer Insights

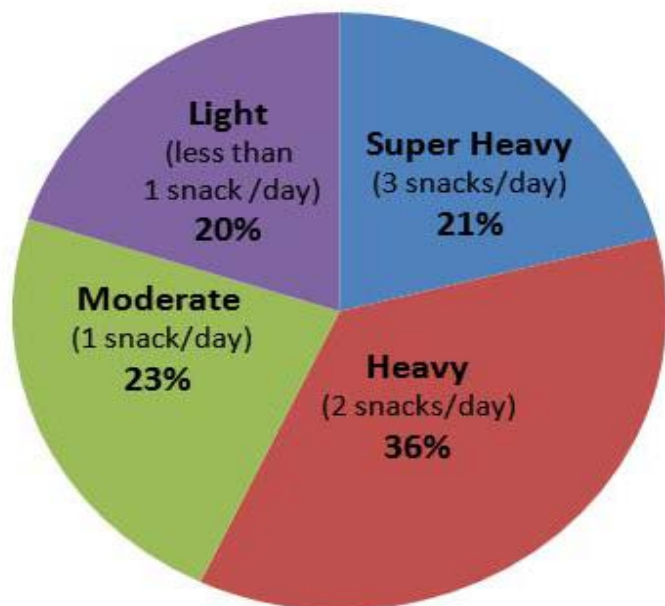
Snack Consumption Behaviour (general snack consumption behaviour)

Consumption Behaviour	Opportunity for Foodservices
Consumers have broadened their idea of what constitutes a snack to include a variety of food and beverages.	Introduce 'snack' menus. List sides and appetizers or small plates as snacks.
Today's consumers snack much more frequently. This is especially true for consumers aged 18-44.	Offer wide variety of snacks as young consumers will be looking for novelty and variety. On-line and social media marketing efforts.
Snack consumption is relatively high throughout the day and peaks in the midafternoon.	Concentrate marketing on afternoon snacks. Traditional breakfast foods can be offered as snacks throughout the day.
Consumers are increasingly eating snacks immediately after purchase.	Offer portable options that are easy to eat on-the-go.
More than a third of consumers expect to eat more healthful snacks in the coming year.	Important for operators to offer and promote palatable, better-for-you snacks.
Among consumers who expect to purchase more snacks from restaurants in the coming year, twice as many will visit fast-food concepts as fast-casual and full-service restaurants.	Full services restaurants have more room to expand snacks.
Consumers strongly differentiate between meals and snacks.	Operators will need to do more than just alter the portion size of menu items to effectively position them as snacks.

Snack Purchasing Decisions (behavior at the time of purchase)

Purchasing Decision	Opportunity for Foodservices
The overall taste and flavour are the main considerations involved in the snack purchasing decision.	Innovative taste and flavours may be important.
A quarter of consumers view snacking occasions as opportunities to experiment with innovative foods.	Can experiment with new or unique snack flavours and ingredients. Snack menus present an effective testing ground for new offerings.
Quality is key to consumers in choosing a snack.	Offer high quality snacks at affordable prices.
Many consumers opt for more indulgent snacks. Healthy snack offerings will not be top of mind for consumers.	As health is important, craveable, tasty snacks options that are perceived as healthy offerings will likely be a winning combination.
Children have a substantial impact on snack purchasing decisions.	Market snack options to children and build familiarity and loyalty.
Fast-food restaurants lead all other restaurants for snacking occasions, likely due to their speed of service, convenience and low price points.	Expand the market for their dollar-menu items, can market combinations of such items as meals.

Consumer Segmentation: Snacking User Groups



Super Heavy and **Heavy** segments are skewed towards females and mostly young consumer groups

Moderate segment is more likely to be males (about 55%) and older consumers (age 55+)

Light snackers skew to males and to consumers aged 45 and over

Outlook Trends to Watch

Growth Avenues for Fast-Food Snacks—More consumers are visiting a wider range of fast-food restaurants for snacks, creating opportunities for fast-food operators that may not have promoted snack items before to target snackers, especially for midmorning and midafternoon snack visits.

From Mini to Micro: New Bite-Sized Snacks—With an emphasis on affordability, indulgence and a portable preparation, new micro snacks shine a spotlight on bite-sized foods as a craveable between-meal trend.

Retailers vs. Restaurants—Retailers have long dominated the snack market, but Technomic research shows that restaurants are gaining a share of consumers' snack dollars. This competitive marketplace calls for both segments to innovate with appealing snack offerings that help them both gain share.

