

# Food Channel releases top 10 snack trends in time for back to school

CHICAGO — *The Food Channel*® has released its top ten snack trends, one of its regular trend reports prepared in conjunction with *CultureWaves*® , Mintel International, and the International Food Futurists.

"These trends are meant to inspire your back-to-school snacking," said Kay Logsdon, editor-in-chief of *The Food Channel*. "But they also show how people are eating today, with smoothies and energy bars functioning as meal replacements, and grazing with small bites throughout the day—sometimes never even sitting down to a meal."

According to foodchannel.com editors, the top ten snack trends are:

- **Chip and Dip 2.0.** New varieties and new flavors give us something different. It is likely that you will have hummus and falafel chips or pretzel crisps at your next party instead of the traditional chip-and-dip duo. The dips are healthier, spicier, and often served hot.

- **Small and Sensational.** We are eating more substantial snacks packed with protein as meal replacements, and eating them more often. For pick-me-ups, we grab a slider at Steak 'n Shake, or a Big Mac Wrap at McDonald's. Come dinnertime, we may graze some more, but by today's definition, snacks may be all we need.

- **The Drink Shift.** This trend is all about the "halo of health" around drinks made with fruit or antioxidants. We have a shift in snack beverages away from colas and energy drinks and more toward teas, lemonades, fruity organic waters, and carbonated fruit drinks with interesting flavor combinations. Plus, there's the trend away from

high-fructose corn syrup and back to sugar that some soft-drink makers are spinning as a "throwback" move. Additionally, smoothie shop chain **Jamba** Juice has just introduced a line of smoothie mixes that lets consumers make smoothies at home.

- **Goin' Nuts.** Snacking habits are adjusting to talk about how good nuts are for you, with nuts and granola, nuts and fruits and smoked nuts. Unique flavor combinations give us the feeling that we are eating healthily: for example, cashews with pomegranate and vanilla, and dark chocolate with caramelized black walnuts.

- **Fruits: The Low-Hanging Snack.** The trend here is the mainstreaming of new types of fruit, and the redefinition of locally grown to mean locally sourced. When it comes to fresh, blackberries have been in abundance, and white peaches and white cherries have given us a choice when it comes to some old standards. Fresh fruit is now the number one snack among kids aged two to 17.

- **Cruising the Bars.** While it is mainstream that the granola bar is an acceptable emergency meal, bars are now offered in dairy-free, gluten-free, non-GMO, organic, soy-free, cholesterol-free, trans-fat-free, and casein-free varieties. There are even versions specifically for women and for kids.

- **Sweet and Salty.** Until recent years, the only way sweet or salty snacks mixed was when we ate something sweet then craved something salty, or vice-versa. What we're seeing now is that the barrier is removed. We dip pretzels in Nutella and eat fruit with a side of popcorn. These tastes are filling up the

new-style vending machines too, where our choices are increasing and more information is available.

- **Yogurt, Redefined.** The new gold standard for yogurt is the increased health value found with probiotics. Acknowledging our trend toward global flavors, there is Greek yogurt, among the healthiest snacks we can eat. Icelandic yogurt is starting to emerge as yet another world player and new self-serve frozen yogurt shops are popping up everywhere too. Although not new, yogurt continues to redefine itself and is definitely trending up.

- **Bodaciously Bold.** Bold flavors are almost becoming regular, satisfying an urge for something unordinary. How else to explain flavors such as Doritos First-, Second-, and Third-Degree Burn (Scorchin' Habanero)?

- **Nostalgia's New Again.** Any decent tribute to snacking has to mention the traditional Snack Cake, The Hostess Twinkie, the Ding Dong, the TastyKake, the Little Debbie. Anything that has lasted this long deserves a mention in the snacking hall of fame, even if it isn't good for you. And, truth be told, we all snack on some of these from time to time.

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