

## NACS 2021

The National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) Show returned to a live format at Chicago's McCormick Place this month. Mask mandates and light traffic did not dampen the enthusiasm of those that attended. The theme, "We Got This!" expressed optimism for the future of convenience retail operations.

### FEEDING MODERN LIFESTYLE CRAVINGS

As consumers are finding their way toward a new normal, lifestyle changes are pointing to opportunities.

#### Convenience Delivered

Everyday workforce mobility has likely changed for the long term. A convenient location on the way to work is not as relevant as affordable and efficient delivery. Trend setting operators like Wawa have invested in making delivery a go-to for many of their customers. Neon Marketplace is planning a roll out of food centric operations with omnichannel accessibility.

#### Celebrating Life

Opportunities for large gatherings may have diminished, but today's consumers are still celebrating. Catering programs with uniquely cravable items that compete with quick service restaurants are finding favor, especially when they are packaged for safety and convenience.

#### Getting Out and Moving

The desire to get outside and participate in physical activity feeds the desire for personal connection and a healthier lifestyle. Better-for-you salty snacks with an extra hit of protein are finding favor as are beverages with benefits.

#### Substantial and Hassle Free

Desperation eating has lost its luster, and consumers are seeking more substantial choices that still offer grab and go convenience beyond the ubiquitous sandwich. Options like coconut chicken curry and chicken congee cups suggest culinary satisfaction. Vegetarian offerings beyond raw vegetables and dipping sauce appeal to those seeking more variety in healthful choices.

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to learn more about the latest consumer insight for food marketers.

### TRENDING NEW PRODUCT FEATURES

**Texture Collision** – classic candies with a crunchy surprise like cereal infused chocolate bars and cookie candy combos.

**Covered and Stuffed** – traditional favorites filled or enrobed like fudge filled molten lava cupcakes and chocolate covered and peanut butter stuffed pretzels.

**Powered Up** – convenient items that deliver lots of desirable nutrition from a single product like a beverage, cookie or a salty snack.

**Free from Everything** – products free from the villainous ingredient of the moment in many categories.

**Baby Bites** – tiny portions with a big pop of flavor give permission to indulge in many indulgent favorites.

**Appealing Alternatives** – alternative beverage and snack ingredients like legumes, beans, seeds and vegetables.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD MARKETERS

**Be More Than Convenient** – as consumer lifestyles have evolved, opportunities to be a source for delicious, healthful and more substantial meal options are growing for the modern retailer.

**Explore Flavor** – a broad range of tastes are worthy of exploration, including: comfortable tried and true favorites, extremely challenging XXtra hot and popular international flavors.

**Meals Reconsidered** – there is nothing new about meal kits, but the need for cooking skills and steep prices have not made this a regular choice for many consumers. There is no reason convenient and substantial meal kits that require little more than unpacking a container cannot be the next wave of meal kits.

**Mindful Indulgence** – according to a recent Culinary Visions<sup>®</sup> study, 58% of consumers surveyed have used the time they have had over the past year to make healthier lifestyle modifications. Yet 72% of those same consumers agreed that a little bit of indulgence would become a regular part of their routine.