

Institute of Food Technologist (IFT) Virtual Conference SHIFT20

The goal of this year's virtual conference was to bring together leaders from a wide range of disciplines in the food industry for a robust conversation that challenged the status quo and fostered new insight. SHIFT20 was about so much more than ingredients and processing techniques—it was about a shift in thinking that brings the world better food.

Pandemic Conscious Consumers

Today's consumers have adjusted their expectations for access to on-demand food at all times and places. They have driven a renaissance for many long standing brands that offer a flavor memory of simpler times. As consumers seek out their new normal, the desire for convenient comfort food is likely to remain.

Packaging Reconsidered

The drive to minimize packaging has taken a shift in focus as consumers seek safety above all else in the food and beverage items they purchase.

Implications for Food Marketers

Brands Matter – reliance on trusted brands has become more important than ever. According to Innova Marketing Insights, 56% of global consumers said the story around a brand influences their purchase decision.

Transparency Feeds Trust – easy access to information builds understanding and trust of new technologies that make food better and more nutritious.

Feeling Good – consumers want to feel good about what they eat while consuming what is good for their bodies and the world around them. Better for you, ethical and community engagement continue to trend and show no signs of slowing.

New Research on Covid-era Consumers

Balancing Healthfulness with Mindful Indulgence

According to a soon to be released study by **Y-Pulse®** (ypulse.org), young Covid-era consumers ages 19–23 have re-evaluated or reconfirmed their desires for healthfulness and indulgence.

Sixty-seven percent of those surveyed said that indulgent comfort food was their salvation in recent months, yet 84% are looking forward to returning to healthier eating. Seventy-two percent said they are now finding that healthy food gives them comfort. Yet, mindful indulgence is certainly here to stay. Sixty-eight percent agreed that a little bit of indulgence was likely to become part of their daily routine.

Inspired to Cook

Faced with weeks of sheltering at home, many consumers cooked more than they might have previously for their everyday needs. When this group was asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "I do not like to cook," 68% of these 19–23-year-olds disagreed. In fact, 78% agreed that staying at home gave them a chance to explore cooking new recipes, and 80% acknowledged that cooking at home inspired them to learn more cooking techniques.

Finding Comfort at Home

As in-restaurant dining begins to open up, consumers still feel some hesitance to dine outside their home; 82% of young consumer participants in the **Y-Pulse®** survey agreed that their new normal included more dining at home. With this level of hesitancy toward eating out, retailers have the opportunity to meet the needs of consumers who are looking for ways to enjoy variety and prepared meals within their own kitchens.