

Sustainable, natural foods lead diet trends

A recent survey of more than 200 registered dietitians shows what food trends will be hot (and not) for consumers and food companies in 2012.

By Louise Pollock

Green is a hot color this year. We're not talking about fashion trends or red carpet "best and worst" lists: we're dishing about the hot new diet trends for 2012, and green is the way to dress your plate this year. Pollock Communications worked with the nation's top nutrition experts to identify the top 2012 nutrition trends for consumers and food companies. The survey of more than 200 registered dietitians revealed five nutrition trends that will make news and affect your choices in the coming year.

With green foods coming out on top of the trends, the survey also revealed that, while Americans are getting enough protein, carbohydrates and fats, they really need to boost their intake of antioxidants, phytonutrients and fiber. Since many consumers might be confused by which food choices are good sources of these nutrients, this is the ideal opportunity for food companies and retailers to help translate the trends into sales, by communicating how their products and services can help consumers meet their 2012 diet demands and needs.

Media News briefs

COMBS, COMCAST TO LAUNCH REVOLT TV

Music mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs, who heads Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group, announced Feb. 21 a new venture with Comcast to create a "real-time, socially connected music television network" dubbed Revolt.

"My hope is that this new network will spark a revolution in entertainment and encourage other media and communications companies to bring REVOLT to their audiences," he said.

The project will be one of four minority-owned independent networks to be broadly distributed on Comcast cable systems between July 2012 and January 2014, the company said.

"I'm thrilled to be at the helm to usher in a completely new model of television that brings together the artist community, social media, and cutting edge technology," added Combs.

Launch is slated for 2013. Porter Novelli handled the announcement.

USA Today reported NBA great Magic Johnson and filmmaker Robert Rodriguez are among others developing networks with Comcast.

Here's a complete list of the top five findings from the registered dietitians survey:

Unprocessed becomes avoidable

Unprocessed, natural foods will be the biggest consumer nutrition trend in 2012.

This indicates that food companies and retailers will see an increase in demand for more green products. Most registered dietitians (72%) predict that consumers will continue to seek out local, organic, sustainable, fresh, minimally processed foods. With consumers returning to the table and cooking at home, they will become more aware of where their food is coming from and what it contains.

According to the survey, almost half of all registered dietitians also agree that simplifying the ingredient list will be a major factor in diet changes, while more than a third of registered dietitians agree that sodium reduction and eliminating high fructose corn syrup will play key roles in dietary modifications in the coming year.

More antioxidants, fiber

Americans need to increase antioxidants and phytonutrients and, in turn, get more fiber.

Of the 204 responses, almost all registered dietitians (96%) emphasize that Americans are lacking antioxidants and phytonutrients in their diet, and many (59%) say consumers need more vitamins and minerals. While most agree that consumers are already consuming enough protein, carbohydrates and fats, registered dietitians say Americans are lacking sufficient amounts of fiber from whole grains and fruits and vegetables.

Seasonal goes fashionable

Seasonal and local fruits and vegetables will rise to the top. Almost all registered dietitians (94%) agree that in the coming year there will be a bigger push for Americans to consume more fruits and vegetables. Eating seasonal and local plant based foods that are organically grown will be a big trend in the coming year, as well. Not only does this reinforce the green trend, but it also

supports the trend of increased antioxidants, phytonutrients and fiber.

Transfats = food label poison

Consumers will take it easy on the trans and saturated fats, sugar and sodium.

The majority of registered dietitians (78%) name trans fats as the most harmful nutrient in the diet, followed by added sugars (68%), saturated fat (58%) and sodium (52%). In 2012, we will see a greater emphasis on reducing these ingredients, as

Americans focus more on unprocessed, natural foods that are enhanced with healthful exotic and ethnically diverse spices and flavors.

MyPlate to drive awareness

USDA's MyPlate will prove to become a helpful guide for consumers and brands in the coming year. Nearly 70% of registered dietitians are using MyPlate to counsel patients and it will continue to play a role in diet recommendations through 2012. MyPlate recommends half the plate consist of vegetables and fruit, with the other half made up mostly of whole grains and a small portion of lean protein. Following these guidelines will serve as a helpful tool for food companies and retailers, too, as they assist consumers in achieving their dietary needs.

We see this trend toward health and wellness being driven by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. As consumers learn more and understand the connection between healthy eating and overall well-being, there will continue to be a shift in eating patterns and demand for wholesome, nutrient-rich options. Including relevant brand benefits that appeal to consumer diet trends in all marketing and communications efforts is paramount to helping consumers make purchasing decisions.

Companies and brands that take proactive steps to meet consumers' changing diet needs will go far to enhance brand loyalty and reputation, while helping to increase their bottom line in the coming year and beyond.

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