

# Bringing innovation to the forefront of everything you do

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Image courtesy of Sunsweet

What drives innovation? This complex process involves as much knowledge and understanding of influential consumer trends as your capability of responding to shifts in consumer purchasing behavior through new product development. And, as Milk Bar founder Christina Tosi puts it, you can't do it alone. "Success," she points out, "does not exist in a vacuum of one."

In this special edition of *bake*, we feature "Supply Side Innovators" in our effort to help you identify and connect with experts who can advance your efforts to bring innovation from concept to fruition.

It is important to recognize the vast amount of resources available to your bakery operation that can help you navigate the occasional rough waters you may encounter. The consumer marketplace is changing rapidly, so it is imperative to gain both a macro and micro view of where things are heading and how you can best respond.

A prominent trend that continues to gain momentum and impact product development is sustainability. In 2009, when The Hartman Group published its Sustainability: The Rise of Consumer Responsibility report, America's consumers were reeling from the weight of a catastrophic economic recession. Some of the only bright lights in the otherwise gloomy economic realities of the time related to "saving energy" and "hope for a better world."

Hartman Group's new report, Sustainability 2019: Beyond Business as Usual, uncovers that sustainability as a cultural value and defining concern for consumers has not lost any of its vitality in the intervening years. "Sustainability is shorthand for a complete moral system of cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes related to a sense of responsibility for the greater good," says Laurie Demeritt, CEO of The Hartman Group, a leading consumer research and consulting firm. "The report finds that today's consumers are confronted by real and immediate sustainability challenges."

In this tense national mood, consumers appear to be more willing to prioritize the greater good in their purchasing than in the past. In a major shift, 51% of consumers now report the environment as their major reason for purchasing sustainable or socially responsible products, compared to 32% of consumers just two years ago.

## **Food as medicine**

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While it is commonly understood that good nutrition promotes general health, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of how their food and beverage choices can help them manage and, in some cases, reverse certain medical conditions, according to health and wellness research by The NPD Group. NPD finds that about a quarter of US adults are trying to manage a health or medical condition by making healthy food and beverage choices.

Younger adults, ages 18-24, are particularly interested in using foods to improve their health. Last year young adults chose foods and beverages with healthy profiles for 19% of their meals and in-between snacks. For example, 9% of adults say a top nutrition goal is protecting brain health, and when asked about foods that promote brain health, young adults were 45% more likely to express an interest in these products compared to 35-44-year-olds, according to NPD's Health Aspirations & Behavioral Tracking Service.

## **Clean label enthusiasts**

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A new study from research firm InsightsNow examined attitudes toward functional ingredients among clean label enthusiasts, a consumer segment characterized by strong beliefs about and aversions to additives and artificial ingredients. About 30% of US primary shoppers fit this description.

“These are consumers that read ingredient lists,” says Dave Lundahl, chief executive officer at InsightsNow. “They are very concerned about what goes into products, so they’re an ideal group to look at from a consumer segment perspective when looking at functional benefits.”

Clean label enthusiasts are 85% more likely to say they’re proactive with their health than non-clean label enthusiasts. They’re increasingly turning to food to manage their health, seeking functional benefits from unprocessed, low carb, low calorie, high protein and non-GMO types of diets. While functional ingredients cater to a variety of health needs, the most highly sought-after benefits include digestive health, heart health, increased energy, anti-inflammatory and immune support, according to InsightsNow.

Clean label enthusiasts are willing to pay a premium for better-for-you products, but they’re also more diligent about getting their money’s worth. “They are looking for claim substantiation,” Lundahl says. “They want to know they’re getting the real deal. This is a group that is ahead of the curve.”

*Starting Tuesday, November 12, we will profile a new Supply Side Innovator each day as part of our Bake Twentyfive series.*

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