



As supermarket retailers increasingly consider health and wellness as an image-building platform, Millennials represent an important consumer segment that's ripe for increasing basket share with healthy, high-margin items like fresh fruits and vegetables.

PMA (*Fresh*) Perspectives

By Eileen O'Leary

Attitudes and Lifestyles of Millennials

Their maturing mindset toward health creates a match for produce marketing.

T rue or false? The Millennial generation takes its youth and physical health for granted. I hope you answered "false," or else you could be overlooking a valuable target for the produce department. The truth is, Millennials are becoming more aware of the importance of taking care of their bodies and are finding ways to do so proactively. They're using exercise to boost energy, be more alert and manage stress. They're also making a conscious effort to eat better. As supermarket retailers increasingly consider health and wellness as an image-building platform, Millennials represent an important consumer segment that's not only responsive to this strategy, but also ripe for increasing basket share for healthy, high-margin items like fresh fruits and vegetables.

Findings from "Outlook on the Millennial Consumer 2014," a syndicated study from The Hartman Group commissioned by the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) and also discussed in this column in *PG's* August 2014 issue, demonstrates that Millennials' approaches to food are maturing. In fact, 59 percent of Millennials surveyed say they're starting to develop healthy eating habits, and 51 percent report actively managing their physical appearance through diet.

Influencing Food Choices

Compared with Bellevue, Wash.-based Hartman's 2011 research on Millennials, the 2014 report finds this generation making more careful food choices and trying to avoid unnecessary additives. Thirty percent say they select foods and beverages with as few additives as possible, up seven points from three years ago. Choosing fresh food over canned, frozen or packaged as much as possible is the preference of 37 percent of Millennials surveyed, and 33 percent report reading labels when shopping to make the healthiest choices.

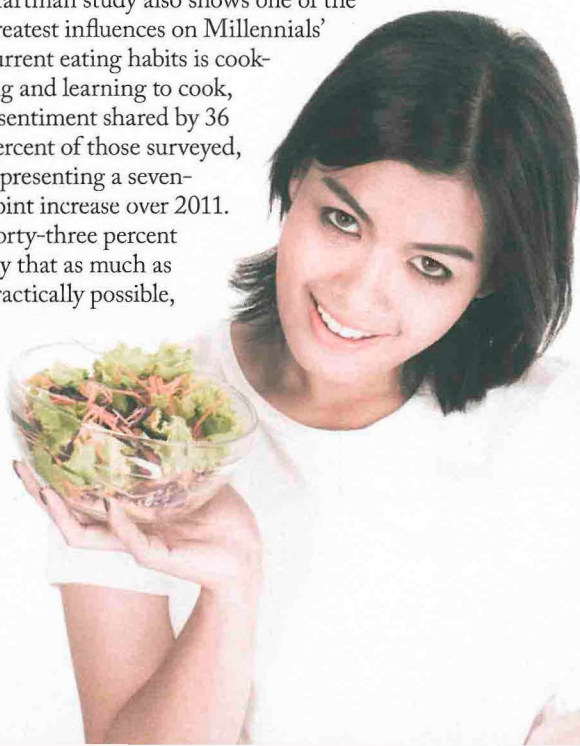
Despite being label readers, fewer Millennials'

purchases are influenced by the health information on product packaging as compared with older generations. They instead rely more on intuition and common sense when determining what to eat. "I'm not a fat and calories person. I'm a vegetable person. I eat vegetables at every meal," said Desirée, a 30-year-old who participated in the study.

This practical approach to eating falls in line with Millennials' tendency to practice balance in many aspects of their lives. They relate less to the idea of dieting to lose weight and are instead looking for convenient opportunities to integrate nutritious ingredients and whole foods into their everyday eating. This outlook aligns beautifully with the wholesome qualities of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Healthy Kitchen

Millennials tend to embrace a do-it-yourself approach to many facets of life, including cooking. The Hartman study also shows one of the greatest influences on Millennials' current eating habits is cooking and learning to cook, a sentiment shared by 36 percent of those surveyed, representing a seven-point increase over 2011. Forty-three percent say that as much as practically possible,



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they have home-cooked meals. Millennials are more likely to buy fresh ingredients the same day they cook them, as reported by 18 percent of Millennials, versus only 6 percent of Baby Boomers.

The fact that Millennials grew up with celebrity chefs and cooking shows likely contributes to their willingness to experiment in the kitchen, with 37 percent saying they experiment with new cuisines at home. With hundreds of items, the produce department is fertile ground for Millennials to expand their culinary boundaries, while also delivering on the healthy, delicious ingredients they seek. This is also a generation that instinctively consults online resources for help on how to prepare anything. Produce suppliers can capitalize on Millennials' sense of adventure by ensuring that product, preparation and company information are easy to find and reach them via all things mobile, social and digital. Highlighting recipes using fresh produce to help Millennials explore new cuisines in their own kitchens also stands to be well received.



Eating Out, Eating Well

It appears that fast food and QSR will continue to be part of Millennials' daily routines, and the research shows many express a desire for healthier options in these foodservice segments that are still budget-friendly. What fast-food and QSR establishments lack represents an opportunity for grocery retailers. Healthier alternatives with affordable, grab-and-go fresh fruit and vegetable options from the supermarket prepared food section can help Millennials make better everyday choices away from home.

Even if health and wellness isn't a focused strategy for your store(s), supermarket retailers are in a position to be a tremendous resource for this generation — answering its calls for affordability, convenience and healthy alternatives when it comes to food choices. This is especially important, as, according to Nielsen, Millennials represent a \$200 billion opportunity and will hold even more spending power in the coming years. **PG**

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