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Snacking Trends Post Pandemic

The pandemic has reshaped the country's approach to snacking. 2020's overnight shift to staying at home and several lockdowns during the pandemic caused dollar sales of snacking to increase by a whopping 79%. 25% of consumers reported snacking more frequently in 2020, a five-point increase from 2016.

However, not all snack foods benefited from the pandemic. Products designed for on-the-go use and smaller pack sizes saw a decrease in sales. This dip in sales could be caused by consumers reaching for larger pack sizes for value and to satisfy a full house. According to market research company IRI, 58% of consumers wanted snacks that appeal to multiple household members, and 17% bought larger packs to save money. Additionally, new launches in core snack categories saw a decrease in 2020, most likely due to manufacturers and retailers focusing on stocking best sellers and pulling back on new items. Some manufacturers also postponed new product launches because celebrating a new product didn't seem appropriate during a pandemic.

As restrictions continue to lift and more people are getting vaccinated, the pandemic almost seems like a thing of the past (let's all knock on wood). Now that we are entering a post-pandemic world, here are a few snacking trends we can expect coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comforting and Familiar Flavors

Taste is a top priority for consumers, with 89% of consumers reporting they have a preferred flavor. Looking at food product trends in the last 14 months, fruit and fruit-flavored snacks were wildly popular and ranged from standalone options such as strawberry to pairings with other flavors like strawberry hibiscus. Other flavor trends in 2020 that will likely continue to carry into 2021 include chocolate combinations, maple, and hot & spicy.

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Grower Spotlight: Crossroads Blueberry Farm

Located in West Olive, Michigan, Crossroads Blueberry Farm harvests almost a dozen different varieties of Michigan blueberries, each ready to be picked at different times throughout the season. Founded in 1956, Crossroads is a fourth-generation, family-owned and operated business that has blossomed into a 700-acre farm that works with local farmers to harvest over 5 million pounds of blueberries annually. Crossroads strives to produce the highest quality blueberries while being good stewards of the land. They are Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verified, and their practices are up to GFSI food safety standards. [Click here](#) to learn more about Crossroads Blueberry Farm.

Snacks with Benefits

Most consumers reach for snacks for comfort and indulgence, but with recent events, health is in the back of consumer's minds as 56% reported they want snacks with health benefits. As the year progressed, consumer interest for specific benefits emerged. Products advertised to reduce cholesterol increased 38%, and products that offered more potassium increased 5%. Consumers also turned to snacks to help meet dietary needs. 28% reported they wanted snacks that supported a diet they follow, such as Keto or Atkins, while 40% said they use snacks to manage daily calorie intake. Additionally, vegan and vegetarian snacks saw a 9% and 8% increase, respectively.

An Experience Beyond Nutrition

Although vaccinations are being distributed, food manufacturers predict that many consumers will continue to spend a lot of time at home. Snacks that heighten consumer experience will likely find success in 2021 as 67% of consumers want fun snacks to eat, 52% want exciting snacks to add to their diet, 51% want an "authentic" or unique snacking experience and 67% want snacks for enjoyment. Last year, brands heightened the snacking experience through social media using different platforms to launch giveaways, host live streams, and created unique filters for their brands.

Graceland Fruit **infused dried fruit ingredients** make any snacking occasion delightful. Infused dried fruits offer food manufactures a healthy, nutrient dense product inclusion that delivers authentic taste, exceptional flavor, and a familiar pop of color.





Ingredient Spotlight: Cultivated Blueberries

Did you know that July is **Blueberry Month**?! That's right, there's an entire month dedicated to celebrating this small blue superfruit berry!

Michigan is one of the top producing blueberry states. In an average year, Michigan blueberry farmers produce more than 100 million pounds in more than 30 varieties of highbush cultivated blueberries. More than 50% of all Michigan blueberries are shipped to the fresh market; the rest are frozen, pureed, concentrated, or processed and can be enjoyed all year long!

Modern-day blueberry farming began in Michigan in the early 1900's, and today more than 20,000 acres of this perennial crop is harvested. Michigan blueberries are grown, harvested, packed, and processed by more than 575 family farms annually.

At Graceland Fruit, we value authenticity and nutrition and use only the highest quality blueberries to create our exceptional ingredients. Our **infused dried blueberries** offer fresh flavor, authentic taste and texture, and are powerfully nutritious. We offer both cultivated and wild blueberries, delivering delight to all **applications**.

On the outside, blueberries may look like any other fruit, but a closer look at this small but mighty berry will reveal their powerful **nutrition and health** benefits.

- A good source of fiber & vitamin C
- Naturally fat free
- Cholesterol & sodium Free
- Antioxidant-rich
- Helps with oral, vision, and cardiovascular health
- Maintains brain function and improves memory

Resources: *Michigan Blueberry Commission & U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council*

2021 National Cherry Festival

The **National Cherry Festival** finally made its return to Traverse City as thousands flocked to Northern Michigan to celebrate our world-famous cherries.

The festival was a week-long celebration, with festivities taking place from July 3rd - 10th. However, this year's Cherry Festival looked slightly different. More than 70% of the Cherry Festival's events returned, but there was no air show, national performers, or the three main parades. Despite these few events being canceled, festival-goers still enjoyed local bands, two alternative parades, fireworks, and of course, the Cherry Queen crowning. "We're excited to celebrate cherries and be together and have cherry pie and hug all of our volunteers for the first time in a very long time," said

Kat Pay, National Cherry Festival Executive Director.

"And then see our amazing guests who come back year after year and have created the generations of fun here and bring their families and grandkids to all of our events. We're excited to be back."





New Building Signage!

(Most of) our new exterior signs are up! Our Main Street, Forrester Road, and North Office have been updated and our new logo is proudly on display.

The North Office has also received a bit of a face lift, complete with a new gray exterior and custom logo painting, shout-out to our Director of Supply Chain's wife, Robin on her awesome artistic abilities!

Graceland Fruit Awarded MDARD Grant

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has announced the 2021 Value-Added and Regional Food Systems grant recipients. This grant is designed to help retain, expand, attract, or develop agricultural processing in Michigan through targeted investments in technology and equipment, feasibility studies, healthy food access, regional food systems, and urban agriculture. "The demand for Michigan's food and agriculture products has never been higher, whether it's globally, nationally, or locally," states MDARD Director Gary McDowell. "These grants will help businesses and organizations across Michigan improve and expand operations, as well as help build a successful future for them and the communities they serve."

MDARD received 118 eligible project proposals with requests totaling nearly \$9.1 million. Of those, only 18 projects were awarded, totaling \$1.3 million. Graceland Fruit was selected as one of the 18 and awarded the full \$100,000 grant. Graceland Fruit was founded by Michigan cherry farmers as an agricultural cooperative to facilitate the processing and marketing of their annual harvest. We pioneered the study and development of the infused dried fruit process, creating the market for the infused dried cherry by developing entirely new applications and year-round utilization opportunities for the crop. With this grant, we plan to expand our product line for Montmorency cherries grown by Michigan cherry farmers.



We deliver *delight*.

Graceland Fruit, Inc. is a leading producer and global distributor of premium quality dried fruit ingredients for the food industry. Our exceptional product and service performance make it easy for innovative food manufacturers and providers to create delicious, on-trend products to surprise and delight their consumers.

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