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Food marketer speaks on 18 emerging food trends



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Guelph - “Nothing sells as well as food served with a good story.” That statement was made by Jo-Ann McArthur recently at a meeting of the Eastern Canada Farm Writers Association.

McArthur should know. She’s the president and founder of Nourish food marketing, a Toronto company that specializes in “getting products off the shelf and into the consumer’s heart.”

McArthur urged marketers and writers to remember the importance of storytelling. “We are hard-wired to respond to character-driven stories. Consumers will trust a story told by a friend more than the facts presented by a company,” she says. And social media is really just campfire storytelling on steroids, she adds.

Based on food trend research and her own knowledge of the industry, McArthur revealed several consumer trends that will shape the future.

Country of Origin. Canadians want Canadian products and the studies show 30% of people will pay a modest premium for something that is :

Canadian-made

On the world stage, Canada is seen as a trusted food source. Contaminants found in Chinese baby formula and dog food have heightened consumer fears, she says. McArthur praised the organizations that are using the “Raised by a Canadian farmer” tagline and sharing producer stories.

International Taste Profiles

Food developers need to understand the taste profiles of their markets. For instance, Canadians tend to prefer saltier snacks like cheese, crackers and chips while Americans like sweets such as candy and desserts. As a whole, North Americans like more spice in their food than Europeans.

Animal Welfare

“Cage-free” and “grass-fed” are terms that are becoming increasingly popular among consumers, especially the millennial generation. Studies show they are willing to pay more for “Animal welfare approved food” than organic. There is a trend towards eating less meat but ensuring it was ethically-raised, she adds.



Jo-Ann McArthur, president of Nourish food marketing: social media is really just campfire storytelling on steroids

Clean Label Movement

Consumers want to see fewer and more natural ingredients in their processed foods. “They want to be able to pronounce everything,” she says. However, consumers do not like the term “natural” as it has become overused and meaningless.

Power of the Internet

The smartphone allows consumers to access an incredible amount of information anytime, anywhere.

Power of the Blogger

McArthur used the example of the food blogger, known as Food Babe, who noticed that the Subway chain listed azodicarbonamide as an ingredient in its sandwich buns. Upon discovering that this chemical was also used in yoga mats, she wrote a blog post that went viral. As a result, Subway removed the ingredient. Even the food blogger was surprised at the effect she’d had, says McArthur.

Non-GMO

Even though consumers don’t really understand GMOs, many are looking for “non-GMO verified” foods. McArthur says this is one area where corporations would be more effective using storytelling to get their message out instead of

corporate speak.

Local

Many consumers equate local with quality. Since the last recession more and more people want to support their neighbours by buying local.

“Free From.”

In Europe foods that are “Free From” ingredients such as dairy, nuts, and gluten are gaining in popularity.

Digestive Aids

Foods such as kombucha, kefir, sauerkraut, and probiotic yoghurt are “big and getting bigger.”

Snacking Culture

Forty seven percent of all meals are eaten alone. Many families are eating the same meal but at staggered meal times. There are opportunities for companies who respond to this changing societal trend.

Craft Culture

Millennials want “real food made by real people.” They tend to distrust big brands. They want to connect with the person who made their food.

Foodie Culture

The millennials grew up with two parents working so they never learned to cook but they also grew up watching the

Food Network so they are very interested in food. They may assemble their dinners by mixing and matching ingredients such as cheese, a baguette, and charcuterie (e.g. sausage, ham, and other prepared meats) from the grocery store. Some stores are catering to this by providing kits that include everything you need to make a meal along with the recipe. McArthur dubs this “Solutions Focused Shopping.”

Halal

Food that is Halal (permissible according to Islamic Law) is a huge market in Canada. By 2018 it will make up 20 per cent of world food trade. McArthur’s company did their own research since there wasn’t any available.

Almost half of Canada’s Muslims live in the GTA which has the largest concentration of Muslim and Halal-principle shoppers in North America. New Zealand has been proactive on this front; all New Zealand lamb is certified Halal. It applies to more than just meat (it can also include sugar, candy, seafood, and snacks).

McArthur’s survey indicated that more than half of those surveyed felt that companies and grocery stores were doing a good job of meeting their needs in this area.

McArthur also discussed several general trends that will have an impact on the food industry.

Millennial Demographic

In 2020 the millennials will overtake the boomers in the marketplace.

Increasing Life Spans. As we are living longer, people want a better quality of life in their later years. McArthur thinks we will see increased demand from the boomers for foods that promote a health.

Rise of Self-Monitoring Technologies

Technologies such as the Fitbit wristband that monitor your activities may track what you eat in the future.

Ability to Bypass Retail

Subscription services such as BarkBox or Dollar Shave Club are changing the way we shop.

Amazon Dash

With this system consumers use a bar code scanner to re-order groceries from a possible 500,000 items. This system is currently being tested in California. This raises a potential problem for manufacturers. If a product is not already in the consumer’s cupboard, how will they get it there?

There will be many opportunities for food manufacturers who cater to the changing marketplace and fill a consumer need.