

Understanding the Plant-based Consumer



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KNOW THE MARKET

The global plant-based food market will reportedly reach **\$21 billion in 2020** on the heels of five years of double-digit growth. While the plant-based movement is undeniably mainstream, the motives for consumers driving growth of these products are personal and understanding them is the key to ensuring the success of your plant-based products.





MAINSTREAM PLANT-BASED CONSUMERS

In some ways, plant-based purchasers are the everyday consumer. Thirty-nine percent of Americans are actively trying to incorporate more plant-based foods into their diets³ and Nielsen reports that up to 98% of those who buy meat alternatives, also purchase meat.²

For a variety of reasons ranging from health advantages to curiosity, these consumers are looking to expand their dietary horizons and give plant-based foods a try.

As with any mainstream consumer, it's best not to assume these are adventurous eaters. Their expectations when sampling a meat substitute or oat-based beverage may be narrow. The whole package, from taste to texture to eye appeal will need to meet the expectations of these consumers already familiar with the real deal.



INTRIGUED CONSUMERS

Some consumers are curious by nature. Novelty catches their attention, and the excitement around plant-based diets is hard to miss. Plant-based sales are growing 14 times faster than total traditional food sales and the “buzz” is everywhere.

In a recent study by Synergy, 20% of participants described themselves as intrigued. That means a fifth of consumers surveyed are curious about trying plant-based foods and beverages. While intrigued consumers are willing to give dairy or meat alternatives a try, to win their favor, the product must strike a balance of taste and function.



FLEXITARIAN

Flexible, is perhaps the best way to describe the flexitarian consumer. This person will eat meat or dairy but is primarily choosing plant-based foods and beverages. Their dietary approach is holistic and aimed at improving their mental and physical well-being. Among those who participated in Synergy's research, nearly a third consider themselves flexitarian. According to FMI's Power of Meat 2019 report, this category of consumers is growing, especially among younger generations.¹

Thirteen percent of Gen Z consumers eat a flexitarian diet versus just 6% of Older Boomers. Millennials and Gen X are tied with an average of 10% each eating flexitarian diets. Women are also more likely to be flexitarians than men (15% vs, 6%). Aside from health benefits, sustainability is helping to drive the flexitarian trend.

These consumers will be honed in on the nutritional make-up of new products and are likely to compare the taste of plant-based products to the gold standard flavor and texture accomplished with real dairy or meat ingredients.

VEGETARIAN

More than a diet, the vegetarian consumer embraces a lifestyle that treads lightly on the planet with a focus on being cruelty free. These consumers say no to meat and poultry. Some eat fish occasionally, others, never. Most will allow eggs and dairy products.

Though there are some variations among food preferences for those who follow a vegetarian diet, they have this in common — they eat a wide variety of plant-based foods. In fact, according to a recent article in Forbes, the term plant-based is winning favor among consumers because it sounds less restrictive than vegetarian.¹

“ Research from Technomic showed that 58% of consumers would rather buy plant-based foods. Only 49% would purchase vegetarian ”



VEGAN

Like the vegetarian consumer, those who embrace a vegan diet follow a lifestyle that's dedicated to sustainability and the environment. Brand trust is essential, because the diet is so restrictive and the commitment is so strong, that there's no room for error. Aside from the obvious avoidance of meat and dairy products, there are less obvious ingredients to avoid such as cochineal or carmine color (derived from insects) and Worcestershire (often contains anchovies). As a result, these consumers may be drawn to simple, clean label offerings that provide transparency to all ingredients used or a third-party certification.

Plant-based foods in all forms make up the entire vegan diet. Though just 3% of respondents in Synergy's research identify as vegan, a report by Allied Market reveals the consumer base is worth paying attention to.¹ The global vegan market size was valued at **\$14.2 billion in 2018** and is **expected to reach \$31.4 billion by 2026**, This represents a CAGR of 10.5% from 2019 to 2026.

1. Innova Market Insights 2020

2. Euromonitor International, Health and Wellness 2020

3. Post-dairy era: the unstoppable rise of plant-based alternatives. Euromonitor Passport, March 2020.



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