



EATING FOR LONGEVITY:

Seniors taking an active role in aging well

Could eating right be the key to a better-quality, longer life? It certainly doesn't seem to hurt, and there is now an increasing body of evidence that suggests it may indeed make a significant difference.

While everyone must get older, developing a chronic illness with age is not a foregone conclusion. Following dietary recommendations and eating a diet that is rich in a wide variety of foods, from fresh vegetables and fruits to legumes, has long been seen as ideal. However, now the food and beverage industry is honing in on a variety of ingredients that help boost the nutritional quality of their products and provide an opportunity to target the increasingly health-savvy senior consumer.

Seniors are a large and growing demographic group. By 2050, according to data from the United Nations, one in six people will be over the age of 65 (compared to one in 11 in 2019).¹ But today's seniors are different from previous generations. These aging consumers are less likely to give in to feeling older... and they are striving to remain healthy, stay active and keep working as they age, according to a report from Innova Market Insights.² While these consumers are looking ahead and addressing their health issues proactively with better diet and more

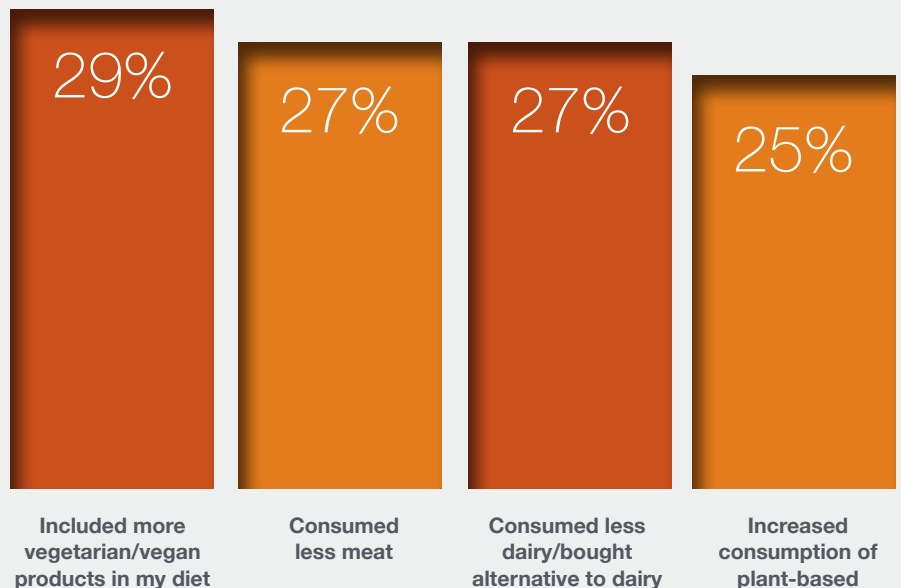
exercise, the narrative is also changing from a focus on prevention to embracing aging with a "live younger attitude and lifestyle."³ Helping these consumers live a longer, healthy and active life, the report says, is becoming an important business opportunity.

New attitudes about aging

These changing attitudes among seniors are helping to drive some of the most recent trends in eating styles, such as the growing popularity of plant-based eating. According to Innova's Consumer Lifestyle and Attitudes Survey 2018, while younger consumers under age 35 are more likely to have turned vegetarian or vegan in the last year, it is the consumers aged 55+ that are shifting away from meat and dairy in favor of more plant-based products. They have made these changes at the slightly higher rate of one in four, compared to about one in five of the younger demographic groups.

What changes have you made to your own diet in the last year?

Ages 55+



Source: Innova Consumer Lifestyle and Attitudes Survey 2018

These consumers also tend to have a sense of perspective that is different from younger generations. They place greater importance on authentic experiences in their leisure time, as compared to outdoor events and sports exercise.⁴ That noted, these older consumers are no longer sitting by the wayside; they are curious and increasingly digitally savvy. They not only research health information online, but also enjoy sharing their experiences on social media.

Not surprisingly, emerging diet trends like the Longevity Diet and the Okinawa Diet Plan are of interest and may be informing these consumers about how to better adapt their diet for a longer life. The Longevity Diet, for example, developed by biochemist Valter Longo, Ph.D., director of the USC Longevity Institute at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, is clinically studied and designed to help people live longer lives by consuming a modified vegan diet that includes eating more plants, less protein and practicing occasional fasting.⁵ The Okinawa Diet is based on the eating style of residents of Okinawa, Japan, which has some of the world's longest lifespans. This diet is low in calories and fat, while high in carbs from vegetables and soy products, and includes small amounts of noodles, rice, pork and fish.⁶

As these older consumers become more educated and discriminating about their diet, they are looking for products that offer proven healthy aging benefits. New food and beverage products offering claims related to healthy aging are on the rise.

Of particular interest are products that support joint health, bone health, brain health, and to a lesser degree, heart health.⁷

As brands consider these changing attitudes, it is important to understand, however, that a one-size-fits-all approach to targeting seniors may not work. New products may need to transcend the general and expected requirements for older consumers by offering individual solutions to address personal health goals. Here are a few trends to consider:

You can't go wrong with plants

More than half of global consumers are consistently looking for foods and beverages that provide protective and/or preventative health benefits, and consumers increasingly believe that products containing a plethora of plant-based ingredients fit the bill.⁸ Nuts, veggies and legumes now headline dairy alternatives and meats, and are expanding into products as diverse as cereals and energy bars, sports powders and cookies.⁹ One in four consumers age 50 and older are embracing the plant-based trend, and nearly as many say they are willing to pay a premium for products featuring plants. Nearly 60% of these older shoppers believe foods featuring plants promote daily and long-term health while preventing disease.¹⁰ The trick for product formulators will be to anticipate what these older consumers will embrace next when it comes to plant-based products.



Functional foods: Maintaining health with age

A top concern for consumers as they age is how to maintain their current activity levels. This is further defined by consumers who say they are interested in products that help them maintain normal functions as they age, including mental sharpness, eye health, and bone health/strength.¹¹ Functional beverages have been the go-to product format for this category, and research firm Mintel predicts that will likely continue. Products will start touting ingredients that support brain and eye health more prominently and will capture these consumers' attention by discussing issues that resonate – such as dementia, memory loss and poor eyesight.¹²

Innovation and personalization

As with other demographic groups, aging seniors run the gamut – from an active 70-year-old marathoner to a crossword puzzle enthusiast – so their health needs and dietary goals can be vastly different. What they do seem to have in common is that they now think about getting older differently. They don't want to be reminded of their age, but they do want to be empowered by the products that they purchase.¹³ So brands need to support the concept of healthy aging and making the most of a longer life. While this will mean different things to different consumers, nutritional solutions will likely move beyond general requirements for older people to personalized nutrition solutions for specific and personal dietary needs.¹⁴

Ultimately, products targeted to today's aging seniors need to help them celebrate getting older, rather than fearing it. Brands need to be increasingly mindful of that as they address today's aging consumers.

SOURCES:

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- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Longo, V. "The Longevity Diet." <https://valterlongo.com/daily-longevity-diet-for-adults/>
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- ⁷ Ibid. Innova Market Insights Edge.
- ⁸ HealthFocus International (HFI) 2018.
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- ¹¹ Ibid. HFI 2018.
- ¹² "Mintel Announces Three Global Food and Drink Trends for 2019." <https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/food-and-drink/mintel-announces-three-global-food-and-drink-trends-for-2019>
- ¹³ Moore, S. Mintel. "Targeting Asia's Seniors with Healthy Aging Dairy Drinks." March 13, 2019. <https://www.mintel.com/blog/drink-market-news/targeting-asias-seniors-with-healthy-ageing-dairy-drinks>
- ¹⁴ Ibid. Innova Market Insights Edge.