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Snacking in America -- it's hot, hot, hot!

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Increasingly, we are a snacking nation. The food industry sees opportunity. (Mike Hutmacher / AP)



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By Rosie Mestel

September 25, 2012 | 12:06 p.m.

Are you free on Nov.1? We've got just the thing for you! We learn from our morning mail that for \$99 you can check out a "Snacking in America Webinar" put on by the Food Institute, a trade group. It notes that "Eating patterns are evolving in the U.S. and SNACKING has become the hottest trend!"

No kidding. May have something to do with why we're becoming so ... lardy.

At the one-hour webinar, food industry participants can:

- "Uncover long-term trends in snacking behaviors and snacking choices."
- "Explore the relationship between snacking & health."
- Learn "What are the key motivational needs driving snack choices?"
- "Better understand the snack 'morning occasion.' "

The snack "morning occasion," eh? I feel one coming on right now.

An April article confirms that snacking is indeed, hot hot hot:

"Consumers are snacking significantly more now than they were just two years ago, according to the "Snacking Occasion Consumer Trend Report" by Technomic," [we read at the website foodprocessing.com](#). (Technomic is a food industry



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consulting firm.) Though it's hard to believe that we could possibly snack more than we did in 2010, there you have it: Those folks crunched the numbers.

"Pressure from the nutritional disclosure legislation has prompted the food service industry to reduce calorie counts in meals," explains Darren Tristano, executive vice president of Technomic, in the article. "As a result, Americans are now more inclined to 'graze' throughout the day, seeking snacks that provide fuel between traditional meal parts."

Take that, Nanny Government! We will get our calories somehow.

The report, which was based on surveys of 1,500 Americans, also found that impulse snack purchases are up, with 62% reporting that most of their snack buys are of this type. All in all, "nearly half of consumers (48%) snack at least twice a day, up from 25% in 2010," [Technomic found](#).

Read more about the snacking trend at another recent [foodprocessing.com](#) article, "[Snacking could be the future of eating](#)."

And read why health experts are tearing their hair out about the steady rise in our grazing habits. Our love affair with soda is contributing to our expanding girth, [reports L.A. Times writer Melissa Healy](#). And this Washington Post article reports that [kids are consuming nearly three snacks a day in addition to their three regular meals](#). In it, Barry Popkin, professor of nutrition and director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Obesity at the University of North Carolina, says: "We are at the point where every age group in America is moving toward constant eating."

Meanwhile, watch out, China — snacks are coming your way too. "Kellogg, maker of Frosted Flakes, Pop-Tarts and Eggo waffles, among numerous other not-so-great-for-you snacks and breakfast foods, has [formed a joint venture](#) to sell its stuff in [China](#) as early as next year," notes our colleague David Lazarus [over at the Money & Co. blog](#).

"According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, only about 3% of Chinese adults are currently obese, compared with a rate of about 34% in the United States," Lazarus writes. "Apparently it's time to welcome our Chinese friends into the club."

The good news over here: The Technomic report found that 33% of those they surveyed said they expected to eat more healthful snacks next year. (It's always next year, isn't it?) Technomic notes that this desire to eat healthfully — while not, of course, giving up on endless masticating — indicates the "greater importance for operators to offer and promote better-for-you snacks."

Although: A vitamin-and-superfruit-infused granola bar is just a different-shaped cookie, really.

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