IFT: Consumers Want Reduced Sugar, Salt in Food Products

Institute of Food Technologists

More than 50 percent of consumers are interested in products with reduced levels of salt and sugar, and yet new products in the United States are more likely to tout low- or no-fat attributes, according to a June 23 panel discussion at the 2014 Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting & Food Expo® in New Orleans.

In recent research, just 25 percent of consumers claimed to be dieting, yet more than 70 percent said they want to lose weight.

"Consumers know they need to take care of their health," said Lynn Dornblaser, director, innovation & insight, Mintel Group, Ltd. "They want to lose weight, but they don't like the idea of dieting. They know that living a healthy lifestyle is all about moderation."

What matters to consumers, and what they do associate with better health, is a reduction in sodium and sugar. More than 50 percent of consumers rated sodium and sugar reduction as an important food attribute, over calorie, carbohydrate and fat reduction.

"And yet in the U.S. market, it's all about low- or no-fat claims," said Dornblaser. "Products that make a low-sugar, low-calorie or low-sodium claim are less prevalent." In Europe and the rest of the world, foods with "no- or low-fat" labels are less common.

However, U.S. food products are lowering salt and sugar levels. In fact, many common products have been "quietly and slowly" reducing sugar and salt levels, knowing that consumers are looking at this information in nutritional labeling.

As "most consumers know that less sodium means less taste," many products are promoting low- or less-sodium, "but also good taste," said Dornblaser. She highlighted products that tout "less salt, more herbs," or "much less sodium, much more flavor."

The discussion highlighted a variety of new trends:

Consumers consistently rank taste as the most important food attribute (88 percent), followed by appetite satisfaction or satiety (87 percent), and value (86 percent).

Food that was grown or made locally was important to just 36 percent of consumers.

"Artisan" food, a relatively undefined term to reflect non-processed food, or food made by hand or by a small firm, was deemed important by 36 percent of consumers.

Thirty-three percent of consumers stated that "organic" was an important food attribute.

The 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines are expected to again recommend lower levels of sugar and salt in food products, said Joanne L. Slavin, professor, Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota. She also anticipates continued "movement toward whole foods and away from nutrients," and reference to trending topics "such as sustainability, gluten, vegan diets and food processing."

"Consumers look to flavor first, health attributes second," said Dornblaser. "Any (food producer) has to keep that in mind. Consumers aren't afraid of sugar or salt, they're afraid of too much sugar or salt. The way to do that overtly and covertly is reduce when you can. Consumers do look at the nutrition statement."

About IFT
This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Institute of Food Technologists. Since its founding in 1939, IFT has been committed to advancing the science of food, both today and tomorrow. Our non-profit scientific society—more than 18,000 members from more than 100 countries—brings together food scientists, technologists and related professionals from academia, government and industry. For more information, please visit ift.org *[1].*

Source URL (retrieved on *11/24/2014 - 5:01pm*):
http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/07/ift-consumers-want-reduced-sugar-salt-food-products

Links:
[1] http://ift.org/