



Cookies: Keep the comfort –
a delicate balance between
taste and health

With the coming labeling regulations requiring the addition of Added Sugars to the Nutrition Facts box, cookies, one of America's most iconic snack foods, are undergoing a seismic transformation second only to the beverage category.

It's not likely consumers will give up their indulgence foods completely, especially cookies. But they are watching their calories and seeking to reduce their sugar intake.

There are two key schools of thought when it comes to cookies:

- Indulge, but just a little bit.
- Eat smaller cookies with fewer ingredients, but it still needs to taste good.

This is leading to several new product trends in the cookie category:

Indulgence light

The days of the giant cookie are waning as brands seek to help their customers enjoy a cookie with all the great taste they are used to, but that will also help them keep to their health and calorie goals. Less is more in this case, as iconic cookie brands like Oreos capitalize on this trend with a thinner version of the treat featuring about a third less calories than that of the original. Mini and bite-sized options are also gaining traction in the market. And little wonder, with nearly 80 percent of consumers now saying they are consuming smaller portions to adopt or maintain healthy eating behaviors.¹

Keep it simple

It is no secret that recognizable ingredients are gaining ground in most product categories, including cookies and baked treats. The good news is that product formulators have a growing stable of sugar-reduction alternatives that are label friendly and useful depending on application and sweetness-reduction goals. For sweetness, there is a wide range of stevia leaf extracts to meet a variety of sugar-reduction levels (from 25% to 50%). For structure and shelf life, there are bulking agents such as maltodextrin, chicory root fiber, polyols and whole-grain corn flour/fiber to provide functionality.

REDUCED-SUGAR COOKIE TRENDS



One-third of Americans
(up from 25% in 2016)
say sugars are more likely
to cause weight gain.

Consumers Avoiding Sugar

Nearly 3 in 4 consumers
are now trying to avoid
or limit sugars — this is
most common among
women, older consumers,
college grads, higher
income consumers.



Half or more of those who
use alternative sweeteners
say these ingredients help
reduce sugar and calorie
consumption and weight gain.

IFIC Food and Health Survey 2017

continued

Not just for kids anymore

Though parents still certainly want different cookie and snack options for their children, there also is a growing market for cookies/bars with more adult-like appeal, featuring value-added nutritional ingredients such as protein, nuts, fruits, seeds, superfoods, spices and especially chocolate. Adults are starting to see the potential of these products as a portable snack food, offering both great taste and function. Growing consumer awareness of ingredients such as turmeric, cinnamon and ginger also provide more exotic and nuanced flavor profiles that make the extra calories worth it for a special occasion. Cookies and treats based on seasonal ingredients, such as chili peppers, can also help drive consumer interest.²

The door is increasingly open for innovation in the bakery and cookie category. But no matter how consumers view their cookies, ultimately taste remains the ever-present arbiter of success. So brands will have to find a balance between providing indulgence and great taste, while also providing products with a solid nutritional profile.

The door is increasingly open for innovation in the bakery and cookie category. But no matter how consumers view their cookies, ultimately taste remains the ever-present arbiter of success. So brands will have to find a balance between providing indulgence and great taste, while also providing products with a solid nutritional profile.

Fiber Trends

55% of Americans are trying to get more fiber in their diets.



Millennials are looking for function in their snacks, with 39% saying that they look for products offering energy.

IFIC Food and Health Survey 2017

Sources:

¹ IFIC Food and Health Survey 2017 <http://www.foodinsight.org/press-releases/survey-nutrition-information-abounds-many-doubt-food-choices>

² Cookie and Cracker trends. *Food Business News*. Accessed at http://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/news_home/Consumer_Trends/2015/09/Cookie_and_cracker_trends.aspx?ID={0CBE421F-E525-49A8-9B1C-C5C3F8E12324}