

Ethnic Foods - US - January 2014

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“Authenticity appears as more of a value-add than a requirement for purchase of products used in home ethnic food preparation. While nearly half (47%) of ethnic food consumers say they are willing to spend more on authentic ethnic/international food, only one quarter say authenticity claims are a leading factor in their purchase decision.”

– Beth Bloom, Food and Drink Analyst

This report looks at the following areas:

- How can the industry encourage the preparation of ethnic food at home?
- How can packaged food providers appeal to scratch cooks?
- How important is authenticity?

Sales of the ethnic food products covered in this report grew 15% from 2008-13. Mexican/Hispanic offerings make up the largest segment measured here, and posted the strongest growth in the category between 2011 and 2013.

Shifting US demographics and a growing interest in flavor variety will contribute to continued growth of ethnic food sales. Consumer interest in ethnic food for flavor variety more than for cultural exploration can be seen. Some 59% of respondents to Mintel's custom survey who eat ethnic food prepared at home say they eat it to try new flavors, not because they're particularly interested in the culture represented by the cuisine. As international dishes become more familiar, ethnic offerings may be viewed simply as flavor alternatives, tantamount to cheese, ranch, or onion, for example, instead of as unique regional experiences.

Authenticity appears as more of a value-add than a requirement for purchase of products used in home ethnic food preparation. The industry can push the boundaries here, and introduce products that feature more complex, regionally specific options. Brands can highlight ethnic authenticity as a means of standing apart from value offerings, similar to the way artisan, handcrafted, and heritage products are growing in popularity across general food and drink categories.

While ethnic food has a wide appeal, encouraging consumers to use ethnic food products at home is a slightly tougher challenge. A large 92% of consumers have eaten some form of the ethnic offerings measured in this report in the past three months (whether at home or from a restaurant), indicating an interested consumer base. However, the percentage of consumers who prepare these items at home is somewhat smaller (74%). Keeping these products top of mind to shoppers, and infusing consumers with the confidence that they can easily and affordably prepare these dishes at home, will be key to maintaining a strong pace of sales growth.

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DID YOU KNOW?

This report is part of a series of reports, produced to provide you with a more holistic view of this market

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Table of Contents

Scope and Themes

What you need to know

Definition

Data sources

Sales data

Consumer survey data

Abbreviations and terms

Abbreviations

Executive Summary

The market

Sales of ethnic food grow 15% from 2008-13

Figure 1: Total US retail sales and forecast of ethnic food, at current prices, 2008-18

Market segmentation

Mexican/Hispanic leads sales and sales growth

Figure 2: Total US retail sales of ethnic food, by segment, at current prices, 2011 and 2013

Innovation

Complete meals losing share to ingredients/components

Figure 3: Ethnic food launches, by category, 2009-13*

Leading companies

PepsiCo represents 12% of ethnic food sales

Figure 4: MULO sales of ethnic food, by top five leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

The consumer

More than one third of home cooks prepare Mexican/Hispanic food from scratch

Figure 5: Ethnic food preparation at home, November 2013

Spicy leads flavors of interest; Mediterranean segment appeals with non-meat, herbs

Figure 6: Top five flavors of interest, by ethnic food consumption in household, November 2013

What we think

Issues and Insights

How can the industry encourage the preparation of ethnic food at home?

Issue

Insight: Capitalize on the familiarity of restaurant offerings

How can packaged food providers appeal to scratch cooks?

Issues

Insight: Packaged offerings should feature more complex dishes and flavor profiles

How important is authenticity?

Issues

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Insight: Authenticity is a value-add, not a deal breaker

Trend Applications

Trend: Snack Society

Trend: Extend My Brand

Mintel Futures: Access Anything Anywhere

Market Size and Forecast

Key points

Sales of ethnic food grow 15% from 2008-13, future growth forecast

Sales of ethnic food

Figure 7: Total US retail sales and forecast of ethnic food, at current prices, 2008-18

Figure 8: Total US retail sales and forecast of ethnic food, at inflation-adjusted prices, 2008-18

Fan chart forecast

Figure 9: Total US retail sales and forecast of ethnic food, at current prices, 2008-18

Market Drivers

Key points

Some 92% of consumers eat ethnic food

Figure 10: Ethnic food consumption, by age, November 2013

Figure 11: Purchase barriers, November 2013

Shifting US demographics benefit the category, alter American diet

Figure 12: Percentage change in population, by race and Hispanic origin, 2008-18

Competitive Context

Key points

Consumers are more likely to eat ethnic food away from home

Figure 13: Ethnic food consumption, November 2013

Restaurants provide a sneak peek into what can be made at home

Ethnic food eaters need a confidence boost

Expanding prepared food options may meet consumer need

Figure 14: Ethnic food consumption, November 2013

Segment Performance

Key points

Mexican/Hispanic leads category sales and recent growth

Figure 15: Total US retail sales of ethnic food, by segment, at current prices, 2011 and 2013

Sales of Mexican/Hispanic food grew 13% from 2008-13

US retail sales and forecast of Mexican/Hispanic food

Figure 16: Total US retail sales and forecast of Mexican/Hispanic food at current prices, 2008-18

Sales of Asian food grew 27% from 2008-13

US retail sales and forecast of Asian/Indian food

Figure 17: Total US retail sales and forecast of Asian/Indian food at current prices, 2008-18

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Mediterranean/Middle Eastern sales reach \$784 million in 2013

US retail sales and forecast of Mediterranean/Middle Eastern food

Figure 18: Total US retail sales and forecast of Mediterranean/Middle Eastern food at current prices, 2008-18

"Other" ethnic food grew 9% from 2008-13

US retail sales and forecast of other ethnic food

Figure 19: Total US retail sales and forecast of other ethnic food at current prices, 2008-18

Retail Channels

Key points

Supermarkets represent 63.3% of ethnic food sales

Figure 20: Total US retail sales of ethnic foods, by channel, at current prices, 2011-13

Growth of supermarket sales slowing

Supermarket sales of ethnic food

Figure 21: US supermarket sales of ethnic foods, at current prices, 2008-13

"Other" retail channels grow 12% from 2008-13

Other retail channel sales of ethnic food

Figure 22: US sales of ethnic foods, through other retail channels, at current prices, 2008-13

Leading Companies and Brand Analysis

Key points

PepsiCo and Gruma sit neck and neck atop the ethnic food market

MULO sales of ethnic food

Figure 23: MULO sales of ethnic food, by leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

Tortillas and snacks drive sales of leading Mexican brands

Tortillas and snacks drive sales of leading Mexican brands

Figure 24: Tostitos, "O'Hare Party Repair: Grandma," TV Ad, 2013

Figure 25: Old El Paso, "Frozen Burrito Commercial," TV Ad, 2013

Figure 26: Herdez, "Cooking 1, 2, 3," TV Ad, 2013

Figure 27: Rosarita, "Blindfolded" TV Ad, 2013

MULO sales of Mexican/Hispanic food

Figure 28: MULO sales of Mexican/Hispanic food, by leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

Noodles make up more than one quarter of Asian food sales

Figure 29: P.F. Chang's, "Ignite the Night" TV Ad, 2013

Figure 30: Kikkoman, "Our Story" TV Ad, 2013

MULO sales Asian food

Figure 31: MULO sales of Asian food, by leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

Sabra dominates the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern segment

Figure 32: Sabra, "Guide to Good Dipping: Just Add Hummus" TV Ad, 2013

MULO sales Mediterranean/Middle Eastern food

Figure 33: MULO sales of Mediterranean /Middle Eastern foods, by leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

McCormick represents 34% of sales of "other" ethnic food

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MULO sales other ethnic food

Figure 34: MULO sales of other ethnic foods, by leading companies, rolling 52 weeks 2012 and 2013

Innovations and Innovators

Category ripe for new product innovation

Figure 35: Ethnic food launches, by launch type, 2009-13*

Hummus drives growth in spreads

Figure 36: Ethnic food launches, by category, 2009-13*

Frozen loses share to chilled

Figure 37: Ethnic food launches, by storage type, 2009-13*

Flavors with a kick lead product launches...

However, promoting subtle flavor nuances can be a means of attracting attention

Figure 38: Ethnic food launches, by top 10 flavors, 2009-13*

Ethnic food goes the way of wine

Category adds flair to healthy eating

Mediterranean offerings benefit from high health profile

Greek steps out

Ethnic offerings find flavor inspiration from other ethnic offerings

Added claims bring ethnic food into the fold, sets it apart

Soup, snacks are a convenient means of introducing ethnic flavors

Global flavors in less than two minutes

Ethnic Food Preparation at Home

Key points

Three quarters of consumers prepare ethnic food at home

Figure 39: Ethnic food consumption, November 2013

Men not far behind in the ethnic food kitchen

Figure 40: Prepared at home, by gender, November 2013

18-34s strong target group

Figure 41: Prepared at home, by age, November 2013

18-24s gravitate toward packaged products, 25-34s cook from scratch

Figure 42: Prepared from scratch, by age, November 2013

Figure 43: Prepared from package, by age, November 2013

Figure 44: Mexican food and ingredients, by age, May 2012-June 2013

Lowest-income earners least likely to participate in the category

Figure 45: Prepared at home, by household income, November 2013

Parents over index in participation, moms cook from scratch

Figure 46: Prepared at home, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Interest in Ethnic Food

Key points

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Restaurants appear as strong driver of ethnic food interest

World events provide a chance for food promotion

Men engaged by experience, women can be swayed in store

Figure 47: Interest in ethnic food, by gender, November 2013

Older consumers drawn to culture, young shoppers look for guidance

Figure 48: Interest in ethnic food, by age, November 2013

Nontraditional advertising may attract higher-income earners

Figure 49: Interest in ethnic food, by household income, November 2013

Purchase Decision

Key points

Low price leads purchase decision

Less than one quarter of consumers are swayed to purchase by authenticity claims

Women gravitate toward guidance, coupons

Figure 50: Purchase decision, by gender, November 2013

Price important to young shoppers, familiar authenticity also of interest

Figure 51: Purchase decision, by age, November 2013

Authenticity important among higher-income earners

Figure 52: Purchase decision, by household income, November 2013

Flavors of Interest

Key points

Spicy leads flavors of interest

Figure 53: Flavors of interest, by gender, November 2013

Young consumers drawn to sweet flavors

Figure 54: Flavors of interest, by age, November 2013

Cajun/Creole eaters looking for heat, Mediterranean appeal with herb/veg

Figure 55: Flavors of interest, by any cuisine type, November 2013

Purchase Location

Key points

Expansion of ethnic food availability clear in consumer shopping habits

Figure 56: Purchase location, by gender, November 2013

Young consumers show more varied purchase locations

Figure 57: Purchase location, by age, November 2013

Ethnic food stores attract higher-income earners

Figure 58: Purchase location, by household income, November 2013

Mass attracts price conscious, specialty outlets provide authenticity

Figure 59: Purchase location, by purchase decision (top five), November 2013

Figure 60: Purchase location, by purchase decision (bottom six), November 2013

Attitudes Toward Ethnic Food

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Key points

Consumers see ethnic food as flavor option, more than a cultural experience

Category participants confident in their cooking skills

Snacks may be good point of entry for men

Women less likely to sacrifice low price for authenticity

Figure 61: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by gender, November 2013

Younger shoppers may need confidence boost

A focus on health may appeal to younger consumers

Young shoppers open to store brands

Figure 62: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by age, November 2013

Low-income earners most in need of a confidence boost

Higher-income earners value authenticity

Figure 63: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by household income, November 2013

Parents indicate an interest in ethnic food among kids

Figure 64: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Impact of Race and Hispanic Origin

Key points

Race and Hispanic origin tie closely to ethnic food consumption

Figure 65: Prepared at home, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Figure 66: Prepared from scratch, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Figure 67: Prepared from package, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Appendix – Special Supplement – Pasta Sauce

MULO sales of pasta sauce

Figure 68: MULO sales of pasta sauce, 2010-13

Pasta sauce innovation

Figure 69: Pasta sauce launches, by top 10 companies, 2010-13*

Figure 70: Pasta sauce launches, by top 10 claims, 2010-13*

Figure 71: Pasta sauce launches, by top 10 flavors, 2010-13*

Figure 72: Pasta sauce launches, by package type, 2010-13*

Use of pasta sauce

Figure 73: Spaghetti/Pasta sauce, by household income, May 2012-June 2013

Figure 74: Spaghetti/Pasta sauce, by presence of children in household, May 2012-June 2013

Figure 75: Spaghetti/Pasta sauce, May 2012-June 2013

Appendix – Food and Drink Market Drivers

Health and lifestyle

Figure 76: American adults by weight category as determined by body mass index (BMI), 2008-October 28, 2013

Childhood and teen obesity – highest in decades

Figure 77: Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents aged 2-19, 1971-2010

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Consumer confidence

Figure 78: University of Michigan's index of consumer sentiment (ICS), 2007-13

Unemployment

Figure 79: US Unemployment Rate, by month, 2002-13

Figure 80: US unemployment and underemployment rates, 2007-13

Figure 81: Number of employed civilians in US, in thousands, 2007-13

Retail channels

Figure 82: Distribution of expenditures on food for off-premise consumption, by channel, 2008-12

Racial, ethnic population growth

Figure 83: US population by race and Hispanic origin, 2009, 2014, and 2019

Figure 84: Households with children, by race and Hispanic origin of householder, 2013

Shifting US demographics

Figure 85: US population, by age, 2009-19

Figure 86: US households, by presence of own children, 2003-13

Appendix – Other Useful Consumer Tables

Ethnic food preparation at home

Figure 87: Prepared at home, by region, November 2013

Figure 88: Prepared from scratch, by gender, November 2013

Figure 89: Prepared from package, by gender, November 2013

Figure 90: Prepared at home, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 91: Prepared from scratch, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 92: Prepared from package, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 93: Prepared from scratch, by region, November 2013

Figure 94: Prepared from package, by region, November 2013

Figure 95: Prepared from scratch, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Figure 96: Prepared from package, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Figure 97: Prepared from scratch, by Hispanic origin and household income, November 2013

Figure 98: Prepared from package, by Hispanic origin and household income, November 2013

Ethnic food purchased from a restaurant (including food trucks or stalls)

Figure 99: Purchased from a restaurant, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 100: Purchased away from home, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Interest in ethnic food

Figure 101: Interest in ethnic food, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 102: Interest in ethnic food, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Figure 103: Interest in ethnic food, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Purchase location

Figure 104: Purchase location, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 105: Purchase location, by household size, November 2013

Figure 106: Purchase location, by presence of children in household, November 2013

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Figure 107: Purchase location, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Figure 108: Purchase location, by prepared at home, November 2013

Figure 109: Purchase location, by Mexican/Hispanic food prepared at home, November 2013

Figure 110: Purchase location, by Asian food prepared at home, November 2013

Figure 111: Purchase location, by Mediterranean/Middle Eastern food prepared at home, November 2013

Figure 112: Purchase location, by other food prepared at home, November 2013

Purchase decision

Figure 113: Purchase decision, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 114: Purchase decision, by household size, November 2013

Figure 115: Purchase decision, by presence of children in household, November 2013

Figure 116: Purchase decision, by parents with children in household, November 2013

Figure 117: Purchase decision, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Flavors of interest

Figure 118: Flavors of interest, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 119: Flavors of interest, by presence of children in household, November 2013

Figure 120: Flavors of interest, by race/Hispanic origin, November 2013

Mexican food and ingredients used

Figure 121: Mexican food and ingredients used, by Hispanic origin and household income, May 2012-June 2013

Attitudes toward ethnic food

Figure 122: Attitudes toward ethnic food, November 2013

Figure 123: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by gender and age, November 2013

Figure 124: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by household size, November 2013

Figure 125: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by prepared at home, November 2013

Figure 126: Agreement with attitudes toward ethnic food, by cuisine type prepared at home, November 2013

Appendix – Trade Associations

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