

Trending Flavors and Ingredients in Protein - US - 2022

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This report looks at the following areas:

- Types of protein consumed
- Protein formats purchased
- Protein preparations of interest
- Protein flavor/seasoning preferences
- Experience and interest in protein flavors
- Protein attitudes/behaviors

Despite the buzz around meat-free living, meat consumption remains the dominant dietary choice for US adults. Chicken, beef, fish and pork lead protein consumption, and only 6% maintain a vegetarian or vegan diet.

Amid the prevalence of animal protein, habit shifts are seen. The youngest adults are least likely to consume meat and are more likely than average to eat plant-based options, evidence of a slow shift away from meat. In the short term, price inflation is causing nearly a third of protein eaters to trade down to less-expensive options. Cost consciousness favors protein sources that are viewed as affordable (eg chicken) and limits those perceived to be less so (eg beef, meat substitutes).

Poultry producers should lean into the versatility of their products to prevent fatigue that may come from another night of chicken, including expanding flavored options, promoting recipe variety and providing formats suited for trending cuisine types. Other protein producers can reinforce enjoyment and support the indulgence of a good, home-cooked meal with flavorful value-added inspiration.

The majority of consumers purchase raw, unseasoned proteins, and they largely turn to dry spices to add flavor. Barbecue and spicy remain popular flavor profiles. Brands will find the widest reach by sticking with these favorite flavor families, while introducing nuance through regionality and heat variety.



“Rising prices are prompting consumers to trade down to less expensive protein options demanding that brands work to demonstrate their value: cue the merits of flavor experiences.”

– Mimi Bonnett, Senior Director – US Food and Drink Research

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The monumental and unsustainable growth of plant-based proteins is projected to slow. The category is dominated by meat mimics, which can help newbies looking for some dietary variety. However, over the longer term, the category will want to establish a footing as an independent option that stands on its own and not solely as a substitute for something else.



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