

## Flexitarianism may save the planet -- but it's killed the traditional European diet

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**The food industry needs to adapt to a paradigm shift among consumers away from traditional diets, according to speakers at the recent FiE show in Paris.**

"We need to learn a new language," said Kevin Camphuis, co-founder of Paris-based business accelerator Shakeup Factory.



Food choices, he explained, were once split between a 'Latin diet' (characterised by an attitude of food meaning pleasure, taste and a social occasion) and the 'Anglo-Saxon diet' (based on the philosophy that food equalled fuel and functionality).

However, there is a new culture of food which is more flexitarian and vegetarian, he said. "*The values the new generations have towards food is completely different to past generations.*" These eaters have a fast and casual approach to food, noted Camphuis. They seek food 'on demand' that has health benefits. They are interested in plant-based foods, sustainability and novel ingredients.

"*We've been growing, transforming, packaging, selling and eating the same food the same way for 60 years,*" said Camphuis. "*And it's over now. There's a new vocabulary that we have to learn that is very different from the previous one.*"

Whereas consumers traditionally sought two-to-three meals a day and made decisions based on trust, price and functionality, younger eaters demand as much as five-to-seven foods a day and value variety and immediacy.

Rick Miller from market research company Mintel agreed. "*The generation born after 1995 are questioning more and are less trustworthy of the bigger brands. That means that smaller artisan brands seem to do better as they're leaner and they can change their business models to reflect consumers growing needs.*" What sits well with these consumers, he said, are brands that tell a story "*not just in terms of their product, but what they stand for as a company*".

Miller cited the brand Tribe, which makes cereal bars aimed at runners, as an example of a company successfully 'telling a story' to connect with these consumers.

"*Their whole business model and premise is based around fuelling from a clean and natural point of view but is also centred around ending modern slavery: it's a powerful message and also niche. They're not talking about climate change or their carbon footprint: they're talking about this in particular and they've built and entire*

*community around that."*

The younger generation wants to know that brands care, and what they stand for, he continued. *"It's not good enough now just to say 'we produce the best boiled sweets on the planet.'"*

## **Snackification and sportification**

They also want snacks. *"The snackification of our culture continues to escalate, which may or may not be a good thing for the obesity crisis,"* noted Miller. *"We're also getting sportification and the merging of different sectors that were once very distinct. For example, a few years ago you never would have seen an average consumer having creatine or Beta-Alanine or even protein supplements. Now you can go into any supermarket and buy a protein drink or a soft drink with cognitive enhancing ingredients, Nootropics and botanicals. The consumer wants more functionality, they want a merging of sectors together."*

Interestingly, not all these food trends are being led by younger people. Populations are, after all, ageing dramatically in most developed countries. *"We're living longer, but we're spending less years of our lives in good health,"* said Miller.

As such, consumers will increasingly demand food and beverage innovations offering solutions in areas such as mental alertness, physical resilience and skin reticence.

Meanwhile, Miller presented the tantalising question of what happens when two trends – ageing populations and young people and the sustainability agenda – meet? *"The NHS [the UK's free healthcare system] produces nearly 6% of the UK's greenhouse emissions and wastes 100,000 meals a day in hospitals. Are we going to see the rise of the sustainable patient eventually?"*

Andres Montefeltro, CEO of Spain-based cultured meat company Cubiq Foods, added: *"I think the opportunity here is that they need us to generate a new type of food. We used to say that processed food is bad. And now processed food can become more nutritional, and healthier than natural ones."*

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