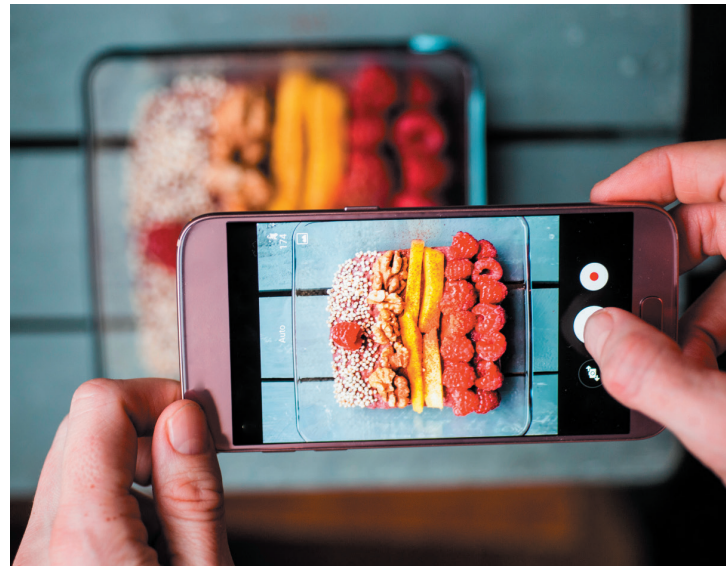




# The Future of Food

## **A Look into the Culinary Preferences of Upcoming Generations**

Brands today compete in a digital landscape in which social media drives consumer tastes, preferences, and trends. Many consumers also seek products that align with their values. Understanding and navigating this complexity is a big undertaking for marketers in an ever-changing digital environment. Let us take a deep dive into the world of Gen Z, the first digital native generation, to better understand their relationship with food and the culinary trends they find most compelling.



## The Gen Z Opportunity

At more than 25% of the current global population, Gen Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, plays a crucial role in shaping markets and trends. As the first digital-native generation, these 12- to 27-year-olds communicate, socialize, and approach life differently.

Unlike older generations, price and quality are not the primary considerations for Gen Z. This young group of consumers also prioritizes sustainability, natural ingredients, and a health-conscious lifestyle. Our research explores how brands can incorporate Gen Z's values into food development while examining the impact of social media and the digital landscape on culinary trends across the globe.

### Build A Connection

Discover how Gen Z uses food to explore new cultures and create memorable experiences.

### Offer An Experience

Learn why Gen Zers view products, including food, as an extension of their identity, lifestyle, and values.

### Make It Aesthetic

Explore how Gen Z embraces visually-appealing social content to interact with food and trends.



“Social media has the power to bring an unknown country or culture to the forefront of trends. What I love about our global culinary network at ADM is that we have colleagues in every part of the world. We can transport the flavors of a nation to a new product.”

- Amay Borle, ADM Research Chef

## Build A Connection

Gen Z and younger consumers have grown up with technology at their fingertips and full access to the world around them. They see social media as an opportunity for connection, seamlessly integrating platforms, like TikTok and Instagram, into their daily lives and often sharing their personal stories online.

Gen Z is thinking about food in emotional terms, whether the self-care aspect of home cooking, or eating out as an enjoyable, relaxing social experience. They use food to create memorable experiences and explore new cultures together (both online and face-to-face). Themed dinners offer Gen Zers a sense of traveling to unfamiliar places with family-style dishes and shared dining taking center stage. Influenced by chefs like Yotam Ottolenghi, who popularized Middle Eastern cuisine, and the current hype around Scandinavian cuisine, these gatherings emphasize a desire for connection around food and a mindful way of living.

TikTok identified storytelling as the biggest trend for the next year when engaging with a target group on the platform<sup>1</sup>

### Key Takeaways About Connections

- Explore shareable food, family-style dishes, and mezze style
- Prioritize nostalgic recipes, slow food, and relaxing aromas and flavors
- Embrace simplicity with a focus on homemade products and seasonal ingredients

<sup>1</sup>TikTok, 'What's Next 2024 in Action,' 2024



“When we look beyond the food bubble, we open our eyes to lifestyle changes and trends. The role of Culinary Research is to detect those movements and translate them to what could be trending next in food.”

- Philipp Weiler, ADM Research Chef

## Offer an Experience

Gen Zers find themselves in an ‘Experiential Era’ - they are looking for food to be an experience, not simply a way to fuel their bodies. They want to experiment with food and are interested in exploring their tastes and preferences. In their world of endless choices and products, offering a meaningful food experience can be an impactful differentiator.

For Gen Z, products are not just commodities, but symbols of identity, lifestyle, and values. This generation curates their lives in real-time, highlighting everything from what they eat to how they live. Their ability to create content and easily interact with others drives their engagement.

# 86%

of those 18+ believe cooking is a very important or important skill to have.<sup>2</sup>

### Key Takeaways About Experiences

- Offer versatility which allows them to be creative in the kitchen
- Satisfy their need for convenience with ‘grab-and-go’ products, meal kits, and no-effort recipes
- Encourage interaction and give them the space to experiment

<sup>2</sup>Kantar Profiles/Mintel, Feb 2024

## Make it Aesthetic

Visually appealing content captures the attention of Gen Zers, especially when it comes to food. Gen Z can quickly turn simple dishes into creative, viral sensations that reflect their aesthetic approach to food.

TikTok aesthetics are visual expressions reflecting values, aspirations, and lifestyles of specific communities within the platform. More than just visuals, social media aesthetics tell a story and set the tone for how Gen Z interacts with products, including food. Some interesting aesthetics we are seeing on social media include:

### Eclectic Grandpa

The hype around nostalgia resonates with Gen Zers as they embrace the trends their grandparents loved. We see this in 'retro' advertisements from 30 years ago (and yes, we mean the '90s). Gen Zers do not want their grandpa's clothes but seek retro with a twist. So, fill a crunchy snack bite with goulash or add a spicy flavor to that frozen yoghurt (yes, FROYO is back!).

### Cottage Core

For a generation engaged with tech from birth, Gen Zers also focus on mindfulness and want to connect with nature. Disconnecting has become a priority. From baking bread to planting an herb garden, these consumers choose to live more consciously. Food brands can capture this aesthetic via seasonal flavors, natural ingredients and functional foods supporting relaxation, as well as nourishing snacks with plant proteins or wholesome ingredients.

### Key Takeaways About Aesthetics

- Experiment with new texture and flavor combinations
- Leverage the power of color to create foods that cannot be ignored
- Focus on authenticity and providing transparency

## POWER OF COLOR


When it comes to food and beverage aesthetics, color may be the unsung hero of Gen Z engagement. Gen Z viral food trends represent a cornucopia of colors, flavors, textures, and techniques. The muted coral tones of the viral 'Tomato Ice Toast,' vibrant (and shiny!) fruit shades of 'Tanghulu' and the rich, creamy red of "Ramen Carbonara," all share one key attribute – they look incredibly delicious. ADM's Colors from Nature™ portfolio can deliver the look and clean label that Gen Zers want while imparting naturally derived shades that stand out in-feed and in-store.

|  |   |                                    |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Coral Red</b>                                 |   | TREND THEME:<br>Revisit & Reinvent |
| EXPRESSIONS:<br>Simplicity, Familiarity, Comfort | FLAVORS:<br>Elevated Berry, Creamy, Umami, Sweet Browns, Regional Fruit |                                    |

|   |   |                                 |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Golden Maize</b>                                     |   | TREND THEME:<br>Adaptive Eating |
| EXPRESSIONS:<br>Affordability, Satiety, Unchanged Taste | FLAVORS:<br>Orange, Lemon, Apple, Honey, Creamy, Cheese & Dairy, Indulgence |                                 |

|  |  |                                   |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Sweet Sage</b>  |  | TREND THEME:<br>Euphoric Wellness |
| EXPRESSIONS:<br>Mood Foods & Beverages, Nourishing Discovery | FLAVORS:<br>Hops, Grapefruit, Bergamot, Botanicals, Tropical Fruit |                                   |

|   |  |                                |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Blue Spruce</b>  |  | TREND THEME:<br>Made for [You] |
| EXPRESSIONS:<br>Unexpected Pairings, Personalization, Experimentation | FLAVORS:<br>Playful, Multi-Sensorial (Cooling, Spicy, Texture), Highbrow + Lowbrow |                                |

 Check out the complete ADM 2025 Flavor & Color Outlook

## Win with Innovation

Gen Z is looking for playfulness, convenience, and uniqueness in the foods they consume. From expressing their creativity in the kitchen to grabbing a quick snack at practice, Gen Zers offer brands and manufacturers many opportunities to innovate. Below are just a few examples of our recent innovation concepts:



### Plant-Based Pulled Pork

With the cost-conscious Gen Zer in mind, we sought to develop an affordable plant-based pulled pork product. We leveraged our versatile textured vegetable protein (TVP®) to create a clean label, pulled meat alternative with various taste profiles.



### Hybrid Chicken Bites

Blended plant + meat products provide Gen Z consumers with straightforward, yet familiar, options to diversify their protein sources, while fulfilling their taste and texture expectations. They represent a strong opportunity for both retail and food service.



### Falafel Fries

Our dippable, dunkable Falafel Fries offer a fun and innovative way to experience a classic Middle Eastern dish. With the added benefits of boosted protein levels and metabolic-friendly post-biotics, Gen Zers can enjoy this as a main meal or at snack time.



### Sweet & Savory Biotic Cluster

This delicious cluster features biotics, protein, and fiber to help support holistic health, and their convenient size makes them great as an on-the-go snack for busy Gen Zers. They can be easily added to yogurt, ice cream, or simply enjoyed on their own.



## We're Ready to Help

There are many reasons to choose ADM to help you customize and deliver the highest quality, tasty, and tailored food products to your customers.



### Global Network of Chefs

Whether you are creating traditional or global cuisine, our team of passionate chefs from around the world have the knowledge and skills to help you deliver winning creations.



### Premier Ingredient Pantry

We offer world-class functional proteins across soy, pea, and wheat, as well as culinary-inspired flavor solutions and on-trend wholesome plant-based ingredients.



### Proactive Innovation Partner

We are further investing in new and expanded regional innovation centers to bring tomorrow's reality to you today.

“ Our extensive, broad knowledge across all food and beverage categories, as well as the openness to look outside of our bubble sets us apart. ”

- Philipp Weiler, ADM Research Chef



### Support from Idea Generation to Commercialization

From consumer insights, regulatory landscape navigation, technical formulation, and co-creation to commercial and manufacturing support, we are your dedicated partner every step of the way.



### World-Class Product Development Expertise

Our renowned technical expertise in both processed meat and meat alternatives pave the way for exceptional formulation, as well as speed to market.



[Click to collaborate with us.](#)