

by A. Elizabeth Sloan

## Digging Into Desserts

Sweet snacks/desserts are expected to be among the fastest-growing food categories through 2018, with the number of servings projected to grow 14% among consumers overall and 34% among Gen Yers, according to the NPD Group's 2011 *A Look into the Future of Eating* report.

About 70% of consumers say they eat dessert after a meal at least once a week, and 36% do so twice or more weekly. In addition, more than half (54%) eat dessert foods as a snack in mid-evening at least once a week or more, while 42% do so in the afternoon, 40% late at night, and 33% mid-morning, according to Technomic Inc.'s 2010 *The Dessert Consumer Trend* report.

In-store bakery sales reached \$10.2 billion for the year ended (Y/E) 5/28/11, up 2.2% over the prior year, according to the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Assn.'s (IDDBA) *What's In Store? 2012* report. Cookies top the list of the most purchased sweet baked goods, bought by 84% of consumers, followed by donuts purchased by 80%, special occasion cakes 79%, Danish/pastries 72%, muffins 71%, pies 68%, brownies 61%, and cupcakes 59%, according to IDDBA's 2010 *Consumers in the Bakery Report*.

Cupcakes, individual-sized treats, cookies, and brownies are among the best sellers in in-store bakeries. Specialty desserts posted impressive gains in in-store bakeries in 2010. Sales of éclairs accounted for 38% of

specialty dessert sales, cannoli 13%, and cream puffs 11% (IDDBA, 2012). Tiered cakes with bold colors and intricate fondants and ethnic cookies (e.g., Mexican galletas and polvorones, Parisian macarons, and Asian tea cookies) are other cutting-edge bakery trends, IDDBA reports.

In supermarkets, dollar sale of cookies sold in the center aisles reached \$3.7 billion (+0.7%) for Y/E 6/12/11, while sales of pastries/doughnuts were \$1.7 billion (+1.5%), baking mixes were \$1.1 billion (-3.9%), and pre-

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pared pies and cakes were \$1.0 billion (+5.3%).

The 2011 Wilton Baking Survey found that 75% of meal preparers were baking with the same frequency or more often than in previous years. Baking from scratch is still preferred by 38% of consumers. In addition, 36% like to doctor mixes, and 26% prefer to rely on a mix or ready-to-bake product. While cookies are the most popular home-baked treat, Wilton reports that cakes grew in home baking popularity—up 17% vs 2008.

According to Mintel's *Baking and Dessert Mixes—U.S.*, a 2011 report, 47% of consumers bought a brownie mix in the past three months, 29% a muffin or cupcake mix, 27% a packaged pudding mix, and 27% a cookie mix. Watch for more restaurant-style, gourmet,

and highly decadent baking mixes. Sugar-free and gluten-free are other fast-emerging trends in the baking mix category.

What's for dessert when consumers are eating out? Artisan/house-made ice cream tops the list of hot menu trends for desserts in 2011, according to American Culinary Federation chefs surveyed by the National Restaurant Assn. It is followed by bite-size/mini desserts, dessert flights/combos, deconstructed classic desserts, and savory desserts. Gourmet house-made

tortes to move back into the spotlight. Similarly, expect a renewed focus on traditional English desserts including scones, shortbread, crumpets, tea pancakes, and mince pie and German favorites including streusel, Bavarian cream, and German chocolate anything.

Mexican churros, sopapilla, choco taco, flan, profiterole, and caramel creations will tempt the younger set. Traditional ethnic desserts (e.g., delimanjoo, a South Korean custard-filled pastry, and qatayef, a Middle Eastern

popsicles, drinkable desserts, gelato/sorbet, fresh fruit, and cupcakes were trendy for more than one-third of chefs.

A scoop or dish of ice cream remains the most frequently menued dessert at pacesetting high-end restaurants, followed by sorbet, sherbet, spumoni, and/or gelato. In addition, crème brulee, fruit tarts, flan/crème caramel custard, tiramisu, mousse, frappe/coolers, and soufflés are coming on strong, according to the Foodservice Research Institute's MenuMine database.

Adults ages 55–64 are the highest per capita spenders at restaurants, according to the National Restaurant Assn.'s 2011 *Restaurant Industry Forecast*, and they are partial to European cuisines, so watch for French truffle cake, napoleons, crepes, and

pancake-style treat) were also cited as trendy desserts for 2011 by ACF chefs.

Desserts aren't all about decadence. Desserts low in *trans*fat are important to 32% of consumers, low-sugar desserts are important to 24%, low-fat 23%, and low-calorie 21%. In addition, all-natural has become a highly desired dessert criteria for 25%, made with local ingredients is desired by 23%, and organic is sought after by 14%, especially young Gen Xers and Millennials, reports Technomic. **FT**

References in this column are available from the author.



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