

by A. Elizabeth Sloan

How Consumers Think About Meat Is Changing

In 2017, 3.8 meals in a typical week were home cooked and contained meat/poultry—the most in five years, per the Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) 2017 *The Power of Meat* report. Three-quarters of adults ate meat/poultry for dinner at least three days per week; one in five did so six times weekly.

According to Packaged Facts' 2017 *Meat & Poultry: U.S. Retail Trends & Opportunities* report, 86% of U.S. households buy fresh beef, led by hamburger, steaks, and roasts; 81% buy chicken; 70%, pork; 40%, turkey; 19%, lamb; and 13%, veal. Lamb, duck, and Cornish game hens are among the smaller meat categories posting strong growth.

Nearly half of households buy

Sales of value-added fresh meats (e.g., kebabs) topped \$4.3 billion; sales of fully cooked products reached \$3.6 billion.

With supermarkets the fastest-growing foodservice sector in 2016 and revenue projected by Technomic to grow 9% per year to \$51 billion by 2025, prepared food offerings need to be upgraded beyond the deli prepared chicken sector. Only 5% of beef sales are currently sold via supermarket foodservice, per FMI/Nielsen.

Just over half of adults are interested in complete fresh meal kits featuring meat/poultry, per FMI. And more than one-third want more sophisticated kits for home entertaining.

Two-thirds of U.S. households own a Crock-pot, according to

salami and Italian specialty meats posted the largest dollar growth, according to the International Dairy Deli Bakery Assoc. Chorizo, pepperoni, porchetta, and flavored lunch meats are posting double-digit gains, Nielsen reports.

Pepper bacon, salami, Angus beef, chorizo, pepperoni, carnitas, and turkey are among the fastest-growing proteins on breakfast handhelds, per Datassential's 2016 *Breakfast Keynote* report.

Culinary trends provide some cues to future meat and poultry product development trends. Decadent sauces—including those made with honey, mushrooms, bourbon/whiskey, and cheese—are an opportunity for

center stage. Slow-growth chicken, heritage breeds, and vegetarian-fed are other fast-emerging trends in meat and poultry.

Nearly half (58%) of shoppers bought natural or organic meat/poultry in 2017, per FMI. Over the past five years, sales of meat/poultry with an antibiotic-free claim grew 28.7% annually; sales of products with a hormone-free claim climbed 28.6%, according to Nielsen/FMI.

One in five shoppers purchased grass-fed beef and cage-free chicken, according to Packaged Facts' 2017 *Animal Welfare and the Meat and Dairy Industry* report.

Two-thirds of adults are very interested in meat/poultry produced in the United States, per FMI. Outside the United States, Australia, Japan, Argentina, and Brazil have reputations for the highest quality, according to Packaged Facts' *Meat, Poultry & Seafood: Restaurant Trends and Opportunities* report.

Lastly, consumers are moving beyond choosing leaner cuts of meat and protein content when it comes to health. Millennials associate meat/poultry with providing nutrients beyond protein, energy, and building physical strength, per FMI. In July 2017, Nielsen reported that 47% of consumers now believe that unprocessed meat is good for your health. **FT**

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frozen chicken or turkey, and nearly one-third buy canned meat, led by SPAM. Eighty-five percent of households buy cold cuts; 81%, bacon; 75%, hot dogs; 74%, sausage; and 40%, beef jerky/meat snacks.

FMI reports that preparation knowledge, ease, and time, are now the most important factors after price and appearance in meat purchase decisions by Millennials and Gen Xers. So expect sales of value-added meat and poultry products to continue to soar.

According to FMI, 45% of shoppers bought heat-and-eat meat/poultry, and 40% bought ready-to-eat products in 2017.

Mintel's *Small Cooking Appliance—U.S.* report. The slow cooker's ability to easily cook less expensive cuts of meat means that slow cooker fresh and frozen meal kits are very big ideas.

Fifty million U.S. households buy frozen entrées, and 38% of them bought more in 2017 than in the past, according to Packaged Facts' 2017 *Frozen Foods in the U.S.* report. IRI reports that volume sales of multiserve frozen dinners climbed 4.5% for the year ended Aug. 13, 2017. So frozen foods are a strong expansion target for meat/poultry.

Although turkey, ham, beef, chicken, and salami are the largest deli cold cut categories,

pork. For chicken, trendy options include beer- and wine-based sauces and fruit-based sauces, such as mango, cranberry, and plum, per Technomic's 2017 *Flavor Consumer Trend Report*.

New cuts of meat are the top overall hot culinary trend for 2018, per the National Restaurant Assoc.'s annual survey of chefs. Street food—inspired entrées are the top main dish trend; for kids' meals, grilled items are trending.

Beef stroganoff was the most Googled recipe of 2017, according to search data released by Google; brine turkey, chicken parmigiana, and pork chops also made the top 10 list. Expect favorite Hispanic cuts of meat to move



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