

Nutrition Notes

Let's travel through the generations of the past to refresh our memories on the characteristics of each...



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The Greatest Generation (that's really what it's called!).

These are folks born between 1901 and 1924. They were adults during the Great Depression and World War II; for the most part, they became strong team players and developed skills in overcoming hardships. For the most part, they grew up without refrigerators, electricity, and air conditioning. Also, no airplanes, radio and no TV! It's no surprise that the eating habits of this generation were simple. Lots of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables; meats, fish and eggs locally produced. Artificial preservatives, colors, additives and other ingredients were not yet introduced! Basically, while there wasn't much concern around calories, vitamins and minerals, a relatively healthy diet was consumed. No school meals as of yet!

The Silent Generation. Born between the years of 1924-1945, these folks became adults at the end of World War II; they enjoyed postwar happiness. These people were the Mickey Mouse and Frank Sinatra generation, they enjoyed jazz and swing; moms stayed at home, dads earned a living. They were not economically affluent. They were hardworking and desired success. Children growing up during this time worked hard and kept quiet. This was the era of "children should be seen and not heard". Civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Robert Kennedy were becoming prominent as well as artists like John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, and Andy Warhol. Folks during the silent generation focused on work and careers; people generally conformed to social norms. Their characteristic feature was to be safe for the future, live more economically and create little waste. They also believed in fewer wants. They also believed in fewer wants. They strove for good health. Eating habits were a reflection of their desire to stay healthy. There were just a small number of convenience foods available, such as cake mixes and Jell-O. Families ate together, home cooked balanced meals were the norm.

Baby Boomers. This is the group born between 1946 and 1964. The soldiers returned home from war; hence a spike in births. Before this time, no official lunch program in schools existed. Some areas around the country offered sandwiches and milk; mostly children went home for lunch and then returned to school. There was rising concern surrounding the nutritional status of our teenage boys who returned home from war, thus in 1946, the school lunch program was made official when the

79th congress recognized its importance. President Harry S. Truman signed the National School Lunch Act, authored by Senator Richard B. Russell Jr.:

“It is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress, as a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food, by assisting the States, through grants-in aid and other means, in providing an adequate supply of food and other facilities for the establishment, maintenance, operation and expansion of nonprofit school lunch programs.”

This is the era of Rock and Roll, Elvis, Beatles, Woodstock, miniskirts, and Barbie dolls. The TV generation and two-income households were seen. Divorce, once seen as taboo, was beginning to be accepted as a reality.

Fast food in America gained popularity. The first hamburger chain in the United States was White Castle which opened in 1921 in Wichita, Kansas. A limited menu which offered cheap hamburgers and sold in large numbers.

When the automobiles became more popular, drive-in restaurants started appearing around the United States. Customers in cars were served by carhops who in 1940s started wearing roller skates. The first McDonald’s with fast food was opened by the McDonald brothers in 1948 (They had a restaurant before but it was not of the “fast-food-type”). Soon after them, others started opening their fast food chains: Burger King and Taco Bell opened theirs in the 1950s while Wendy’s first opened in 1969. For many of the fast food chains, products were high in fat, sodium and calories; many items were fried. To support the increase in demand, many food items were prepared at good distances away from the eating locations. Many



products were produced and stored in warehouses throughout the country. For this reason, as well as to enhance flavors and appearance, artificial colors, flavors and preservatives were utilized. Kids were watching TV commercials featuring “yummy” fast foods and coupled with many two parent working households, many families were taking advantage of the convenience of a quick, low cost meal.

Not only were fast food restaurants becoming popular, manufacturers were expanding product lines – cookies, crackers, cereals, as well as frozen food selections. To enhance flavor and extend shelf life, sodium and fat content were increased, and trans fat became widely used. Important to note: food labels were not required!

When it comes to healthy eating styles, boomers generally view nutrition more in terms of how much and what kinds of food they eat. Boomers are likely to define a healthy eating style by moderation, variety and portion size. Baby boomers are likely to consider certain foods healthy based on individual qualities in a food. For instance, boomers are more likely to rate vitamin C, whole grains, protein from plant sources and omega-3 fatty acids as healthy components in foods.

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Boomers tend to look at food with health benefits beyond basic nutrition—also known as “functional foods”—such as those with fiber, carotenoids, probiotics or vitamin fortification. This group seems to want foods associated with healthy aging and bone health. Boomers also are more likely to be concerned with foods associated with weight management, cardiovascular health and digestive health and less likely to be interested in the mental health, muscle health and immunity health benefits associated with foods.

Generation X. Defined as those born between 1965 and 1980, children of this generation have often been referred to as “latch-key kids”, frequently the product of divorced or career focused parents. The nickname “yuppies” has been applied to this group. Computers were introduced while this generation was in middle or high school; they are also sometimes referred to as “Digital Immigrants”. Unlike earlier generations, many in this group tend to be more “committed to self”; are into brand names and recognizable labels.

There tends to be a need for immediate gratification, and this group seems to have accrued a larger amount of bank and credit card debt. They are often late to marry, quick to divorce and there are also many single parents. Also, unlike earlier generations, career changes among this group are more common. It’s not uncommon for this group to ask, “What’s in it for me?”

Research reports that 50% of women and men in this generation read nutrition labels when deciding what foods and drinks to consume. Up until the late 1960’s, little information was available on the food label; calorie or sodium content was included on foods that

were meant for “special diet needs”. In 1972, FDA proposed regulations to provide nutrition information on packaged food labels. In 1973, regulations were finalized and nutritional labeling on FDA regulated foods would include:

- Number of calories
- Grams of protein, carbohydrate and fat
- % of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance of protein, Vitamins A and C, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, calcium and iron
- Sodium, saturated fatty acid and polyunsaturated fatty acid information could be included but was not required.

After 1973, interest in the relationship between diet and health grew rapidly. Manufacturers became interested in claiming the health benefits of their products. In 1987, FDA proposed policies that would regulate claims

surrounding health benefits of foods and the inclusion of information on the sodium and cholesterol content of foods.

After several years of development, regulations for USDA and FDA were published in January 1993. This mandated nutrition labeling in the form of a Nutrition Facts panel on most packaged

foods. Exemptions were allowed for foods that were insignificant sources of calories or nutrients, foods produced in bulk for further processing and restaurant foods. Required nutrients were:

- Calories
- Serving size (beginning in about 2004)



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- Calories from fat
- Total fat
- Saturated fat
- Trans fat (beginning in 2003)
- Cholesterol
- Sodium
- Total Carbohydrate
- Dietary fiber
- Sugars
- Protein
- Vitamins A and C
- Calcium and Iron

While attention to nutrition labels is given, this age group is interested in home cooked meals and exploring recipes and new food items. About 10% of this population reportedly buys organic and attention is being given to genetically modified foods. Almost half of the Generation X group eats out on the average of once per week. There is focus on food safety and interest in nutrition topics that directly affect their own health and the health of family and friends.

Generation Y – also called Millennials. Folks in this group were born between 1980 and about 1995. Oftentimes, this generation has been labeled as the “Peter Pan” generation because of a perceived tendency to slow the steps to adulthood. Examples include living with parents longer, delaying career identification and marriage. This is the first generation that was born into technology; they have been referred to as

“Digital Natives”. They are used to instant access to product information and routinely “google” information about everything! Their infinite access to information strengthens their likelihood to have strong opinions and assertive behaviors.

This group is committed to wellness, eating right and exercising. It is reported that when identifying their choices for lunch, the priorities are:

1. Quality and taste of food
2. Fast service
3. Value

Generation Y members have a vision of eating healthy and the majority enjoy cooking meals at home. Despite this fact, millennials eat out more than any other group. Many eat at least one meal out every day. This is not a group that tends to conform to “normal” meal times. Many times the breakfast meal is exchanged for a late morning snack. Dinner is often consumed later into the evening.

Generation Z. This is the generation that needs your attention! They were born after 1995; they have NEVER known a world without computers and cell phones. Technology is as normal to them as the air they breathe.

When it comes to food preferences when eating out, what sets Generation Z members apart from their Y

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LATIN-INSPIRED CHICKEN TOTCHOS			
PROVIDES	PORTION	YIELD	PREPARATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 M/MA• 1 cup vegetable (starchy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 ½ ounces queso• 2 ounces seasoned chicken• 1 cup tater tots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 47 servings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Combine Ultimate White Cheese Sauce, chiles and jalapeño in half steam table pan. Cover.2 Heat on full steam until product reaches 165°F for 15 seconds. Hold warm.3 Hold prepared shredded chicken warm until ready for service.4 Hold prepared tater tots warm until ready for service.5 For service, top 1 cup tater tots (4.5 ounces) with 2.2 ounces shredded chicken and 2.5 ounces queso.6 Garnish with prepared pico de gallo or sliced scallions, if desired.
INGREDIENTS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 pouch Land O Lakes® Ultimate White Cheese Sauce• 2 cups canned diced green chiles, undrained• ½ cup canned jalapeño slices, drained, chopped• 5 pounds 14 ounces prepared shredded chicken• 13 pounds 4 ounces prepared tater tots			
Optional: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepared pico de gallo and scallions, sliced			
			
For nutritional information please visit landolakesfoodservice.com			

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predecessors is their desire to see foods prepared to order. They seem to like the “assembled as they order” concept and enjoy foods that appear homemade and fresh. It appears that all students – elementary, middle and high, prefer fruit and vegetable smoothies, Mexican and other ethnic foods, items that are fresh, fast and made from scratch. Having a large selection of choices on the cafeteria line is a plus!

As students move from elementary school through high school, there appears to be a shift in preference from fast food to more casual dining as well as from convenience stores to fast-casual restaurants. This group has extensive knowledge in nutrition and is food safety savvy. They read labels; don't try to sell them expired products – they know better. They are familiar with GMO foods, organic and are well versed about foods containing artificial colors and flavors as well as preservatives. They know about high fructose corn syrup and Trans fats. Many prefer a vegetarian or vegan diet. Gluten free is in. In spite of all this, they still like pizza, chicken sandwiches, burgers, and fries. Consumption of salads, fruit and vegetables has increased.

It is thought that Generation Z may be the healthiest generation yet! They seem to gravitate towards natural ingredients. They have been nicknamed “fresh foodies”. There is also an interest in growing healthy foods; there

appears to be a strong interest in developing a knowledge of where food comes from and how it gets to the table.



This generation prefers cooking their food at home. Doing so gives them control over the food selection, nutrients and calories consumed. Healthy eating seems to come naturally to this generation!

To summarize, there is a huge focus today on health, wellness and nutrition. Today's students, while still enjoying many of their usual favorites, are leaning towards healthier food habits. It's important that we keep pace with changing ideas and trends in the world of school lunch!

And, above all, nothing can replace the warm smiles and outstanding customer service you provide!

Continue to do the amazing work you do every day! Know that you are serving healthy meals every day to our Generation Z students! They want and need your fresh, well prepared, healthy food choices! In so many ways, you might be the happiest part of their day!

Have a healthy and wonderful summer!

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