Mini entrees billed as snacks are the current hot-ticket item on many top chain restaurant menus. Why? Not only has snacking consumption increased, but 27% of 18- to 34-year-olds even say they like to purchase snacks at restaurants instead of full meals. Plus, a notable 59% of consumers say it’s very important that snacks aren’t too large, which is higher than the proportion who say it’s important that snacks aren’t too small (49%). Thus, operators are repurposing entrees as snacks by downsizing them to appeal to consumers throughout the day.

**Consumer Attitudes Toward Snackified Entrees**

The majority of consumers (54%) find snackified entrees like mini burgers and Smucker’s Uncrustables appealing. Men aged 25-34 skew the highest, with 81% expressing an interest in these types of snacks. Other significant skews occur with Hispanic (67%) and Southern (59%) consumers, signaling opportunity for operators to downsize traditional Latin and Southern recipes—such as offering mini tacos or barbecue sliders—that may appeal to these folks in particular.
The time of day in which consumers are most likely to consider snackified entrees is the afternoon. More than three-fifths of consumers (63%) say they’re at least somewhat likely to consider eating a snackified entree during the afternoon, while evening occasions trail close behind (60%). About half of consumers (51%) would order a snackified entree late at night.

It is worth noting that consumers would be more willing to eat a snackified entree as a meal replacement (47%) than as a snack during a morning occasion (40%). Thus, operators who are promoting bite-sized breakfast starches such as mini pancakes or waffles should consider doing so beyond the morning hours.

Looking at gender breakouts, men overall not only find snackified entrees more appealing than women, but they are also more likely than women to consider ordering these types of snacks during every time of day (including as a meal replacement). And regarding ethnic backgrounds, there are very clear preferences of each demographic. Here are some other notable demographic findings:

- Women ages 18-24 and ages 65 and over are more likely than men of those age brackets to consider ordering snackified entrees in the morning and afternoon.
- Women ages 65 and over are also more likely than men of the same age group to consider ordering snackified entrees in the evening and as a meal replacement.
- Black/African-American consumers are the most likely of any ethnicity to order snackified entrees in the morning and late at night; Asians are the most likely to consider ordering them in the afternoon; and Hispanics are the most likely to buy them in the evening.
- Every ethnicity selects the afternoon as their preferred time to consume snackified entrees except for Hispanics, who prefer these snack types in the evening.

### Likelihood to consider ordering snackified entrees during the following times of day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Likelihood of Consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Night</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Meal Replacement</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q: How likely or unlikely are you to consider ordering “snackified” entrees during the following times of day on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 = not likely at all and 5 = very likely?

Base: 1,000 consumers aged 18+ © 2018 Technomic Inc.
Preferred Snackified Entrees

When it comes to the types of snackified entree items that consumers purchase at least occasionally (once every 90 days), those that reign supreme align with the most popular full-size lunch and dinner entrees. Mini burgers are the most popular snackified entree, with almost half of consumers (49%) saying they buy sliders at least occasionally. Mini pizzas and pizza bites trail close behind, with 47% of consumers agreeing to purchasing these snacks.

After mini burgers and pizza, there’s a large gap until the next most purchased items. About a third of consumers say they buy mini sandwiches and wraps (33%); mini pancakes, waffles and French toast (31%); mini or side salads (30%); and mini hot dogs or corn dogs (30%), at least once every 90 days.

Various demographics sway very differently when it comes to their most preferred snackified entrees. Here are some interesting data findings:

- Men prefer mini burgers, sandwiches and hot dogs over women, while women more often purchase mini pizzas, breakfast starches, salads and savory pies.

- Even though mini burgers are the overall favorite, mini pizzas are the preferred snack of Gen Zers (67%) and millennials (64%) at least occasionally.

- Mini burgers are the most preferred snackified entree for Northeasterners, Midwesterners and Westerners; however, Southerners purchase mini pizzas (53%) more often than mini burgers (50%).

- Hispanics eat all snackified entree types more than any other ethnicity.

- Matures are the most likely generation to say that they don’t purchase any snackified entree selections (51%).

- Consumers with a mixed ethnic background select mini sandwiches and wraps more often than any other snackified entree.

- Though mini savory pies are the least likely purchased snackified entree type, Hispanics (30%) and those aged 25-34 (27%) skew much higher for interest in these items compared to other demographics.

Which of the following snackified entree items do you purchase at least occasionally (once every 90 days)?

Select all that apply

- Mini burgers/sliders (49%)
- Mini pizzas/pizza bites (47%)
- Mini sandwiches/wraps (33%)
- Mini pancakes/French toast/waffles (31%)
- Mini/side salads (30%)
- Mini hot dogs/corn dogs (30%)
- Mini savory pies (18%)
- None of the above (25%)

Base: 1,000 consumers aged 18+

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<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Menu mentions of mini savory pies are up 13.5% in the past year.

Base: Q2 2016-Q2 2017
Source: MenuMonitor, Technomic.
Other Items to Snackify

Here are a few other mini entrees that are also seeing growth on menus in the last year.*

**MINI ASIAN BOWLS** (+9.1%)
With many Asian bowls trending—ramen, hot pots and curry, for example—one opportunity is to provide mini versions so consumers can sample a variety of regional tastes more easily.

**MINI SUSHI** (+4.2%)
Despite its growth, sushi is still considered an adventurous food to many. Offering mini sushi rolls is a great way to get hesitant guests to try raw fish.

**MINI PASTAS** (+2.9%)
Pasta can be very rich, so a mini version could offer consumers some indulgence without as many carbs.

There are also a number of snackified entrees that Top 500 chains and leading retailers have experimented with in the last year that are too new and innovative to be among the offerings tracked. Here are some examples of further innovation in the snackified entree mealpart.

**Einstein Bros. Bagels’ Shmearfuls** are cream cheese-filled mini bagels available in six flavors: Pretzel & Beer Cheese, Jalapeno Cheddar & Plain Shmear, French Toast & Maple Shmear, Everything & Plain Shmear, Asiago Parmesan & Plain Shmear and Plain & Plain Shmear.

**Buffalo Wild Wings’ Southwest Sampler** features shareable offerings such as mini quesadillas and tacos.

**Balducci’s**, a Mid-Atlantic small format retailer, launched **Mini Maryland Crab Cakes** on its Game Time menu for football parties.

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*Base: Q2 2016-Q2 2017
Source: Technomic, MenuMonitor

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FEATURED RECIPE:

Arepas con Queso

INGREDIENTS
• 2 cups frozen corn, thawed
• 1½ cups hot water
• 2 cups yellow cornmeal
• 2 teaspoons sour cream or crema
• 1 tablespoon sugar
• ½ teaspoon salt
• ⅓ cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided
• 2 tablespoons Crisco® Butter Flavor All-Vegetable Shortening
• Hot rice and black beans

DIRECTIONS
1. Combine corn and hot water in blender or food processor. Blend until smooth.
2. Mix cornmeal, sour cream, sugar, salt and cheese in large bowl.
3. Pour blended corn mixture over cornmeal mixture in bowl. Stir until evenly moistened.
4. Divide dough into 18 pieces. Roll each piece into a ball and flatten to about ¼ inch thick and 3 inches in diameter.
5. Melt shortening in medium skillet over low heat. Cook arepas 3 to 5 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Cool. Serve with hot rice and black beans.

TIP: Arepas can also be made using a panini sandwich grill.
TECHNOMIC TAKEAWAY:

3 Areas of Opportunity for Snackified Entrees

1 Catchy Marketing Logos and Branding

Memorable marketing jargon that helps to emphasize small size, convenience and portability will win over customers looking for snackified entrees. Consider Sonic Drive-In, who has used “Lil’” in its branding for the past few years with their Lil’ Doggie snack-sized hot dogs, Lil’ Chickie snack-sized fried chicken bites and Lil’ Griller mini sandwiches. Other words to consider are “fun-sized” and “snack n’ go.”

2 Mix-and-Match Snackified Entrees

On many occasions, consumers visit a restaurant craving two or more different entrees. For those who may be craving both a burger and a pizza, for example, a mix-and-match snackified version of both could be just the ticket. This option allows diners to trial both options without breaking the bank or the zippers on their pants. Operators should consider menuing various snackified entrees with the ability to mix and match to their liking.

3 No-Waste Opportunities

Operators should transform leftovers from entrees into snackified versions for zero waste. Have some extra crabcake mixture, but not enough for a full entree? Turn it into a mini version! Have a little extra beef patty that you don’t want to go to waste? Serve it as a mini burger and slice the bun in half! Consumers will appreciate the trash-to-treasure promotion, knowing they’re eating something that’s environmentally sustainable.

Stay tuned for our forthcoming issues on:
- Rising stars in coffee
- Breakfast snacks
- Sweet snacks