



# Sustainable snacking

Snacking intentionally and making the right choices supports a healthy body and benefits our planet

Leonardo Da Vinci was onto something in the late 1400s when he eschewed beef and chicken. He would be amazed to learn that today plant-based eating is arguably one of the biggest trends in food. With analysts predicting that the plant-based market is forecasted to grow 28% annually, reaching \$85 billion in 2030, it is no longer just a way of eating but rather has evolved into a movement and way of being.

Innovative companies like Vegan Rob's are leading the way in the plant-based snack space, a huge slice in the plant-based category, valued at almost \$35 billion in 2019 and expected to record a striking 8% CAGR through 2028. Certified vegan,

plant-based, gluten free, non GMO, this formula provides "everything that everybody wants," says Rob Ehrlich, founder of Vegan Rob's and a driving force behind every product that he creates. "It's about bringing the consumer along." Snacks are the perfect entry into vegan because they are quick, convenient, tasty and a low-investment buy. Additionally, with busy lives and less time at the table, eating habits have changed and snacks are playing a measurably pivotal role. It also has to be fun and about how these snacks can make you feel better, says Ehrlich.

Plant-based has broken its own glass ceiling: Traditional meat eaters and flexitarians are now embracing

plant-based products, which means it is critical for retailers to employ plant-based strategies that attract the mainstream consumer. Some outlets show that up to 50% of people are trying plant-based foods, a tremendous piece of marketshare to tap into, and vegan, though more niche, is growing rapidly too, up to 3% of the population, representing a 300% increase. For consumers, this stepping in can be gradual. "[Vegan] is not about jumping in the pool all at once. It's about putting your toe in. '[Saying] I can do this.' It's not all or nothing," says Ehrlich. "You can take one step and then the next meal you say you're going to skip meat today."

Consumers report that they



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are turning to plant-based foods because it makes them feel healthier, and the majority of these consumers add that they see these healthy changes to their diets as permanent, creating a category that is here to stay. The bringing along of vegan snacking is a natural progression as snacking carries with it a unifying force that is unmatched.

Nearly every single one of us snacks, munching, crunching and enjoying a pick-me-up anywhere from one to multiple times a day. Surveys show that people snack primarily because of legitimate hunger and thirst and also to meet cravings (for salty and sweet) and even boredom, but also, says Ehrlich, people are turning to munchies for stress and anxiety. The intent is to create an afterglow, where rather than asking "why did I eat that?" people may feel they've accomplished something for themselves, their environment and are even part of a larger community or tribe through their snack choice. Vegan Rob's serves more than snacks, "customers want to be part of a larger vision," says Ehrlich.

This vision is savvy, unique, sustainable, environmentally conscious and part of a "lifestyle" that supports individual health and also the health of the planet, snacking for the "we" and not for the "me". Studies show that shifting to plant-based reduces carbon emissions and waste products that end up in the ocean, and adds to the global food supply without expanding croplands. Ounce for ounce, and essentially pertinent to snacks, vegetarian and vegan snack choices pack a powerful nutritional punch in a compact, albeit meaningful, format. Indeed, customers seek nutrient-dense foods and snacks with

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fruit and vegetable additives, whole grains and fiber to support both themselves and the planet. Can you get all this in one snack? A resounding yes! says Ehrlich, whose brand employs ingredients like sea buckthorn, which requires no water, and sorghum, which is drought resistant, and follows sustainable practices, sourcing the finest ingredients from independent, agriculturally conscious growers. Where it would be easy to take a shortcut with a snack product, this is a standout.

### Taste is of the essence

Surveys indicate that customers prefer "savory" flavors, and Vegan Rob's is there to answer the call, with ingredients like serrano chile powder, brussels sprouts, turmeric, spinach or sea buckthorn and beet. "Part of the puzzle is understanding what consumers want before they even know it," says Ehrlich. There is opportunity for education and exploration here, connecting with and drawing shoppers to what will be a new experience.

Ehrlich, who says he's missing the trade shows as a way of continuing to connecting with the public on his innovative products this year, is handling the pandemic-related isolation as only he could know how: on an electric catamaran sailing around the world with other industry experts studying ocean and climate. He says: "If I can utilize my success for something good and my platform for change I can continue helping people and leading,"



## SNACK STATS

Nearly all people—a full

**97%**

—are regular snackers.

### Plant based shoppers

are all ages, purchase from mainstream channels and spend

**61%**

more than the average shopper.

**63%**

of shoppers prefer to buy from brands that stand for a purpose and reflect their values and beliefs.

COURTESY VEGAN ROB'S (4)