



THE GEN Z FOOD CODE:

Cracking the Next Billion-
Dollar Appetite



Why Gen Z eats differently and why it matters to your brand

They're not eating like previous generations, and they're definitely not buying like them either. Gen Z is shaping a food culture where taste, ethics, convenience, and trendability collide. Their grocery carts are digital, their cravings are global, and their loyalty is earned one experience at a time.

What you need to know to stay on Gen Z's radar

1. Flavor first, always: 50.8% of Gen Z picks food based purely on taste.
2. Speed over nostalgia: 75.5% prefer quick-and-easy meals.
3. Natural wins over organic: 36% opt for "natural" items, versus 20% who care about "organic."
4. Local credentials matter: 50% choose local produce; nearly triple that choose grass-fed.

ONLINE IS THE NEW NORM:

49.4%

buy groceries via delivery services.

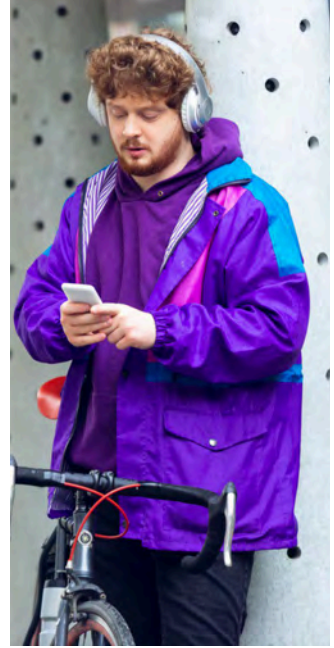


Who Are We Feeding, Really?

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z doesn't just scroll, they sculpt culture. They eat with their eyes, values, and for the algorithm. They're responsible for shifting how food is marketed, purchased, consumed, and even invented.

They're not passive consumers.

THEY'RE
PROACTIVE
CURATORS
OF WHAT
ENDS UP ON
THEIR PLATES,
AND THEIR
FEEDS.



More than 2.6 million responses in Tastewise's [survey on Gen Z's food and beverage preferences](#) reveal a generation that:

- Prioritizes flavor and variety (50.77%) just slightly more than convenience (50.57%)
- Thinks "quick and easy" beats "comfort food" by over 3.3X
- Values natural food 1.8X more than organic
- Seeks meaning through local produce, sustainability, and low waste

Flavor Is King, Queen, and Court Jester

Gen Z isn't into vague "healthy" claims. They want functional, flavorful, and fun. Think yuzu-spiked seltzer or protein-packed ice cream that also slaps on TikTok.

1



Ingredients

Miso caramel, sea moss, and matcha are rising stars

→ Based on 2025 ingredient trend data

2



Bratwurst?

Up 1198% year-over-year

3



Soup

Yes, soup — is now trending on menus and socials, with details in this [soup-specific Gen Z survey](#).

It's not just about the "what" — it's about why and how. Global mashups (Korean tacos, shakshuka bagels) win hearts, while nostalgic comfort still has a seat at the table.

Platforms › Supermarkets

Forget endcaps and in-store promos. The new aisle is vertical, so I guess welcome to TikTok. Here's how Gen Z's digital diet breaks down:

74%

USE TIK-TOK FOR
FOOD DISCOVERY



Key Role: Snack hacks, viral recipes

Platform	% Using It for Food Discovery	Key Role
Tik-tok	74%	Snack hacks, viral recipes
YouTube Shorts	56%	Immersive tutorials
Instagram Reels	48%	Aesthetic + sustainability
Threads	32%	Value-based food convos
Reddit/Discord	22%	Sourcing & niche discussions

When it comes to buying? Nearly half prefer online grocery services, 49% shop digitally, nearly double in-store trips, per Tastewise. Gen Z also moves fast on impulse: 68% shop online for groceries, and 16% buy at least half their groceries digitally, [according to Hartman Group](#).

Social media fuels this too: [66% of consumers have bought ingredients](#) or food items featured in an online recipe, linking discovery to purchase behavior.

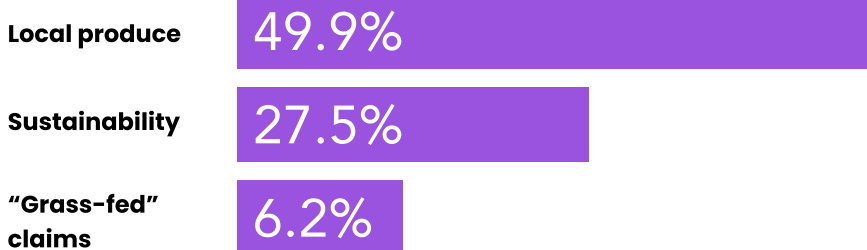
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The Ethics-to-Appetite Pipeline

Gen Z is all about values-to-spoon. Here's how their priorities play out:



This isn't a marketing trend, it's a supply chain mandate. Brands that flaunt transparency, from sourcing to labor ethics, score points and loyalty.

And don't forget packaging. Gen Z isn't here for planet-wrecking plastic. Compostable, upcycled, and minimalist designs speak volumes. They're not price-averse, either. 62% of Gen Z prefer sustainable brands, and a whopping 73% are willing to pay more for sustainable products, as [reported by First Insight](#). Blue Yonder confirms this trend: 85% of Gen Z say sustainability matters in purchases, and [55% are willing to pay a premium](#) for eco-friendly goods.

What This Means for Brands

So how can brands crack the code, without faking it? Gen Z has zero patience for brands that try to "relate" with outdated slang, forced aesthetics, or empty sustainability claims. But if you show up with flavor, function, and purpose? You've got their attention, and maybe their wallet.



DON'T:

- ✗ Overdo wellness buzzwords no one believes
- ✗ Assume "organic" still carries clout (spoiler: it doesn't for Gen Z)
- ✗ Skip the visuals, Gen Z eats with their camera first

DO:

- **Tap real-time trends.** Read the signals fast, like the data in this [Gen Z beverage trends breakdown](#).
- **Lean into quick, bold launches.** Think limited-time-only, creator-led collabs.
- **Design for shareability.** Products that pop on Instagram Stories = gold.
- **Match flavor + function.** Ice cream that boosts focus? Yes, please.

GEN Z
ISN'T "THE
FUTURE."
THEY'RE
THE NOW

Billion-Dollar Appetite, Real-Time Playbook

Gen Z isn't "the future." They're the now, and if you want in on their \$360B+ annual spending, you'd better be fast, fresh, and fluent in food culture.

This generation has spoken: Give them matcha, miso, digital-first discovery, and food with a cause. Or watch them scroll right past your brand.

Want to keep up?

Discover preferences and market fit with Tastewise's AI food surveys and consumer insights. Your next billion-dollar idea might be trending right now.

[Learn More about Tastewise](#)

