

Ready to eat and ready to heat

Craveable Foods for Convenience Store Consumers



Younger consumers lead the way in prepared food item purchases.¹ They are typically more willing to try new items, especially when those items are recommended by friends or family. This enthusiasm for distinctive food items opens a door for C-Stores to update the menu.²

Snacking/Non-traditional

C-Store customers look for speed of service when they visit. Speed of service is particularly crucial for snacking occasions – a meal part in which C-Stores excel.

The popularity of snacking can help C-Store operators increase sales, even during these nontraditional dayparts. In addition to customers’ tendency to graze on snacks throughout the day, C-Store visitors also eat prepared foods at atypical times – 24% of hot dogs are purchased and eaten in the morning and 19% of breakfast sandwiches are eaten outside of breakfast times.¹

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“C-Store operators are looking primarily toward snacking for increasing revenue. Because of the wide variety of offerings, they're competing with coffee shops and QSRs. So finding effective ways to attract their target audiences is crucial.”

Consumer snack time appeal¹

	C-Stores	Quick Service Restaurants	Rast Casual Restaurants	Supermarkets
AM Snack	73%	67%	52%	65%
PM Snack	78%	70%	63%	73%
Late Night	71%	69%	55%	64%

Compared to other foodservice segments, C-Stores have the highest appeal across the board in all snack categories¹

When visiting a C-Store, 43% of customers buy something they hadn’t planned to buy. Recognizable brands, prominent food displays, and eye-catching packaging encourages impulse purchases, and 32% of consumers

would purchase prepared food at a C-Store if it was incorporated into a colorful food display.¹ Many visitors appreciate the speed of service at C-Stores because they eat their food on the go, perhaps during the morning commute or as something to hold them over while running errands.

75% of customers think C-Stores have better grab-and-go options than QSRs.³

Ready to eat

Pre-packaged items currently make up the bulk of impulse purchases because C-Store visitors value convenience.¹ Customers may try to control the amount of time they spend within a store by seeking out grab-and-go options.

Although C-Stores are known for quickness, they are ranked lower in speed of service than other foodservice segments.¹ One way for operators to remedy this is to offer additional self-serve options – such as handhelds and roller grill items – for on-the-go customers.

Ready-to-heat options satisfy customers' cravings to eat as soon as possible – when visiting a C-Store, 72% of consumers purchased food to eat immediately. In order to drive more visitors, C-Store operators can continue to offer additional portable menu items, which 30% of customers seek. Another 27% want these grab-and-go options to be brands they know and trust.³

Handheld and roller grill item purchase motivators¹

- 30%: High quality ingredients
- 26%: Wide selection
- 24%: Can be purchased as part of a combo
- 17%: Brand names and sauces
- 11%: Vegetarian/Vegan varieties

Ready to eat

Although pre-packaged items are purchased more frequently than prepared items, customers seek out classic C-Store fare such as hot dogs, pizza, and sandwiches as well as innovative global flavors.¹

27% of consumers would pay more for sandwiches with brand-name condiments or spreads.⁴

Overall, more customers visit C-Stores compared to past years, and this is especially true for younger generations. Millennials claim they are buying more prepared foods at C-Stores than they did in previous years. When compared to the entire population of C-Store customers, Millennials buy prepared food 10% more frequently than others.¹

Prepared food to offer C-Store customers¹

High interest:

- Tacos
- Fresh salad
- Asian rice bowls
- Soup
- Fresh cut salads

High profitability:

- Hot dogs
- Pizza
- Breakfast sandwiches

- Veggie burgers
- Gyros

Sources:

1. *Datassential, Convenience Store Keynote, June 2016*
2. *Datassential, CPP – Generations, 2015*
3. *Datassential, CPP – C-Stores, February 2017*
4. *Technomic, Banking on Brands Infographic, June 2016*