AdAge

THE BIGGEST FOOD STORIES OF 2017

By Jessica Wohl. Published on December 13, 2017.

Amazon innovation: 365 Everyday Value diced tomatoes
Credit: Whole Foods/Georg Beyer

Amazon buying Whole Foods Market was the most-remembered food industry story of 2017, with 60 percent of U.S. adults aware of the acquisition, a recent survey by Hunter Public Relations found.

Surprisingly, 35 percent of people in the survey ranked food and nutrition news as more important than other types of news -- including politics, which dominated headlines this year. That number was the lowest level in the past five years of the Hunter survey.

Among millennials, Gen X and what the survey labels baby boomers/mature adults, the top two stories were Amazon buying Whole Foods this summer followed by Chipotle's latest food safety concerns, which 41 percent of people remembering seeing, hearing or reading about. The burrito chain's recovery was the biggest U.S. food story in 2016, according to Hunter's prior survey.

The third-ranked story of the year is where the generations' opinions really start to differ. Among millennials, "unicorn food" -- those trendy, colorful and somewhat unique items that generate plenty of buzz (hello, wacky Frappuccinos) -- ranked third. But among both Gen X and Baby Boomer/Matures, the third-most remembered food story of the year was Tyson recalling nearly 2.5 million pounds of breaded chicken products because they might have contained milk.

And in an interesting sign for marketers, food trends, food brand marketing and food industry news are somewhat more important to millennials than to Gen X and Baby Boomers/Matures, the survey found. Still, the most important topics for all three cohorts were food safety and nutrition/health and wellness.

The survey also showed social media strengthening its lead as the main place people hear or learn about recipes, with 51 percent citing social media, up from 37 percent in 2016. And while 44 percent opt for websites to find recipes, just 36 percent said they turn to books or cookbooks, down from 42 percent in 2016 and from above 50 percent in 2015 and 2014. For general food news, TV is still the leading source of information, though only 42 percent turn there first, down from 46 percent in 2016.

The study, fielded online Oct. 24 to 28, asked 1,000 American adults about top food stories that ran over the previous 12 months. Hunter says the survey, conducted with Libran Research & Consulting, was fielded online Oct. 24 to 28. Hunter noted that it has been an agency on select Amazon U.S. retail businesses since May, but was not involved in any work on the Whole Foods acquisition.

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2017 FOOD NEWS STUDY
15TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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Here's the agency's full top 10 of 2017:

1. Amazon Acquires Whole Foods Market
2. Another Food Safety Scare at Chipotle
3. Nearly 2.5 Million Pounds of Tyson Chicken Products Recalled
4. Trump Takes Aim at School Lunch Guidelines
5. Restaurant Chains Now Deliver
6. Proposed Tariff on Mexican Imports to Fund "Wall" Means Americans Will Pay More for Food & Beverages
7. There's a Meal Kit for Everyone
8. (TIE) Unicorn Food is Colorful, Sparkly and Everywhere
8. (TIE) FDA Delays Rollout of New Nutrition Labels
10. Avocado Prices Stabilize

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