

2026 UPDATE

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHEFS: MILLENNIALS & GEN Z AS DECISION MAKERS

BACKGROUND

Generation Z, or iGen, is the largest U.S. generation with about 86 million members, notably shaped by post-recession experiences. This practical outlook on work and spending aligns them with their Gen-X parents, yet their tech-savvy nature leads to distinct work styles. Millennials, around 80 million, differ by not expecting lifelong employment, significantly influencing the foodservice industry. Building on FSIP's 2016 study of Millennial chefs, our updated research examines how Millennials and Gen-Z are shaping foodservice innovation to aid sponsors in fostering growth across various dining venues.

OBJECTIVES

- **Compare Gen-Z chefs with Millennials and older chefs** in terms of opinions, values, and behaviors.
- **Analyze how they use innovation** to tackle long-term challenges.
- **Identify consumer trends** impacting business/product development.
- **Determine key characteristics of successful manufacturer relationships** affecting purchasing.
- **Compare findings** to the 2016 Millennial chef study.
- **Provide sponsors insight** into Gen-Z and Millennial chef mindsets for future growth.

APPROACH

- **Existing data review:** thorough assessment of key industry information for deep contextual perspectives on market dynamics.
- **In-depth original research:** 200 qualitative interviews with Gen-Z chefs, Millennial chefs and older chefs (37-54) for comparison purposes. FSIP will target the top 500 restaurant chains, top high-volume independent and select non-commercial (lodging and recreation) venues.
- **Strategic analysis:** robust PowerPoint report with clear implications and next-step guidance.

NEXT STEPS

To purchase FSIP's 2026 update of **The Next Generation of Chefs: Millennials & Gen Z as Decision Makers** study, please complete the agreement on the following page or contact:

TIM POWELL

Managing Principal
312.600.5131
tpowell@foodserviceip.com

GREG HOBBY

Director, Business Development
502.376.5426
ghobby@foodserviceip.com



ISSUES ADDRESSED

- How do Millennial and Gen-Z chef attitudes, opinions, behavior and lifestyle characteristics impact product selection, supplier relationships and foodservice philosophies? How does it differ across chefs in these and older generations?
- What is their level of satisfaction with products, processes and procedures?
- Which sources drive innovation? Travel? Media? Social Media? Peers?
- What's important/not so important to them?
- What challenges/opportunities do they envision coming down the road in the next 3-5 years?
- What actions are they taking to solve these issues, capture opportunities?
- What role does innovation play in the response to short-term and long-term issues and challenges?
- How are consumer trends, changing tastes and demographic makeup impacting menu development?
- Which consumer trends will be impactful going forward? For example, health/wellness, bold/unique flavors, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, etc.?



FSIP's RESEARCH ADVANTAGE

- Comprehensive analysis from experienced consultants exclusively focused on the food industry
- Value-priced intelligence that answers the "so what" and "what now"
- Truly strategic guidance tailored to your business needs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2026 Update

The Next Generation of Chefs: Millennials & Gen Z as Decision Makers

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Background & Objectives
Approach
Notes on Project Scope & Methodology
Survey Composition Highlights

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Notable Differences from 2016 "Millennial Chefs" Study
Key Takeaways & Clarifications
Conclusions & Implications
Recommendations

SURVEY COMPOSITION

Composition of Quantitative Survey: Generational Cut Considerations
Regional Distribution by Generation
Generational Breakdown Across Segments
Breakdown of Culinary Roles
Authority Over New Product Introductions by Segment
Decision-Making Authority by Generation

ABOUT THE CULINARIANS

Native Language
Race of Chefs
Kitchen Staff Skill Levels
Cooking Models
Where Cooking Occurs
Motivation to Join Culinary the Profession
Career Aspirations
Motivation to Stay in the Profession
Inside the Culinary Mindset by Generation
Mentors: Age & Influence in Shaping How New Products are Evaluated
Training: Where Received & Certifications

Culinary School Influence on Brand Use Today

OPERATIONAL INSIGHTS

Frozen vs. Fresh Produce Usage by Season (Generational Perspective)
Overall Reasons for Using Frozen Ingredients: By Generation
Sources of Culinary Inspiration
Reasons for Attending Food Shows and Perceptions of Impact on Decision-Making
Social & Digital Platforms Used
Most Influential Content
Preferences for Manufacturer Follow-up on Appealing Content
AI Trust & Perceptions
Consumer Trend Focus by Segment
Menu Standardization and Structure by Segment
Menu Standardization and Structure by Generation
Chefs' Perceived Personal Control Over Menu Changes
Frequency of Menu Changes
Reasons for Menu Changes: By Generation
Reasons for Menu Changes: By Segment
Standardized Recipe Decisions
Manufacturer Selection Criteria: Total Sample
Manufacturer Selection Criteria: Commentary on Generational and Segment Differences
Manufacturer Selection Criteria: Data Overview by Generation
Manufacturer Selection: Data Overview by Segment
Approval Process Time by Segment
Roles Involved in Approval of New Products by Segment
Challenges to Introducing a New Product by Segment

APPENDIX

Generational Breakouts: Additional Detail on How Generations Were Defined
Regional Breakout of Respondent Operations by Segment
Additional Data: Chef Roles, Size of Operation, Ownership Model
Sub-Segments for FSR and Health Care Segments

Thank you for your business!