

Consumer Digest

Issue 1: 2026

Welcome to this edition of the Consumer Digest, our periodic newsletter where we provide relevant, informative, and actionable insights around consumer trends. This Snacks & Sweets Consumer Digest breaks down what's driving purchases, when are snacking decisions made and maps how seasonal moments like the Big Game, college basketball tournaments, and Valentine's Day shift what ends up in carts (and on coffee tables).

Planned at Home vs. Picked in Aisle: Before they ever hit the snack aisle, shoppers have already decided: the budget, the flavor, and the format. The brand, pack size, and how many? That's an in-aisle game-time call.



Flavor and Taste is the most important factor when choosing a snack.

Q: What are the top three most important factors you consider when choosing a snack? (n=400)

Top impulse trigger for snacks: it might not be on your list, but a sale in the aisle makes it a "yes."



1
Sale or promotion



2
Hunger or craving while shopping



3
New product caught my eye



4
In-Store displays



5
Personalized Coupon

Q: When you buy snacks on impulse (not planned ahead), what typically influences your decision? (n=400)

Ingredient claims — real, whole, and no artificial flavors — are the biggest factors in purchase decisions.

Made with real ingredients (74%)

Made without artificial ingredients, flavors or colors (59%)

Whole ingredients (51%)

Low or no added sugar (50%)

High Protein (47%)

Good source of fiber (46%)

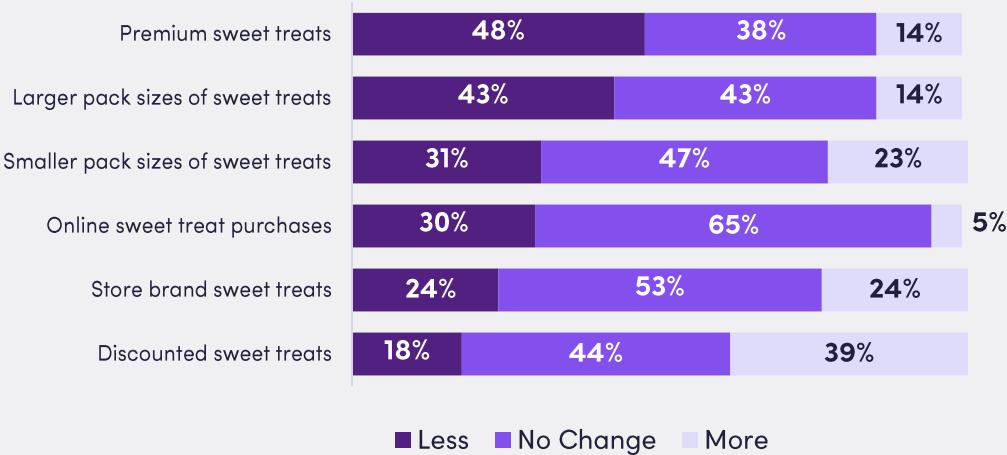
Q: How important are each of the following claims when you decide to purchase a snack? (n=400) *T3B% on a 7-point importance scale, 1=not important at all, 7=extremely important.

What's the Occasion? Why consumers buy sweet treats.

	Chocolate	Gummy Candies	Hard Candies	Baked Goods	Frozen Dessert
1	Personal Snacking	Personal Snacking	Personal Snacking	To Share	Personal Snacking
2	Comfort/Stress Relief	To Share	To Share	Personal Snacking	To Share
3	To Share	Movie/TV watching	Travel	Special Occasions	Post-meal treat

Q: Please select your primary reason for purchasing each of the following sweet treats. (n= 400)

Increased Price Impacts: Price hikes are curbing sweet treat splurges, hitting premium and larger pack sizes the hardest.



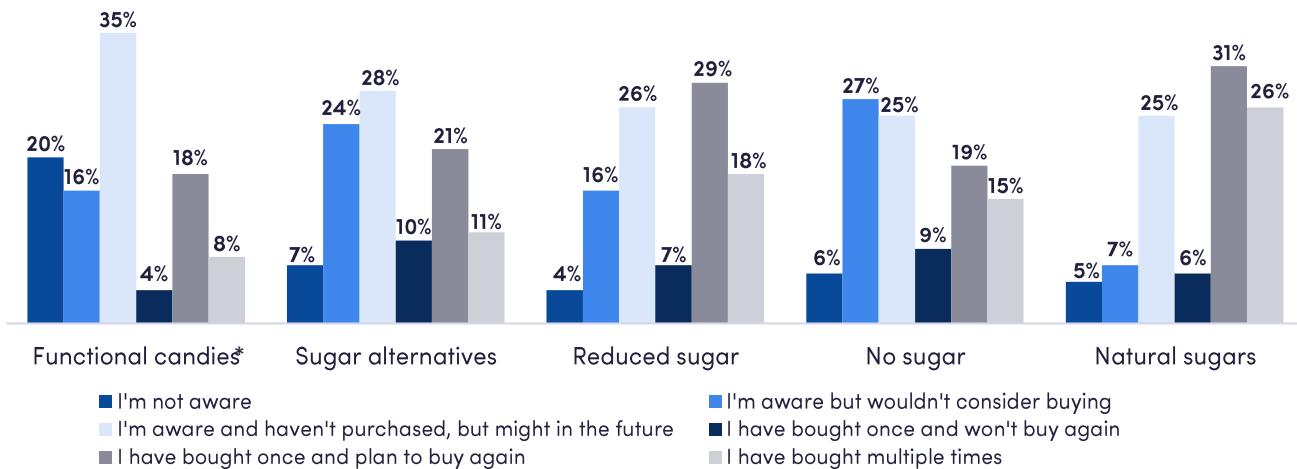
Price is the top barrier for purchasing sweet treats **MORE** often, but it **barely edges out health goals and sugar concerns** (only by 2%).

[CHART] Q: How have recent price increases affected your candy buying habits, if at all? (n= 400) *Less= Purchase significantly less and slightly less of this, More= purchase significantly more and slightly more of this.

[CALLOUT] Q: What is the biggest factor that prevents you from buying sweet treats more often? (n=400)



Awareness is sweet, conversion is sweeter: Better-for-you candy has strong awareness, creating larger opportunity for conversion.



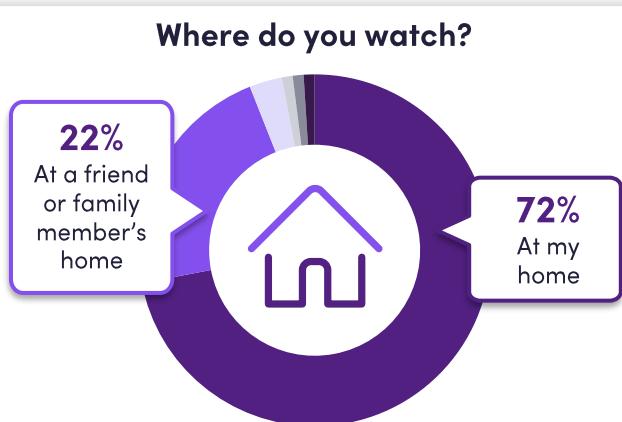
Q: When grocery shopping, which of the following best describes your experience with each of the following Better-For-You (BFY) candy options? (n= 400)

*Functional candies are candies that have added health-related ingredients, such as vitamins, probiotics, and protein.

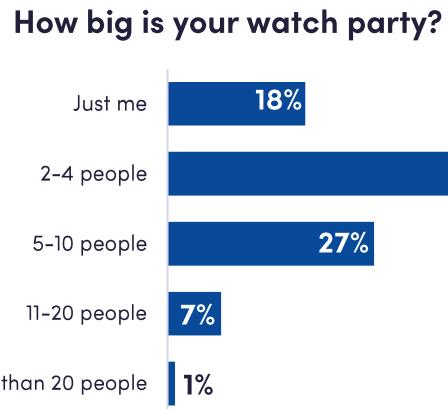
SEASONAL SNACKING MOMENTS

83% of households plan to watch the Big Game this year — here is where they plan to watch & how many people they plan to watch with:

Q: Which of the following do you plan on watching or celebrating this year? (n=400)

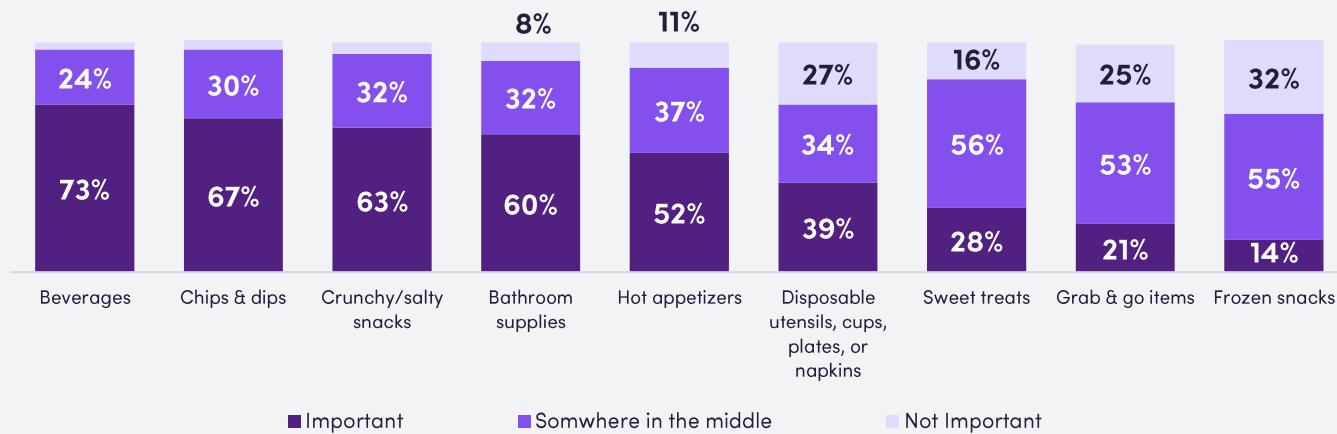


*Q: Where do you typically watch the Super Bowl? Households who plan to watch the big game (n=332) *data labels < 3% have been removed from the chart.*



Q: What is the typical size of your Super Bowl gathering? Households watching the big game at home or at a friend/family member's home (n=311).

Most households plan their menu & purchase items for the Big Game the week of — but which items are essential to the celebration?



[HEADLINE Q: *How far in advance do you typically do each of the following for your Superbowl gathering? Households watching the big game at home or at a friend or family member's home (n=311).*

[CHART] Q: How important is it to have each of the following items at your Super Bowl gathering? Households watching the big game at home or at a friend/family member's home (n=311). *Based on 7-point importance scale T2B% = Important, M3B% = Somewhere in the middle, & B2B% = Not Important. Data labels <5% have been removed from the chart.

3451°

True or False? How people say the Big Game impacts their snacking habits vs. reality:

CLAIMED BEHAVIOR	TRUE	FALSE	THE FACTS
"I plan ahead" (52%)			Average weekly sales are 1.1x in the 4 weeks leading up to the Big Game
"I buy larger sizes" (44%)			\$/unit are the same during Big Game week as average
"I spend more" (37%)			\$/HH are 7.5x during Big Game week vs. average
"I stock up more" (33%)			Units/HH are 8x during Big Game week vs. average

Q: How does the Super Bowl influence your normal snacking habits? Households watching the big game at home or at a friend/family member's home (n=311). 84.5% Stratum: Fiscal 2025, Bagged Snacks

Most college basketball tournament viewers are casual, final game followers.



50%

I follow casually, mostly the final rounds



32%

I follow regularly, watching many games



18%

I'm a highly engaged fan, watching most games

Q: How closely do you follow the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (March Madness)? Households who plan to watch March Madness (n=171).

Top items purchased for the tournament viewing:

1. Chips/Salty Snacks
2. Beer/Alcohol
3. Dips/Spreads
4. Pizza
5. Soft-Drinks
6. Wings/Chicken

Q: Thinking about March Madness, which of these food and beverage categories do you usually buy specifically for the games? Households who plan to watch March Madness (n=171).



Last year, Kroger sold **20M+ bags of chips** during the tournament.



71% of households plan to celebrate Valentine's Day this year.

Q: Which of the following do you plan on watching or celebrating this year? (n=400)



77% plan to celebrate with a Significant Other



30% plan to celebrate with their Children

[RIGHT] Q: Who are you planning to celebrate with this Valentine's Day? Households that plan to celebrate Valentine's Day this year (n=282).

[LEFT] Q: How are you planning to celebrate Valentine's Day year? Households that plan to celebrate Valentine's Day this year with children (n=85), with significant other (n=216).

How do they plan to celebrate?



■ Their Children ■ Significant Other

Top items in planned Valentine's baskets mirror how households intend to celebrate – buying sweet treats and ingredients for a special at-home meal.

PLANNED BASKETS



- Chocolate Candies/Boxes
- Greeting Cards
- Fresh Flowers
- Baked Goods
- Wine/Champagne
- Fresh Meat/Seafood

CONSUMER'S PLANS TO FOLLOW THROUGH AT CHECK OUT:



- Packaged Candy Sales are **2x** average week
- Greeting Card Sales are **3x** average week
- Fresh Flower Sales are **4.5x** average week
- Baked Sweet Goods Sales are **1.3X** average week

Q: Which of the following do you plan to purchase for Valentine's Day this year? Households who plan to celebrate Valentine's Day (n=282), 84.51° Stratum, Fiscal 2025.

Key brand takeaways



Households know which Snack Brand(s) they plan to buy prior to their trip—ensure you are in their consideration set by leveraging **Connected TV**. But don't worry, they can be swayed mid-purchase, if the price is right, consider **TDCs** a known point of conversion and claimed impulse purchase driver.



Price is the top barrier to buying sweets more often, and recent hikes are prompting households to dial back the splurge. Highlight budget-right pack sizes via **PLAs** and use consumer research to fine-tune occasion-based messaging.



Most households already know what they'll buy for upcoming moments like the Big Game and Valentine's Day. Make sure your products make the basket—and the celebration—by using early reminders via **TOA** and **Display**, backed by timely promotions and offers when they are purchasing.

Dig deeper with 84.51° Consumer Research & Digital Journey

84.51° Consumer Research

- Hear from **verified shoppers** about their snack preferences (taste, flavors, etc.) to inform innovation.
- Understand **the occasion** for your sweets to inform strong messaging that resonates.



Customer Journey

- Dive into the Customer to **understand if they switch from traditional candy to better-for-you, and stay in better-for-you**.
- Drive **new household acquisition** with your products by understanding how they enter a product group through pricing, promotions, modality and multiplicity.

Connect with us at Insights@8451.com

Drive awareness & consideration for your brand's Snacks with Connected TV

Connected TV (CTV) advertising reaches audiences streaming premium content through apps on smart TVs or over-the-top (OTT) devices, with ads served before programming or during traditional commercial breaks.

Drive awareness for your brand by tapping into viewers who have cut the cord—or never subscribed to cable—in a big-screen, brand-safe environment.



- **Generate awareness**—Reach a captive, lean-back audience at scale, ensuring your brand remains top-of-mind
- **Showcase** your products in premium, **high-attention environments** where consumers are actively engaged. **Drive consumer interest and inspire action** by strategically placing your ads within trusted, brand-safe streaming content

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Increase Game Day Snacks & Sweets Trial with Targeted Digital Coupons

Leverage Targeted Digital Coupons to create custom, tailored digital-only offers that utilize 84.51° personalization sciences to deliver your campaign specific objectives.



- **Give households a chance to try your products with lower cost risk.** Connect with shoppers at the point of purchase to secure conversions and reward them for their brand loyalty with savings.
- **Recommended:** Campaign length 4–6 weeks, with a 2-week post-period redemption window.
- **Drive stronger sales uplift with media amplification** and 84.51° Collaborative Cloud: 6.64x aROAS, 0.94x iROAS, +18.31% Sales uplift.

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Boost Snacks & Sweets visibility via Product Listing Ads

Product Listing Ads are a pay-per-click solution where brands can set a bid price to **boost individual products across highly trafficked placements in search results** and other customized carousels across Kroger.com and mobile app.



- **Basket Builder:** Get your items in the basket via personalized, science-driven carousels across the site & app.
- **Search & Browse:** Boost your brands while users are actively shopping and adding items to their cart.
- **Savings:** Remove the high price perception barrier for sweets with sales or digital coupons.

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