



## Microsizing: The Smaller, the Better

Microsizing is the new right-sizing as the move toward “less is more” breaks the gravitational pull of “bigger is better” for Americans. There are Minis on highways, Nanos in pockets and micro-TV series online. But it’s in the food industry where consumers’ continuing desire for fresh experiences, a growing sensitivity to consuming too much and a new consciousness about spending converge to create an environment that’s ripe for an explosion of huge opportunities in the world of itty-bitty offerings. This week’s MONITOR Minute looks at the growing trend among consumers to “think small.”

## Wanted: Bite-Sized Indulgences

When it comes to buying food and beverages today, consumers are increasingly aware that they no longer have to settle for the one-size-fits-all approach. Many are now looking for a reprieve from, or at least reconsidering, large portions. They’re realizing that if they don’t want to commit to an entire entrée or dessert, they can still satisfy their cravings with other choices that provide just enough (for example, “small plates,” “100-calorie packs” or “bite-sized desserts”).

## Many Reasons Why

This trend was caused in part by health-conscious consumers trying to lose weight and avoid carbs, and what better way to do that than by eating smaller portions? With microsized portions, customers can still indulge without sabotaging their diets. They can be decadent and sinful but in a controlled setting, and they can fight the urge for more by limiting themselves to what’s in front of them. But while this trend initially might have been about weight management, the “itty-bitty” idea has caught on beyond those who are merely weight-conscious and has been influenced by other factors as well, all of which represent intriguing opportunities for marketers.

Some people are philosophically opposed to overconsumption and believe that Americans consume more than our fair share of the world’s resources. In general, consumers are tired of being force-fed options (such as portion

### Industry Responsibility?

62% of consumers agree that the food and beverage industry should take more responsibility for helping solve obesity problems in America (up from 56% in 2005).

### Did You Know?

In 2006, sales of 100-calorie snack packs by such companies as Frito-Lay, Pepperidge Farm and Hershey grew nearly 30%, while the snack industry as a whole grew just 3.5%. <sup>(1)</sup>

According to the National Restaurant Association’s 2007 “What’s Hot & What’s Not Chef Survey,” 83% of chefs rated bite-sized desserts and 73% rated small plates/tapas/mezze as “hot.” <sup>(2)</sup>

### Quote of Note

“The trend of small plates is definitely hot, including offering tasting menus of small portions

sizes) that they don't want. Instead, consumers are intent on extracting the "bits and bites" across a variety of options to create those that work best for them (a mindset captured in the MONITOR Vital Sign of **Splicing**). Mini-options provide more flexibility for cobbling together a meal that's personally satisfying. So if they want cheesecake but don't want an entire slice, they're going to find the restaurant that lets them order just the sliver. In addition, customers today are hunting for what's original or unique, and with smaller options come the potential for increased variety. With mini-portions, consumers may feel emboldened to sample unusual or exotic fare.

of food, wine or other alcohol beverages."

—Chef John Kinsella,  
president of the  
American Culinary Federation <sup>(3)</sup>

## Implications and Opportunities

- **Bring back the "small" size.** Instead of offering only the ubiquitous medium, large or extra-large options, reintroduce the traditional smaller choice.
- **Play up "cute."** For many, there is an aesthetic appeal to these mini things.
- **Go even smaller.** Think about taking the itty-bitty concept to the extreme—go beyond small to ultra-small.

## Bottom Line

For a variety of reasons, consumers are increasingly intrigued with micro-sized options. "Bigger is better" has led to "That's too much." Mega-products don't help consumers keep the weight off or meet their specific needs; they don't help them sift through the surplus and find what's meaningful or unique; and they don't help them indulge responsibly. Today, there's ample opportunity for marketers to find creative ways to offer "less" and "think small."

## Running with It

- At the Timpano Chophouse & Martini Bar chain, patrons can request the shot-glass sized crème brulee or chocolate mousse. Price: \$1.95. <sup>(4)</sup>
- In Canada, Molson has responded to the mini-can trend by offering a pair of its top-selling beers in slim 8-oz. cans called "Cold Shots." <sup>(5)</sup>
- At the Five Star Bar and Grill in Chicago, mini-sandwiches are on the menu (including mini versions of hamburgers, cheeseburgers, sloppy joes and pulled-pork sandwiches) for 50 cents each. <sup>(6)</sup>
- Starbucks is testing a "short" \$1 cup for brewed coffee in its Seattle-area stores. <sup>(7)</sup>

## MONITOR Resources

MONITOR 2007/2008 State of the Consumer Report: "Splicing" and "Upside of Obscurity"

MONITOR Minute: "nanoWorld," 04.03.06

## Sources

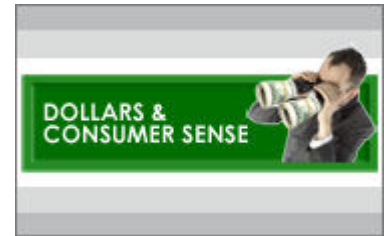
1. "Bite-Size Snack Packs Attract Big Following," *The New York Times News Service*, 07.07.07
2. "2007 What's Hot & What's Not Chef Survey," National

### FEATURED PRODUCTS



Restaurant Association, October 2007

3. "Small Is Big on Restaurant Menus, and Craft Beer Tops Beverage Trend, National Restaurant Association Research Finds," National Restaurant Association Press Release, 11.29.07
4. "Living Large by Going Small," *Houston Chronicle*, 01.18.06
5. "Mini Cans Live Large," brandchannel.com, 04.10.06
6. "Small Bites, Big Savings: Mini-Meal Deals to Help You Stick to Your Budget," Metromix Chicago, 01.07.08
7. "Starbucks Testing \$1 Coffee, Free Refills," *The Wall Street Journal*, 01.23.08



Yankelovich web site // contact us // unsubscribe //  
© 2008 by Yankelovich, Inc. // 400 Meadowmont Village Circle, Suite 431, Chapel Hill, NC 27517