

Texture Unlocks the Emotion in Snacking

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As the culinary world is experiencing and experimenting with brand new discoveries in the realm of “mouthfeel,” texture is of the utmost importance. While we don’t know as much as we should about what allows the right texture to take a bite from enjoyable to craveable, there are a few textures that have that undeniably addicting mouthfeel.



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Back to that funny word – mouthfeel. Let’s consider for a moment what happens in the mouth when you chew. A tremendous amount of activity can occur between first touching the lips or tongue and swallowing. It’s an orchestra of biting, chewing, nudging, and shifting. This experience is extremely emotional as well. The satisfaction of chewing a larger bite down to a smaller one makes you more alert and engages the senses in a multitude of ways. Conversely, scientists have known for years that sipping or sucking a more viscous liquid can calm you down and in some cases create a sense of peace. And, let’s not

forget the satisfaction of crunch. Scientists at The University of Leeds conducted a study that determined as the volume of the sound of crunching increased so did peoples enjoyment of the snack. All of this occurs in consumers’ mouths, with every bite.

If this is so important then why do we spend so little time talking about textures in our snacks? While some cultures are more texturally simplistic when it comes to descriptors, according to the book *Mouthfeel: How Texture Makes Taste*, the Japanese have 400 words to describe texture, plus three different words for mouthfeel. It’s high time the rest of the world started exploring some of the new ways to play with textures to unlock these emotional snacking moments.

Let’s end on the emotional side by looking at four chewing styles and the perfect snack to accompany each represented by the multifaceted almond. According to researchers behind the book *Food Texture Design and Optimization* there are four types of chewing preferences.



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“Chewers” prefer that emotional satisfaction come through leisurely chewing snacks over an extended period of time. Think Almond Butter Bites, for example. These delicious snacks made with almonds, almond butter, dates and chocolate chips are not only healthy but also dense enough to delight the Chewers for that nice long flavor download they covet.



“Crunchers” love the primal sensation of biting into a crunchy snack. The vibration of the bite surrounds their head and closes out the rest of the world. They prefer snacks that respond with a resounding crunch, like dry-roasted almonds or nut mixes that offer various levels of crunch.

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“Suckers” prefer foods which dissolve slowly or change over time. This group loves texture that is slightly crispier than the Chewers or Crunchers. They have an almost sensual relationship with their snacks. Desiring the immediate release of flavor that becomes something else as they savor it in their mouths. Sweet & Spicy Almonds are the perfect snack for this group as the initial hit of sweet releases into the sting of heat, delighting their taste buds.

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The last group is the “Smooshers.” This group prefers soft creamy foods that spread flavor across all areas of the mouth. They are the snackers with the least desired amount of texture resistance. Creamy texture is most associated with food that is high in fat, which consequently means high flavor and satisfaction. The easy solution here would be an almond milk smoothie with fresh fruit. Another wonderful snack choice for the Smoosher is Almond Butter & Jelly Cups. This indulgent creamy center chocolate cup drives flavor across the entire mouth allowing the Smoosher the full flavor and creamy almond texture they desire.

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