



**Bluegrass**  
INGREDIENTS®

CLEAR,  
ACTIONABLE  
DETAILS

MORE COMFORTABLE  
BOOTH EXPERIENCE

SEAMLESS WAY TO REACH  
THE RIGHT PERSON

## Dispatches from IFT First: Evolving Food Trends and a Continued Focus on Gen-Z

IFT First once again reaffirmed its reputation as a destination food manufacturing conference, with thousands of culinary experts, R&D professionals, foodies, and hungry attendees descending on Chicago for the multi-day event. With IFT First 2023 in the rearview mirror, it's a good opportunity to look back on the conference and some key learnings about where the industry is focused now – and where it's headed.

### Trending Ingredients and Culinary Approaches Continue

By and large, many of the [trending topics](#) at IFT First were aligned with what the industry has been talking about for the last several months – and beyond. Plant-based products were a popular topic.

**The same goes for plant-based meat – although the tone around that particular offering continues to evolve.**

References to “lab meat” and “frankenmeat” could be heard, a sign that the industry and consumers are still grappling with how to position and enjoy the meat alternatives that have seen their [popularity wane](#) over the last year or two.

At the same time, sustainability was a common thread throughout sessions and exhibits. The industry is still very uncertain with how to make their offerings and partnerships more beneficial for people and the planet. At the same time, companies across the value chain are looking for innovative ways to tell their sustainability story to customers and consumers.



## Gen-Z's Influence Looms Large

One oft-discussed industry trend on full display at IFT First was the [increasing influence](#) Gen-Z has on everything from product concepting to tradeshow dynamics. At the conference, all of Gen-Z's influence fell into two broad categories – eating and shopping trends and conference engagement trends.

## Gen-Z Eating and Shopping Trends

Here's a rundown of some of the most prominent trends in Gen-Z eating habits that were on display at IFT in various ways.

- **Following a diet or eating pattern** – About 75% of Gen-Z stick to a specific diet or follow an eating pattern, [according to Food Insight](#). That includes clean eating, mindful eating, and plant-based eating.
- **Snacking** – More eating opportunities throughout the day and less emphasis on traditional mealtimes continues to be a defining trend for younger people. More so than older generations, Gen-Zers tend to prioritize healthier snacks that fit in with their busy and nonconventional schedules.
- **Customized meals and flavors** – Conventional menu items like pizza and burgers (with the right ingredient tweaks) are still popular with Gen-Z, but a [ToastTab survey](#) found that customizable versions of these classics are gaining traction for their ability to be tailored to specific dietary preferences and flavor cravings.
- **Greater trust in family and friends (and social media)** – More than their parents and grandparents, Gen-Z individuals are more likely to trust the recommendations of family and friends than marketing pushes and so-called experts. They also look to their network of friends and influencers on social media for new food experiences.

## Gen-Z Engagement Trends

Each year, conferences add technological capabilities.

**Can you even imagine attending a conference without a smart phone these days?**

Just from walking the tradeshow floor and attending the sessions at IFT, it was clear that Gen-Z were most likely to not just engage with these technologies but expect them. As this generation takes over a greater portion of the food industry, digital tools for connecting and collaborating will be essential.



## Bluegrass Ingredients' Digital-first Booth Delivers

IFT First marked a first for Bluegrass Ingredients – our first “[digital-first](#)” [tradeshow booth](#). We spend a lot of time at tradeshows, and we wouldn't trade the insights and connections to be found there for anything. They're invaluable to our work. At the same time conferences have a lot of downtime and awkward time spent seeking out meaningful connections and forging new relationships.

### So we set about creating a set of criteria for a better tradeshow booth:

1. It offers a more comfortable booth experience.
2. It offers clear, actionable details on who Bluegrass is, our products, and how we work.
3. It offers a seamless way to reach the right person on our team and set up a time to connect.
4. It offers a fun and legitimate giveaway that rewards people for taking the time to check us out.

The result? A resounding success. It turns out people were eager to learn a bit more about us without the pressure of an awkward conversation or a promise to share more information.

But the lasting impact amounts to more than just avoiding awkward conversations. Gen-Z is playing a bigger role in our industry every day – their preferences are shaping how we interact, how we cook, and how we create. That influence is only going to increase as time goes on and Gen-Z careers accelerate. Digital-first isn't just a tradeshow tactic or an engagement campaign – it's how our entire industry should be thinking about our offering and our organization.



The **Agile Kitchen at Bluegrass™** is a creative space that blends innovation and insights to deliver formulations and products that align with pressing consumer trends. Bluegrass Ingredients food scientists and culinary experts partner with customers to use these powders and all our products to invent and improve the future of food.

### Creating Great Flavors

Bluegrass Ingredients operates at the cutting edge of taste and flavor trends. **The Bluegrass Agile Ingredient Innovation®** Model is custom built to help brands and flavor houses achieve the rapid food innovation they need to stay ahead of today's dynamic consumer taste and dietary demands.

#### Contact Us

- 🌐 [Bluegrassingredients.com](https://bluegrassingredients.com)
- ✉ [info@bluegrassingredients.com](mailto:info@bluegrassingredients.com)
- ☎ Sales Inquiries: +1-270-297-7850
- 📍 801 State Street  
Bowling Green, KY 42101
- 🌐 [LinkedIn](#) 📧 [Newsletter](#)