



# Cooking Trends Among Millennials: Welcome to the Digital Kitchen

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Millennials are bringing their I-want-to-do attitudes and their mobile devices into the kitchen. They're turning to mobile at every phase of the cooking journey—deciding what to make, learning how to prepare it, and actually cooking or baking—and smart brands are there to help in each micro-moment.

think with **Google**

**M**illennials ask lots of questions in the kitchen, but maybe none more frequently than: “Where do I put my phone so I don’t spill on it?”

Through research with mcgarrybowen and Kraft Foods, we found that, while people over 35 are more likely to print out a recipe,<sup>1</sup> 59% of 25- to 34-year-olds cook with either their smartphones or tablets handy.<sup>2</sup>

The smartphone is becoming the ultimate sous-chef for millennials who are taking an [I-want-to-do](#) attitude into the kitchen. Our research indicates that online 25- to 34-year-olds (how we’re defining millennials here) prefer the culinary process as much as the finished dish: They want to dive into everything, experiment with new recipes, and learn new skills.<sup>3</sup>

“We see through secondary research that millennials are cooking more,” says Anna Conroy, planning director for mcgarrybowen. “It isn’t a chore as much as an ability to create an experience.”

In many [micro-moments](#), they’re turning to mobile to get all the information and guidance they need. We’ve boiled this fragmented consumer journey down to three major phases—from that initial spark to preparation to the actual cooking. And we’ll serve up some key takeaways for brands that want to reach millennials at the important moments leading up to mealtime.

**“59% of 25- to 34-year-olds head to the kitchen with either their smartphones or tablets.”**

## The spark phase

The cooking journey starts with a spark—a curiosity about *what* to cook. These what-do-I-make moments can be confusing to millennials, with 31% of them saying that choosing what to cook was the least enjoyable part of the cooking process.<sup>3</sup>

They turn to search for help, and the top 100 food search terms tend to be broad in nature (“dinner ideas,” “healthy recipes,” and “slow cooker recipes,” for example).<sup>4</sup> Search interest for “best recipes” on YouTube is up 48% year over year.<sup>5</sup>

### Top “Best Recipe” Searches



#### 1. best chocolate chip cookie recipe

2. best banana bread recipe

3. best meatloaf recipe

4. best pancake recipe

5. best lasagna recipe

6. best mac and cheese recipe

7. best burger recipe

8. best chili recipe

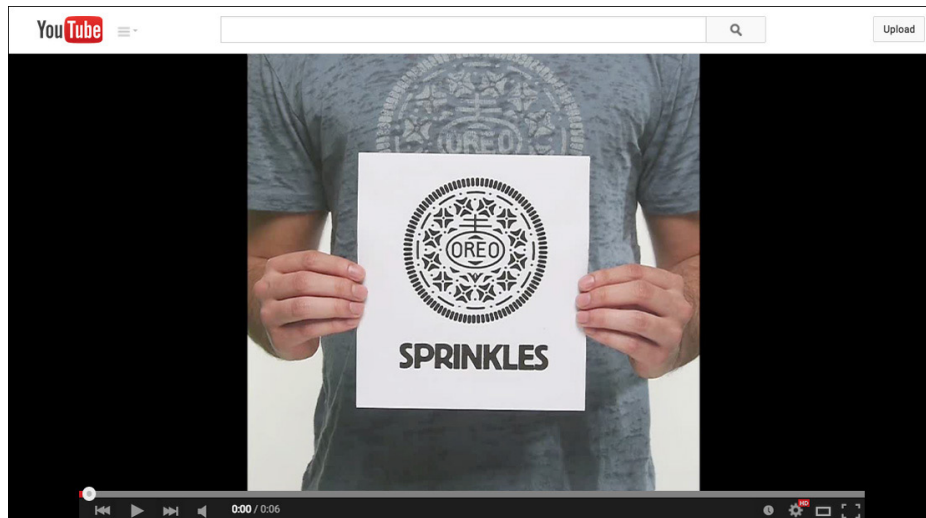
9. best margarita recipe

10. best baked pork chop recipe

Source: Google Data, April 2015, United States.

While nearly one-third of millennials say they don’t enjoy choosing what to cook, it certainly doesn’t deter them from being creative. Our research shows that, for a quarter of online millennials, the most important part of cooking is adding a personal touch to make a recipe unique.<sup>6</sup> Take food hacks, kitchen tricks that make cooking easier and more fun, for instance. Forty-one percent of the millennials we surveyed are interested in them.<sup>6</sup> Popular examples range from coffee hacks to Oreo hacks.<sup>7</sup> YouTube creator [CrazyRussianHacker](#) is a master of the food hack genre. His [“Food Life Hacks” playlist](#)—where he teaches his fans how to do everything from cook eggs in the microwave to awesome ways to cut a watermelon—has more than 545K views (at the time of writing).

Click through  
for "[Oreo Snack  
Hacks: Sprinkles](#)"



And if the finished product isn't perfect, so be it: Ninety-two percent said they were satisfied even if there were mistakes.<sup>8</sup>

**For brands:** Tap into millennials' curiosity—and their broad recipe searches—with specific cooking ideas. Perhaps a hackable salmon recipe in response to a "healthy recipes" search. Turn the stressful experience of deciding what to make for dinner into a fun exploration.

What will people bring to all of those block parties, potlucks, and Fourth of July fetes this summer? Here are the top trending foods and drinks on Google:



#### Top Rising 4th of July Foods

Rice Krispie Treats (400%)  
Smoked Picnic Ham (100%)  
Cupcake Ideas (50%)  
Fruit Pizza (25%)  
Picnic Salads (18%)



#### Top Rising Summer Recipes

Zucchini (82%)  
Dump Cake (548%)  
Quinoa Salad (191%)  
Cauliflower (73%)  
Stuffed Chicken Breast (134%)



#### Top Rising Summer Drinks

Moscow Mule (176%)  
Hibiscus Tea (56%)  
Banana Smoothie (0.39%)  
Bahama Mama (6%)  
Cold Brew Coffee (43%)

*Note: Percentages represent year-over-year growth.*

Source: Google Data, July–August 2013 and July–August 2014, United States.

## The preparation phase

Once the evening's menu is set, the how-do-I-actually-make-it moment strikes, and millennials look for help on Google Search or YouTube.

Millennials have [subscribed en masse to food channels on YouTube](#), and 75% of the growth in viewership is coming from mobile devices.<sup>9</sup> How-to content related to food on YouTube is incredibly popular, with 419M views in 2014.<sup>10</sup> "How to cook that" is one of the ten most popular how-to searches on YouTube (behind "how to draw," "how to kiss," and "how to tie a tie").<sup>11</sup> It's also the name of a popular [YouTube food channel](#), where Ann Reardon dishes out whimsical desserts weekly to more than 1.6M fans (at the time of writing).

And keep in mind that these searchers aren't necessarily experts in the kitchen, so they're often looking for practical advice. A timely example: As summer approaches, expect a huge spike for "how to cut a watermelon," as we've seen for the past few summers.<sup>12</sup> (And don't miss CrazyRussianHacker's food hack mentioned above!)

### Trending "*How to Make the Best*" Searches on Google



#### 1. **baked potatoes**

2. quesadilla
3. poached eggs
4. buttercream icing
5. burger patties

6. steak in the oven
7. michelada
8. pour over coffee
9. mac n cheese
10. french press

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Source: Google Data, January–May 2014 and January–May 2015, United States. Trending searches are those with strongest YoY growth.

When they do go beyond the basics, it's usually in search of an unique ingredient or a new flavor. And this adventurousness extends to

millennials' choice in brands: Forty percent of millennials said they choose a brand featured in a recipe because it adds a unique flavor.<sup>13</sup>

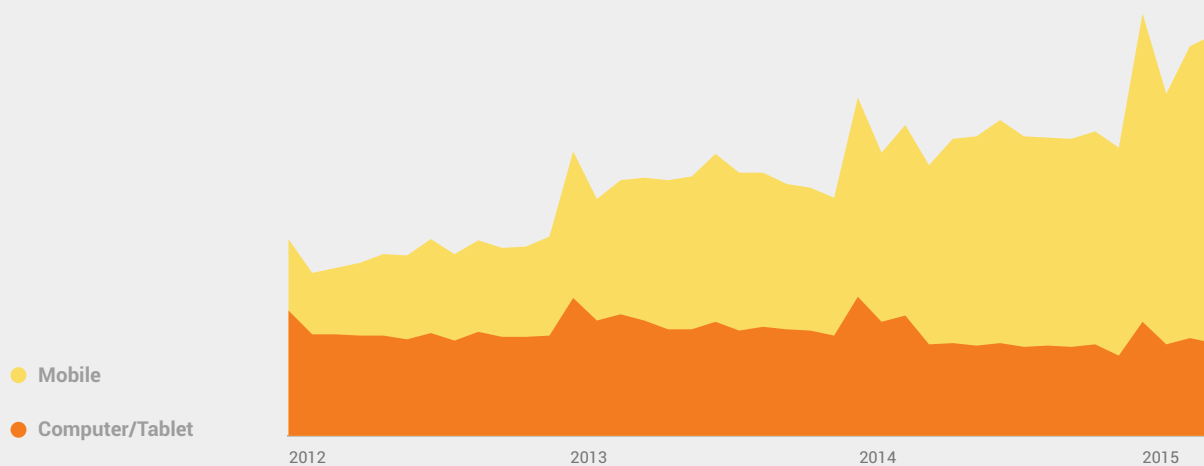
**For brands:** Be there during the discovery *and* consideration stages. It's not just about your product, but what millennials can do with that ingredient or tool. Help them develop the techniques required to make interesting meals with your product.

## The cooking phase

In the kitchen, the am-I-making-this-right moments strike, and millennials search for guidance. Questions like "What temperature to bake chicken?" are increasingly asked from mobile devices (see chart), and 68% of [millennial moms](#) said that they also watch videos while cooking.<sup>9</sup> And if hands are occupied, voice search becomes indispensable: Twenty-three percent of adults [use it while cooking](#).

While they wait for the oven to preheat, maybe they realize they're running low on salt. That's a potential [I-want-to-buy moment](#) for brands. In fact, 39% of consumers report having made a purchase of some kind from their kitchens.<sup>14</sup>

### Searches Related to Chicken Temperature



Source: Google Data, January 2012–April 2015, United States.



Now, where are the dinner guests? More than likely, they're in the kitchen, too. Millennials aren't cooking alone; 27% said they were likely to be sharing the experience with a spouse, friend, or child.<sup>1</sup> This is helping millennials see cooking as an opportunity to spend quality time with family and friends, not as a chore—something Kraft has seen. "For Kraft, we believe it's about not only asking what we can do to help consumers create a better dish—but what we can do to help consumers achieve a better experience across the board," says mcgarrybowen's Conroy.

**For brands:** The cooking journey doesn't end once the ingredients have been bought and the pans are in place. Think beyond the recipe and how-tos, and consider ways to promote a fun and social cooking experience for millennials, whether their family and friends are in the kitchen or across the country.



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## Sources

- 1 Google Consumer Survey, May 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=502. Thirty-three percent said "printed recipe," 22% said "cell phone," 20% said "tablet."
- 2 Google Consumer Survey, January 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=550.
- 3 Google Consumer Survey, January 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=1,657.
- 4 Google Search Data, January–December 2014, United States.

- 5 Google Trends, January–May 2014 and January–May 2015, United States.
- 6 Google Consumer Survey, January 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=663.
- 7 Google Search Data, April 2015, United States.
- 8 Google Consumer Survey, January 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=460.
- 9 Millward Brown Digital/Firefly/Google, YouTube Food, May 2014. Based on millennials ages 18-34.
- 10 YouTube Data, 2014, United States. Classification as a "how to" video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every "how to" instructional video available on YouTube.
- 11 YouTube Data, 2015, United States.
- 12 Google Trends, January 2013–May 2015, United States.
- 13 Google Consumer Survey, January 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=483.
- 14 Google Consumer Survey, April 2015. Based on U.S. online population, n=1509.