

Meat must be marketed differently to every generation

By [Janie Gabbett](#) on 3/9/2009

DENVER — Just as each generation has its own music, movies and worldview shaped by the times, each generation also has its own attitudes about food and must be marketed to accordingly, author and speaker on generational marketing Neil Howe told attendees at the Annual Meat Conference here.

The silent generation

Howe identified "the silent generation" — encompassing those who are now between 66 and 83 years of age — as the most upwardly mobile of all the generations. They grew up in a strong middle class, got married and had children young, and enjoyed high civic trust. Living through the McCarthy era, they prefer not to make waves.

Howe said while this generation witnessed a great explosion in processed food production, this was also a generation of fine dining with a cosmopolitan palate.

"They like to cook," said Howe, noting that social eating from restaurant dining to tailgate parties to extended family meals are all important to this group. Therefore, meat product marketing around these themes would do well with this demographic.

Baby boomers

Howe noted that "baby boomers" (now 48 to 65 years old) famously rejected authority and exhibits low civic trust. The original "me" generation, they believe in individualism and have a strong values orientation.

Marketing to these individuals should appeal to their causes, their values and sell them on the experience. "They don't buy a briefcase, they buy a briefcase experience," Howe quipped.

Their food themes include grazing, take-out food and health food. Howe suggests marketing meat as healthy and natural. "Without a positive values message, they will assume you are hiding a negative," warned Howe.

Generation X

This group (now 27 to 47 years old) doesn't even like to be associated with a generation. They grew up while divorce rates were rising, schools were declining and child-rearing was losing its societal appeal. These former latch-key kids have the lowest civic trust of any generation.

Their food themes include convenience, efficiency and cost. Casual restaurants and multi-cultural urban palates are associated with this group. Howe suggests marketing to them by appealing to need and "keeping it real." Appeal to their appetite, he said, and tell them how much food they are going to get.

Millennials

Howe defines millennials as those 26 years old or younger. He describes them as a generation that has been protected and treated like it was special by often over-involved baby boomer parents.

This generation is family- and team-oriented and wants a balanced life. While Generation X might have used technology to shield themselves from others, this generation has embraced technology like social networking Web sites to become and stay connected with others.

Their food themes include obesity, fitness and a global palate. Howe suggested marketing meat to them as part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle. He also suggested, similar to the silent generation, marketing cooking meat as a communal activity that can bring people together.