Breakfast and Snack Vie for Lifestyle Impact Award

The yearly Trend Award ceremony is only a few weeks away, and while the nominations have been announced, the winners have not yet been finalized. The categories include Best New Trend, Lifestyle Impact Award, Best New Packaging Trend, and the coveted Trend of the Year Award. The winners are determined based on a point system split between a panel of judges and call-in votes from fans following the final interview panel. Those nominated are put through an interview that is televised for the voting audience. Here is a peek at the final day of interviews.

The stage is overly bright, which makes it harder for nominees to see the studio audience but easier to focus on the judges. The nominees shift in their seats as the judges enter the stage and cross to their seats while the audience cheers. Nominees have been told they will be judged in tandem interviews instead of separately this year. Many of the entrants have left already, having survived their cross examinations, and just two remain to convince the judges they deserve to win the Lifestyle Impact Award. Judge #1 motions to the audience for quiet and addresses the two nominees—Snack and Breakfast.

Judge #1: “Thank you for coming, we will try to make this as painless as possible,” he says with a smile. “As you know, you will both be asked questions in three areas—your ties to health, consumer interest, and government activity surrounding your specific trend. Let’s start with government, shall we? Breakfast, why don’t you begin—what has been the recent activity around government and you?”

Breakfast: “Oh, well, the USDA and I go waaaayyy back. But most recently, the states of Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee were selected to participate in the first year of a universal free meal service option under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which I am a part of. North Carolina is also considering a bill to establish statewide nutrition guidelines for food sold in schools, which of course I am sure I will benefit from.”

Judge #2: “Are we to understand that your only interactions with government primarily involve the National School Lunch Program?”

Both nominees nod.

Judge #2: “Let’s move on to consumer interest.

Judge #1: “Yes, how do consumers feel about you both?”

Snack: “Packaged Facts reported that U.S. retail sales of packaged snacks grew to $64 billion in 2010 and are expected to reach $77 billion by 2015. And, Market Force Information reported that consumers prefer certain private-label products over others, including snacks. Also, researchers with the American Dietetic Association found that kids are replacing breakfast and dinner with snacks more often now. Busy lifestyles have driven consumers away from traditional meals toward quick, convenient foods, helping growth in the global snack foods market, according to Global Industry Analysts (GIA). GIA reported that the global snack food market is likely to be worth as much as $334 billion by 2015.”

Breakfast: “While Snack has excellent support, Mintel reported that 66% of customers want restaurants to give them healthier breakfast options, and Pinnacle Foods found that 94% consumers start the day with breakfast and that 56% make an effort to choose breakfast options they feel good about. Industry loves me too, as QSR magazine states, approximately 47% of all commercial foodservice units currently have at least some breakfast items. And, don’t forget the Kellogg study that reported 34% of adults eat breakfast daily.”

Judge #1: “Very good, that leaves us with your ties to health. What do you have to offer regarding clinical research?”

Breakfast can hardly contain herself—her biggest problem is where to start, as she has years of clinical research she can reference. Consumers of breakfast commonly have a lower body mass index (BMI) and better cognitive function compared with those

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who skip breakfast. Best to stick with the last six months to begin with and then add to it if need be—yes, good strategy she decides.

In contrast, this is the portion of the interview Snack has been least looking forward to. Clinical research is not as friendly to him as it is to Breakfast. At first Snack was touted as the great hope for obesity based on the theory that if snacks were to replace meals fewer calories would be consumed during the day. But, that’s not how things have shaken out. Snack instead has found himself at the center of a mixed bag of research—some favoring his weight loss prowess and aid in mental focus, while other studies have pointed to him as a cause for rising obesity because, as it turns out, consumers have continued to eat three traditional meals while adding snacks to their day.

**Breakfast:** “The majority of clinical research shows that consumers who eat breakfast have a lower BMI, but until recently it was not clear why. It was the University of Missouri that reported that skipping breakfast increases the brain activity that drives eating. Researchers from the University of Nottingham found subjects who skipped breakfast consumed more calories later in the day and surpassed energy intake levels compared with those who did not skip breakfast.”

**Judge #3:** “You forgot to mention what researchers at the Center of Nutritional Medicine in Munich found.”

**Breakfast:** “Oh, well yes, they reported that eating a bigger breakfast doesn’t reduce the number of daily calories consumed. However, the University of Pennsylvania found the exact opposite. And, in my defense, this isn’t representative of the majority of studies. Eating breakfast has also been shown to improve mental focus, memory, and cognitive function among the Gen Y, Gen Z, Baby Boomer, and WWII generations. Researchers at the University of Tasmania also have reported that skipping breakfast may increase the risk of heart disease.”

**Judge #3:** “Snack, what would you like to offer?”

**Snack:** “The most recent research by the Universite Libre de Brazil found that decreasing food-item size without altering the portion size offered may reduce energy intake during snacking occasions. I must also offer that most clinical research is not on my side, including the suggestion by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that efforts to reduce obesity should focus on reducing the number of meals and snacks and portion sizes. It really boils down to what the snack is. The University of Tennessee found that the lower the energy density or smaller the portion size, the lower the average calorie intake. In other words, snacks only contribute to obesity when their energy content is high and satiety is low. I don’t really think I should be blamed for the whole obesity tie though.

**Judge #2:** “What about beverages then?”

**Snack:** “Yes, well beverages have grown as a snack item and do easily contribute to intake of empty calories, I acknowledge that, but only when they are consumed in addition to total calorie intake for the day. I am best able to play the part of the hero when it comes to diabetic consumers, helping them to regulate their blood sugar. I am actually part of standard diabetic diet plans. I also specialize in increasing mental focus for all generations, helping them with accuracy and task completion throughout the day.”

Judge #3 is impressed, but not unduly so. She turns away from the candidates and speaks for a moment to the other judges, with a sideways tilt of her head making it impossible to make out what she is saying. The others lift their heads in approval, and so Judge #3 presses on.

**Judge #3:** “It is all well to quote studies, but where do you each think you are headed next?”

**Snack:** “If companies position me as a meal substitute, a means to aid in mental focus throughout the day or as a means of blood sugar regulation, then I cannot be used as a scapegoat for the obesity crisis. Also, as I can be consumed at all hours, this sets me up to not only compete with appetizers and other eating opportunities throughout the day, but to replace them. I must be seen as a meal replacement, not always as an adjunct. I offer flexibility to consumers.”

**Breakfast:** “Well, I am the only traditional meal of the day that is backed by health research. Lunch and dinner are currently not well studied, so their impact on obesity or any other disease state is not understood. Because consumers are looking for breakfast options throughout the day, as Hartman has reported, I too now compete with all other eating opportunities throughout the day. I am loved by the government and moms as well.”

The judges thank the candidates for their time and leave the studio audience with the thought that regardless of how the judges vote, it is up to the audience to judge the nominees for themselves.

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