

Snack food industry trying to be healthy

By Anne Marie Chaker, Wall Street Journal

Is a seaweed flake the new potato chip?

Hoping to elevate snack foods out of junk territory and into a healthier zone, more companies are offering munchables made from ingredients with ironclad nutritional credentials, including black beans, brown rice, seaweed and parsnips.

Never mind that recommended serving sizes in many cases are minuscule, or that calorie, fat or sodium profiles can rival or exceed those of old-school pretzels and potato chips.

The snack-food aisle's neon-colored bags contain cheesy, spicy fare designed mainly for guys in their teens and 20s. The new munchies are directed at a potentially larger group—consumers who want to eat better but also love salty chips.

The proportion of consumers reporting that they eat three to four snacks a day in addition to meals rose to 31 percent in 2013, up from 19 percent in 2010, according to Chicago market research firm IRI.

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