



LISTENFIRST

Food Industry Special Report:
Social Media in the Time of Coronavirus

**FOOD INDUSTRY
SPECIAL REPORT:**
SOCIAL MEDIA
IN THE TIME OF
CORONAVIRUS



April 2020

Food Industry Special Report: Social Media in the Time of Coronavirus

There's no question that the coronavirus outbreak is changing our relationship with food. With eating in restaurants no longer an option, layoffs and supply chain issues making it less of a given that customers can access or afford the food they want, and with people cooking more at home than they have in possibly several generations; how audiences are thinking about food is drastically different than it was just a couple of months ago.

While we all accept that as a given, what's less apparent is how that dramatic change impacts the food industry on a brand level, and how CPG brands should adjust their social media conversation. What does brand loyalty look like when there is a run at the local supermarket and consumers have less options about what they can bring home? Are contests more or less relevant on social media during the current situation? With people forced to cook more for themselves and their families, which types of CPG brands are recipe posts relevant to? Additionally, with people at home more, should brands shift what time of day they post on social media?

Understanding what audiences want food brands to post about is critical for a social media strategy and the knowledge of what worked in the past, isn't necessarily helpful in the current climate. That's where the Food Industry Special Report: Social Media In The Time Of Coronavirus comes in. Analyzing the performance of every food category, ListenFirst tracked what types of posts in which contexts are best performing on social media, highlighting the most valuable and actionable nuggets of information.

This isn't a status quo anyone asked for, but in this challenging moment there are objective answers to what the social media audience is looking for from food brands. This report shares the new social media best practices. In this time of great uncertainty, social media strategy doesn't have to be one of those question marks.

About ListenFirst

[ListenFirst](#) is the social analytics solution trusted by the world's leading brands. We unite billions of consumer signals from every social platform to give brands a complete picture of their performance and the analytics to drive successful strategies. For additional information, visit www.listenfirstmedia.com.

Our clients include:

OLD NAVY

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amc

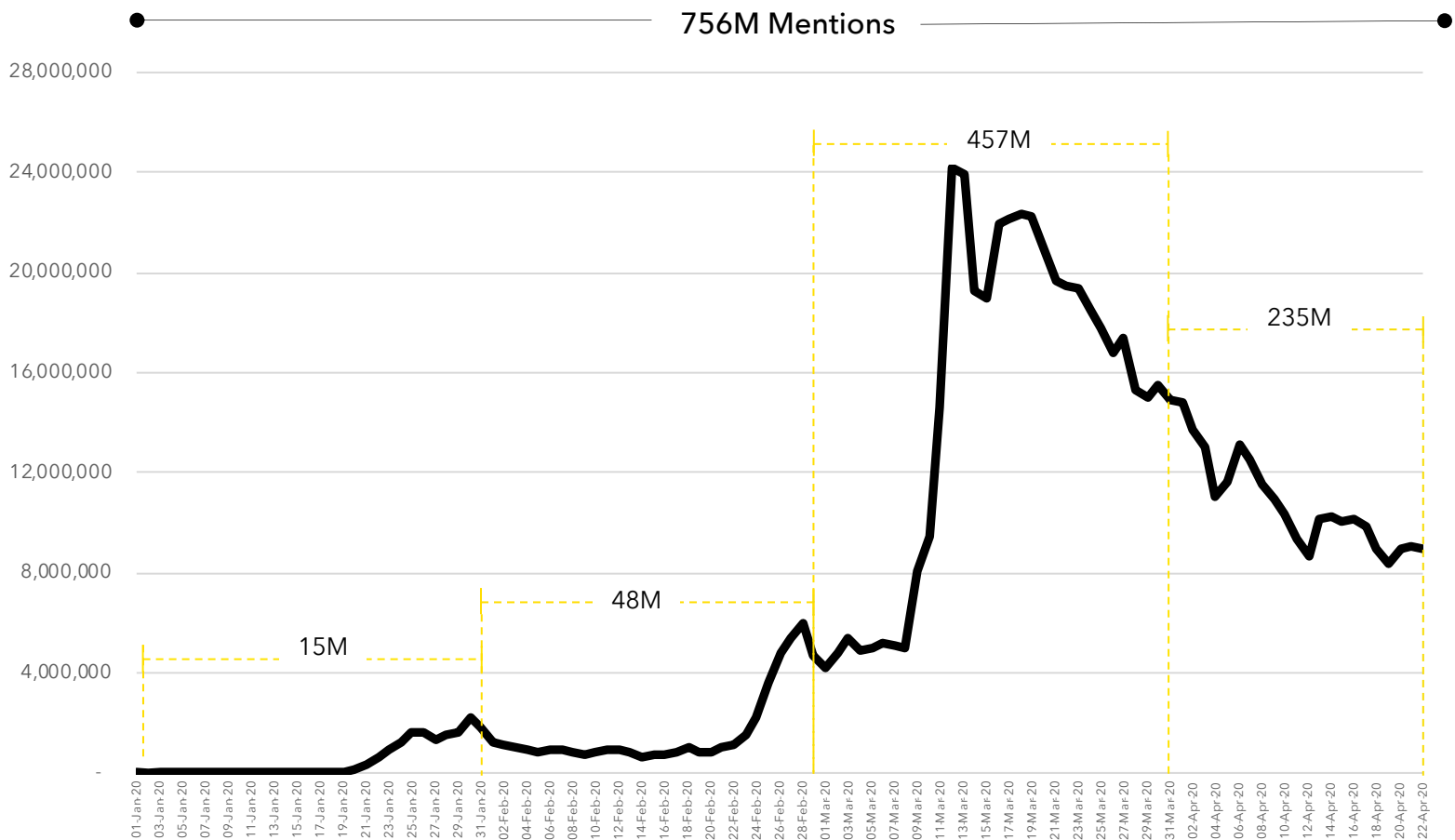
VIACOM

NBCUniversal

Conversation Around Coronavirus

Conversation around the Coronavirus or Covid-19 is declining after a peak in March when the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic and states in the U.S. and countries around the world started shutting down. Conversation is still high but is starting to slow down as people have come to terms with life in quarantine. While conversation in March was focused on “washing your hands” and the lack of toilet paper and hand sanitizer, in April the conversation shifted towards attending to the crisis at hand and populations at-risk.

CORONAVIRUS MENTIONS (TWITTER & REDDIT) JAN 01 - APR 22, 2020



Sentiment Around Coronavirus

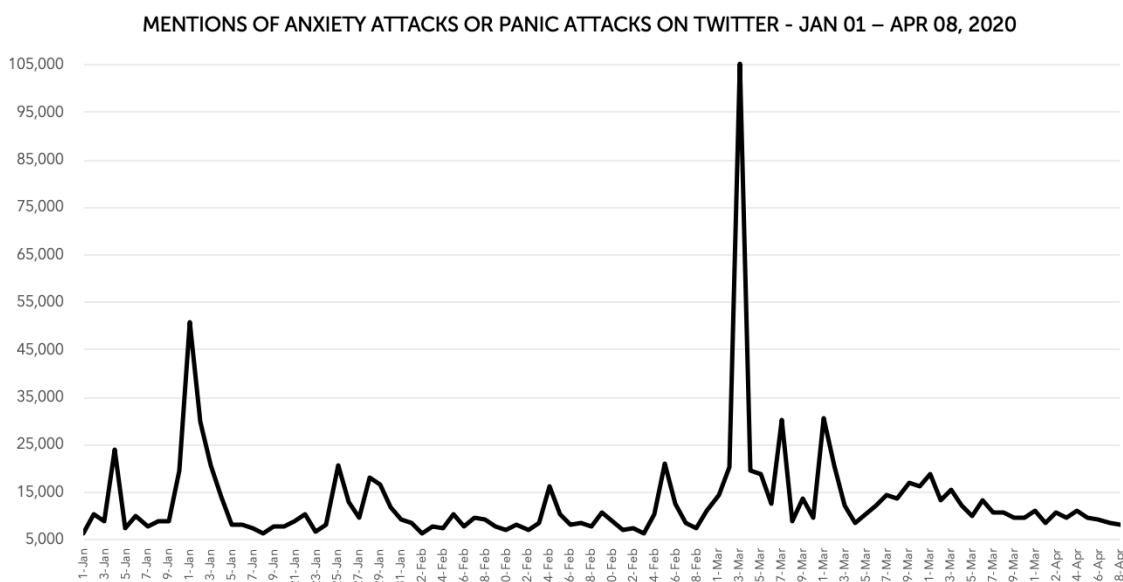
Analysis has shown that over time, people have become less fearful about the coronavirus, but as some regions have been able to “flatten the curve,” fear has not necessarily lessened. Since mid-March, fear has been steady at 13%, negative sentiment has also been steady at 33%, while anger has begun to inch up. In general, negative feelings including emotions of anger, sadness and fear are still dominating conversation. As food brands engage their audiences on social media, understanding people’s emotions are important in sending the right message.


Sentiment Classification & Emotional Sentiment of Conversation

Sentiment	2/24-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29	3/30-4/5	4/6-4/12	4/13-4/20
Positive	18%	18%	22%	23%	22%	22%	22%	22%
Negative	39%	36%	37%	34%	33%	33%	32%	33%
Neutral	43%	46%	41%	43%	45%	45%	45%	45%
Fear	17%	17%	16%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%
Surprise	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Sadness	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%
Anger	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%
Joy	6%	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Love	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%

What's Next?


A messaging strategy around re-opening and managing people's anxiety should be top of mind of brand marketers as they think about what comes next. While people are eager for life in lockdown to end, many are still expressing anxiety. Mentions of anxiety and panic attacks rose 41% between March 1 - April 8 compared to the average in January and February. This represents a 54% rise in mentions of anxiety and panic attacks compared to the same period in 2019. Today, some discussion about panic attacks is not in the context of right now, but later when businesses are open again, society gets back to normal, and people come out of quarantine.



 **EL HIM** ✓
@elohimmusic

I feel like my first day back in society will potentially give me a panic attack you know the one where you're gagging dry heaving shaking etc ?

12:45 PM · Apr 3, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

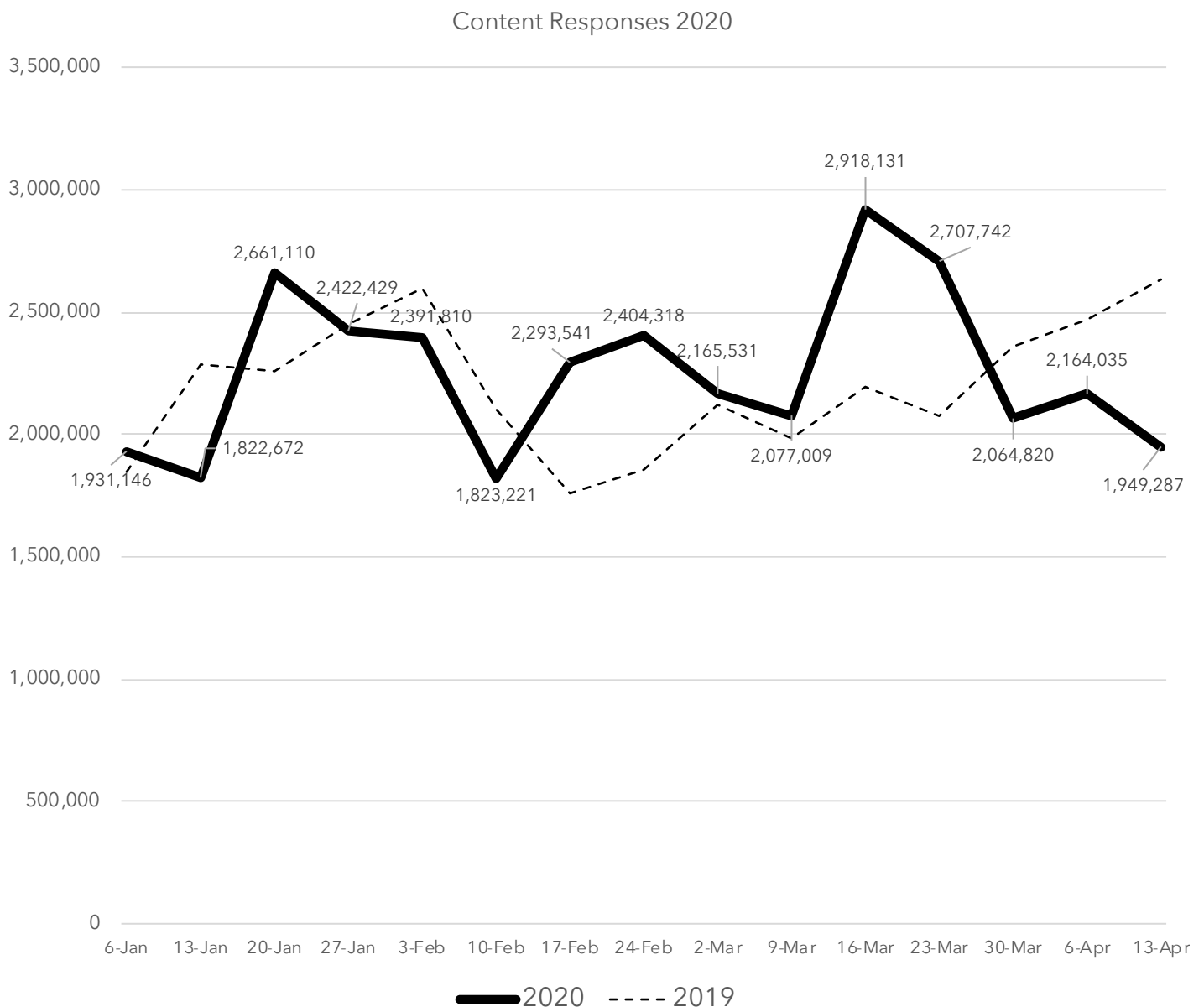
 **rachel syme** ✓
@rachsyme

i keep thinking about how no matter what it isn't going to go back to the way it was for a really long time; people are going to be wary of stadiums and theaters etc. i have a panic attack thinking about being in a crowded elevator again one day.

12:42 PM · Mar 20, 2020 · Twitter Web App

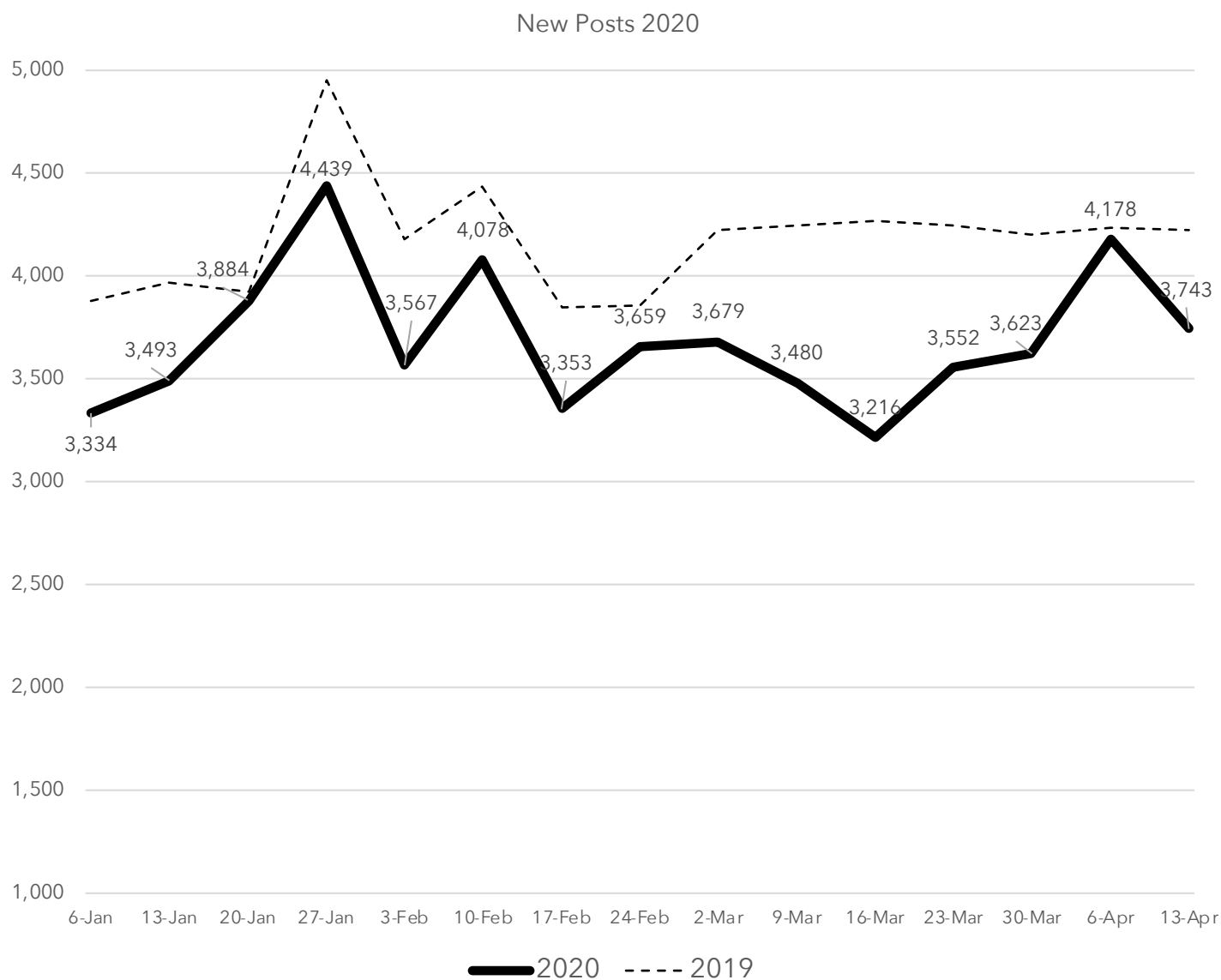
How Engagement Has Changed for Food Brands

Social Engagement has ebbed and flowed for the food industry, spiking during the first full week of lockdown as panic buying started happening. While brands have picked up posting across social channels after an initial dip in March, engagement levels are back where they were pre-Covid-19. While April is down compared to the same time last year, engagement with food brands is up 2% overall compared to 2019.



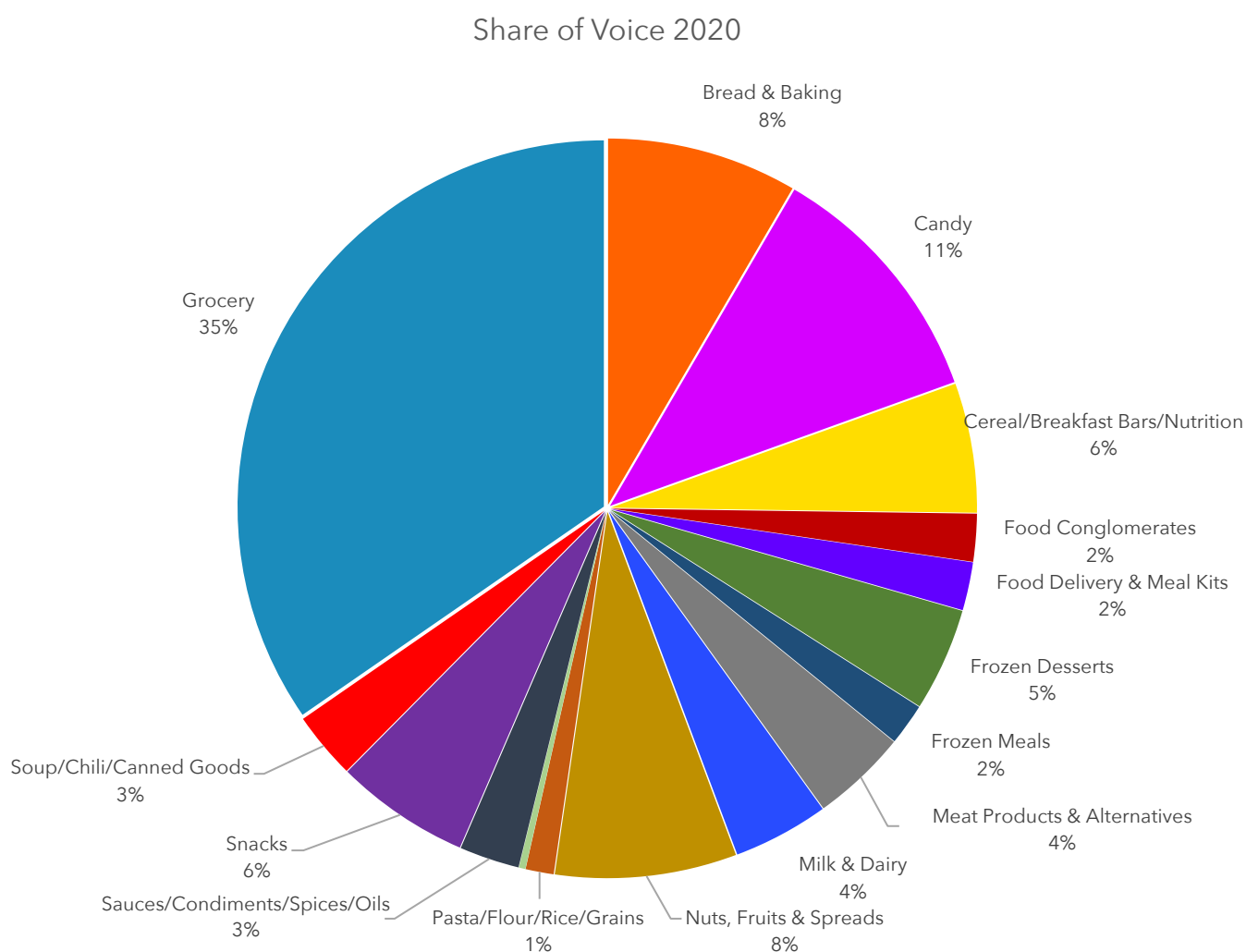
Food Brands are Back to Posting As Usual

Compared to other industries, the food industry largely shies away from posting directly about Covid-19 with only 8% of content since March mentioning either Coronavirus, Covid-19, quarantine, or staying at home. Overall, posts on social media from the food industry is down -12% compared to 2019. And, while posts are back to usual compared to 2020, they are still below 2019 levels. Despite less posts, the food industry is up 2% on engagement for 2020.



Share of Voice of Food Categories

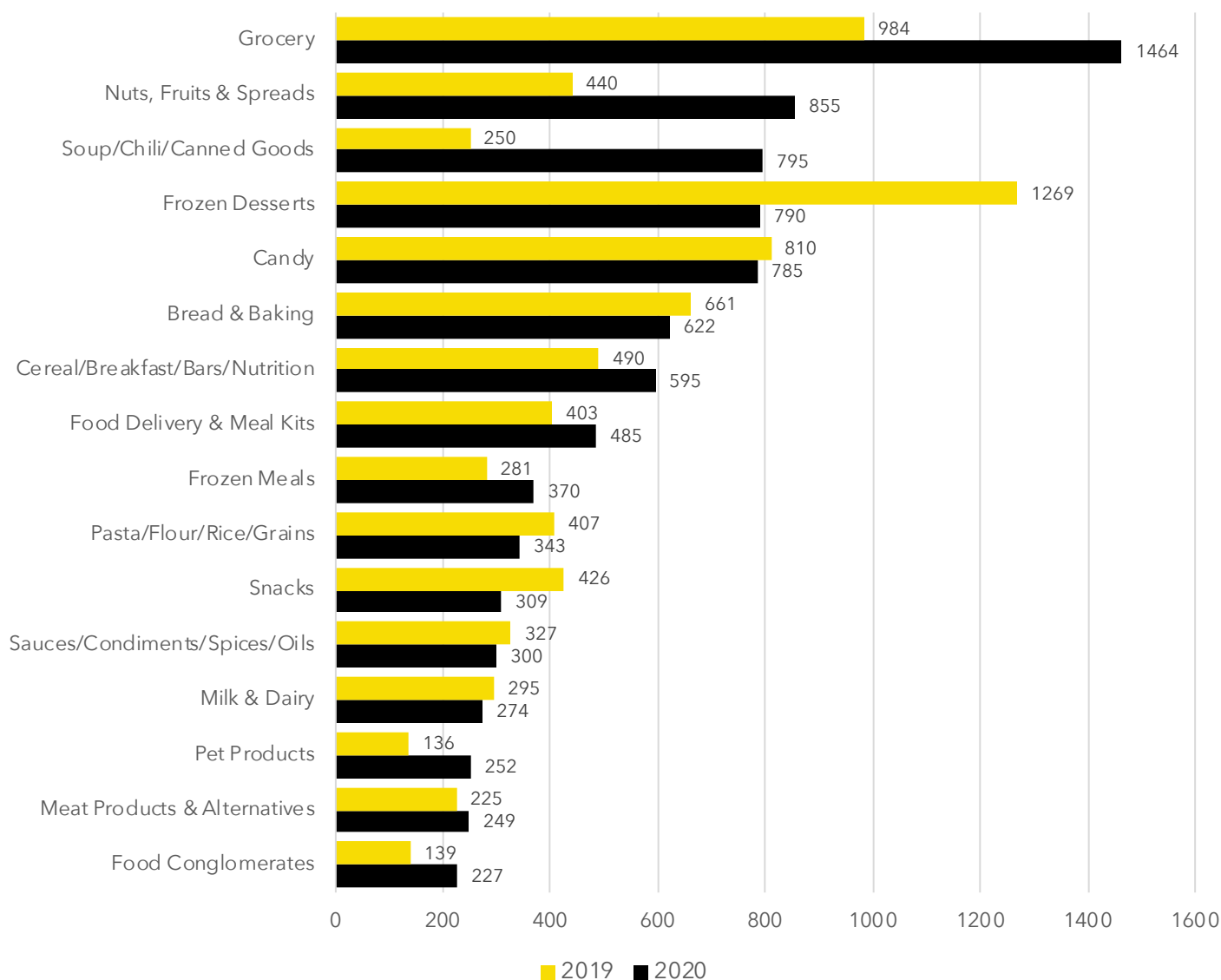
Retail generates more social engagement than CPG so it's no surprise to see the grocery category owning the largest share of voice on social media. The candy category follows grocery in generating the second highest volume of likes, shares and comments on social media, driving spikes with Superbowl investments in the beginning of the year. The nuts, fruits & spreads and bread & baking categories come in third, with the nuts, fruits & spreads category seeing a 45% lift in the volume of engagement since 2019.



Grocery Has Taken Over from Frozen Desserts to Lead in 2020

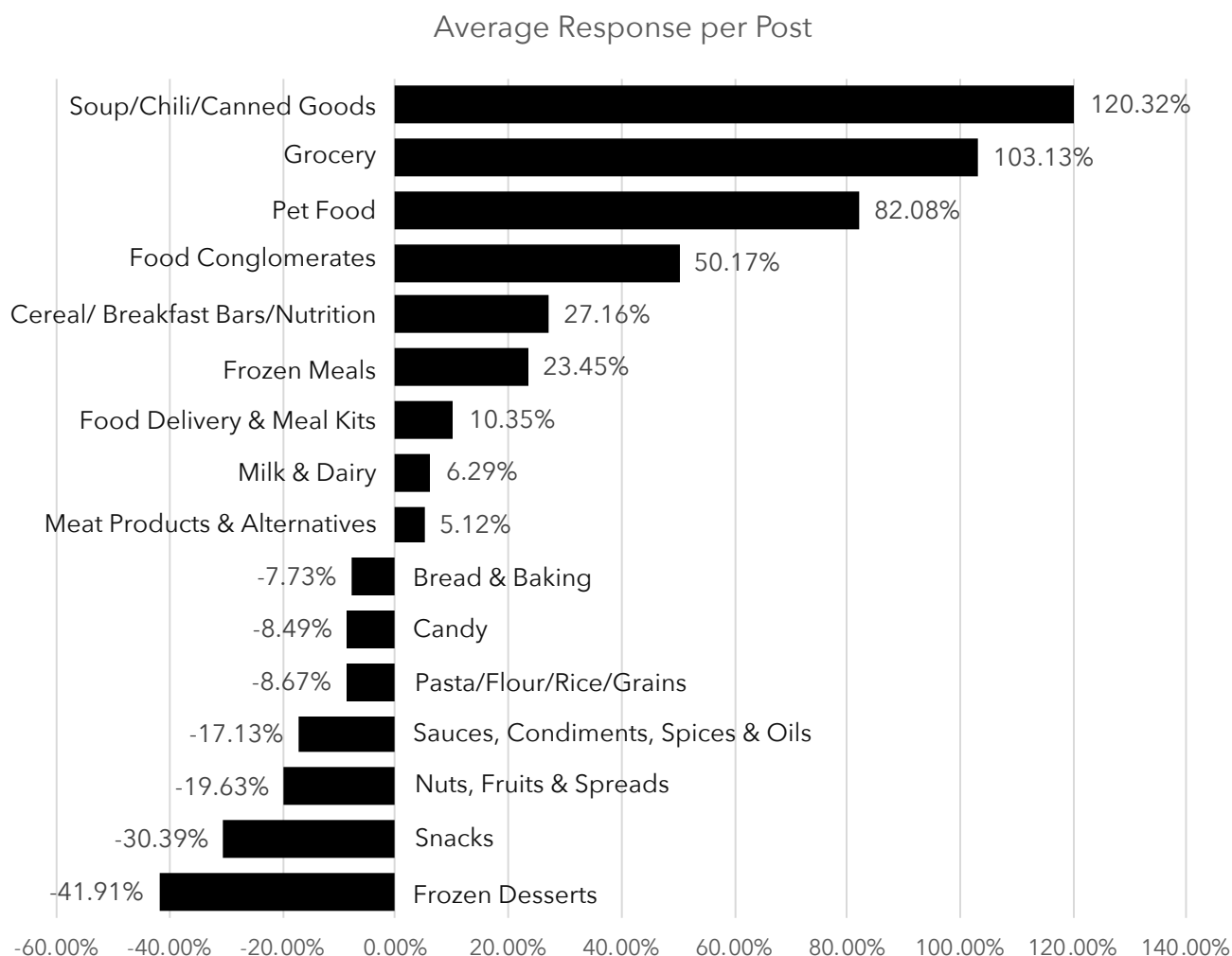
Grocery has always been one of the leaders in social media engagement within the food industry and this year has overtaken frozen desserts as the front runner in social media. This is no surprise given that grocery stores are “essential” during Covid-19 and have become de facto hubs for communities around the nation. In general, most categories have seen a rise in engagement from 2019 as CPG foods have taken on a larger significance in people’s daily lives. Only the frozen desserts category has seen a notable decrease in social engagement year over year.

Average Response per Post 2020 vs 2019



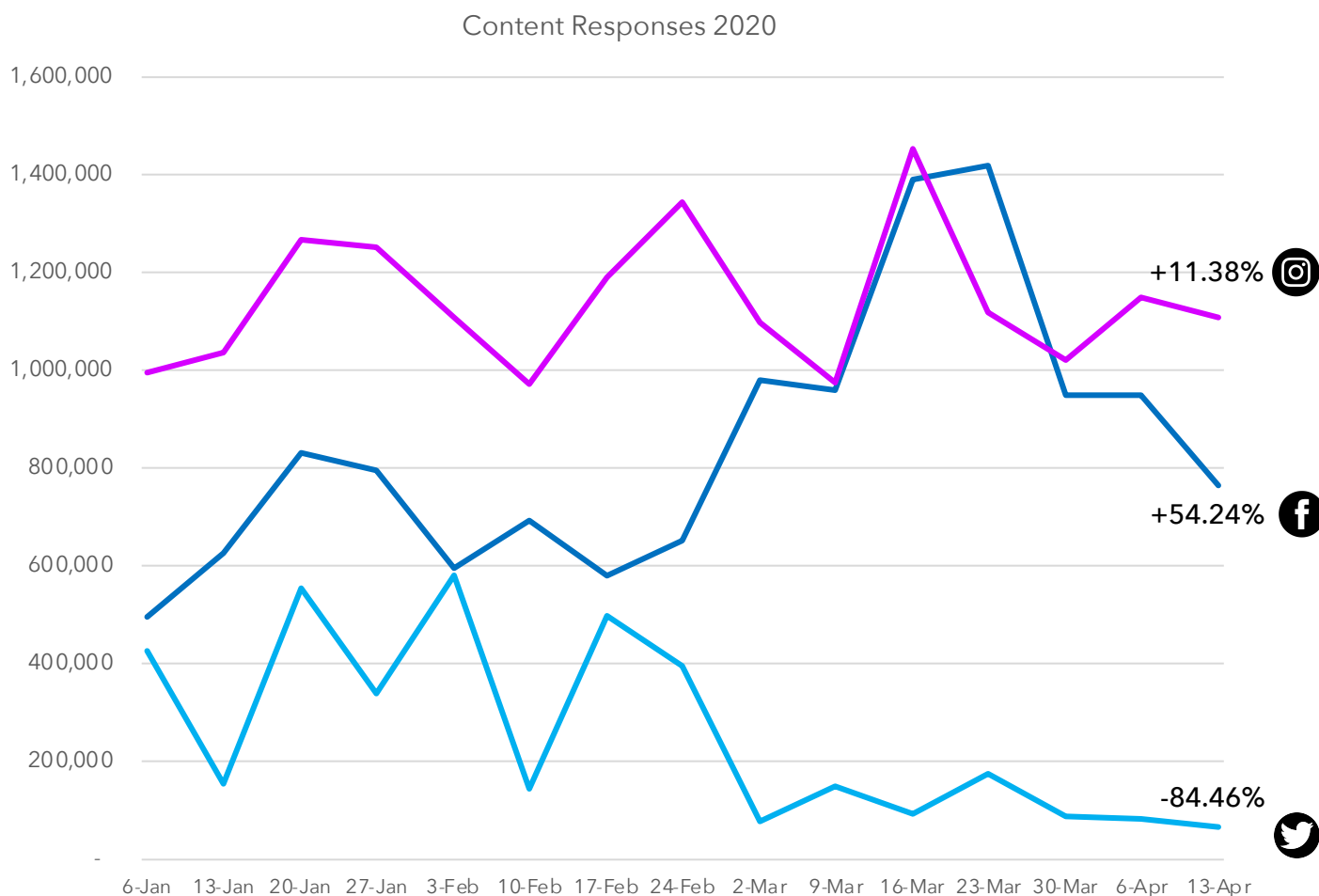
Canned Goods Is the Fastest Growing Category Since March

As people are confined to their homes due to Covid-19, there is big disruption happening in the food industry, particularly in food services. However, there are bright spots. Canned foods is seeing a rise in social media engagement, led by Bush's Beans, Green Giant, and Red Gold Tomatoes. Retail is seeing robust sales with particularly heavy social engagement being generated by brands like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. And, Pet Food is seeing a big growth led by Meow Mix and Hill's Pet Nutrition.



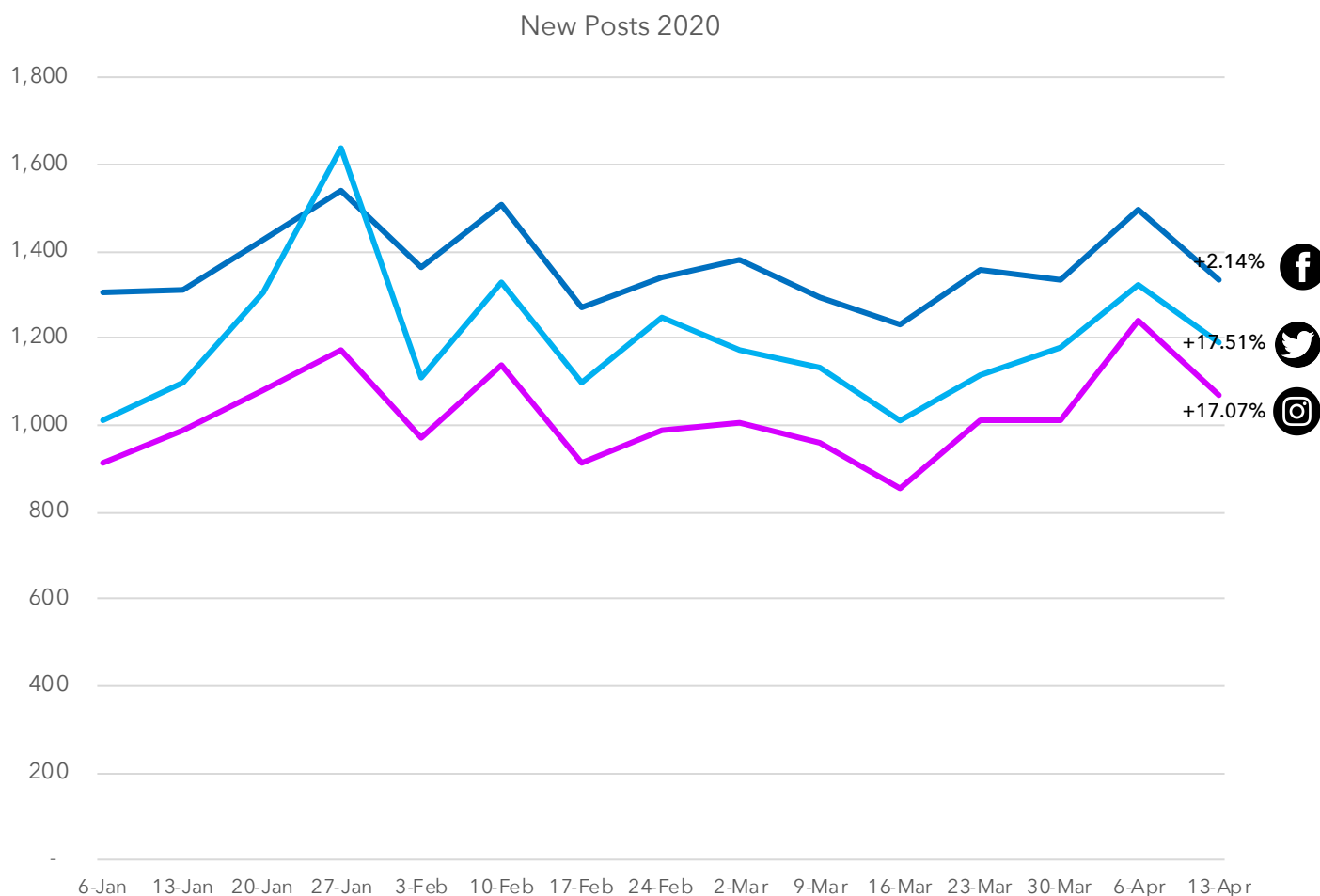
Facebook Saw the Biggest Spike at the Start of Coronavirus

While Instagram has been the leading platform for generating social media engagement for the food industry, during the time of Covid-19, Facebook has gained in significance. Social engagement on food industry posts on Facebook jumped by 41% the week of Mar 23 compared to the week of Feb 24 as brands posted about how they were helping support essential workers, grocery stores posted about store openings, and food brands found a way to share important information to their loyal customers. While posts on Facebook have since declined in the volume of engagement, the platform is still generating more activity than the start of the year.



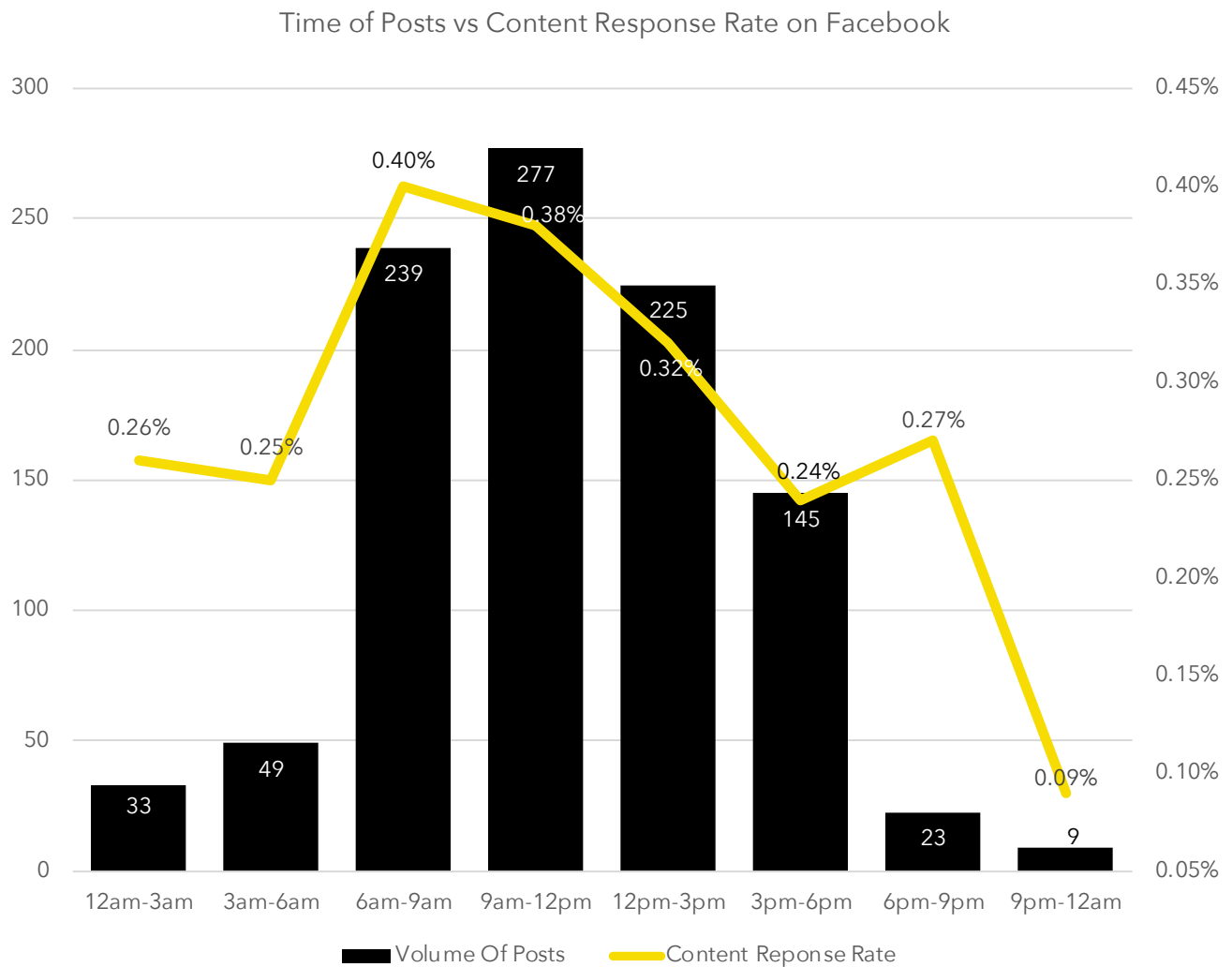
Posting Across Platforms Has Stayed Consistent

Despite a drop in posting the week of March 16 when the majority of the nation went on lockdown, posting across social media platforms has remained consistent. On Instagram, posts have increased since mid-March and hit it highest weekly level the week of April 6. That same week in April saw spikes in posts across Facebook and Twitter too.



Best Time to Post: Facebook

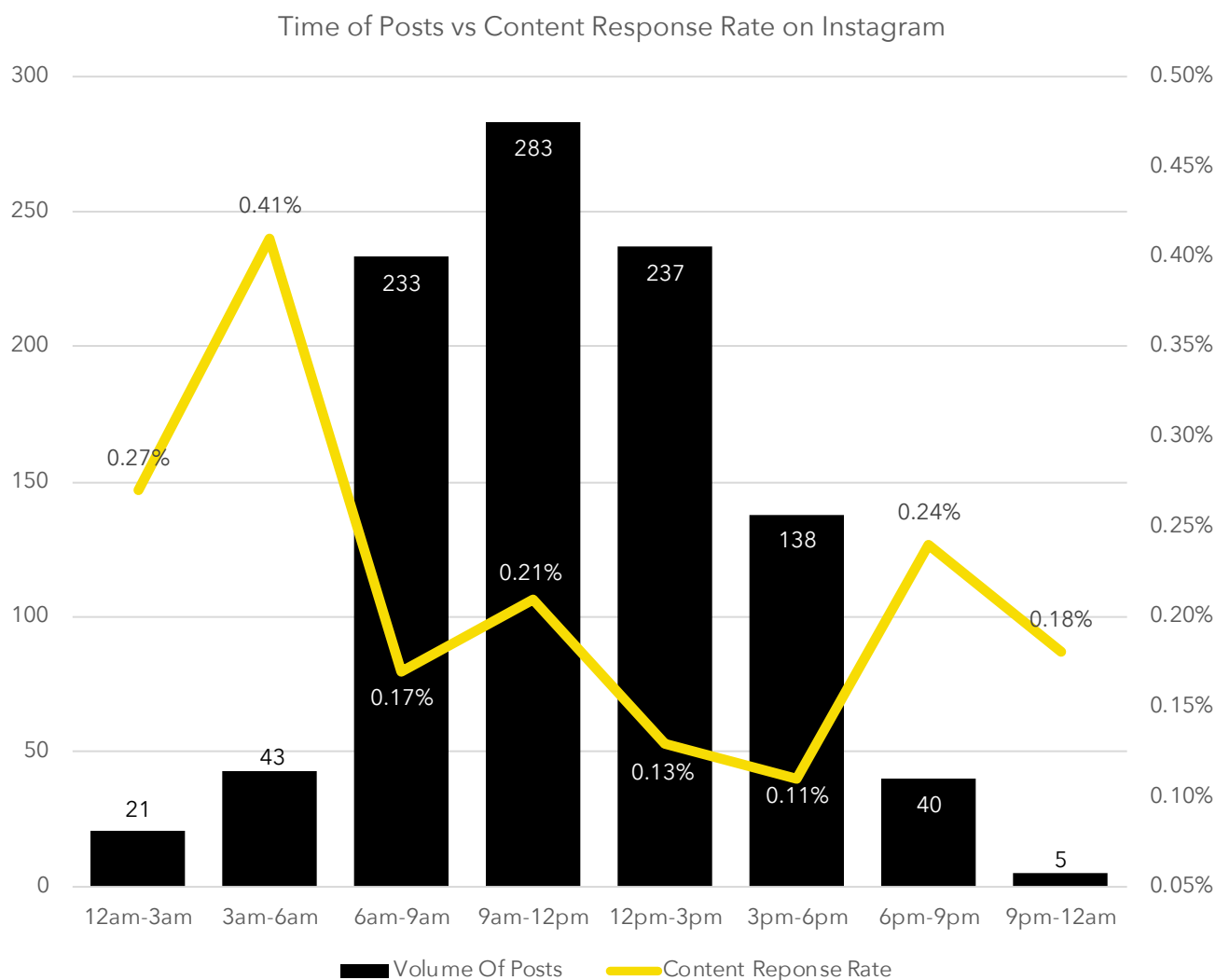
Looking at the top 1,000 Facebook posts for the Food Industry the week of April 6, 74% of the posts were uploaded between 6am-6pm PST. This is a strategy that is working for the food industry with the highest response rates also occurring during those times. By far, the best content response rate for food industry posts is between 6-9am PST, just as people are preparing for their day. Note, the evening, particularly 6-9pm PST is also opportunity to generate greater engagement on posts.



Pacific Standard Time (PST)

Best Time to Post: Instagram

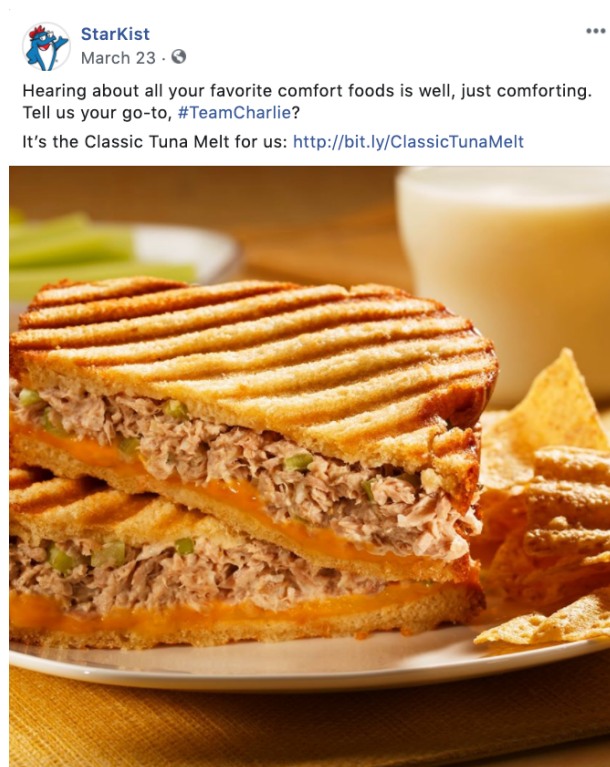
When analyzing the top 1,000 Food Industry posts on Instagram the week of April 6, while 89% of the posts were uploaded during the 6am-6pm PST timeframe. However, the real goldmine is between 3am-6am PST. There are significantly less Instagram posts published by food brands during this timeframe where the content response rate is more than double.



Pacific Standard Time (PST)

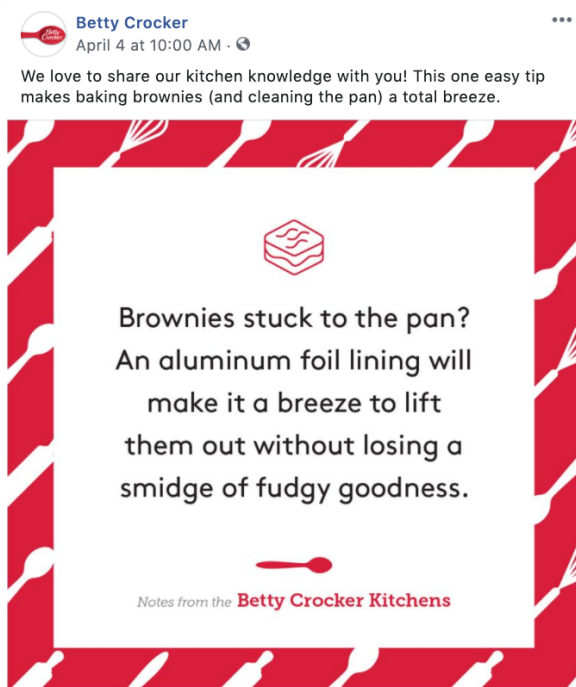
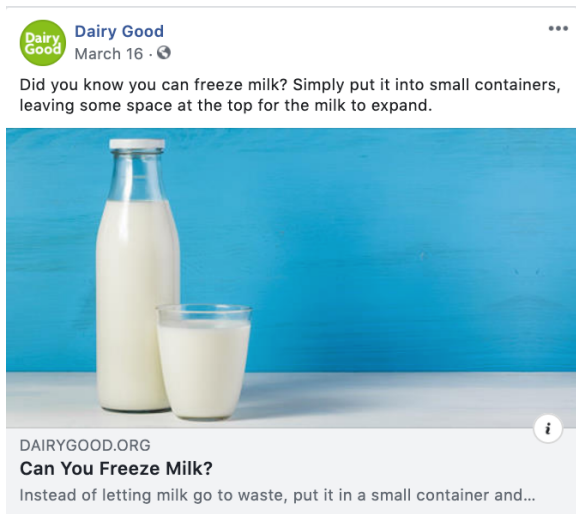
Bring Your Community Together

Highlighting your community through user-generated content is more effective than ever. Not only does it bring people closer to your brand, the content also serves as an inspiration for others as they try to get creative with food recipes at home. During the Covid-19 period, people are looking for ways to connect with one another. Loyal customers are also more loyal than ever. Take advantage of this period to offer your fans a sense of togetherness connected by a similar thread, your brand.



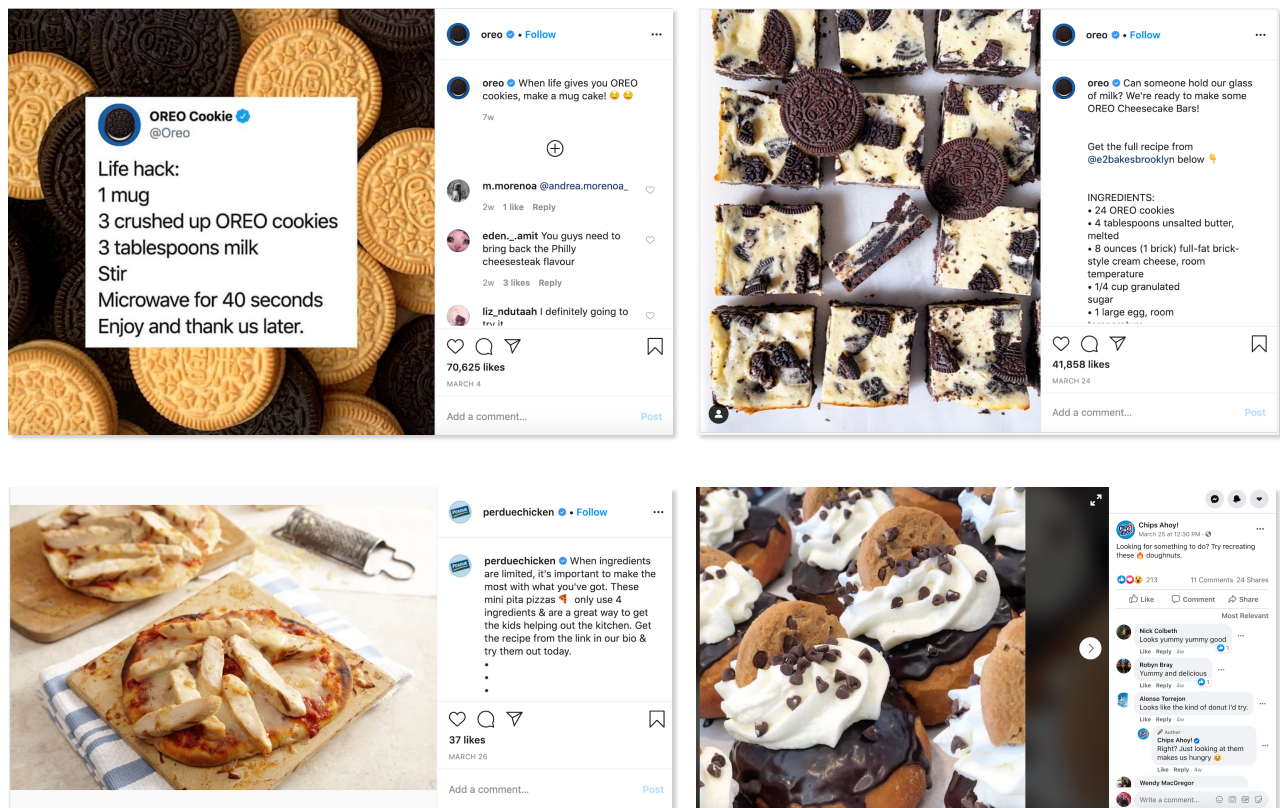
Offer Practical Advice

Can you freeze milk? How long past an expiration date is food still good for? As people are confined to their homes and cooking and eating at home more than ever, offering practical tips and tricks are essential to keep your community engagement. Whether its tips to keep products fresh and long lasting, ways to spruce up lunch, kitchen tricks, or freezer-friendly recipes, helping your community by sharing knowledge is going a long way.



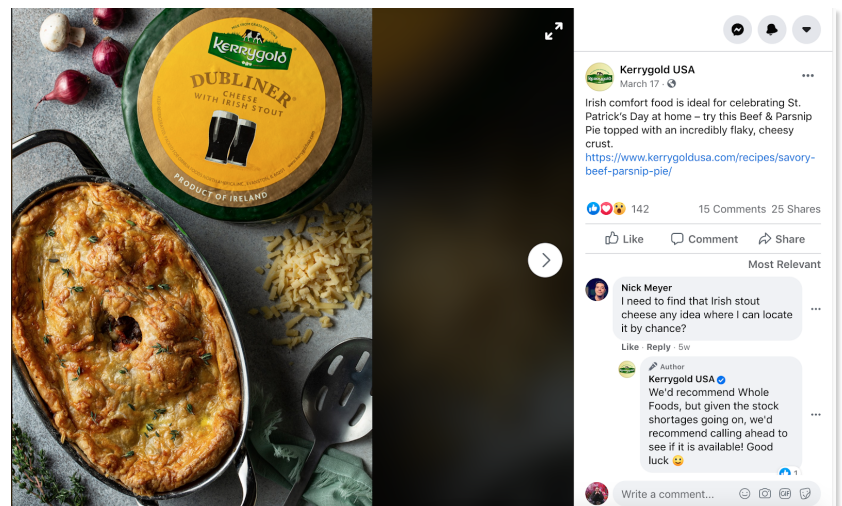
Recipes Posts Relevant For A Whole Lot More Brands

Usually the advantage of snacks is they're delicious calories which don't take any preparation to eat between meals. However because of the extra free time people have at home, snack brands are having success with recipes for turning basic cookies into more elaborate desserts. For instance OREO had 71,426 responses around a recipe for mug cake and 41,942 responses for a recipe for OREO cheesecake bars, while Chips Ahoy! received 1,804 responses around a donut recipe. Meanwhile, Perdue Chicken took a different tack, pointing at when ingredients are limited, it can be used a topping for a pita pizza. During quarantine, recipe posts are relevant for pretty much any type of food.



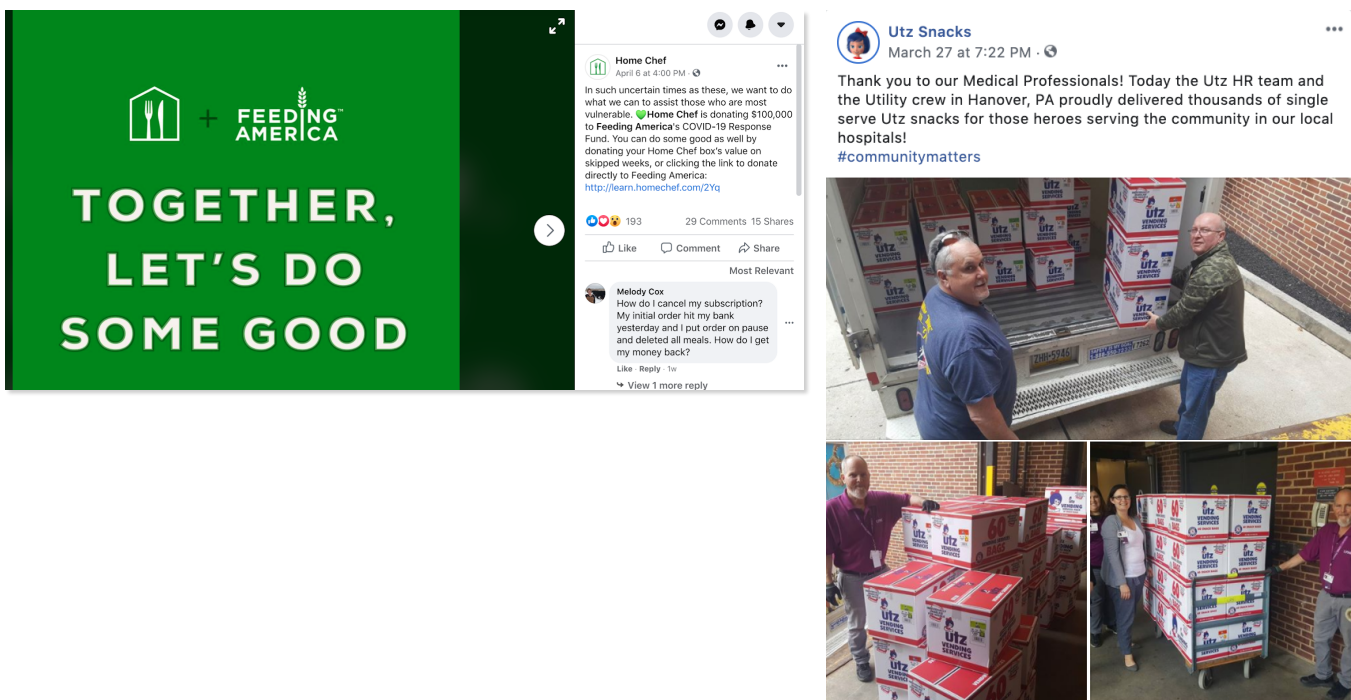
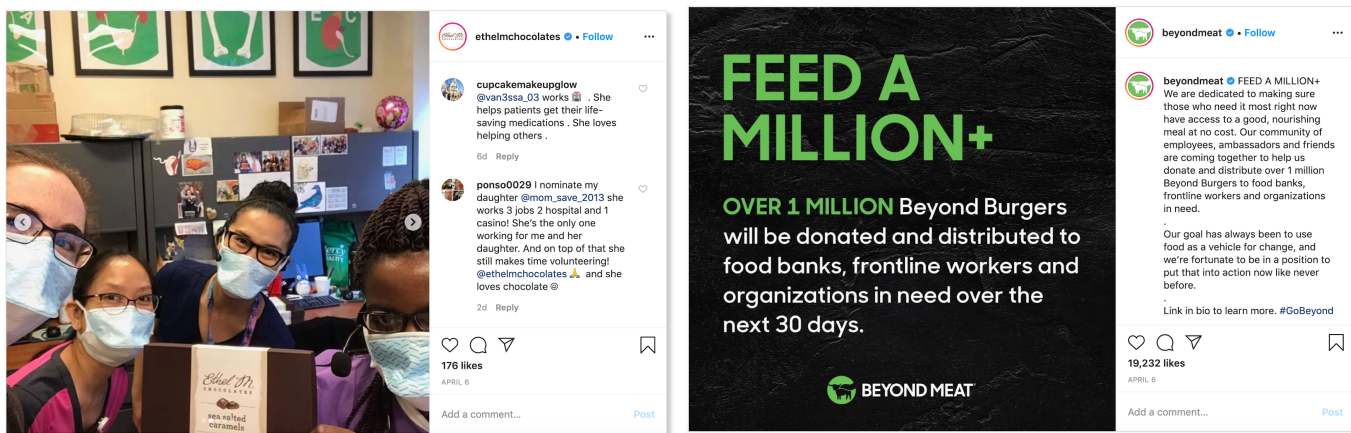
Brands Focusing More On Stay At Home Recipes Around Holidays

CPG Food posting about holidays is certainly nothing new but about Easter and St. Patrick's Day this year brands emphasized the made at home angle more. For instance around St. Patrick's Day, Kerrygold USA posted a beef & parsnip recipe that generated 369 responses noting it's the ideal comfort food for celebrating at home, while Lifeway Foods generated 249 responses around a Shamrock Toast recipe that can be made at home. Meanwhile for Easter, Eggland's Best Eggs had 248 responses around its post about how to dye eggs at home with no mess and and Bob's Red Mill, noting that Easter would look a little different this year, recommended a M&M Skillet Cookie recipe that generated 245 responses. Even if it's holiday themed posts you'd be sharing anyway, framing it within the stuck at home angle will make it more relevant to the current moment.



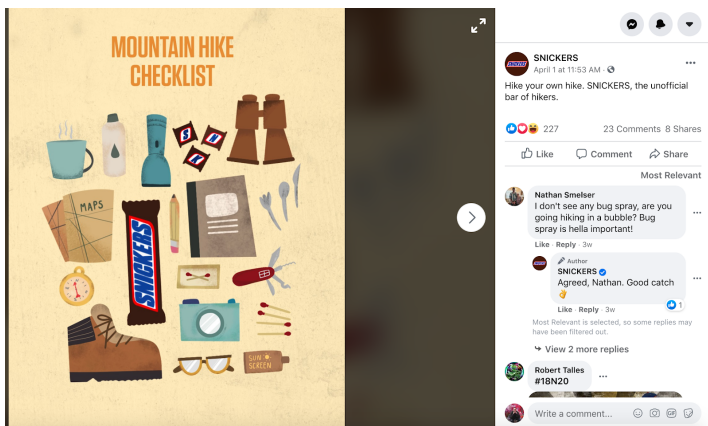
Supporting Essential Workers & Food Banks

Around the pandemic outbreak, food brands are seeing high engagement around social media posts discussing donating their products to either food banks or directly to frontline workers. For instance, Beyond Burger received 19,632 responses on Instagram around the brand giving away one million burgers in a month and Utz Snacks posted on Facebook about donating a truckload of its snacks to medical professionals, which generated 4,070 responses. As much as the social audience likes getting free stuff, they also like seeing people in need getting free food.



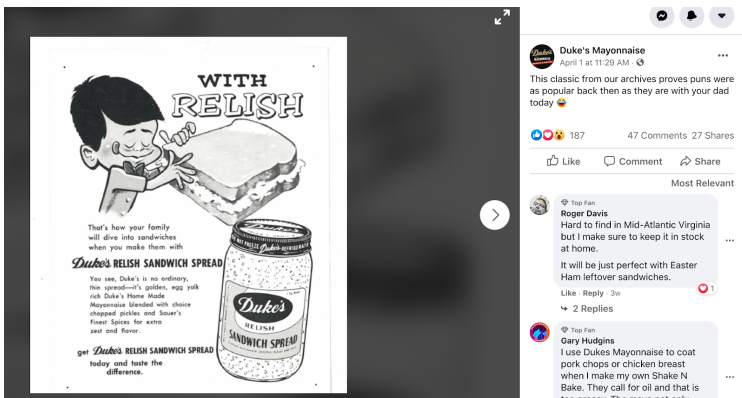
Point Out Where Your Brand Fits In With People's Altered Lifestyle

From Snickers pointing out that it's a perfect snack on a solo hike, to Frank's RedHot hot sauce hinting that you might want to buy large quantities because of more time at home, food brands are using social media to explain where they fit into consumers' new reality. Other examples include Kerrygold pitching grilled cheese toast as a lunch option that both kids and parents will like, while Pillsbury knows you miss going out to brunch and shared an air fryer bacon egg biscuit recipe.



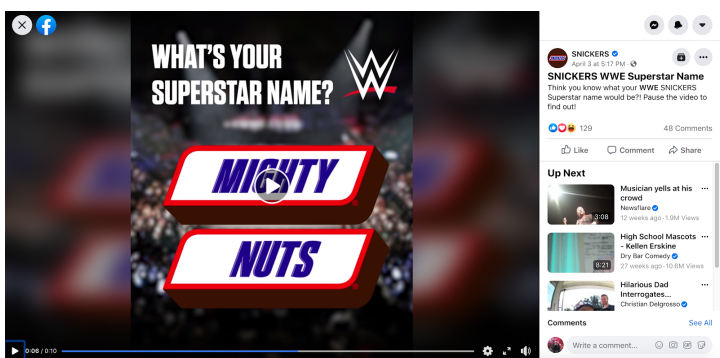
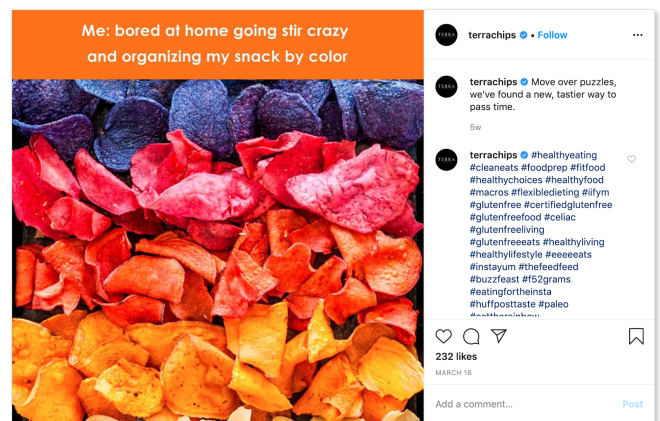
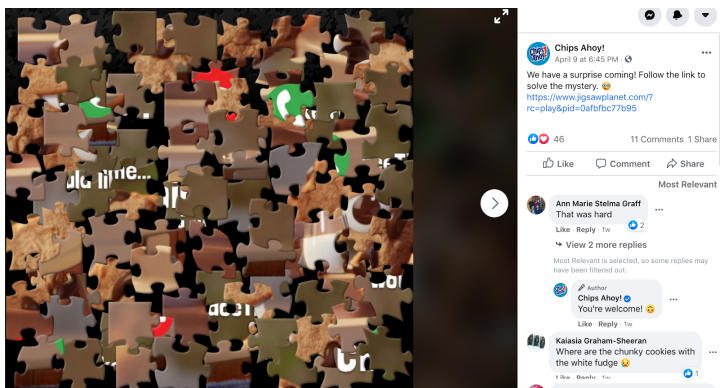
Throwback Posts Still Work On Social Media

While food might have an expiration date, a compelling campaign can still be usable years later. That's what food brands should keep in mind as creating new collateral to share on social media becomes a little more complicated in self-isolation. Duke's Mayonnaise got 328 responses around resharing a pre-internet ad while Cadbury shared a series of nostalgia themed posts, including a Star Wars: The Phantom Menace tie-in that generated 248 responses. Meanwhile Perdue Farms and Stubb's BBQ Sauce utilized the #TBT hashtag to highlight either old ads or company trivia.



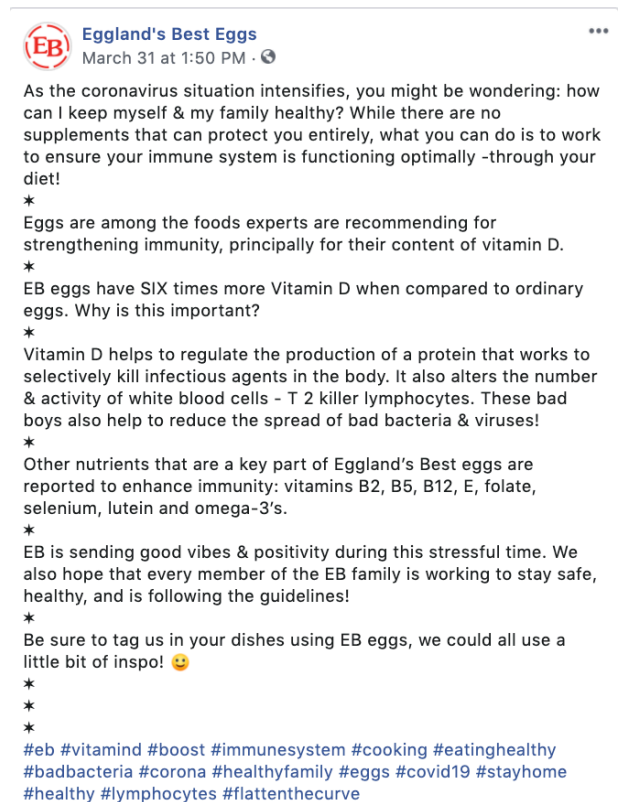
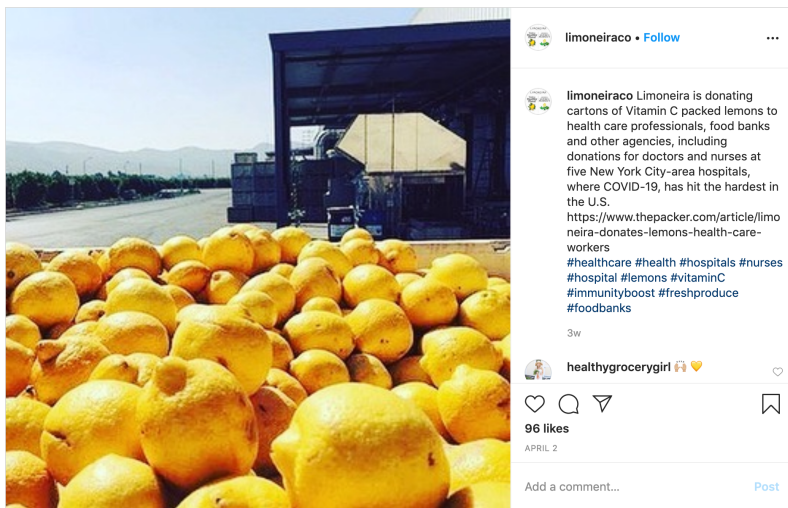
Now Is The Time To Share Games That Kill Time

As most of the social media audience is working or otherwise stuck at home, many more people are looking for distractions to stave off boredom than is normal. That makes it an opportune time for food brands to share fun games or other entertaining time killing activities on social media. For example, Chips Ahoy! shared a virtual jigsaw puzzle that when properly assembled had a cookie related CTA, while TERRA Chips suggested organizing its chips by color to avoid going stir crazy. Meanwhile Snickers created a game that revolved around pausing a video to figure out your WWE wrestling name, while Black Forest Snacks shared a picture that you can print out to color.



Immunity and Healthy Eating Messaging Matters More

Likes, comments and shares was up 374% for Limoneira, 178% for Delmonte, and 122% for Healthy Planet while people are under shelter-at-home orders; looking at March 16 - April 19 compared to February 10 - March 15, 2020. These brands and others highlighted how their products could boost immunity and provide nutrients, indicating the audience is far more receptive to 'protecting your health' messaging during the pandemic.



Giveaways Are Driving Shares

While shoppers are always looking for a good deal, this is especially true now. During this challenging and uncertain time around job security, giveaways and donations are driving consumers to interact with food brands. Giveaway posts were the most responded-to posts for brands including Garden of Eatin' Chips, Hostess, Marie's Dressing, and Ethel M Chocolates during the shelter-at-home period from March 16 - April 19, 2020.

Ethel M Chocolates
March 20 · 🌟

Donation Alert

Ethel M Chocolates would like to thank our selfless superheroes who are showing up for work every day to keep America safe during these uncertain times. If you know a real-life hero who works for a hospital, pharmacy, trucking company, school, grocery store, restaurant, sanitation company, etc., please tag them in the post below for a chance to be thanked with a special care package from Ethel M Chocolates to share with their co-workers. We realize this is a small token of thanks for the sacrifices they're making but hope it will help them know how much they're appreciated and offer a little comfort. ❤️

Friend @EthelMChocolates on Facebook and tag your superhero below now through April 17th. Each Friday, we will randomly select 50 heroes to receive a care package of chocolate thanks from Ethel M Chocolates. Please note that, since we wouldn't want to disturb your heroes during this critical time, if selected, you would need to provide their work address for the packages to be shipped.

*Per Facebook rules, this giveaway is in no way sponsored, administered, or associated with Facebook. *By entering, entrants confirm they are 13+ years of age, release Facebook of responsibility, and agree to Facebook's terms of use.



Hostess
April 6 at 9:20 AM · 🌐

Happy #NationalTwinkieDay!! Show us how you're celebrating with your best Twinkie selfie, and you could win a YEAR's supply of Twinkies! Get creative, get crafty - use what you have on hand, draw one, paint one or even make one yourself. It's your time to shine! 🌟

*Reminder: You don't have to stay 6-feet away from Twinkies. 😊

To Enter:

1. Take your best Twinkie selfie.
2. Post on your story or feed tagging Hostess & #NationalTwinkieDay
3. Tag your friends for BONUS entries!
4. Drop a 🍌 in the comments when you're done.

You must be following us to win. Full Rules & Regulations here: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Hostess/about/>

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#HostessSnacks #Twinkies #Twinkie #ILoveTwinkies #TwinkieDay #TwinkifyYourself #Snacks #Snacking #TreatYourself #Giveaway #EnterToWin #Win #Winner #Winning #Prize #YearSupply #Love #Celebrate #GetCrafty #GetCreative #DIY #VirtualContest #Selfie #SelfieContest #ShelterInPlace #StayHome #SocialDistancing



gardenofeatinchips · Follow

gardenofeatinchips Happy #NationalChipAndDipDay 🌟 Need something crunchy to add to your pantry? Enter for a chance to have 12 bags of Garden of Eatin' Chips delivered right to you, no going outside needed 🍌 🌟

How To Enter:

- Like and save this photo!
- Follow @gardenofeatinchips
- Tag the chip to your dip! (1 line = 1 entry)

Stay safe and good luck!

US only. Giveaway closes 3/27 at midnight ET. ARV of prize \$72. For official rules, head to: bit.ly/goe-chips

763 likes
MARCH 23

Add a comment... Post



mariesdressing · Follow

mariesdressing CLOSED. We're giving away a fresh produce box to pair with your Marie's Market Reserve dressings! To enter, follow @mariesdressing & comment with an emoji of your fave salad ingredient! 🥗

Enter by 4/17 at 11:59pm. Winner announced by 4/20.

#giveaway #sweepstakes #free #groceryhaul #mariesdressing #stayhome #food

407 views
APRIL 10

Add a comment... Post



Not Pandemic Related Content Is Still Going Viral

On March 25, Twitter user Sage Boggs went on an epic, unsolicited 9 Tweet overview of the history of Triscuit, which went viral, especially after Triscuit confirmed everything he said was true. That confirming Tweet Triscuit posted generated 76,343 responses and was the biggest contributor to content responses around Triscuit increasing a stunning 6,830% during March 16 - April 19 compared to February 10 - March 15, 2020. The success of Triscuit during the pandemic highlights the importance of still looking for conversations that have nothing to do with social distancing during the pandemic.

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

OK, buckle up. I wanna talk to you about Triscuit.



Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

Replying to @sageboggs

Several years ago I was at a party (BRAG!), and I spotted a box of Triscuits. I asked everyone, "What does the word 'Triscuit' mean? It's clearly based on the word 'BISCUIT,' but what does the 'TRI' mean?" (I'm great at parties.)

99 575 19.5K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

The consensus was that "TRI" means three. Maybe "three layers" or "three ingredients." No one knew for sure, though, so I Googled it. But here's the thing -- Google didn't seem to have an official answer, either. Just more guesses.

32 245 12.1K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

So we went straight to the source. We emailed Nabisco. And the response we got a few days later shook us to the core. Here it is:

Thank you for your interest in our Triscuit crackers.

No business records survived which specifically explain the origins or inspiration for the name Triscuit. But we do know the name was chosen as a fun derivation of the word "biscuit." The "TRI" does not mean 3.

If you haven't done so already, please add our site to your favorites and visit us again soon!

80 529 18K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

"The 'TRI' does not mean 3." How... how do they know what it DOESN'T mean, but NOT know what it DOES mean? HOW??

38 426 23.3K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

Also, "No business records survived"? What the HELL happened at the building explode? Did someone run out of the doors and yell "It doesn't mean THREE!" right before perishing in a giant blaze?

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

I was baffled. And I couldn't stand not knowing. So I did a little sleuthing online, and stumbled on some early Triscuit advertisements. Take a look at these bad boys:



410 1.3K 25.6K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

In the early 1900's, Triscuit was run out of Niagara Falls. And their big selling point? Being "baked by electricity." They were "the only food on the market prepared by this 1903 process." Look at the lightning bolts! And that's when it clicked--

122 630 23.3K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

Elec-TRI-city Biscuit

TRISCUIT MEANS "ELECTRICITY BISCUIT"

1.8K 8.2K 117.9K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 26

We did it, folks. WE DID IT.

Triscuit @TheRealTriscuit · Mar 26

We had to go all the way up the ladder but we CAN confirm ⚡

twitter.com/sageboggs/stat...

Gavin Purcell @gavinpurcell · Mar 25

Replying to @sageboggs and @TheRealTriscuit

this was remarkable, next do a deep dive into who changed the box to this monstrosity from the simple yellow one

16 8 1.7K

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 25

I'm on the case

12 1 555

1 more reply

BRITTANY REINHARD @britybrit · Mar 26

Replying to @sageboggs and @TheRealTriscuit

Is this all an undercover sponsored ad for triscuit

1 123

Sage Boggs @sageboggs · Mar 26

I wish I were getting paid. That'd be so rad

29 1 440

1 more reply

Jessica Fletcher @heckyessica · Mar 25

Replying to @sageboggs and @TheRealTriscuit

I never knew I needed this thread or that I would have to buckle up for something Triscuit related but 2020 is a wild ride.

18 83 3.7K

Matt Dawson @SaintRPh · Mar 25

This made me forget about corona for a few minutes :)

16 17 2.1K

5 more replies



LISTENFIRST

QUESTIONS?

Contact Us. We're here to help.

contact@listenfirstmedia.com

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Let us show you how we can solve your social challenges and make your life easier.

requestdemo@listenfirstmedia.com

VISIT US!

At www.listenfirstmedia.com for industry reports, case studies, benchmarks, and to sign up for our monthly newsletter (we promise we won't spam you).