

# U.S. FOODLINK

The bi-monthly newsletter for importers of U.S. foods

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## THE RISE IN AT-HOME DINING Presents Major Opportunities in 2021

America's new normal may be a major boon for the retail food industry: 55% of shoppers started eating at home more often since the pandemic began, according to research from Acosta. Companies that can capitalize on up-and-coming trends will have a bigger audience than ever and could develop habits that will keep consumers making meals at home for years to come.

On the most basic level, this trend has led to a significant uptick in in-home meals throughout the day, according to Acosta. Now 44% of consumers eat breakfast at home daily, compared to 33% pre-COVID; 31% eat lunch at home, compared to 33% previously; and 33% eat dinner at home every day, compared to 21% previously.

These new habits will stick around even after the pandemic becomes a memory. In fact, 47% of shoppers plan to eat breakfast out less often or not at all, 33% plan to eat lunch out less often or not at all, and 29% of shoppers plan to eat dinner out less often or not at all going forward.

Grocers and manufacturers looking to serve this surge in stay-at-home diners may want to keep an eye on their frustrations and offer products that can offer relief. One of the biggest challenges is planning different meals every day, which was cited by 40% of shoppers, followed by lacking an ingredient for a meal at 38%. Meal suggestions can relieve this issue, as well as give the 17% of consumers who felt the need to improve their cooking skills a low-risk way to practice.

Both manufacturers and retailers should also be aware of the power of e-commerce, which is likewise here to stay. Online grocery shopping and food delivery now

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## The Rise in At-Home Dining *Continued*

represents 35% of all U.S. trips, 19% of all Canadian trips, 39% of all Mexican trips, and 29% of all trips worldwide, according to dunnhumby.

Shoppers are becoming more used to what online grocery ordering entails, and net satisfaction increased to 45% from 27% during the early weeks of the pandemic. Companies with products that lend well to travel may be able to benefit from an additional sales channel through partnerships with delivery companies.



**Companies are rising to the challenge by rethinking classics like eggs, waffles, bacon and cottage cheese for a new era by putting an emphasis on speed and making products ready-to-eat where possible.**

Another new trend heading into the new year is “foods that deliver on usability,” according to Mintel and the Specialty Food Association. Shoppers have been stocking up on the staples, and they need products that will transform these sometimes-boring staples into delicious meals, such as sauces, dips, and seasonings.

This trend presents an opportunity for international flavors, such as Indian, which can put a bit of variety into the diet of someone who hasn't been eating out. Comfort foods can also capitalize on current needs of shoppers, particularly convenience, provided that manufacturers don't compromise on quality despite their simplicity.

Interest in comfort foods is already playing out in the breakfast space, where 36% of specialty food consumers say they are buying items for breakfast in the category. Companies are rising to the challenge by rethinking classics like eggs, waffles, bacon and cottage cheese for a new era by putting an emphasis on speed and making products ready-to-eat where possible.

Mintel also expects the new normal to have an impact on meat-based proteins: Shoppers will take a “less but better” approach as meat remains important but appears less often in the center of the plate. This is due to a combination of factors, including the rise of alternative proteins as plant-based meat substitutes hit the mainstream: 45% of U.S. consumers

strongly or somewhat agree that plant protein is healthier than animal protein.

However, proteins also gained new advantages. Mintel found that 43% of U.S. consumers who have not tried foods with immunity benefits would be interested in trying them, and companies can play up the role protein and other nutrients in red meat, poultry, and fish play in immune system health. This approach can appeal to both traditional consumers and flexitarians who may otherwise shy away from meat in favor of what they see as healthier options.

A beneficiary of the protein-forward future will be the chickpea, which Spoonshot sees playing a bigger role in consumers' diets in 2021. The versatile legume has come a long way since it started gaining attention as a hummus ingredient in the early 2000s, and now chickpea flour is expected to become a standard ingredient in foods such as flatbreads. Aquafaba, or chickpea soaking water, can be used to make dairy-free ice cream or cookies, adding a healthy twist to what would otherwise be an indulgent treat.

Keeping an eye towards health will continue to be an important consideration for all food manufacturers, along with a solid value proposition. Shoppers are even more interested in nutrient-rich foods than in the past, but at the same time they are a bit stressed out and want to save a bit of money. One approach to meeting this need is offering smaller versions of existing products, which doubles as a way to keep frugal shoppers on board and give potential newcomers an inexpensive way to try out new products.

Despite how things may seem, the up-and-coming trends of 2021 are very similar to what food manufacturers and retailers have seen in the past. Health and cost are still at the forefront of consumers' minds, and the surge in the number of meals being eaten at home should make the coming year a great one for companies across the industry.





## This Year's Holiday Celebrations Will be Smaller, So Plan Accordingly

The 2020 holiday season will be truly unique: 89% of consumers expect to celebrate at least some holidays differently this year, and 77% of shoppers think their shopping habits will differ for these holidays as well, according to Numerator. Food companies may want to adjust their holiday assortment and marketing strategies to appeal to this change, as 38% of respondents said that they would need different kinds or amounts of supplies for this year's festivities.

One of the biggest changes will be the size of individual celebrations. Parties will be smaller and more intimate, with 65% of those expecting to celebrate differently, only gathering with immediate families and members of their households, and 49% gathering with smaller groups.

Additionally, 18% of consumers will be celebrating digitally, which will likely mean smaller, more intimate meals than usual. Products that can add a bit of luxury to these smaller meals may find a place on tables unlike a usual holiday season, where time and quantity become larger concerns.

Despite these changes, food companies shouldn't be worried that their holiday sales are in jeopardy. The vast majority (96%) of shoppers said they still plan on purchasing items



**18%**  
OF CONSUMERS  
WILL BE CELEBRATING  
HOLIDAYS DIGITALLY

to celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah, down just one percentage point from last year. New Year's had a slightly larger drop, down to 64% in 2020 from 69% in 2019, but that still means two-thirds of customers plan on engaging in their usual merriment.

Money may be no object for many, with 37% of consumers planning to spend more and indulge during the holidays after a tough year—presenting a perfect opportunity to offer some indulgent treats. While a significant minority does plan on scaling back their holiday spending, a full two-thirds still plan on celebrating on a smaller scale, and the right meal could help make their holiday feel special without breaking the bank.

**\$2.3B**  
PORK



TOP AG EXPORTS

Pork  
Corn  
Feed Grain  
Eggs  
Soybean  
Beef

PORK PRODUCTS EXPORTED TO  
**31 countries**

**\$10.6B**  
AG EXPORTS



TOP AG EXPORTS

Greenhouse and Nursery Products  
Dairy Products  
Sweet Corn  
Aquaculture (Seafood)  
Apples

FARMLAND COVERS  
**10%**  
OF STATE'S TOTAL AREA

**\$2.4B**  
EXPORTS

**\$11.5M**  
CHICKEN EGGS

TOP AG EXPORTS  
Dairy Products  
Corn  
Soybeans  
Cattle & Calves  
Chicken Eggs  
Hogs  
Apples  
Sugar Beets  
Wheat  
Potatoes



**23M lbs**  
OF ASPARAGUS

40% of exports go to Canada



**\$493M**  
DAIRY PRODUCTS

**\$134M**  
AG EXPORTS

TOP AG EXPORTS  
Dairy Products  
Cattle & Calves  
Maple Products

Turkeys  
Apples  
Hay  
Chicken Eggs  
Sweet Corn  
Honey  
Hogs

# news briefs

**Meat and poultry sales grew 34.6% amid the pandemic.** The meat department sold an additional \$7.9 billion and 1.4 billion-lbs. between March 15 and July 26 versus a year ago, according to The Midyear Power of Meat report. Nearly half of shoppers bought more meat to support the greater number of at-home meal occasions. Additionally, beef generated 61% of new fresh meat dollars, with particular strength for ground beef.

**FDA takes steps in improving food traceability.** The agency proposed a new rule that lays the foundation for end-to-end traceability across the food industry. The proposed rule would help establish clear tracing of a product's source if needed to address food safety risks. Recent foodborne illness outbreaks tied to fresh produce like leafy greens and papayas, among others, highlight the importance of traceability.

**Americans are paying more for groceries during the pandemic.** Prices of beef, paper products, and poultry in particular are contributing. In response, 43% are eating less meat, 38% look for discounts, and 33% eat less poultry, while 69% say they changed their grocery shopping habits to an alternative pickup or delivery method, according to a survey of 2,040 consumers from C+R Research.



**Pizza, hamburgers, ice cream, and mac and cheese are popular choices during the pandemic.** A study of 2,000 U.S. residents commissioned by plant-based meat company Farm Rich found childhood comfort foods and snacks were ways for people to find reassurance during social distancing and isolation. People also tended to spend more time cooking at home than usual, reported the New York Post.

**Plant-based continues to become mainstream.** CPG companies have been expanding their plant-based offerings to compete with brands such as Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat. The Kellogg Co. partnered with Walt Disney Co. to launch Mickey-Mouse shaped Incogmeato chick'n nuggets.

**Plant-based is quickly expanding into international markets.** Impossible Foods is introducing Impossible Sausage Made From Plants in Hong Kong, while also making



its debut in Canada. Meanwhile, Beyond Meat is developing two manufacturing facilities in Jiaying, China.

**U.S. shoppers are going to the grocery store less often but filling up the cart more when they do go.** Additionally, delivery and curbside service are both trending upward, with some customers totally transitioning to digital ordering with no plans to change back. Manufacturers can reduce their variety of products in favor of focusing on staples as customers seek healthy basics and comfort food, reported Bradenton Herald.

**Beverage companies lean into health.** Several beverage brands are launching new products that have a stronger focus on consumer health. PepsiCo is launching a new drink called Driftwell to aid sleep as consumers struggle with stress, while Boston Beer Co. is launching a non-alcoholic beer.

**The at-home coffee market is set to grow by 4.9% this year to reach \$15.6 billion.** This is compared to a total of 3.9% growth experienced between 2015-2019, according to Mintel. As many as two in five Americans are willing to pay more for premium coffee at home, with foodservice branded coffees—such as Starbucks and Peet's—being particularly popular. Gen Z is leading the at-home craze with 46% drinking ready-to-drink coffees.

**The pandemic is highlighting the value of family meals.** Lockdowns pushed Americans to cook more and they are using family meals (both in person and virtually) to stay strong and more connected during the pandemic, noting the food they eat is even more balanced or healthier than if they would eat alone.



## U.S. FOODLINK

Tim Hamilton  
Executive Director  
thamilton@foodexport.org

Greg Cohen  
Communications Manager  
gcohen@foodexport.org

Adolfo Montelongo  
Communications Coordinator – Content  
amontelongo@foodexport.org

Laura Buske  
Communications Coordinator –  
Publications  
lbuske@foodexport.org

Sara Larson  
Communications Associate –  
Social Media  
slarson@foodexport.org

### FOOD EXPORT ASSOCIATION OF THE MIDWEST USA

309 W. Washington Suite 600  
Chicago, IL 60606  
T: 312/334-9200  
F: 312/334-9230  
www.foodexport.org  
info@foodexport.org

Michelle Rogowski  
Deputy Director  
mrogowski@foodexport.org

Teresa Miller  
International Marketing  
Program Manager  
tmiller@foodexport.org

Molly Burns  
Branded Program Manager  
mburns@foodexport.org

### FOOD EXPORT USA- NORTHEAST

One Penn Center  
1617 J.F.K. Boulevard, Suite 420  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
T: 215/829-9111  
F: 215/829-9777  
www.foodexport.org  
info@foodexport.org

Suzanne Milshaw  
Acting Deputy Director / International  
Marketing Program Manager  
smilshaw@foodexport.org

Howard Gordon  
Branded Program Manager  
hgordon@foodexport.org

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### MISSION STATEMENT

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## Tohi Ventures, LLC

Kansas City, MO

Tohi (tow-hee) is a female-founded, emerging wellness brand innovating antioxidant-rich, ready-to-drink beverages from Aronia Berries, a sustainable specialty crop native to North America and grown in the U.S. These superberries have higher levels of antioxidants than any other berry – 4x the level of blueberries and 2x acai berries!

We all live with oxidative stress caused by a buildup of free radicals that overwhelm our bodies and can lead to chronic diseases and health issues. Antioxidants are nature's natural defense against free radicals. Co-founders, Shari and Elma, were motivated to create a convenient and tasty product that consumers could easily incorporate into their daily routine. While researching, they read about Aronia Berries and quickly fell in love with both the history and amazing nutritional profile of Aronia. Tohi was formed!

Available in four delicious flavors – Original, Dragon Fruit, Blackberry Raspberry, and Ginger Lime, with each flavor featuring 30% single strength (NFC) Aronia Berry juice and a touch of Monk Fruit. Tohi is all-natural, non-carbonated, with no added sugar and only 45 calories per 12-ounce serving. [drinktohi.com](http://drinktohi.com)



## Mighty Cricket

Ballwin, MO

Mighty Cricket's next generation protein products are winners with health conscious consumers, outdoor enthusiasts, and athletes. Made from a blend of highly nutritious and sustainable proteins, Mighty Cricket's Clean Protein Powders come in both Chocolate and Vanilla and are praised for their delicious, natural flavors. The Company also sells High Protein Oatmeals: Apple Cinnamon, Coconut Cream, and Dark Chocolate with 10g complete protein per serving. Sought by eco-friendly consumers, Mighty Cricket products bring the future of food mainstream. [MightyCricket.co](http://MightyCricket.co)



## Ecuadorian Rainforest, LLC

Clifton, NJ

Founded in 1997, Ecuadorian Rainforest has supplied hundreds of bulk fruit, herb, marine, spice and vegetable nutraceutical ingredient powders and powdered extracts to the beauty, health and nutritional industry. Committed to offering the best quality ingredients on the market, we provide rigorous testing and keep stringent quality control over our ingredients to surpass the demands our clients have.

**Major Markets:** Fruits, Vegetables, Herbs, Spices, and Marine | Dietary Supplements | Foods & Beverages | Cosmetics

**Certifications:** Quality Assurance International (QAI) USDA-Organic certified ingredients | Halal certified ingredients | Star-K Kosher-certified ingredients | cGMP-certified facility

**Best-Sellers:** Chaste Tree Powder | Cat's Claw Powder | Mastic Gum Powder | and others

No matter where you are, Ecuadorian Rainforest can bring the ingredients of the world right to your door. From the company's warehouse in New Jersey, we are able to deliver ingredients to virtually anywhere on the planet. [IntoTheRainforest.com](http://IntoTheRainforest.com)



## Blue Harvest Fisheries

New Bedford, MA

At Blue Harvest Fisheries, we believe the best seafood comes from a better seafood company – one that brings transparency, openness, and unflinching honesty to everything we do. It is a commitment to treating our customers like partners, protecting the marine environment, creating economic opportunities in our communities and delivering the best quality seafood products.

Like our Atlantic pollock / saithe – harvested by Blue Harvest's own vessels from MSC-certified fisheries in Georges Bank and the Gulf of Maine and processed in our own SQF certified waterfront facility in New Bedford, MA.

Blue Harvest Fisheries Atlantic pollock is all natural and available fresh or frozen in a variety of forms and pack sizes along with our other all-natural, sustainably harvested seafood products including scallops, haddock, and ocean perch (Acadian redfish).

[blueharvestfisheries.com](http://blueharvestfisheries.com)

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**



## SCD Probiotics

Kansas City, MO

Introduce your customers to the healthiest version of their lives, powered by probiotics. Probiotics are everywhere, from our guts to our kitchen countertops. And everywhere they go, they help us live healthier. SCD Probiotics has been refining our patented probiotic technology for 22+ years to bring consumers powerful and easy-to-use new products that go beyond probiotic dietary supplements – including our exclusive, new line of probiotic-powered cleaning products.

Safe, sustainable, and easy, probiotic-powered cleaning is not just non-toxic: these products deliver a microscopic clean that lasts for up to 3 days. Dirt-busting, biodegradable, and healthy, they also smell amazing, thanks to premium-quality, organic essential oils.

Vegan | Never Tested on Animals | Zero Fake Fragrances | Free from Petroleum, Sulfates, Phthalates, Parabens, Triclosan, and Ammonia | Dye Free | Microbiome Friendly [scdprobiotics.com](http://scdprobiotics.com)



## Fulfill Food & Beverages

Saint Louis, MO

Karuna Beverages makes award-winning prebiotic & antioxidant juice drinks and smoothies using whole plant ingredients. Our formulation approach is rooted in the Far East "Food Is Better Medicine" wisdom and backed by modern medical and nutritional science. As the innovator in creating prebiotic drinks made with unique superfood ingredients, Karuna is determined to solve rising health issues such as diabetes and obesity caused by the modern lifestyle. Karuna is not another me-too superfood product.

In addition to the must-have attributes such as no-added sugar and all natural ingredients, Karuna juices are low in natural sugar and glycemic index and high in prebiotic fiber and natural antioxidants. Karuna drinks offer health benefits such as improve digestive system health, boost immunity, and provide sustained energy. Karuna is also the pioneer in using a hydroponic farm to grow bean sprouts as well as using whole plant ingredients in production to eliminate waste. [mykaruna.com](http://mykaruna.com)



## Carnivore Meat Company

Green Bay, WI

Freeze-dried dog and cat food made by Carnivore Meat Company is purely raw and instinctively healthy with no "junk food" ingredients, celebrating happy, healthy pets by providing the ultimate limited ingredient diet for pet parents all across the world. The custom 48-hour slow freeze-drying process locks in the natural flavor, texture and freshness of the meat without compromising the nutritional value

Vital Essentials® dog food is made from real meat to deliver essential nutrients that support vitality and overall wellness for dogs, naturally. No grains, gluten, artificial ingredients, flavorings or rendered by-products. Vital Essentials provides classic and exotic proteins in a variety of forms including Patties, Mini Patties, Mini Nibs, Nibbles and Toppers. Available in Beef, Chicken, Turkey, Duck, Rabbit or Salmon.

Cats aren't picky when it comes to Vital Cat food – made with only fresh, whole, single-sourced animal protein to deliver essential nutrients and support vitality. Vital Cat provides classic and exotic proteins in a variety of forms including Mini Patties, Mini Nibs and Toppers. Choose from Chicken, Turkey, Duck or Rabbit for a simple and convenient way to feed a raw diet. [veraw.com](http://veraw.com)



## Suan's

Founded in 2009, Suan's® uses the Jamaican Scotch Bonnet Pepper as the base for a gourmet line of condiments. The original Scotch Bonnet Pepper Jelly has won the "Gold Award for Best In Class at the Dallas Gourmet Market" and was named "top 30 gourmet item in the U.S." by the Natural Food Merchandizer's. Also available as Pepper Relish, Sweet Tomato Jam, Pineapple Cinnamon Jam, Mango Lemon Fruit Butter, Onion Preserves, and Jalapeno Pepper Relish, which is a sweet hot. Most are available in both retail and food service size.

Suan's products are versatile, unique in flavor, and made with all-natural high-quality ingredients. Used in mocktails/cocktails, appetizers, entrees, side-dishes and desserts – great with every meal and occasion. Encased in oval-hex jars with a modern-designed-label that lets customers know this is something very-special, they will not be disappointed. [suansfoods.com](http://suansfoods.com)

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**