

U.S. FOODLINK

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International Flavors DOMINATE SUMMER FOOD TRENDS

Consumers' food interests are ever-changing, and the transition from a chilly winter to a warm summer will give a multitude of new products and ingredients a chance to take the spotlight.

People will be looking for new recipes to cook on their grills, new flavors to add to their desserts and trendy snacks to keep them fed between meals – with many international flavors finding their way into pantries and fridges.

Summer is prime time for barbeque, and international options will find a place on consumers' grills this season. Ingredients with smoky and peppery notes from the Middle East, the Mediterranean, South America, and Asia are expected to rise in popularity, as are flavors and techniques used in Korean and Thai barbecue.

This food can be washed down with tepache, a Mexican fermented drink that could become the next kombucha. The low-calorie, probiotic-rich beverage is made from pineapple skins and unprocessed brown sugar and comes in a variety of flavors including mango chili, grapefruit, and tamarind. Larger brands like De la Calle are being stocked in major U.S. grocery chains, and home cooks can make it with leftover pineapple peels.

Another trend that draws mainly from international flavors is “swicy” food that combines both sweet and spicy elements into one dish.

Examples of swicy items include chili dark chocolate and hot honey, and South Korean cuisine, which has been gaining interest over the past few years, includes this flavor pairing in multiple dishes. One option includes mixing hot sauce and strawberry jam to create a glaze for fried chicken.

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International Flavors *Continued*

This trend also might manifest in the addition of spicy ingredients, such as chipotle and cayenne, in sweet baked goods. Classic swicy combinations like Mexican hot chocolate, mango habanero and chili raspberry are expected to pop up in the form of cakes, cookies, and pies, which also could affect what home bakers create in their own ovens.

Another international-driven trend is tamarind, which is popular as an ingredient in Mexican, Indian, and Southeast Asian cuisine. It can be found in pods or as a paste in sweet and sour formulations, and it's taking off for use in candy, snacks, and beverages.

One standout brand is Banderilla Tama Roca Tamarindo Mexican Candy Sticks – which have grown as a search term by more than 5,000% on Google.

Some fading fads are expected to give way to new successors. One of these is ube, a purple yam that is gaining popularity as interest in taro root falls. It has a vanilla-adjacent flavor that can work with both desserts and entrees, which makes it particularly popular for baked goods.

Not all summer trends are flavor-driven.

The latest beneficiary of consumers' sustainability push will be mushrooms, which could become more popular as both restaurants and shoppers look for eco-friendly options. Classics like shitakes, portabellas and criminis will get a small boost, but the bigger winners will be specialty mushroom. Oyster mushrooms have reportedly seen 100% growth on menus as appetizers, while Trumpet mushrooms are appearing 75% more often compared to 2022.

Another regular trend, superfoods, will see sea-born plants join its ranks. Ocean-based plants, already a staple in Asian cultures, are gaining popularity among Millennials and Gen X across the world. Foods from green algae to nori to dried seaweed are gaining popularity for their high nutrition density and other benefits.

Food manufacturers can't afford to ignore social media, particularly TikTok, when



searching for the next big thing. The social media platform may be poised to drive one of the biggest up-and-coming food trends in the unlikely form of tinned fish. This isn't traditional tuna, but trendy seafood including octopus, squid, mussels, and mackerel, often preserved in sauces, with herbs or smoked.

These foods also carry health benefits that broaden their appeal as snacks. Canned fish provide great sources of protein and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, while shellfish are full of zinc and vitamin B12. Additionally, canned seafood is usually made from smaller, non-predatory sea creatures, which puts the mercury content lower than what's found in regular servings of large fish.

This same trend is driving interest in escabeche, which is the name for a number of dishes that utilize marinated fish, meat or vegetables as well as paprika and other spices. This is an easy way to preserve fish used in Spain, Italy, France, and other countries, and it could provide another option for people to enjoy tinned fish.

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One potentially unusual trend is gourmet salts, particularly pink peppercorn, matcha, and black lava. Black lava salt, which is either harvested from cooled lava or made from regular sea salt mixed with activated charcoal, is being touted for its health benefits. All three salts are unrefined, which enables them to retain minerals like potassium, iron, magnesium. A survey by Cargill found that the net health perceptions, which measures whether consumers feel positive or negative about an ingredient, of "sea salt" such as the above three was 36%, compared to a -15% for "salt."

Non-dairy items have been trending for some time now, and an alternative dairy item may also find its time in the sun: goat milk.

Goat milk lacks the enzyme that affects lactose intolerant people and boasts a longer shelf life and easy digestibility. These properties are expected to make it a popular option in butter, cheese, flavored milk, and yogurt, as well as an ingredient in home-cooked meals.

Convenience and Price Remain Top-of-Mind at Foodservice



Shoppers are cooking at elevated rates compared to pre-pandemic trends, but restaurants remain a popular way to eat with convenience. Price and convenience are two of the primary drivers of a good away-from-home meal, and restaurateurs need to deliver on both aspects in order to succeed in the current climate.

With this in mind, foodservice companies need to be ready to focus on delivery and takeaway choices when molding their menus – 75% of diners believe it's worth paying more money for a unique dining experience, according to Eventbrite.

Many consumers are still interested in contactless choices, which means they prefer to take their meals at home. Dishes that can be easily enjoyed elsewhere will be a key part of the menu for the foreseeable future.

Those who do want to dine out are looking for experiences, which means offering memorable dishes, as well. In fact, 84% of people surveyed by Eventbrite reported seeking out a surprising menu or theme.

International flavors, such as Asian and African spices, are trending right now and worth investigating. These can exist alongside comfort foods that continue to see popularity across menus.

Of course, price remains an important part of the equation. Consumers across all income levels are watching their wallets as they manage the impact of more than a year's worth of inflation, and they want the best value for their money when they go out to eat.

However, recent inflation can also play to restaurants' benefit.

Technomic has found that larger bills at the grocery store have shrunk the perceived value gap between cooking at home versus eating out. This has made both visiting a restaurant and ordering takeout more appealing, so foodservice operators who can add even more value to what they offer will be in a good position.

Restaurants should strive to keep sustainability in mind when navigating both of the above strategies. Deliverect noted that while 65% of consumers said that while they find healthy, sustainable eating to be more expensive, 43% are willing to pay more for takeaways in restaurants that have visible sustainability practices.



Featured U.S. Midwest & Northeast State Profiles



news briefs

Some 73% of consumers are concerned about shrinkflation. A new YouGov poll found that snack foods like chips and sweets (52%) top the list of product categories where consumers are noticing this trend, reported *Supermarket News*.

Sugar is becoming even more expensive, raising costs for the industry. It's also keeping up pressure on global food inflation. Prices of refined sugar surged to the highest in more than a decade this week and are on track to jump about 11% in March, the most for a month since 2021, reported *Bloomberg*.



Vegetarianism is growing slowly in the U.S. and Europe. Consumers are becoming more sensitive to climate change and aware of the impact of food on health. The World Economic Forum and Statista reported that the trend is declining in less developed and emerging economies, however, as meat becomes more available and affordable.

The oat milk market is projected to grow to \$7.8 billion by 2030 at a CAGR of 7.2%. According to a report by Market Research Future, growing numbers of consumers who identify as vegans and health-conscious shoppers who desire plant-based milk with high nutritional value are both credited as primary market drivers.

Seven out of 10 consumers find sustainability more important today than they did two years ago, and more than half consider it "very important," according to *Glow's 2023 US Brand Sustainability Benchmark Report*.



Natural/organic product sales continue to climb, according to a new study. Findings from the Acosta Group also revealed that nearly three in four shoppers are purchasing natural/organic products. For non-natural and organic shoppers, 73% say price is the key barrier to purchase.

Many CPG companies are culling product lines to combat rising input costs. Decreasing consumer demand, a trend which began during the pandemic, is also contributing. Conagra Brands, the Kraft Heinz Co., Nestle SA, and Unilever PLC are among the companies shrinking their product portfolios, reported *Reuters*.

A recent study questioned the viability of cage-free eggs. The study, led by researchers from Michigan State University, found that there are segments of consumers willing to pay premiums for cage-free eggs, but the largest segment (55%) is primarily motivated by price and doesn't discriminate between cage and cage-free eggs, reported *Food Processing*.

Cultivated meat is on the horizon, but it still has a long way to go before hitting grocery shelves. Cultivated meat is still expensive to make, and "the average consumer is still pretty skittish" about trying it, noted one agricultural economist from Purdue University, reported *Marketplace*.

Consumers' frugality in response to inflation could potentially open new opportunities for retailers. A new Deloitte report found that, for example, consumers' frugality can offer behavioral insights and "important strategic implications for retailers" and consumer packaged goods companies.



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Venus Wafers Inc.

Hingham, Massachusetts

CaPeachio's crackers are baked exclusively with non-GMO, wholesome ingredients. Delivering old world deliciousness that's perfect for dressing up, dressing down, or snacking however you like. Available Seven savory flavors: Original Water, Peppercorn & Poppy, Butter Flavored, Multigrain Wheat, Vegetable, Ancient Grains, and Classic Golden crackers.

Since 1931, family-owned and operated Venus Wafers has pioneered healthful crackers and flatbreads to meet the changing tastes of convenience-driven consumers. From their founder's first product more than 90 years ago, a 100% whole wheat wafer bread, through their authentic Lavasch, Water crackers, Stoned Wheat crackers and Organic Flatbreads. Venus has always strived to bake with the finest ingredients into a variety of shapes and sizes that are packaged in an appealing fashion. venuswafers.com



Golden Cannoli Company

Chelsea, Massachusetts

As a leading national cannoli manufacturer, established in 1970, Golden Cannoli Shells Company continues to grow and expand into new markets with innovations on the traditional cannoli experience. "Our goal is to create cannoli awareness and availability across the country, every day, in every market." When you expect high quality cannoli enjoyment, Cannoli Chips & Dip platters and grab-n-go cups allow for the same cannoli experience in a non-traditional way. It's a "chip off the old cannoli." Golden Cannoli is still family owned and operated by the 2nd generation. "We come every day to work with a passion for cannoli and for what our dads created over 50 years ago when they came to this country." At Golden Cannoli, quality and service is a priority and the success is based on exceeding partners' expectations at every stage. goldencannoli.com

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BNutty Gourmet Peanut Butter

Portage, Indiana

Founded by two spunky soccer moms who were tired of watching their kids eat gas station junk food on the road to games, BNutty Nut Butters were created to be a gourmet tasting, unfussy snack, no spreading or dipping required, with a variety of flavors to fit any preference. BNutty products are made with love in our 17,000 square foot production facility known as "The Nouthouse."

Women-Owned | Minority-Owned | Gluten-Free | Kosher bnutty.com



Value Wholesale dba Prefer Products Brands

Oak Park, Michigan

Value Wholesale Distributors has been building partnerships with businesses for 30 years. Our customers have come to know us as simply "Value" – that's the reputation we've built, and our customers thrive on. We are family owned and operated at every level to make sure you have the edge needed in an increasingly competitive market. Distributing over 5,000 national branded food and general merchandise products, we have multiple private label branded products. valuewholesale.com



Vesta Ingredients

Indianapolis, Indiana

Pearl Tomato® carotenoids prevent the pigmentation process in human bodies while still brightening and lightening skin tone. White tomatoes are known to reduce the melanin in dark spots and freckles. These carotenoids can absorb UV and infrared wavelengths, making them an excellent protector against destructive sun rays. Combining Pearl Tomato™ with liposomal technology, Liposomal-Pearl Tomato® uses tiny, spherical structures comprising a phospholipid bilayer that encases the ingredient and allows it to pass through the digestive system for easier absorption while maintaining a high level of effectiveness and potency. vestanutra.com



Stonewall Kitchen

York, Maine

Stonewall Kitchen is a leading specialty food, home goods and personal care producer headquartered in York, Maine. Founded in 1991, partners Jonathan King and Jim Stott established the Stonewall Kitchen brand by selling jams and jellies at local farmers' markets with a flavorful line of distinctive and high-quality products. Over time, they expanded the brand to include sauces, condiments, crackers and baking mixes, always focusing on innovative product development, beautiful packaging, and exceptional guest service. Today, Stonewall Kitchen is the premier specialty food and home goods platform in North America, home to a family of premium quality brands.

stonewallkitchen.com



Aero-Cos International

Marlboro, NEW JERSEY

Aero-Cos International Ltd. is a multi-divisional company engaged in manufacturing, marketing, selling and distributing consumable products, including a range of "Better For You Healthy Snacks" under the Western Range brand. Products include plant-based portabella mushroom snacks that are vegan, gluten free, non-GMO and a great source of protein; premium dried fruits and premium beef jerky available in three flavors. Beef Jerky is also available with Halal certification. All Western Range products are grown and processed in the U.S., are shelf stable with a shelf life of 15-18 months. aerocos.com

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Pearl and Rose Premium Foods LLC

Newark, New Jersey

Käze Cheese snacks were created to be satisfying, delicious, and healthy! Packed with protein, keto-friendly, and gluten-free, these 100% real cheese snacks contain no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives. Käze brings real cheese to life through our proprietary drying process that locks in all the rich cheesy taste for you to enjoy wherever you go. They're portable, convenient, and delicious. kazecheese.com



Pocas International Corp.

South Hackensack, New Jersey

We are proud to present our delicious ginger brew made in the U.S. with only the finest ingredients. Our New England-style ginger brew is carbonated and infused with fresh ginger, offering five unique flavors: Original Ginger Brew, Apple Moringa, Calamansi Mojito, Pineapple Ginseng, and Mango Turmeric.

New England Made | Non-GMO | Caffeine-Free | No High Fructose Corn Syrup | No Preservatives pocas.com



Health Garden of NY INC

Paterson, New Jersey

We believe that a healthy lifestyle and a positive outlook on life go hand in hand. Indeed, our customers' happiness is our priority. Our low-glycemic sweeteners and condiments are safe for diabetics and allergy sufferers. Available in many sizes from small packets to bulk food service. Private labels and bilingual packaging also available.

Non-GMO | Gluten-free | All-natural | Kosher | Free of artificial chemicals and additives healthgardenusa.com