



2026 FLAVOR TRENDS

How global influence, fruit-forward balance, newstalgia, and function are shaping what's next in flavor.



Flavor is becoming more intentional across categories. As consumer expectations evolve, brands are moving beyond single-note profiles toward more layered, experience-driven flavor systems. Our trendologists* dive into data and market signals across food and beverage to uncover the trends shaping flavor today.

FOUR MACRO TRENDS ARE SHAPING THIS SHIFT:



GLOBAL

Globally inspired flavors continue to gain traction as consumers seek new ways to explore familiar formats. These profiles balance discovery with approachability, often introducing subtle savory, toasted, or umami elements.



FRUIT-FORWARD

Bright, expressive fruit flavors are driving refreshment and broad appeal. Citrus, tropical, and tart profiles create balance while supporting lighter, more approachable food and beverage applications.



NEWSTALGIA

Nostalgia is being reimaged through bold color, indulgent flavor, and playful formats. Familiar profiles are evolving into more experiential, visually engaging applications that resonate across generations.



FLAVOR + FUNCTION

Functional ingredients deliver targeted benefits while also contributing to flavor. Botanical, floral, and spice-driven profiles help bridge wellness and taste, supporting better-for-you products that drive repeat purchase.

*Trend experts who translates data, market signals, and emerging trends into insights that inform innovation across food and beverage.

FOOD & BEVERAGE INGREDIENT SOLUTIONS

Across food and beverage, flavor is becoming more expressive and more intentional. Familiar profiles are evolving through global influence, citrus and fruit-forward balance, nostalgia and functional ingredients, shaping how products are developed and how consumers explore new flavors.



Vibrant Trendologist:

*Leah Kuipers, Marketing Manager
Food & Beverage*



MACRO TREND
Global**HOJICHA**

Hojicha brings warm, toasty notes and subtle sweetness, making it an approachable way to introduce global flavor into beverages. Its momentum is clear, **with menu presence increasing +41.8% over the past four years¹**, supported by strong familiarity and growing interest among younger consumers, where the flavor continues to overindex.

SESAME

Sesame is emerging as a more subtle way to introduce savory depth, adding warmth and complexity while remaining approachable across sweet and beverage formats. As consumers explore globally inspired flavors, **48.2% of U.S. adults express interest in sesame as a beverage ingredient³**, with even higher engagement among those who use social media for flavor discovery⁴.

PISTACHIO

Pistachio continues to resonate by balancing familiarity with a more premium, globally inspired profile. Its broad appeal remains strong, **with 73% of consumers showing interest in pistachio in desserts and confections²**, reinforcing its versatility across applications.

**TRENDOLOGIST PICK****MISO**

Miso is gaining traction beyond traditional savory use, increasingly paired with sweet flavors like caramel and chocolate. This balance of comfort and contrast reflects growing interest in more layered flavor experiences, **with 50% of consumers expressing interest in miso in desserts or confections²**, supported by strong familiarity and momentum, with the flavor rated *"On Fire"*¹.

Miso's sweet-savory profile makes it a natural fit for beverage innovation.



**Salted
Caramel Miso
Latte**

Sources: ¹Datassential, 2026; ²Mintel, May 2025; ³Mintel, October 2026; ⁴Mintel, October 2025

MACRO TREND

Fruit-Forward

LYCHEE

Lychee brings light sweetness and subtle floral notes, offering a clean, refreshing profile that continues to gain traction in beverage innovation. Interest is building, with **42% of U.S. consumers expressing interest in lychee¹**, with stronger engagement among younger consumers, reinforcing its appeal in more exploratory, flavor-forward formats.

CITRUS & HEAT

Citrus and heat continue to gain traction, balancing brightness with spice to create approachable complexity in beverages. This *"swicy"* profile is resonating with consumers, with **72% expressing interest in citrus and 42% in habanero in non-alcoholic beverages²**, while higher engagement among social media-driven consumers highlights its role in driving flavor exploration.

BLACK CURRANT

Also trending in away-from-home

Black currant brings bold, tart berry flavor with bright acidity, adding depth and contrast to fruit-forward beverages. Interest is building, with **nearly 40% of consumers expressing interest in currant in non-alcoholic beverages¹**, with stronger engagement among younger consumers, signaling opportunity in more trend-driven applications.

TRENDOLOGIST PICK

WHITE PEACH

White peach delivers soft sweetness and low acidity, creating a smooth, refreshing profile that feels both light and indulgent in beverages. Its broad appeal is clear, with **61.3% of U.S. consumers expressing interest¹**, supported by strong engagement across generations, reinforcing its versatility across applications.

"Swicy"

What It Means:

Combination of sweet and spicy flavors, balancing heat with sweetness to create a bold, craveable taste experience that feels both exciting and approachable.

White peach delivers smooth, approachable flavor that works seamlessly across hydration and better-for-you beverages.

White Peach Aloe Hydration

Sources: ¹Kantar Profiles/Mintel, January 2025; ²Mintel, October 2025

MACRO TREND

Newstalgia

BLUE RASPBERRY

Blue raspberry delivers bold, sweet-tart flavor rooted in candy and childhood treats, bringing strong nostalgic appeal with high visual and flavor impact in beverages. It continues to resonate across generations, with **70% of Gen Z and 60% of Baby Boomers expressing interest in blue raspberry-flavored beverages¹**, reinforcing its broad appeal and staying power.

CREAMY

Creamy profiles are gaining traction as consumers seek comfort, indulgence, and familiarity in beverages. Smooth, rich textures bring a sense of treat-like enjoyment while balancing brighter or bolder flavors, with **56% of consumers saying they would likely or definitely buy a strawberries-and-cream soda²**, alongside strong overall affinity and continued menu growth³.

COTTON CANDY

Cotton candy brings light, airy sweetness inspired by classic fairs and childhood treats, delivering playful nostalgia and vibrant appeal in beverages. Interest is building, with **46.7% of U.S. consumers expressing interest in cotton candy flavor in non-alcoholic beverages¹**, with stronger engagement among younger consumers driving continued momentum.



TRENDOLOGIST PICK

SUPERMAN ICE CREAM

Superman Ice Cream brings bold color and playful sweetness inspired by a classic scoop shop favorite. Its citrus, berry, and vanilla blend delivers a bright, candy-like flavor with high visual and nostalgic appeal. Its momentum is accelerating, with **+58.6% predicted 4-year menu growth³**, supported by strong engagement among Gen Z and Millennials, where the flavor continues to overindex.

Bold color and playful nostalgia continue to gain traction in beverages that prioritize experience and visual appeal.



Superman Swirl Refresher

Sources: ¹Kantar Profiles/Mintel, January 2025; ²Mintel, January 2026; ³Datassential

MACRO TREND

Flavor +
Function

CHAMOMILE

Chamomile offers a gentle, floral profile associated with relaxation and calming benefits, making it a natural fit for beverages focused on stress relief and sleep support. Demand remains strong, with nearly **60% of consumers expressing interest in calming functional beverages**, reinforcing the role of ingredients like chamomile in wellness-driven formulations¹.

GINGER

Ginger delivers a warm, slightly spicy profile with recognized digestive and anti-inflammatory benefits, supporting its widespread use in functional beverages. Its appeal continues to grow, with **over 57% of consumers expressing interest and nearly 63% having tried ginger in non-alcoholic beverages**², alongside continued growth in new product introductions.

TURMERIC

Turmeric brings warm, earthy flavor paired with well-established anti-inflammatory and antioxidant benefits, making it a consistent choice in beverages focused on wellness and long-term health.. Interest remains strong, with **47% of consumers expressing interest in turmeric in non-alcoholic beverages**², alongside continued adoption and projected growth across applications.



TRENDOLOGIST PICK

JASMINE

Jasmine brings a light, aromatic floral profile with delicate sweetness, increasingly used in beverages to support relaxation while adding an elegant, fragrant finish. Its momentum is accelerating, with flavor usage **growing 39% in global non-alcoholic beverage introductions** since 2023², supported by strong interest among younger consumers³.

Florals that also deliver on function make it easy to deliver wellness without sacrificing taste.



White Peach
& Jasmine
Iced Tea

Sources: ¹Mintel, June 2024; ²Mintel, October 2025; ³Kantar Profiles/Mintel, January 2025

POWERING EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES THROUGH FLAVOR

Flavor is what brings products to life. It connects ingredients, defines the sensory experience, and plays a critical role in how consumers discover, enjoy, and return to brands.

At Vibrant Ingredients™, flavor is the thread that brings our ingredient systems together, uniting taste, function, and performance into solutions designed for today's evolving expectations. It is how we deliver on our promise of Purely Better™.

Looking ahead is essential. Our team of *Trendologists* connects emerging signals to future opportunities, translating cultural shifts and consumer behaviors into actionable flavor direction that helps shape what's next.

Our certified flavor chemists and product developers bring those insights to life, working side by side with partners to create scalable, high-performing solutions across food and beverage applications.

What We Deliver

- Trend-driven flavor insights
- Custom natural flavor
- Rapid prototyping and technical collaboration
- End-to-end formulation and regulatory support

Your products deserve flavors as distinctive as your vision. We help make them real.



PURELY
Better™