

# 20 FLAVOR INSIGHT 15 REPORT



## Latin Flavors' Growing Influence

Consumers increasingly look for quality in variety and adventure, rather than in the comfort of traditional foods. We are seeing growth in consumer interest in discovery of varied culinary traditions (global, regional, ethnic etc.), particularly among the younger generations. One ethnic cuisine in particular is Latin. Latin America is a highly diverse region with a rich and varied culinary landscape.

In this report we will look at Latin flavors appearing in the United States and United Kingdom and the influence they are having on new products and menu items.

# Latin Flavors On the Rise

## Mexican flavors extremely popular in the United States.

In U.S. food service and retail, Mexican food/flavors continue to grow in popularity. According to Mintel's Menu Insights, Q1 2015 saw a 5% increase in use of Mexican inspired core menu items compared to Q1 2014. 15% of main meal items featured on US menus were Mexican inspired during this time, making it the third most featured food type (after American and Italian foods). Its popularity stretches across all restaurant types - from fine dining to quick service.

This wide availability of Mexican foods in restaurants is influencing retail products, as well. Italian is first, but Mexican is the second most popular ethnic/ international food prepared at home in U.S. kitchens.

## More than Mexican: Regional Latin American flavors are winning over U.S. consumers.

Latino food is so much more than Mexican! Foods from other Latin countries, such as Argentina and Uruguay are becoming more popular in the United States as people migrate to this country, bringing the flavors of their homelands with them. Later on in this report, we'll look at quick service restaurants and retail products we've seen featuring Latin flavors.



**46% of U.S. households – and 56% of U.S. 25-34 year olds—have prepared Mexican food at home.**



**2/3 of UK consumers are interested in trying Latin American cuisines, such as Brazilian and Argentinean foods.**

## UK consumer interest in Latin American cuisine is considerable.

In the UK, four in 10 consumers report eating Mexican food at home in the last six months, placing Mexican as the third most commonly consumed ethnic food, behind Chinese and Indian.

Other Latin American cuisines, such as Brazilian and Argentinian, are currently consumed much less, having only been eaten at home by 6% of UK respondents in the last six months. But, this could trend up quickly, as South American cuisine is the ethnic food that the most UK consumers are interested in trying.

# Dining Out

U.S. quick service restaurants featuring Latin flavors can be found coast to coast.

**Mr. Pupusa, Venice, CA:** Pupusas, popular in El Salvador, are thick corn tortillas filled with cheese, refried beans, or pork (chicharron). Mr. Pupusa also has a popular flavor featuring loroco, an edible flower from El Salvador.



**Giraffas, Miami, FL:** The flavors of Brazil are central to this Miami restaurant chain (which has 400 locations in Brazil). There are Brazilian flavors in most Giraffas dishes, including steak and chicken sandwiches, the sauces, beans, rice, quinoa salad, and farofa, which is a toasted flour made from yuca. The steaks and burgers made from the picanha (rump cap) cut of beef, a very traditional cut in Brazil, says João Barbosa, chief executive of Giraffas USA.

**Pollo Campero, National:** Originally from Guatemala, this restaurant draws its influences from “all over Latin America,” says Lisken Kastalanych, vice president of marketing. “We’re bringing the flavors people want to experience, even if they can’t travel down there.”

“We start with the freshest ingredients, mix in spices from across Latin America, and add a whole lot of Latin pride” to create food that is a “modern twist on Latin American favorites,” says their website. Some of those favorites include: Peruvian-spiced chicken, quinoa, pinto beans, yuca fries, sweet plantains, steak tacos with Argentine chimichuri sauce, and empanadas (a stuffed pastry that is baked or fried), including one with Cuban-style pulled pork.

**Chix, Washington, D.C.:** The menu here highlights Peruvian and Colombian chicken (featuring coconut milk and coffee), along with sides, such as Cuban-style black beans. “I think people are looking for these different options,” says founder Victoria Garcia, whose Spanish father, a chef, created the restaurant’s basic sweet and savory chicken marinade.

## SPOTTED:

The Kentucky State Fair had a Taste of Brazil dinner series this year. Coba Cocina, continued its dinner series with A Taste of Brazil, 6:30 p.m. Aug. 26. Chef Jonathan Lundy prepared five courses of traditional Brazilian fare with a pinch of Kentucky essence. The menu includes shrimp and rice croquettes, black-eyed pea fritters with shrimp, seared palm hearts with Limestone Bibb lettuce and heirloom tomatoes, southern fried coxinha with catupiry cream gravy and more. The passion fruit caipirinhas (the national cocktail of Brazil) will be served in Mason jars, and there will be a selection of Brazilian beer.

# Beverages bring interesting Latin flavors to consumers.

Beverages are an easy way for consumers to try new flavors, and we are seeing some interesting Latin flavors appear in retail and menus.

## Califia Farms Aguas Frescas

U.S. juice drink and smoothie-maker Califia Farms rolled out a Hispanic-inspired Aguas Frescas line in Whole Foods Markets this summer. Flavors available are Watermelon Ginger Lime, Strawberry Basil, and Kiwi Cactus Lemonade. The packaging graphics are inspired by Mexican mural art and Día de los Muertos designs.



This product launch is a good example of Hispanic-leaning products not just targeting Hispanics, signaling the increased push of Latin flavors to consumers as a whole.

1. Natural supermarkets are not a retail stronghold for Hispanics, so placement of the products through Whole Foods indicates they are seeking a mainstream audience.
2. The packaging is close to Califia Farms' lemonades, with the brand hoping to connect with cross-over consumers and flavor-seekers.
3. Speaking of flavor, the flavors have a Latin influence and incorporate traditional aguas frescas elements, but infuse flavors such as watermelon and strawberry which are perhaps friendlier to a mainstream audience than more traditional offerings such as tamarind and hibiscus.

## SPOTTED:

**Via Lima, Chicago** – Chicha Morada (purple corn drink), Inka Cola (classic peruvian soft drink), Pisco Lychee Martini, or a La Monte Carla with pisco, St. Germaine, thyme infused simple syrup, lime juice, and fresh blueberries. (Read more about this restaurant under the Peru section of this report.)

### **Moon Juice restaurant, L.A. – Sesame Ginger**

**Lucuma Moon Juice:** Lucuma is a fruit native to the Andean Valley of Chile, Ecuador and Peru. It has a maple & butterscotch flavor and contains protein and iron, which is unusual for a fruit. It is also an anti-inflammatory.

### **Pichuberry Infusion found at Whole Foods in CA and AZ:**

This drink features the pichuberry, a sweet and tart golden berry grown around the Andes Mountains. According to Pichuberry Company, this fruit has phytochemicals that can prevent cancer, is anti-inflammatory, lowers bad cholesterol, and is low glycemic. (Read more about the pichuberry in the "Peru" section of this report.)

# We all scream for Latin-flavored ice cream!

In the UK, where 2/3 of consumers are interested in Latin flavors, Mövenpick launched a Latin American inspired ice cream range in the winter of 2014. The flavors are:

- Martinique Rum Soaked Pineapple
- Guatemalan Coffee Pure Arabica
- Dulce de Leche Argentinian Recipe
- Brazilian Orange Sorbet and Spices

Mövenpick describes the flavors as “two adventurous gourmet creations from Martinique and Brazil and two great classics inspired by specialties from Argentina and Guatemala.” On the company website there are dedicated pages for each of the ice cream variants; with information detailing the origin and history of the ingredients used.

In the U.S., venture to Little Havana in Miami and visit Azucar for homemade ice cream rich with Latin flavor. The Miami Herald says, “Azucar’s bold fusions are a mélange of evocative flavors that prick your imagination and tantalize your palette.”

- Cuban Coffee & Oreo
- Cuban Vanilla
- Sugarcane & Pineapple
- Spiced Sugar Plum
- Orange Blossom Almond
- Four Milks Cake
- Champagne Grapefruit sorbet
- Watermelon Mint sorbet

## RETAIL SPOTTING:

In retail, we spotted Steve’s Mexican Chilli Chocolate Ice Cream, which is made in small batches with Hudson Valley Fresh milk, Taza chocolate and spices including cayenne, cinnamon and Guajillo chili.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Dulce de leche, a flavor seen in the U.S. desserts, is from Argentina. The Food Lover’s Companion defines dulce de leche as a caramel-like mixture popular in Mexico, Central America and South America. In Spanish, dulce de leche literally translates to “sweet of milk,” and more loosely as “milk candy.”

## ABUELA MARIA:

Azucar in Miami is the home of Abuela Maria® Ice Cream, which they call a Cuban classic: “Our premium vanilla ice cream mixed with bright jewels of ruby red guava, rich cream cheese and crispy, sweet galletas Maria” (cookies).



## Peru—A Cuisine on the Rise

“Recent fine dining recognition of Peruvian cuisine is likely to stimulate consumer interest in a wider range of Latin American flavors.” *David Turner, Mintel*

Peruvian cuisine features many ingredients that are already growing in popularity in the U.S., which should help overcome any concerns over unfamiliarity. Grains such as quinoa and amaranth are increasingly used in retail food launches. Consumers’ awareness of aji panca, aji rocoto and aji Amarillo peppers, the Peruvian equivalent of jalapeños or chipotle, may also be boosted by their increased use in retail food launches.

The flavors of Peru are on display in fine dining fashion at **Via Lima** in Chicago where guests are taken on a “whirlwind culinary tour through the Peruvian inspired menu.” Guests experience Peruvian mainstays such as ceviches, lomo saltado (stir-fried steak) and aji de gallina (chili pepper chicken). For dessert, options include the turrón de chocolate: *chocolate torte with raisins, almonds, vanilla, and pisco gooseberry compote and picarones: beignets of sweet potato and pumpkin, served with panela syrup.*

New Orleans has seen several new restaurants with Latin flavor open recently. The growing Latino population in the area is bringing Central and South American, as well as Mexican flavors to town. For example, **Rebellion Bar and Urban Kitchen** combines Korean and Brazilian flavors. The Times-Picayune offered this menu description: “Gochujang, the fiery fermented soybean chili paste, shows up in several creations, including an excellent variation on a margarita. Coconut milk ceviche is served with golden plantain chips, and yuja honey vinaigrette dresses the house salad. Large masa crust empanadas are filled with a creamy blend of Oaxaca cheese and kimchi and topped with pale green chimichurri creme fraiche.”

**51%** of sauce and marinade buyers prefer spicier, hotter flavors: sounds like a great market for Peruvian pepper flavors!



Via Lima, Chicago



Rebellion, Chicago

# Peruvian Pichuberry: The Next Superfruit?

About the size and texture of a cherry tomato, but growing in a husk like a tomatillo, the Pichuberry is simultaneously sweet and tart, with a flavor similar to kiwi, according to the Pichuberry Company that is banking on the fruit being the next big fruit in the United States. CEO Michael Popescu explained to Produce Processing that the berry is popular in Australia, South Africa, Europe, Asia, and in Central and South America, but limited exposure here in the U.S. – a fact he is aiming to change.

Manuel Villacorta, a registered dietician for the company and author of the book *Peruvian Power Foods: 18 Superfoods, 101 Recipes, and Anti-aging Secrets from the Amazon to the Andes* says: “It can be used in many different ways. You can eat it fresh, of course. But also I have made salads with it ... bread, muffins, scones, smoothies, you name it.”

According to Produce Processing, Sergio Novoa, owner of GreenSurge in San Francisco, which offers seasonal organic smoothies and cleanses, is using fresh Pichuberries to make cold-press juice and as ingredients in its products. “One of the things I look for on my menu is to make sure I get variety,” he said. “I can’t just use spinach for everything, lemons for everything.” He’s been using Pichuberries in combination with greens and other fruits and reports the results to be “quite refreshing.”



**Lundberg Organic Whole Grain Peruvian Style Quinoa & Rice:** Quinoa's popularity owes more to ancient grain and gluten free properties than provenance. However, this quick-serve rice meal makes a feature of the grain's Peruvian heritage in its product name.



**H-E-B Pepper Toppers Aji, Peruvian Yellow Pepper Sauce:** Claimed to be the most popular chili pepper in Peru, this sauce is marketed as providing a milder, fruitier hot flavor.



**Sweet Earth The Peruvian Burrito:** Says to be Inca inspired and made with black beans, red quinoa, sweet potato, goat cheese, roasted corn and spirulina. The burrito has 17 g of protein and 3 g fiber.

## FONA CAN HELP!

The findings of our research suggest there are significant opportunities for product developers to experiment with Latin flavors and ingredients from countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Peru, as well as the ever-popular Mexico.

Let FONA's market insight and research experts translate these trends into product category ideas for your brand. They can help you with concept and flavor pipeline development, ideation, consumer studies and white space analysis to pinpoint opportunities in the market.

Our flavor and product development experts are also at your service to help meet the labeling and flavor profile needs for your products to capitalize on this consumer trend. We understand how to mesh the complexities of flavor with your brand development, technical requirements and regulatory needs to deliver a complete taste solution.

## SOURCES:

GNPD

Mintel Food & Drink

<http://www.worldsofflavor.com/schedule>

Defining the New healthy in today's modern culture, The Hartman Group  
Mintel's Ethnic Foods – US, January 2014 report

<http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/food.htm>

<https://www.qsrmagazine.com/menu-innovations/more-mexican>

<http://www.campero.com/>

<http://www.azucaricecream.com/flavors.html>

Capsicana launches range of Latin American cooking sauces - 31st July 2015 by Douglas Faughnan , Mintel

<http://www.bestofneworleans.com/gambit/review-rebellion-bar-and-urban-kitchen/Content?oid=2766803>

<http://www.vialimachicago.com/>

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/via-lima-mike-sula-review-north-center-peruvian/Content?oid=18651335>

[http://www.nola.com/dining/index.ssf/2015/03/rebellion\\_bar\\_and\\_urban\\_kitche.html](http://www.nola.com/dining/index.ssf/2015/03/rebellion_bar_and_urban_kitche.html)

<http://produceprocessing.net/article/pichuberry-being-developed-for-fresh-salad-and-juice-markets/>

<http://www.naturalproductsonline.co.uk/capsicana-brings-taste-of-latin-america-to-cooking-sauce-sector/>

<https://www.moonjuiceshop.com/>



1900 Averill Road, Geneva, IL 60134  
630.578.8600 | [www.fona.com](http://www.fona.com)