



# NOSTALGIA: OLD INSPIRATIONS FOR NEW INNOVATIONS

Enjoying s'mores by the campfire, the scent of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies or sweet childhood cereals with the cereal box prize included - these are memories some may recall as some of their fondest food experiences. Although food and beverage nostalgia differ from person to person, there's science behind our strong emotional ties to food, and it's a common theme that food and beverage developers can leverage to innovate or expand their brand. From the magic behind nostalgia to memory-sparking products on the market today, let's take a walk down memory lane while also helping you discover your "what's next".

# THE “MAGIC” BEHIND NOSTALGIA

You might wonder why you're drawn to certain foods, beverages or scents or why you feel that warm and fuzzy feeling when thinking about your favorite comfort food.

Research shows connections between our brain and how we perceive and remember certain foods and beverages. The hippocampus, located in our brain, influences this connection and plays a major role in memory retention, specifically in storing long-term memories. It also has strong ties with parts of the brain important for emotion and smell which are very closely related to our experiences with food and drink.

Like a blast from the past, nostalgia brings back memories of sentimental times, feelings of belonging and close relationships. On the flip side, negative experiences with specific foods and beverages may cause us to have a strong aversion for others.



“Researchers suggest that when we associate foods with happy memories, the effects are profound, impacting how good we think foods taste as well as how good those foods make us feel.”

- TIME MAGAZINE



# NOT ONE SIZE FITS ALL

No one person has the exact life experiences as another, and nostalgia is no different. Rather than a one size fits all, nostalgia related to food and drink differs due to many factors from generational differences to family and cultural differences. Imagine someone growing up in the 80s versus someone growing up in the 90s – just as their childhood and upbringing will differ, so will their view on what is nostalgic. What is considered nostalgic to one person is largely based on their personal perceptions and experiences with food and drink.

While most consumers enjoy nostalgic products, it's important to understand your consumer when using nostalgia as a sell factor. Taking into consideration your target consumer is key in order to predict if they will connect with your product.



“Associating brand messaging with positive references from the 90s, 80s – and even the 70s – humanizes brands, forging meaningful connections between the past and present.”

- FORBES



“According to Mintel’s Trend Driver Global survey, 71% of US consumers enjoy things that remind them of their childhood.”

- MINTEL



# FLAVORS THAT TAKE US WAY BACK

We conducted a social listening search on nostalgia covering the last three months. An overview is provided below.



Mentions per Hour



Positivity

## TRENDING HASHTAGS:

#childhoodmemories  
#nostalgic  
#foodlover  
#throwbackthursday  
#foodie

## TASTE THE NOSTALGIA

Nostalgic flavors usually evoke feelings of happiness, comfort, fun, and indulgence. We researched a few common nostalgic flavors to see how they compared to other products.

**S'mores:** Compared to other products, S'mores-flavored products received a rating that was **18.4** percentage points higher for the attribute **Indulgent treat**, followed by **Fun** with a difference of **15.4** percentage points.

**PB&J:** Compared to other products, PB&J flavored products received a rating that was **12.6** percentage points higher for the attribute **Fun**, followed by **Filling** with a difference of **10.7** percentage points.

**Cherry:** Compared to other products, Cherry flavor products received a rating that was **11.3** percentage points higher for the attribute **Fun**, followed by **Indulgent treat** with a difference of **8.5** percentage points.

# FLAVORS THAT TAKE US WAY BACK, continued



From food, beverage, and everywhere in between, companies are using nostalgia in their product development to engage and connect with their consumers. These products include some of the common nostalgic flavors we mentioned earlier.



“In any channel, from retail to foodservice, if these items are available, people buy them.”

- KOBI AFEL,

RICHARDSON BRANDS CEO ON

NOSTALGIC BRANDS



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**S'MORES SOFT DONUT BITES** are described as a delicious bite filled with a mouthwatering combination of sweet and creamy marshmallow and chocolate filling. S'mores bites can be warmed in the microwave for 30 seconds.

46% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



**KRAVE HELLO KITTY CHERRY LIME FIZZY POP** features a nostalgic cherry flavor as well as Japanese company Sanrio's popular character Hello Kitty. Introduced in the 70s, Hello Kitty can be seen as a nostalgic character and brand.

34% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



**SKIPPY PB & JELLY MINIS** are made with real peanut butter and contain 7g protein per serving. The product also comes in whole grain or filled with strawberry jelly.

32% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product

# TWO TYPES: INDULGENT & NEXT GEN NOSTALGIA



## INDULGENCE & COMFORT

To evoke those “feel good” comfy cozy feelings, food and beverage developers often create indulgent products that likely feature high amounts of calories, sugars, and or sodium. s’mores, mac n cheese, candy and more, nostalgic

food and beverage is often synonymous with comfort food for its ability to evoke sentimental memories that make a consumer feel at home.

We talked about [indulgence](#) in a previous report and noted today’s consumers’ shift to a more purposeful and balanced mindset when it comes to indulgence. Many consumers look to achieve a particular mood or desired mental state when indulging. Indulgent products that also evoke nostalgia allow consumers to achieve positive emotions and feelings such as happiness and belonging.

## NEXT GEN NOSTALGIA

While most nostalgic products lean towards indulgence, there could be an opportunity in offering products that remind consumers of their childhood with a more “adult” mindset.



The Cereal School has been marking innovation in this space. With the tagline “old school cereal made the new way” the brand offers cereal flavors such as cocoa, fruity, berries and more with 0 sugar and 16 grams of protein per serving. Combined with their retro styled packaging and “better for you” ingredients, The Cereal School promotes a more health focused take on nostalgia.

Image Source: Food Dive

# NOSTALGIA IN THE MARKET

Nostalgia can be introduced into the market in many ways. From relaunches to revamped classics, nostalgia can inspire innovation in a developer's brand and product introductions. We've noted a few products below that are bringing us back to "simpler times".

## RELAUNCH FAVORITES



**GENERAL MILLS' 90'S SNACK DUNKAROOS:** Though taken off U.S. shelves in 2012, General Mills received thousands of requests to revive the childhood snack. General Mills notes the graham cracker cookies and vanilla frosting snack as "the ultimate staple of 90's nostalgia."

Image Source: Food Dive

## CHILDHOOD INSPIRED PRODUCTS



**RUGRATS REPTAR BAR:** Based off a fictional candy featured in the well-known Nickelodeon cartoon Rugrats, the Reptar Bar was brought to life when launched in 2017. The milk chocolate bar with green frosting filling promises to turn your tongue green.

Image Source: Amazon

## NOSTALGIA REVAMPED



**ELLIOT'S ADULT NUT BUTTERS:** A play on PB&J as a childhood staple, Elliot's Adult Nut Butters looks to create a "bolder nut butter." The US brand offers unique flavors such as Spicy Thai and Garam Masala Peanut Butter, Harissa Cashew Butter and Chocolate Chili Almond Butter. Elliot's combine a classic childhood flavor with more grown up and diverse flavors.

Image Source: Mintel

Looking for more nostalgic products? We noted a few in our previous report on Fun. [Click here to Download!](#)

# THE TAKEAWAYS

*With 71% of US consumers saying they enjoy things that remind them of their childhood, there is a great opportunity in using nostalgia as a selling factor. Whether relaunching a retro product, revamping an old one or simply drawing inspiration from the past, we can see that nostalgia sells. While most nostalgic products lean towards indulgence, next gen nostalgia might lie in offering products that remind consumers of their childhood with a more health focused mindset. The key is understanding the consumer, their experiences and the feelings evoked that drive them to purchase. By using inspiration from memories of days past combined with the mindset of “what’s next”, product developers can find innovative ways to create a successful product that consumers will connect with.*



## YOU DESERVE MORE. LET'S GET STARTED.

What does true partnership look like? You deserve a flavor partner ready to turn these trends into the tangible.

Let FONA's market insight and research experts get to work for you. Translate these trends into bold new ideas for your brand. Increase market share and get to your “what’s next.” Our technical 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. Let’s mesh the complexities of flavor with your brand development, technical requirements and regulatory needs to deliver a complete taste solution.

From concept to manufacturing, we’re here for you — every step of the way. Contact our sales service department at 630.578.8600 to request a flavor sample or chat us up at [www.fona.com/contact-fona/](http://www.fona.com/contact-fona/)

## SOURCES

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