



# Ingredient Hot List

## IMMUNITY

Immunity, already a hot topic going into 2020, has now become a high priority among consumers all over the world who are aggressively seeking ways to improve their health and help protect themselves from illness. Products with immunity health claims, such as those containing vitamins C and D, blueberries, elderberry, garlic and mushrooms, among others, are trending. Other superfoods have emerged from relative obscurity to top-searched items online. Immunity claims do have pitfalls, however. Given the uncertainty about COVID-19 – which is completely new to the human body – manufacturers must walk the fine line between promoting the overall functional benefits of immunity-boosting products and touting ingredients as a cure or even a promise of prevention. Read on to learn more about the latest ingredients shown to help with immunity and how to navigate the new normal of product development and introduction.

# THE RISE OF IMMUNITY

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Between January and April 2020, posts involving “immunity” were up 134% on social media. It has a huge amount of interest – but claims must come with care.



“Immunity-based products will have a continued demand post COVID-19, but current launches show few products are maximizing the opportunity to use this claim. The crisis has exposed vulnerable groups (e.g. diabetics) that need specialized products. In the event of no vaccines, immune-boosting herbal extracts will be in high demand.”

-Rick Miller, Food & Drink Associate Director for Specialized Nutrition, Mintel, March 2020



“Stronger immune systems can help people fight the virus, and may help keep some patients out of the hospital, leaving room for those in most dire need. Nutrients that may help the immune response include micronutrients like zinc, selenium, iron, and vitamins A, C, D, E, B-6, and folate; with additional potentially promising effects of whole foods like goji berry, broccoli, green tea, and turmeric.”

-Statement by doctors Dariush Mozaffarian, Dan Glickman and Simin Nikbin Meydani published on CNN.com, March 27, 2020



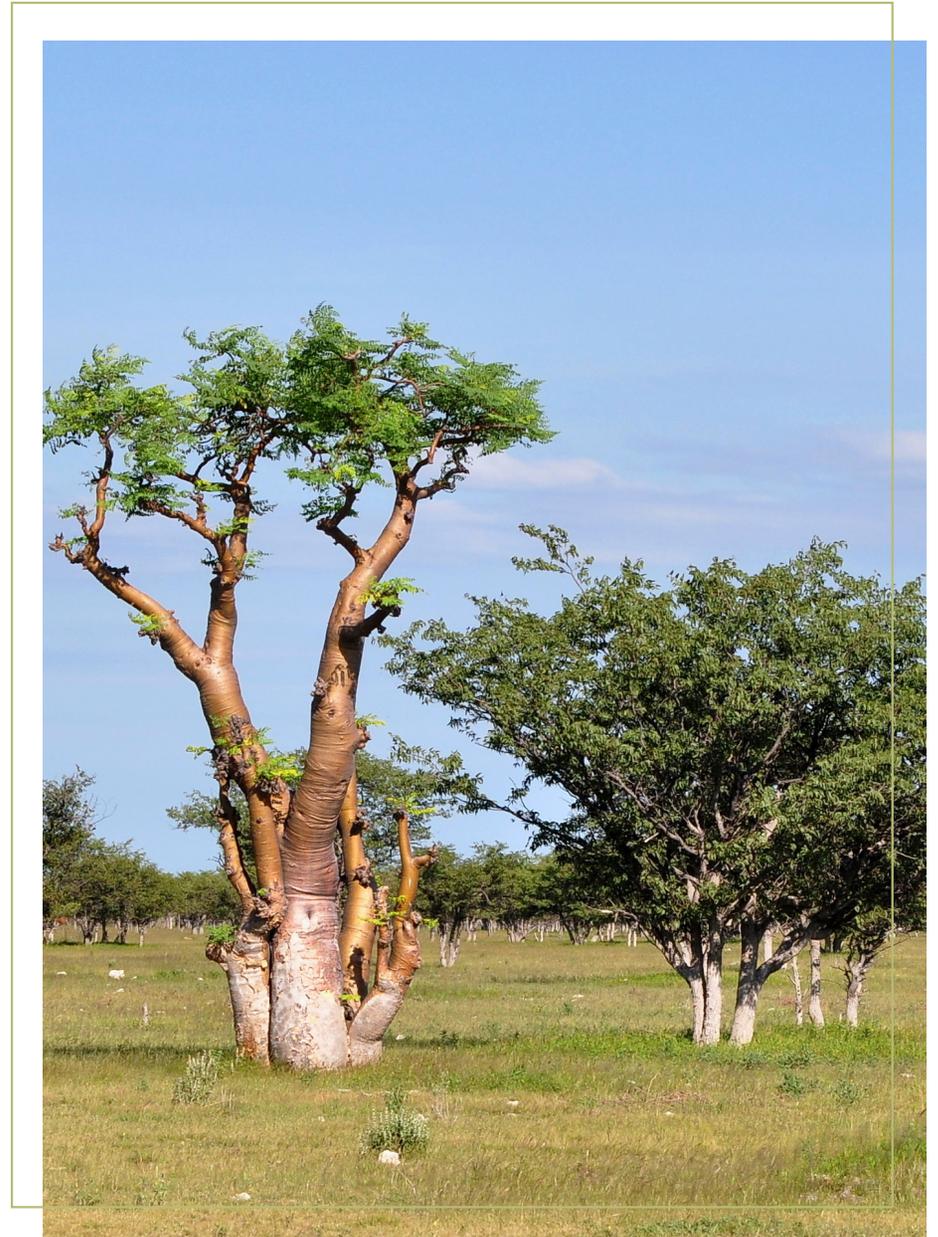
# MORINGA

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The *Moringa Oleifera* tree, native to India, has been dubbed the “miracle tree.” While that’s quite a lofty description, moringa has indeed been touted for centuries for medicinal benefits associated with its green leaves and fresh pods and seeds. The leaves are rich in immune-boosting antioxidants, phytochemicals, vitamins C and A, calcium, zinc, iron, magnesium, and potassium, while the pods and seeds are high in beneficial oleic acid. In addition to its inclusion in supplements, moringa is used as an ingredient in tea, smoothies, special nutrition drinks and snack foods ranging from bars to noodles.

## CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The role moringa plays in immune health and other functions, like focus, cognition and energy, is increasingly apparent to consumers. Consumer mentions of moringa on social media have surged 337% in the past year, according to the 2019 Functional Foods Report from Tastewise. As an indicator of its growing presence, 40 restaurants in a recent Tastewise survey said they have added menu items with moringa, up 57% from the previous year. Meanwhile, market research firm Nielsen reports that this superfood has achieved 3% household penetration.



# MORINGA, continued



“For years, nutritionists have hailed the moringa plant as a superfood because of its nutritional profile, powerful anti-inflammatory, high antioxidant activity and tissue-protective properties.”

- FoodDive article, March 2019



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**PEACH FLAVORED WHITE TEA FROM THE BERRY COMPANY** is a vegan juice blend made with moringa, white tea extract, peach, lemon and spring water and does not contain any added sugar or sweeteners.



**FERMENTED MILK DRINK WITH CRANBERRY, RASPBERRY AND MORINGA**, part of an Activia line from Danone, is a probiotic-rich daily shot that includes moringa as a featured ingredient.

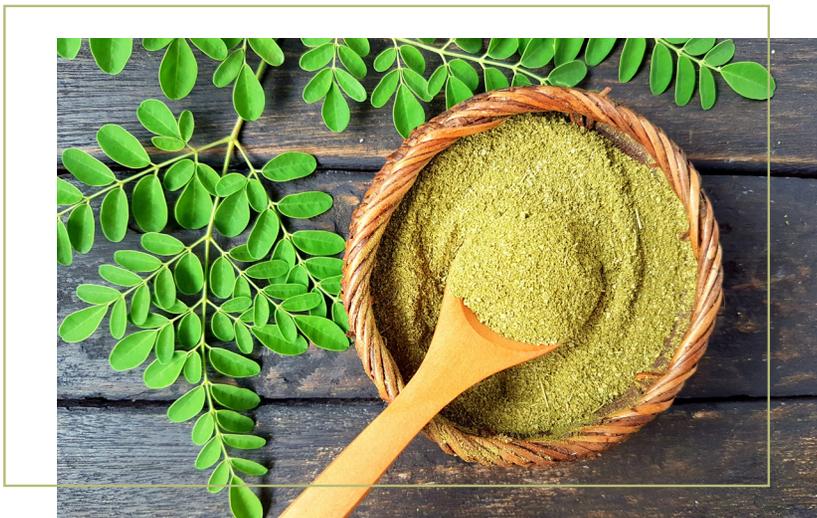


**VEGAN ROB'S MORINGA PUFFS**, made from whole grain sorghum and moringa, are promoted by the manufacturer as rich in important vitamins, minerals and enzymes.

19% of consumers responded they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**MORINGA SUPERFOOD BARS FROM KULI KULI** are available in Dark Chocolate and Black Cherry varieties and are described by the brand as a “salad in a bar.”



# WHEATGRASS



It's fair to say that this sprouted product is, in fact, sprouting in the marketplace. Derived from sprouted leaves of the basic wheat plant, wheatgrass is rich in vitamins,

minerals, amino acids, enzymes and chlorophyll and is typically available in a juice or powder form. Studies have linked wheatgrass consumption with an improved immune system, along with other health and wellness benefits, such as detoxification and improved metabolism.

## CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

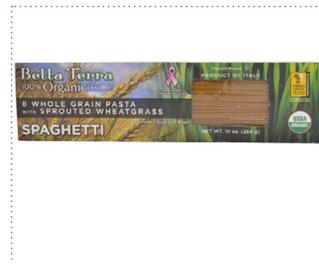
Wheatgrass is familiar with some consumers who have been introduced to it over the years in the natural foods market. But now the ingredient is on an upward trajectory, with social media growth up 265% in the past year, according to the Tastewise Functional Food Report from 2019.

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**WHEATGRASS, PINEAPPLE AND GUAYUSA LEAF COLD-PRESSED ENERGY ELIXIR JUICE** from the Garden of Flavor contains beneficial live probiotics along with wheatgrass, pineapple and dark greens. It's said to promote wellness and sustained energy because of these superfood ingredients.

29% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**EIGHT WHOLEGRAIN PASTA WITH SPROUTED WHEATGRASS SPAGHETTI** is a new take on a classic product from Racconto Bella Terra. In addition to whole grains that have been shown to help protect against heart disease and cancer, the wheatgrass in this pasta is said to contribute to nutrition and immunity.

31% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**SMALL PLANET FOODS ALL NATURAL SMOOTHIE KIT**, available in Berry Pomegranate flavor, is ready to blend and mix, with a wheatgrass boost that delivers extra vitamin C.

# HOLY BASIL



If its name suggests a certain reverence, that's because holy basil has long been viewed as a sacred plant in the Hindu religion for its healing properties. The adaptogen – also

known as tulsi -- is linked to protection against viruses like the common cold as well as ailments like stomach issues, headaches and diabetes. It's also been said to reduce anxiety and stress.



“Considered as a potent adaptogen, tulsi has a unique combination of pharmacological actions that promote well-being and resilience.”

-Journal of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine,  
“Tulsi - *Ocimum sanctum*: A herb for all reasons”, December 2014



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**TIGER LIVING HERBAL TEA FROM SACRED BLOSSOM** is promoted as a drink that improves energy and helps normalize body functions. In addition to holy basil, this tea is enhanced with lemongrass, elderberries, ginkgo, elderflower, thyme and safflower.

21% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**ORGAIN VANILLA BEAN FLAVORED PLANT BASED PROTEIN & SUPERFOODS POWDER** is a drink mix that contains 40 organic superfoods, including holy basil.

18% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**CRANBERRY CRAZE ORGANIC FRUIT JUICE DRINK**, made by Suja Fermented Botanicals, contains water, cranberry, pomegranate, orange, ginger, cherries and fermented botanicals including holy basil.

23% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**DEAN & DELUCA THAI HOLY BASIL STIR-FRY PASTE** is designed for stir-fry dishes, with a dual bonus of spicy taste and wellness properties.

# BEETROOT

Beetroot, derived from nutrient-rich beets, has been shown to boost the immune system, thanks to high amounts of beta carotene, zinc, copper, vitamin A and C, and other phytonutrients. A study in the January 2019 issue of Journal of Food Chemistry underscored the benefits of beetroot, citing bioactive compounds including flavonoids and betalains. Commonly found in juice and powder form, beetroot is an ingredient in many functional beverages geared to athletes as well as a plant-based curing agent in products like bacon and sausage.

## CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2019 Functional Food Report from Tastewise, beets have doubled in growth over the past year, due in part to its role in naturally enhancing the human immune system.



“Research has found that betalains (which give beets their rich red color) have powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Betaine is essential for many cell functions and also protects cells against oxidative stress, which can damage cells.”

- Consumer Reports, “Are Beets Good for You?”,  
November 2019



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**STRONG ROOTS' BEETROOT & BEAN BURGER** is a blend of beetroot, kidney beans, bulgur wheat and seasonings.

28% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**RW GARCIA 3 SEED SWEET BEETROOT CRACKERS** are vibrantly-colored gluten-free crackers made with beetroot, along with flaxseed, black sesame seeds, chia seeds and stone ground white maize. They are also non-GMO and kosher certified.



**GOOD CROP APPLE/CARROT BEETROOT GINGER COLD PRESSED VEGETABLE AND FRUIT JUICE** is teeming with immune-bolstering ingredients, including beetroot. It comes in a single-serve high-pressure certified bottle and is free from GMOs.

30% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this products.

# TURMERIC



This bright orange-yellow spice, in the same family as ginger, is often called a superfood. Turmeric is said to improve immunity through its active ingredient of curcumin. In food, it's

a staple ingredient in curry and is also used to add color and flavor to a variety of other products.

## CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Turmeric may date back centuries but it's still finding new fans. In a 2019 Consumer Flavor Trend Report, Technomic reported that turmeric is projected to grow on menus, from 1.8 percent to 2.1 percent in 2021.

In addition to the traditional use in curries, juices are another avenue to deliver turmeric. According to the Future of Juice and Juice Drinks 2019 report from Mintel, turmeric stands out as a botanical with natural functionality in newly launched juices. Turmeric is also trending in sauces and as an ingredient in bars.

## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**TUMERIC GINGER PROTEIN DRINK**, from Be Well Nutrition, is formulated with milk from grass-fed cows and premium ingredients, including a big dose of turmeric. It's promoted as a drink for breakfast, a snack or a post-workout boost.

26% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.



**VEGAN ROB'S TUMERIC CHIPS** contain algae protein with flavorings including turmeric and hints of pumpkin and brown sugar. The brand touts the inclusion of turmeric as a powerful herb in fighting and reversing disease.

24% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would purchase this product.

# OTHER INGREDIENTS TO WATCH

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At a time when consumers are seeking products and information on food and beverages that purport to support immune systems, other ingredients are garnering interest, including both traditional and not-quite-mainstream ingredients. Examples include reishi mushrooms, elderflower, green tea, ginger, goji berries, onion and garlic.



“In the short term, to preserve immune function and protection against viruses or even mitigate the infection risk due to long-term conditions brands should follow closely the changes in consumer responses to the crisis and respond with effective nutrition solutions, personalized to their current, and ideally future, needs.”

- Rick Miller, Food & Drink Associate Director for Specialized Nutrition, Mintel, March 2020



# THE TAKEAWAYS

*Many ingredients, including those on the hot list, have been shown in scientific studies and other research and practices to be linked to improved health and wellness, which is why they are in greater demand in today's marketplace. But while those products may indeed boost overall immunity, manufacturers must take care to avoid promoting foods and superfoods as being a cure or prevention for the novel coronavirus. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration and Federal Trade Commission have been clear about the seriousness of claims of disease prevention, especially when it comes to COVID-19.*

*Immunity-boosting ingredients have their place in overall health and wellness, something that many, if not most, consumers are focusing on anew as this particular outbreak has significantly impacted their lives. So while care and restraint must be practiced, it remains true: The opportunities for these ingredients, in the short-term and long-term future, are many.*

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

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## SOURCES

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- Tastewise Functional Food Report
- U.S. Federal Trade Commission



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