



INNOVATION IN UNCERTAINTY:

3 Paths to Take For Innovation In Today's Climate

By: Molly Zimmerman, Scientist

The needs of consumers have changed dramatically over the last few months. With the COVID-19 pandemic shifting the way consumers purchase, eat and drink, everyone, consumers and product developers alike, have had to make changes and sacrifices. But there is one thing I know for sure, people need to eat and drink. Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity and responsibility to innovate to help people move forward. While innovation may not be top of mind or appropriate for every brand, if it is, there are a few ways you could approach it. Whether that is creating more adventure to fill the void or comfort to keep people going, food and drinks are one of the ways people are continuing to get on with life when everything else has drastically changed.

There are many ways you can innovate, but in my opinion there are three paths you could take to innovate in our current climate: make your product more accessible, make your product more adventurous, make your product more indulgent. While people are stuck at home, they may be bored or they may be exhausted and looking for a way to wind down. Here are some ways you could innovate right now to help your business and customers carry on.



PATH 1: MAKE YOUR PRODUCT ACCESSIBLE

For example, let's say you make a beverage. Shipping costs are crazy and shipping water isn't ideal. Could you create a new product line that is a dried version of your product? You would need to match the flavor in a dry format, but suddenly you would have a lot more opportunity

online because you wouldn't have to ship water. What would some of the inherent challenges you and your business can overcome to make your product more accessible to customers online? If you can nip these challenges from the start, you can make it easier for your consumers to access your innovation.



PATH 2: MAKE YOUR PRODUCT MORE ADVENTUROUS

Nearly everyone I know has some level of boredom or cabin fever happening right now for one reason or another. Since, people haven't been able to travel, one way you could innovate is to bring the destination to them. A globally inspired flavor or flavor pairing could create adventure in a way that doesn't force people to forget about social distancing. A really fun way to do this could be a flavor passport where you could represent countries or cities with flavors and encourage customers to try them all to get "stamps" on their flavor passport.



PATH 3: MAKE YOUR PRODUCT MORE INDULGENT

Everyone needs a break and a special moment for themselves every now and then. By making a more premium and indulgent version of your product you could offer that "me moment" to people stuck at home or people working hard on the front lines (and they REALLY deserve it!). For example, instead of creating a chocolate product, you could create a dark chocolate truffle product to make it taste and feel like a special occasion any day.



Innovation during these trying times is challenging and can be daunting. Although times are uncertain, no one knows your customers better than you do, so go with your gut and innovate in the way that best serves them. When you're ready to talk about how you can innovate, our experts are here for you.



ABOUT MOLLY

With 10 years of experience in food and beverage, Molly brings a diverse skillset in beverage development, the culinary arts and consumer expertise. She serves as Scientist on FONA's technical team with an eye toward creating impact and growth for valued partners.



Many things may feel like they're standing still, but we can help you move forward.

Let's Talk.

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