



Ingredient Hot List

NUTS & SEEDS

Since the earliest days of foraging, nuts and seeds have been part of the human diet. Flash forward a few millennia, and these earthy foodstuffs are still trending. Versatile and available in a wide variety, nuts and seeds as ingredients and on their own align with many popular ways of eating, from the surge in plant-based lifestyles to the snackification of everyday food and beverage consumption. Rich in fiber, protein, healthy fats, antioxidants and several vitamins and minerals, these ingredients are good carriers for both sweet and salty flavors, whether it's simple Himalayan salt, soothing chai seasonings or super-spicy cayenne pepper. Read on as we go gathering to find the latest varieties, formats and flavors piquing consumers' interest and taste buds.

NUTS ABOUT NUTS, WILD ABOUT SEEDS



Consumers today are focusing on personal health and well-being, but they also search for balance in their quest for interesting new flavors with comforting classics. Luckily, nuts and seeds fit the bill. As ingredients, nuts and seeds can be incorporated into an array of food and beverage products to add a nutritional halo and to lend interesting flavor, texture and appearance. They're also one of the more accessible food types, grown in many regions of the world.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

A nut is a seed, but not all seeds are nuts. A nut is actually a form of dry fruit that has a hard shell protecting a typically edible kernel. A compound ovary, a nut is both the seed and the fruit. A seed, meantime, comes from fruit and can be separated from that fruit.



The nuts and seeds market is expected to grow at a combined annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.42% from 2021 through 2026.



41% of plant-based meat substitute consumers in the U.S. are interested in seeds as a source of protein in those products.

Source: Mordor Intelligence, Mintel



“Nuts and seeds meet many of today’s food industry trends, such as natural, clean label, plant-based, wholesome, healthy, inherently nutritional, and taste-pleasing. They are also sources of healthy fats, dietary fiber, protein, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. Not only are nuts and seeds popular as stand-alone snacks, they also add nutritional value to meals, snack foods, desserts, and more.”

- INSTITUTE OF FOOD TECHNOLOGISTS



CASHEWS

Whether nibbled as a snack or studded in candies, cashews have long been one of the most well-known and often-consumed nuts. Derived from the tropical evergreen cashew tree, kidney-shaped cashews are getting a fresh take as a go-to ingredient in vegan and alternative dairy products, especially alt-cheeses, nutmilks and ice creams. They can easily be complemented with sweet or salty flavors for a unique addition.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Cashews have a high awareness among consumers:

- **94%** of consumers know what cashews are.
- **83%** of consumers who have tried cashews like or love them.

Source: Datassential

“Cashew milk is one thing, but ‘cashew cheese’ is something else entirely. Lately, TikTok has been full of ideas, gadgets and recipes designed to make it easier to be vegan...there are some extremely popular vegan cheese recipes out there — many of which rely on cashews and a high-tech blender.”

-IN THE KNOW

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



PARMELA CREAMERY PLANT-BASED 30 DAYS AGED FIERY JACK STYLE SLICES, from Life is Life USA, are vegan cheeses made with a whole base of cashew “milk” and are ideal for melting.



FIT BUTTERS CINNAMON SUGAR COOKIE CASHEW ALMOND BLEND is made from a unique blend of nuts, flavors, textures, inclusions, healthy fats like coconut oil and MCT and high quality protein sources.

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



TRADER JOE'S SPICY CASHEW BUTTER DRESSING from the Trader Joe's retail chain is a vegan-friendly dressing that contains cashew butter, lime juice, ginger, cilantro and red chili peppers.

33% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



FORAGER PROJECT ORGANIC DAIRY-FREE UNSWEETENED CASHEWMILK is a USDA Organic and kosher certified plant-based milk that is free from dairy, gum, GMO, gluten and soy.

16% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

PISTACHIOS

Pistachios are one of the oldest edible nuts, consumed as food by humans far back as 6,000 B.C. These days, what's old is new again, as food and beverage developers go for pistachios as part of plant-based formulations, including alternative dairy products, snack foods and bases for sauces and dressings, among other applications. Pistachios are somewhat unique in the nut world because they are considered a complete plant protein containing all nine essential amino acids and have been shown in studies to help weight management.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- **More than half (53%)** of consumers have tried pistachios in some form and **32%** of consumers want to try them.

Source: Datassential



“The protein quality of pistachios meets the Food and Drug Administration’s requirement for labeling U.S. grown pistachios to bear the claim, ‘A good source of protein.’ ... This is important for vegetarians and those moving toward plant-based diets to satisfy their protein requirements.”

-AMERICAN PISTACHIO GROWERS, 2020 ANNUAL



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



TACHE ORIGINAL BLEND PISTACHIO MILK is a plant-based, vegan-friendly milk that can be consumed on its own or used in coffee, matcha, smoothies and breakfast. It's touted for its velvety texture and foaming properties when steamed.

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



ELMHURST PISTACHIO CRÈME OAT CREAMER, made with a blend of pistachios, oats and hemp, is described as buttery, smooth and nutty, with a bit of sweetness.



PARM CRISPS ORIGINAL SNACK MIX from That's How We Roll, USA is made from 100% cheese and dry roasted nuts including pistachios, almonds and cashews, for a keto-friendly and gluten-free snack.

27% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Sure, they come from sunny colored flowers and are sentimentally associated with baseball games and movie theater concession stands. But sunflower seeds have a certain halo of their own, thanks to their positive nutrition profile as a source of healthy fats, fiber, protein and several vitamins and minerals.

There are two types of ingredients sourced from sunflowers. Edible sunflower seeds are encased in a signature black shell and have a mild flavor and a tender texture for stand-alone snacks or incorporated in recipes ranging from nutrition bars to trail mixes to salad toppings. Sunflower oil extract from sunflower plants is another common ingredient.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- **63%** of consumers have tried sunflower seeds and **30%** want to try them.

Source: Datassential

“After fueling grand slams and double plays for years, sunflower seeds are branching out of the ballpark and sliding into crackers, ice creams and creamy cheeses...these mighty little seeds are transforming the 21st century snack game”

-WHOLE FOODS MARKETS

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



NATURE'S PATH ORGANIC KETOLA CRUNCH TOASTED PUMPKIN SEED & VANILLA NUT GRANOLA is USDA Organic, keto and kosher certified and contains sunflower seeds, toasted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, dried coconut, pecans, coconut oil, chia seeds almond flour, coconut flour, sea salt and vanilla flavor, among other ingredients.

25% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



STORCK WERTHER'S ORIGINAL CARAMEL POPCORN SEED CLUSTERS contain sunflower and pumpkin seeds combined with Werther's caramel made from real butter, fresh cream, white and brown sugars, and salt.

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



BLAKE'S SEED-BASED BLUEBERRY LEMON SNACK BARS feature sunflower seeds, real fruit, pumpkin seeds, flax seed and are allergy- and vegan-friendly and filled with natural energy, fats, antioxidants, protein, and fiber.

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



88 ACRES THE SEED CO.'S SMOKY CHIPOTLE DRESSING contains 4 grams of sunflower seed protein per serving and with mole-inspired blend of cocoa, tomatoes, and chipotle chili.

33% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

HEMP SEEDS

If ingredients had a mood, the hemp seed would be chill. These small seeds from the cannabis plant – which do not contain the cannabinoids THC or CBD -- are low-key nutrient dense and complement a wide range of other ingredients for broad recipe applications. Hemp “hearts” and whole hemp seeds are used in everything from plant-based milks to granola to baked goods.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- The hemp seed market is estimated to grow at a compound annual rate of **8.20%** from 2021 to 2028, a jump largely attributed to the growing number of vegan consumers.
- **509k posts** with #hempseeds on Instagram

Source: Data Bridge Market Research



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



YISHI RED BEAN BERRY OATMEAL, said to be inspired by Chinese cuisine and “a mama’s home cooking,” is formulated with hemp seed, Adzuki bean, red date, goji, cherry, almond and flax seed. The high protein, vegan oatmeal is packed with cleansing antioxidants.

22% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



GROUNDLED CHEESE FREE CHEESE SAUCE is made with cauliflower and hemp seed and is considered ready to eat with pasta, nachos, burgers, pizza, or straight from the pouch.

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



GOODSEED CHORIZO HEMPSEED CRUMBLES has a smoky, fruity flavor, with hempseed complemented by garlic, oregano, lemon and warm cinnamon.



“We look at it as an oil seed. We fractionate them into oil and protein, and we do it in a way that doesn’t use harmful chemicals. We increase the functionality of the protein to fit into a variety of (food and beverage) categories.”

-BAKING BUSINESS



PILI NUTS



Pili nuts have a bit of legend and lore to them, grown in volcanic soil in the Philippines. As a “heritage nut” and a recent darling of the plant-based food world, pili nuts are an ingredient rich in monounsaturated fats, magnesium, and phosphorus and are deemed a complete protein.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- Pili nuts grew 37.5% in sales over the past year.
- 22.9k posts with #pilinuts on Instagram

Source: SPINS



“Pili nut snacks are high in omega-3 fatty acids and have zero net carbs, making it the perfect keto, vegan and paleo snack...What makes these even better is that the pili nuts are hand-harvested by local villagers from volcanic soils without any destruction to the natural environment or water supply, so it is a great sustainable option.”

-WHOLE FOODS MARKETS



PRODUCTS OF NOTE



LAIRD SUPERFOOD HIMALAYAN SALT PILI NUTS are keto and vegan snacks seasoned with Himalayan salt.



PILI HUNTERS PUMPKIN SPICE & LION'S MANE BUTTER is a seasonal pili nut butter made with wild-harvested sprouted pili nuts, along with organic coconut butter, organic extra virgin coconut oil, Organic Lion's mane mushroom, organic cinnamon, organic Ginger, organic cloves, organic nutmeg and Himalayan Salt.



LAVA CHOCOLATE PLANT MILK is made with pili nuts and offers nutty caramel flavor. The vegan product is lightly sweetened with dates and is free from dairy, added sugar and gluten.

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

BLACK SESAME SEEDS



Open sesame: the potential for black sesame as an ingredient is wide, because of the earthy flavor of black sesame seeds. A staple of Asian, Middle Eastern and Indian cuisines, black sesame lends flavor

and visual interest to sushi, hot vegetable and salads, as well as some better-for-you vegetables. Black sesame paste is an increasingly popular base for food and drink recipes.

Nutritionally speaking, black sesame is a good source of dietary fiber and nutrients including thiamin, copper and zinc and has been shown in some studies to potentially lower cholesterol.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- 66% of U.S. adults who order food from restaurants have tried and liked sesame seed and one in 10 who haven't tried the flavor express interest in doing so.

Source: Mintel

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



BLACK SESAME PASTE from Khong Guan Corporation is a 100% black sesame paste.

16% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



PINK'S ICE CREAM BLACK SESAME ICE CREAM is produced by Macadons USA and features a savory, nutty flavor from the handcrafted black sesame paste.

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



EDEN ORGANIC BLACK SESAME BUTTER is a creamy spread made with organic unhulled black sesame seed, dry roasted and ground to a smooth paste.

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



“Aside from simply munching on a spoonful of sesame seeds, there is plenty of fun and delicious ways to add a few black sesame seeds to your meals that go beyond just tossing some in the mix for decoration.”

-ONE GREEN PLANET



THE TAKEAWAYS

Nuts and seeds prove the adage that good things come in small packages, thanks to their trifecta of nutrition, texture and flavor. As plant-based eating becomes mainstream, nuts and seeds including stalwarts like cashews, sunflower seeds and up-and-coming hemp seeds, pili nuts, and black sesame seeds are providing a base or a plant-protein addition to a range of foods and beverages. Product developers can explore opportunities with these hot ingredients and keep an eye out for other emerging nuts and seeds, such as watermelon seeds and “upcycled” seeds. Brands in this space can crack open product success through flavorful additions that will complement their taste.

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](tel:630.578.8600) to request a flavor sample or [chat us up at www.fona.com/contact-fona/](https://www.fona.com/contact-fona/)

SOURCES

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- Baking Business
- Food Dive
- Food Navigator
- In the Know
- Institute of Food Technologists
- Mayo Clinic
- Mintel
- NBC, “Today” show
- SPINS
- Tufts University
- Whole Foods
- Instagram



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