

# FLAVOR PAIRINGS

## OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACE

### 2022 TREND REPORT BITE

#### TWO'S A PAIR

Peanut butter and jelly. Apple and cinnamon. Tomato and basil. Some flavor pairings are so ingrained in our taste buds that they need no introduction. But over the last few years, consumers have gotten more adventurous: Some pairings may be destined to become modern classics, while others are likely more of a one hit wonder (mustard ice cream, anyone?) But with 58% of US consumers reporting that taste is the top consideration when purchasing food and beverages, it's time to take pushing the flavor boundaries seriously. Whether sweet, salty, spicy, bitter or umami, you've got a lot of pairing opportunities to choose from for your product development. Read on to learn about flavor pairings, why they work and how you can develop a tasty pairing that fits your consumer's taste bud cravings.



**70%**

*of customers are experimenting  
with new food concepts and  
unique combinations*

**58%**

*of US consumers report that  
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when purchasing food and  
beverages*

# Dynamic Duos

We took a look at the top flavor pairings in North America food and beverage product introductions over the past three years. Below are the flavor combinations that came out on top.

- *Roasted/Toasted & Salt/Salted*
- *Tomato & Basil*
- *Garlic & Herbs/Herbal*
- *Pumpkin/Squash & Spice/Spicy*
- *Apple & Cinnamon*
- *Fruit & Punch*
- *Peanut Butter & Chocolate*
- *Lemon & Lime*
- *Chocolate & Brownie*
- *Salt (Sea) Fleur de Sel & Caramel/Caramelised*
- *Mint & Chocolate*

***Let's see where you can find flavor  
inspiration for your brand!***



# Keep it Sweet

Sweet flavors are great candidates for pairing because with the addition of another note, whether spicy, salty, sour or bitter, it gives a new complexity that can be lacking in sugary treats. In fact, [McCormick's 22nd Edition of Flavor Forecast](#) dives into the Plus Sweet trend, highlighting sweetness balanced with other flavor favorites for a unique twist on sweet.

## SWEET + HEAT

Warming spices are a classic addition to sweet flavors– think apple pie, pumpkin spice and all things autumnal. To pack more of a punch, spicy additions like chilis and wasabi give sweet ingredients an unexpected and delicious twist. Examples include:

- Apples + Cloves
- Dates + Cardamom
- Strawberry + Habañero
- Chocolate + Chipotle

## SWEET + SALTY

Salted caramel is everywhere for a reason: even a tiny pinch of salt makes sweet flavors shine! A few examples include:

- Caramel + Sea Salt
- Chocolate + Salted Peanuts

## SWEET + SOUR

Sweet + sour products do not only increase serotonin levels, increasing satisfaction and happiness, but it can also enhance the taste. In fact, Prepared Foods reports a 113% increase in new tart/fruity bakery items. Examples include:

- Strawberry + Balsamic Vinegar
- Watermelon + Lime



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**SAP! STRAWBERRY WITH HABANERO SPARKLING WATER** combines birch tree sap, which is claimed to be one of the most nutrient-rich waters on earth, with premium superfood ingredients, and is described as an elevated sparkling experience.

39% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



**NABISCO OREO CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER PIE SANDWICH COOKIES** have a graham flavored cookie with peanut butter and chocolate flavor crème and use 100% sustainably sourced cocoa, helping protect the people and the planet.

51% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.

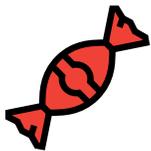
# Bitter & Sour Bites

Bitter and sour profiles are hit or miss for some consumers, but when used thoughtfully they can make a bland dish sing and bring new layers of flavor to old favorites. These profiles are especially effective for cutting through fatty and/or sweet ingredients, but the key is moderation.

We've also seen interest in bitter and sour due to increased consumer interest in digestive health — think kombucha, green superfood supplements, sparkling probiotic/prebiotic drinks and more. In fact, a recent study showed that 1 in 4 consumers say digestive health is the most important aspect of their overall health.

Below are a few examples featuring bitter and sour:

- Olive Oil + Balsamic Vinegar
- Chocolate + Coffee
- Cheese + Olive



When compared to the pre-pandemic normal of 2019, sour chewy candy sales are up an impressive 24.5%.



21% of US consumers are interested in bitter flavors in menu items.



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**POCKET LATTE SEA SALT + MOCHA COFFEE NUTS** are made with 100% real arabica coffee, have 46% less sugar than the leading brand and contain 100mg of natural caffeine per pouch.



**POPPI ORANGE PREBIOTIC SODA** is infused with apple cider vinegar, and contains 5g of sugar or less, 7% juice and prebiotics for a healthy gut and immune system. The kosher certified bubbly product is free from gluten and GMO, and retails in a 12-fl oz. recyclable can.

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



**ACID LEAGUE BLUEBERRY POMEGRANATE LIVING BALSAMIC** is gut friendly gastronomy that can be used on salads, parmesan, roasted beets and fresh berries. It's raw, unfiltered and unpasteurized.

# Oh My, Umami!

Umami, the difficult-to-describe fifth flavor, is a savoriness that is found in ingredients high in glutamates and nucleotides, such as meat, mushrooms and soy sauce. Adding umami to other flavors gives them a complex, craveable quality and gives depth to sweet or creamy items.

Below are a few examples featuring umami:

- Truffles + Cream
- Chocolate + Mushrooms
- Soy Sauce + Honey



## FLAVOR SPOTLIGHT: MISO & CARAMEL

Miso Caramel is the evolution of salted caramel flavor with a balance of sweetness and umami-forward flavor that's ready for pairing with drinks, desserts, and marinades. Sprinkle over pork or chicken before cooking, over sugar cookie dough before baking, or stir into yogurt or oatmeal to completely elevate your breakfast routine.



## PRODUCTS OF NOTE



**SPICY TRUFFLE RANCH IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN HIDDEN VALLEY AND TRUFF**, a truffle hot sauce brand. The sauce is a twist on truffle ranch, which is an elevated version of traditional ranch. The Spicy Truffle Ranch is a pairing between the spice of red chilies and the umami flavor of black truffles, all with the creaminess of a ranch dressing.



**VOSGES HAUT CHOCOLAT SUPER DARK REISHI MUSHROOM & WALNUT SUPER FOODS & DARK CHOCOLATE** combines deep, dark chocolate with fellow super food ingredients resulting in a healthy decadent chocolate.

# THE TAKEAWAYS

When it comes to flavor profiles, there are endless opportunities for developers to innovate within their current product line or in new launches. Sweet, Salty, Sour, Bitter or Umami — pair two complementary profiles together and you might just create a match made in flavor heaven for your consumer. Unique flavor pairings that stray slightly from favorite classics can get consumers excited about trying new products and bring life to dishes that are feeling flat.

Opportunity in flavor pairing innovation spans cross-category. So, whether it's adding a sour lemon twist to a dessert, adding umami to your stocks with a bit of miso, or drizzling a bit of salty-sweet caramel over a savory pork dish, there's sure to be a flavor pairing out there that will hit the right notes for you.



## SOURCES

- Mintel
- Mintel GNPD
- Candy USA
- McCormick & Company
- Prepared Foods
- Innova Market Insights
- Candy USA
- Food Network

## 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.

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/](http://www.fona.com/contact-fona/)



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