

FLAVOR COMBINATIONS

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACE

2023 TREND REPORT BITE

From tried and true to bold and new combinations, flavor is one of the most enticing factors that consumers look at when trying a new product. In fact, Mintel notes that 63% of people list taste as one of their top considerations when choosing food and beverages. And while consumers know what they like and tend to naturally gravitate towards those products, familiar flavors combined with unexpected pairings can result in an entirely new taste profile and innovation opportunity for your brand. Consumers are more open than ever to trying new flavors and are viewing food as a unique experience. For example, global flavors, namely Asian and Mexican flavors, are growing in popularity, as well as sweet and spicy combos and refreshing fruity flavors. With such bold flavor combinations gaining traction, we're diving into what flavor combination trends you can expect to be seeing more of, from sweet & spicy, to fruity, and savory flavors. Where does your brand fit in? Read on for more flavor inspiration.



75%

of consumers say they would love to try exotic flavored snacks

73%

of people would be interested in seeing spicy flavors on restaurant menus

CONSUMERS' FLAVOR FAVORITES



After taking a look at top and growing flavor combinations in the food and beverage space, we asked consumers to rate their level of interest for the flavor combinations below in new food and/or beverage products. All flavor combinations were rated on a 5-pt. scale from not at all interested to extremely interested.

We're taking a look at 3 categories – **Fruity**, **Sweet & Spicy**, and **Savory**. Based on survey results, here's a look at what our consumers are craving.

To introduce consumers to unique flavors they might be hesitant to taste, try choosing flavor combinations with “*approachable adventure*” in mind. This technique pairs a less common flavor with a more familiar flavor, decreasing perceived trial risk and purchase hesitancy.

FRUITY

FLAVOR	MEAN SCORE
• Strawberry (cheesecake, shortcake, milkshake, cream)	4.00
• Strawberry Lemonade	3.97
• Fruit Punch	3.89
• Peach Mango	3.85
• Tropical Mango (passion fruit, dragonfruit, guava, pomegranate)	3.85
• Chocolate Raspberry	3.81
• Apple Cinnamon	3.78
• Blueberry & Pomegranate	3.73
• Banana & Cream	3.71
• Strawberry Dragonfruit	3.63

SWEET & SPICY

FLAVOR	MEAN SCORE
• Cinnamon & Sugar	3.80
• Mesquite Barbecue	3.61
• Sweet & Spicy Mustard	3.61
• Ginger Lemonade (lemon, citrus)	3.60
• Hot Honey	3.56
• Chili & Citrus	3.46
• Spicy Margarita	3.37
• Mango Habanero	3.37
• Nashville Hot	3.36
• Pumpkin Spice	3.34

SAVORY

FLAVOR	MEAN SCORE
• Buffalo Chicken	3.76
• Cheddar Jalapeno	3.69
• Sesame Teriyake	3.63
• Garlic Chili	3.61
• Elote (Mexican street-corn - chili, corn, mayo, cheese)	3.59
• Korean Barbeque	3.58
• Cilantro & Lime	3.52
• Birria & Salsa	3.33
• Salsa Macha	3.30
• Miso & Caramel	3.22

Fruity Combinations

Food and beverages can be more than just something to consume. They can provide an escape from the mundane and provide excitement for consumers. Fruit flavors, especially tropical and nostalgic profiles, can help consumers transport themselves away from stress and anxieties and travel through flavor, whether to their favorite vacation location or fondest memory, right from the comfort of their own home.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



JOYBA MANGO PASSION FRUIT BUBBLE GREEN TEA combines vibrant fruit flavors with real brewed tea and popping boba.

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



STRAWBERRY DRAGONFRUIT Nutrient Enhanced Hydration Beverage recently got added to PepsiCo's SoBe Water.

47% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



BLUE BELL CREAMERIES has introduced a new strawberry lemonade flavored ice cream that contains a strawberry base swirled with lemonade sherbet.

42% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



FLAVOR SPOTLIGHTS:

Strawberry & Shortcake showed 300% growth in new product introductions from 2021-2023

Mango & Peach showed 400% growth in new product introductions Q2 2021 vs Q2 2023

Sweet & Spicy

Consumer interest for spicy flavors is heating up. In fact, consumers have explicitly told Datassential “I want new and exciting spicy dishes”. To create this excitement, food and beverage developers and dining operators globally are leveraging sweet and spicy flavor pairings from cinnamon & sugar to hot honey, that bring out the best of both worlds.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



BRACH'S HOLIDAY HEAT SWEET AND SPICY CANES were released for Christmas 2022 featuring watermelon chili, pineapple chili, and mango chili flavors.

36% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



PRINGLES now has a hot honey flavor, only available at Walmart.

49% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



TRADER JOE'S Organic Sweet and Spicy Mustard Sauce is described as a versatile sauce for glazes, marinades, and more.

41% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



138% INCREASE IN SPICY FLAVORS IN BAKERY MENUS THIS YEAR.

Additionally, the sweet heat combination is showing up in everything from snacks, breakfast cereals, cocktails, dips/sauces, and more.

Savory Combinations

What's not to love about comforting, rich, creamy and salty flavors?

On menu items in the U.S., "Umami" is up 66% showcasing savory flavor interest in food. Consumers have even been leaning into these flavor profiles and expanding their palates by trying more global flavors. For example, consumers have been exploring more Asian and Mexican cuisine, opening themselves up to a whole new world of savory flavors.

PRODUCTS OF NOTE



SABRA'S MEXICAN STREET CORN Inspired Guacamole brings together the taste of Hass avocados and the infamous street food "Elote" into one dip.



S&B FOODS FLAVOR OF JAPAN CHILI GARLIC EDAMAME SEASONING MIX is giving people the ability to make Asian style cuisine right from their own kitchen.

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



HAWAIIAN BRAND KETTLE STYLE POTATO CHIPS released a Korean barbeque flavor which are said to combine sweet and savory.

42% of consumers responded that they likely or definitely would buy this product.



FLAVOR SPOTLIGHTS:

Korean Barbeque showed **500% growth** in new product introductions from Q2 2021 vs Q2 2023

Jalapeño Cheddar showed **200% growth** in new product introductions from Q2 2021 vs Q2 2023

THE TAKEAWAYS

While there's opportunity in tried and true combos, flavor profiles are no longer limited to the classic combinations consumers grew up with. Many of today's consumers are looking to explore a variety of experiences and cultures, all through their food and beverage choices. Developers have the opportunity to combine the old with the new, providing an approachable adventure eating experience consumers can be excited about.

The opportunities are endless when it comes to flavor pairings. From sweet and spicy, to fruity, to savory, there'll always be something new to explore. Looking to create the next flavor combo fan favorite? We can help you find flavor inspiration for your brand.



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 McCormick Flavor Solutions 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, seasoning 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 your sales representative or chat us up at www.mccormickflavor.com/en-us/contact-us

SOURCES

- Mintel
- Mintel GNPD
- Datassential
- IFT.org
- Nutritional Outlook
- McCormick FONA 2023 Flavor Combination Survey



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