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2024 Food & Beverage Trends Include Mood-Supporting Foods, Function-Focused Hydration, Protein-Packed Snacking, the Rise of AI, and Third-Culture Cuisines

(Washington, D.C.) — As the food landscape continues to evolve—reflecting technological advancements, cultural and economic shifts—the International Food Information Council (IFIC) presents its annual food trends forecast. According to its team of food, nutrition and health experts and its consumer research insights, 2024 will see more functional beverages, a boom in botanicals, rising demand for foods that support emotional well-being, a focus on food labels and a growing acceptance of artificial intelligence (AI).

Mood on the Menu

“The belief that the food we eat directly influences not only our physical, but also our emotional and mental well-being continues to gain traction, prompting a paradigm shift in the way we’re eating and what we’re placing in our shopping carts,” explains Wendy Reinhardt Kapsak, RD, MSN, Chief Executive Officer of IFIC.

According to the [IFIC 2023 Food & Health Survey](#), three in four Americans (74%) believe the food and beverages they consume have a significant or moderate impact on their overall mental and emotional well-being. Conversely, more than six in ten (61%) also believe their overall mental and emotional well-being has a significant or moderate impact on their food and beverage choices.

In the next year, IFIC forecasts a greater emphasis on how nutrition can support mental and emotional health, including supplements focused on women’s health, as well as foods and beverages to assist with sleep, stress reduction and support mood (look for ingredients such as ashwagandha and turmeric).

The demand for wellness-related products will also lean on the use of botanicals—a group of ingredients that include herbs, flowers, and roots—and will be incorporated into teas, seltzers, and certain foods.

Function-Focused Hydration

The bubble hasn’t burst for bubble water. “In 2023 we saw a boom in flavored sparkling water (#WaterTok garnered over 960 million mentions on TikTok!) and the premium hydration category was launched into the zeitgeist,” explains Jenny Phillips, IFIC’s Senior Manager of Communications.

In 2024, functional beverages will continue to take center stage, redefining the way we hydrate. That includes beverages that contain “clean caffeine,” drinks to support better sleep, and added pre- and probiotics for gut health.

According to IFIC’s *Consumer Insights on Gut Health and Probiotics Survey*, of those who try to consume probiotics, one in four Americans say they commonly seek them out in wellness drinks. Similarly, among those who try to consume prebiotics, 23% seek them out in wellness drinks.

But it’s not just the beverages we drink. “Water stewardship will matter more in 2024. Consumers are looking for foods and drinks that require less water to grow or produce,” notes Tamika Sims, PhD, IFIC’s Senior Director of Food Technology Communications.

Plant-Based Innovations & Protein Snacking

Plant-based proteins aren’t new, but the amalgamation of protein-fortified products and protein-focused snacks *are* a newer trend. And while consumers are becoming increasingly comfortable with innovative, plant-based food alternatives, plant-based seafood will take plant-based to new heights.

Keep an eye out for products fortified with protein, such as rice, pasta, baking mixes, nut protein powders, and snack foods. This is not surprising, since “high-protein” was the number one ranked eating pattern from the IFIC 2023 *Food & Health Survey* (at 18%, followed by mindful eating [17%], calorie-counting [12%], clean eating [12%], and intermittent fasting [12%]).

Alyssa Pike, RD, IFIC’s Senior Manager of Nutrition Communications says, “We’ve seen an uptick in interest around protein-rich diets, and consumers are interested in boosting this nutrient any way they can—even the unconventional.”

Rise of Third-Culture Cuisine

Once labeled as “fusion,” 2024 will see the rise of third-culture cuisine, which celebrates the plurality of American cuisines and identities. From restaurants to cookbooks, this trend lends itself to the renaissance of a commonly maligned ingredient: monosodium glutamate (commonly known as MSG).

Long plagued by misconceptions, MSG’s historical baggage is being unpacked and reexamined—scientific studies have debunked the myth of “Chinese Restaurant Syndrome”—and celebrity chefs and home cooks alike are embracing this umami-rich ingredient.

“MSG has been unfairly demonized for far too long. We’re predicting consumers will continue to reevaluate its place in the kitchen, especially those looking to reduce sodium while maintaining flavor,” states Tony Flood, IFIC’s Senior Director of Food Ingredient Communications.

More Than Just a Label

In 2024, expect a heightened emphasis on transparent food labeling, empowering shoppers to make informed decisions about the foods and beverages they consume. Labels such as “clean,” “cold-pressed,” and “fermented,” which consumers associate with healthfulness, will continue to be at the forefront.

Actions by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are bringing Americans closer to an updated definition of a “healthy” food. As far as consumers are concerned, the most common attributes they

believe define a healthy food are “fresh” (37%), “low in sugar” (32%) and “good source of protein” (29%), according to the IFIC 2023 *Food & Health Survey*.

“Front-of-Package nutrition labeling will be a major focus in 2024 as U.S. food regulators roll out a new labeling proposal to help shoppers make easier, quicker, and healthier food decisions. The proposal will spur a national conversation about the importance of reading food labels (on the front *and* the back of the package) and the multitude of factors beyond labeling that influence our personal food choices,” explains Kris Sollid, RD, IFIC’s Senior Director of Nutrition Communications.

AI on the Plate

In an increasingly online world, consumers are looking to the digital universe for information on health, nutrition, and food safety. Consumers will increasingly be using ChatGPT or other AI functions to improve eating habits, answer questions about food safety and nutrition, help craft meal plans, and more.

“From farm to fork, AI will transform the way the world produces and consumes both food and information,” states Reinhardt Kapsak. IFIC predicts much of AI’s influence will also reside behind the scenes with the potential for more resilient supply chains, food waste reduction, precision farming techniques and innovative product formulation.

Swipe, Like, Eat

“Lest we forget the ‘[girl dinner](#)’ trend from over the summer, or the potato chips and caviar combo that launched high/low snacking into the ether,” says Phillips. “We predict more social media-induced snacking and cooking trends to continue well into 2024.”

According to IFIC’s [data](#), as a result of social media content, half of Americans (51%) say they have tried a new recipe, 42% say they have tried a new brand or product, 29% say they have tried a new restaurant, and 28% say they have reevaluated their relationship with food. Six in ten say they have made healthier choices as a result of information they see on social media. Phillips notes, “If we’ve learned anything, it’s to not underestimate the power of social media in influencing what people are eating, cooking and buying.”

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