feeding the minds that feed the world

# The Top 10 Functional Food Trends

## Moving from 'better for you' to 'what's best for me,' consumers are personalizing their approaches to healthy eating and reprioritizing their diet and nutrition goals.

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1. Eating Well
2. Buying In
3. Mind Matters
4. High Octane
5. Reconditioning
6. Assisted (Healthy) Living
7. Claiming It!
8. Grazing . . . Semi-Herbivores
9. Basic Upgrades
10. Family Ties

Today's consumers are looking for customizable foods, beverages, and dietary solutions that will help them more aggressively meet their own unique nutrition and personal health goals. General health and wellness products and programs no longer fit all.

Over the past three years, consumers have redefined a healthy lifestyle to include regular exercise, relaxation, and attention to mental/emotional health (Mintel 2017). Eight in 10 (82%) now say that mental/emotional balance is as important as physical health (Hartman 2019a). Four in 10 consumers closely monitor what they eat; 43% try to eat healthy but don't pay close attention; and 9% claim to be on a strict diet (Datassential 2019). Nearly half of U.S. consumers say their diet could be somewhat healthier; 23% say it could be a lot healthier (FMI 2019a).

Fit consumers, who live a healthy, active lifestyle differentiated by integrating frequent physical exercise (three to five days per week) and a focus on enhancing their everyday mental/physical performance, now represent about 40% of the general population (Sloan and Adams Hutt 2019).

With 109 million Americans aged 50 or older and 48 million aged 65 and older, lifestyle issues and conditions of aging will increasingly drive functional food sales (U.S. Census 2020).

Lastly, functional foods are becoming more influential in foodservice. High-protein, vegetable-rich foods and superfoods are the most attractive to diners; heart health, energy, weight management, and gut health are the most influential issues (Datassential 2019).

Globally, fortified/functional food sales topped $267 billion, and naturally healthy food sales were $259 billion in February 2020; U.S. sales reached $63 billion and $42 billion, respectively (Euromonitor 2020). Asia Pacific continues to lead global health/wellness growth in food and nutrition (Barbalova 2019). China tops the list of markets with the highest growth potential for fortified foods; it is followed by Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, India, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Malaysia, and Brazil (Mascaraque 2018).

Global sales of organic food and drink topped $105 billion, up 6% in 2018 (Ecovia 2019). U.S. organic food sales reached $47.9 billion, up 5.9% in 2018 (OTA 2019).

In 2019, 77% of U.S. adults used dietary supplements, an all-time high (CRN 2019). U.S. supplement sales are estimated to have reached $49.3 billion in 2019, up 6.2% (NBJ 2019).

Retail sales of cannabis edibles are projected to grow from nearly $1.2 billion in 2019 to $4.9 billion in 2024 (Packaged Facts 2020).

## 8. Grazing . . . Semi-Herbivores

Americans' passion for plant-based foods continues to grow. One-quarter of consumers say they ate more plant-based foods last year versus 2018 (IFIC 2019). A pseudo-vegan movement is sweeping the nation. One-third of adults are very interested in vegetarian and 28% are very interested in vegan foods, although only 5% are strict vegetarians and 3% vegans (Datassential 2019). Of the 50% who tried an eating plan last year, 9% tried a vegetarian and 6% a vegan diet (Hartman 2019a).

Plant-based proteins are the second overall hot culinary trend for 2020; specialty burger blends rank ninth. Vegetable noodles/rice, edamame noodles, lentils, and farro are the hot side dishes; oat milk ranks fourth among 2020's fashionable beverages (NRA 2019a). Mushrooms, pulses, and new varieties of chili peppers have been recast as on-trend flavors for 2020 (NRA 2019a).

At least on occasion, 73% of meal preparers serve plant protein–based meals for dinner. Beans, chickpeas, lentils, and legumes are used by 49%; nuts/seeds, by 48%; veggie burgers, by 30%; quinoa or other grains, by 29%; and tofu/tempeh, by 17% (FMI 2019b). Just over half of consumers eat legumes at least once a week (Datassential 2019).

Four in 10 U.S. households (39%) now buy refrigerated nondairy milk; 15% buy meat substitutes; 10%, frozen plant-based meals; 9%, plant-based yogurt; 7% each, plant-based ice cream and creamers; and 5%, plant-based protein bars (Grzebinski 2019). Sales of plant-based milks reached $1.9 billion, up 6%, for Y/E April 2019, per the Plant Based Food Association; almond milk holds a 70% share (Grzebinski 2019).

Nondairy creamers and hybrid drinks of milk and nondairy milks are another fast-emerging trend. For Y/E April 2019, sales of nondairy creamers grew 40% to $226 million; nondairy yogurt sales climbed 39% to $230 million; and frozen nondairy dessert sales were up 26% to $304 million. In addition, sales of nondairy cheese grew by 19%, reaching $160 million; and nondairy butter sales were up 5% to $189 million (PBFA 2019).

Meat alternative sales topped $878 million in 2019 (FMI 2019c). Marketers need to pay more attention to cleaner labels, as well as the nutrition profile and price differential of plant-based products versus meat.

Plant-based burgers are the most popular meat alternative, followed by tofu, chicken/poultry, breakfast items, and pizza (Packaged Facts 2019c). Alternative pork products, seafood, and eggs are among the new generation of plant-based products.

Tofu and tempeh sales reached $118 million in 2019 (PBFA 2019). Sales of plant-based dips skyrocketed in 2019 and appear poised for more explosive growth (Grzebinski 2019).

Plant-centric fare is an important opportunity for product developers; consumers are looking for foods that contain more fruits and vegetables. One-third of consumers most associate plant-based eating with consuming more fruits and vegetables, and to a slightly lesser extent, they associate it with consuming more ancient grains (Hartman 2019a). **Nine in 10 millennials and Gen Zers want more plant-based items in their foods (Culinary Visions 2018).**

One-third of adults define plant-based foods as containing some meat (Datassential 2019). Three-quarters of those who buy meat alternatives also eat meat (FMI 2019c). Two-thirds of consumers are interested in buying blended meat items such as mushroom burgers.

Lastly, among the most familiar plant-based proteins, consumers rate the overall quality of bean/legume-sourced protein the highest with 42% categorizing it as excellent. That compares with 34% who rate soy as excellent, 25% who rate pea as excellent, and 24% who categorize wheat as excellent (USB 2019). Soy, quinoa, chia, and buckwheat are the only complete plant proteins.