

A top-down view of a rustic wooden bowl filled with a vibrant yellow curry. The curry contains large chunks of cauliflower and potatoes, garnished with fresh green herbs. A portion of white rice is on the left side of the bowl. The bowl sits on a weathered wooden surface. Surrounding the bowl are various spices: a small metal dish with yellow powder in the top left, a pile of fennel seeds in the top right, and two red chili peppers in the bottom left. Sliced ginger is visible in the bottom right corner.

EASTERN INFLUENCES

BY JENNIFER BARNETT FOX

*Cafe Spice is bringing
premium Indian food to
perimeter deli departments.*



Now trending

By Jeff Gelski

Ingredient selection opens a world of promotable opportunities for sauces, dressings and marinades. Korean barbecue, Thai and Indian curries, and spicy habanero are some of the flavor options. Health claims such as low fat, reduced sugar and reduced sodium may be achieved through the choice of starch and other ingredients. Yet before formulation begins, product developers should consider allergen issues and supply availability.

Two flavor trends are standing out this year, said Daniel Espinoza, corporate research and development chef for OFI, a business of Singapore-based Olam International.

Comforting, earthy flavors inspired by nature appeal to consumers seeking a sense of certainty.

“This holds true even as they adopt a more plant-based diet,” he said. “This trend is all about maximizing delicious, rich umami flavors in sauces and marinades with ingredients like roasted garlic and mushrooms, truffles, nuts and seaweed.”

Travel restrictions have consumers eager to explore foreign cuisines such as bright, vibrant and spicy sauces, he added.

“As restrictions begin to ease, this desire for interesting new flavors has raised the profile of fiery marinades and table sauces featuring flavorful chili varieties like habanero, ancho and guajillo,” Espinoza said, adding OFI recently acquired the US-based chili pepper business from Mizkan America, Inc.

ASIAN-INSPIRED CUISINE continues to surprise and delight consumers with traditional options, innovative fusions and hyper-authenticity.

Food is often thought of a necessity, but in truth it offers the potential of so much more. At its finest, food is an exploratory medium. Today, ever-increasing cross-cultural connections allow consumers to experience the world through food like never before. With 449 countries and six regions, Asia, the world’s largest continent, offers a never-ending cornucopia of flavors, ingredients and combinations.

Often underestimated by mainstream food brands, next-generation entrepreneurs are setting a new standard in the category – reclaiming and celebrating the flavors of childhood, culture and community, according to Vanessa Pham, co-founder and CEO of New York-based Omsom.

Initially gearing its products to Gen Z and Millennial Asian Americans, Omsom is finding its line resonating with customers in and outside its target audience. For some this triggers a reaction of familiarity and intrigue and for others it becomes an opportunity to broaden horizons. The company’s proportioned sauces, spices and oils allow consumers to work from recipes or experiment with the produce and protein they have on hand.



Building familiarity

These days it’s easier than ever to experience global flavors with manufacturers offering traditional products in a range of convenient formats. In 1986, Van Oriental Food introduced its signature egg roll products to the US market and today, the company is keeping pace, producing new flavors, new formats and new placements to keep

Allergen and supply issues

Consumers tend to explore global cuisines through countries' traditional sauces such as Korean gochujang and bulgogi sauces, Japanese yakiniku and tonkatsu, and Thai and Indian curries, said Tyler Burns, food scientist for Wixon, Inc., St. Francis, Wis.

Coconut milk is used in many types of curry, but allergy issues may crop up with that ingredient.

"Additionally, sourcing clean label coconut milk powder has been difficult due to supply chain issues," Burns said. "Some developers omit coconut milk completely from their formulations resulting in a less authentic flavor. However, there are many allergen-free coconut flavors available, which when paired with starch and gums for mouthfeel, allow one to get closer to a more traditional tasting curry."

Galangal and kaffir lime are other Thai curry ingredients that may be expensive and limited in supply.

"Galangal can be replaced with ginger, and kaffir lime can be replaced with lime with great success," Burns said. "The overall flavor of the curry when employing these substitutes will vary from the original but will still allow the developer to provide the unique aromatic qualities characteristic of coconut curries."

Other ingredients may affect flavors unfavorably.



Deli and prepared foods sections are seeing demand for high-quality Asian foods migrating from restaurants to grocery stores.

products top of mind for consumers. Rebranded Van's Kitchen, Dallas, the company is sharing its refrigerated egg rolls with a new audience.

Listening to its market is helping Café Spice, Hudson Valley, N.Y., create Indian food dishes that resonate with its consumers. A willingness to explore new flavors can help explain the continuing rise of Indian cuisine, according to a 2022 Hospitality Trends Report from af&co. and Carbonate. Within the restaurant industry, this includes redefining boundaries by introducing Indian foods to the public that many in the United States have never eaten before.

"Consumers are looking for a punch of flavor, whether it be from condiments, ingredients or other accompaniments," said Lauren Baghdo, marketing coordinator, Café Spice. "We believe that consumers are opening their minds to explore bold flavors and foods that are spicy, which is reflected by the rise in popularity with Indian food, Korean foods and every other Asian cuisine that has made an appearance in grocery store aisles."

Others are finding opportunities to provide crossover grab-and-go products that merge a traditional favorite like sushi with a popular mainstream brand. Last year, Hissho Sushi, Charlotte, N.C., teamed with Frank's RedHot to create a Crunchy Buffalo Chicken Roll. The traditional sushi format contains avocado, carrots, cream cheese, rice and nori with decidedly "unsushi" additions of grilled chicken and Frank's RedHot, a hot sauce made with cayenne peppers. Toppings include Frank's RedHot, crunchy fried onions, Japanese barbecue sauce, spicy mayo and a dusting of Frank's RedHot seasoning.

Located by the deli or near the seafood section, Snowfox sushi kiosks, operated by JFE Franchising, Houston, prepare fresh sushi daily. Pairing the familiar with the new, Snowfox recently released sushi-inspired salad cups in California, Salmon & Tuna and Zucchini Noodle varieties at various Kroger locations.

The right ingredient **for the right flavor**

“Some ingredients can mute flavors while others may bring in off-notes that distract from the product’s intended flavor profile,” said Shiva Elayedath, senior technical services manager for Cargill, Minneapolis. “We can sometimes see this with starches, for example. Hands down, tapioca starches offer the cleanest, most neutral flavor, which is one of the reasons we added SimPure tapioca starches to our product line last year.”

Native waxy potato starches maintain a neutral, clean flavor profile compatible with a range of flavors, said Carter Foss, technical sales director, American Key Food Products, Closter, NJ. The starch products may be used in applications such as ketchup, sauces, vegan mayo, marinades and Alfredo sauce, said Philippe Benyair, senior vice president of sales for American Key Food Products.

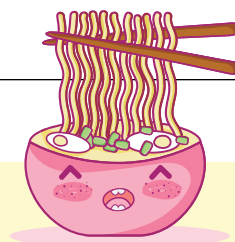
“Native waxy potato products help to provide a smooth, creamy texture and also can have an appealing and glossy appearance,” Benyair said.



Measured approach

While Asian cuisine has long topped the lists of trends forecasters, the last couple of years have been difficult to prognosticate. After the rockiness of the past two years, many in the business of trends forecasting are choosing a conservative approach. Some, like Suzy Badaracco, president, Culinary Tides, Inc., forecast the trends of 2019, like Korean food, getting a reboot. Popular in 2019, Korean is back in part because of the Hollywood influence of BTS, the Korean boy band, and the Squid Games series on Netflix, she said.

Top anime foods



- Katsudon (pork cutlet bowl)
- Taiyaki (filled pancakes)
- Yakidango (rice flour snacks)
- Onigiri (rice ball)
- Ramen
- Curry
- Pocki (chocolate-covered biscuit stick)
- Ramune (soft drink)
- Omurice (omelet with fried rice)
- Miso soup
- Takoyaki (seafood snack)
- Tamogoyaki (rolled, grilled omelet)
- Parfaits
- Hamburgers

Fandom.com

“All trends went into lockdown, just like we did,” Badaracco said. “A good place to restart them is to look at what was popular in 2019 – Japanese because of the Olympics in Tokyo and the Winter Olympics in China.”

Other 2022 trends predict southeast Asian influences with foods from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. In anticipation, consumers are stocking up on pantry staples of jasmine rice, garlic, sesame seeds, chilies, dried onions and soy proteins.

While 2021 saw a rise in Chinese-Peruvian and Mexican-Korean fusions spurred on by second- and third-generation immigrant chefs, 2022 is serving up Nikkei, Japanese-Peruvian food. Nikkei, now a sensation in many European capitals, demonstrates how the second-largest Japanese population in South America is putting its influence on Peruvian food. For consumers looking for a more traditional option there’s Washoku, a Japanese cuisine that blends seafood, vegetables and edible wild plants with a dash of umami.

Closer to home, Badaracco predicted global regional cuisine is more likely to come from regions that consumers are already familiar with.

“Fusion only appears when we are in a calm and prosperous time,” she continued. “We were on track to move to fusion maybe for 2023, but now with inflation and Russia there’s absolutely no change. We will stick with hybrids and mashups, which is an earlier post-recession trend.”

Defining what fusion could be becomes all the more difficult when you consider the food industry has Americanized so many dishes from various cuisines, Baghdo said. Consumers aren’t aware of what is truly eaten in certain countries, which blurs the line between cuisine and country. “Fusion” food incorporates a handful of different cuisines from a few different countries.

“We’ve already blurred the lines between the cuisine and country because we are not able to fully distinguish foods and flavors of Americanized dishes from a certain country. With the growing number of chefs wanting to incorporate flavors from all over the world into their culinary creations, the lines are only going to get more infused.”

Cultural authenticity

With the world once again in turmoil, some elements like Japanese animation, or anime, could provide both an escape and food inspiration.

Flavor forecast

McCormick & Co. predicts a “Humble Nosh” trend that explores global flavors.

Chaat masala

combines savory and fruity with a combination of cumin, coriander and fennel seeds, mint leaves, ground ginger and ground cayenne pepper.

Crunchy chili crisp

is a textured finishing oil that delivers sweet, heat and savory, blending healthy ingredients and regional flavor. The versatile oil can be infused with aromatics, seaweed, ginger, fried peppers, garlic, shallots, sesame seeds, anchovies, peanuts and mushrooms as a topper for meals, sides and desserts.

Pandan kaya is a green jam from Malaysia made with pandan, an herbaceous tropical plant, coconut and egg custard.



The food featured in anime is an essential part of the Japanese culture and an influential part of the viewing, according to Amy Marks-McGee, founder, Trendincite LLC.

Through the medium, viewers can develop an intimate relationship not only with the characters but what the characters are eating. As evidence, she referenced growing interest in foods such as ramen, Gotcha Roast Pork, a fake pork roast made with potatoes, mushrooms and white onion wrapped in bacon, and Omurice, a Japanese omelet wrapped around fried rice.

“Ramen, Gotcha Pork Roast, and Omurice have been featured in different Anime shows and are creating interest in these foods,” Marks-McGee continued. “On TikTok #gotchaporkroast has witnessed 6.2 million views while #omurice has had 168.1 million views as of Feb. 23, 2022.”

The versatility of staples like ramen also allow it to play a regular role as a cheap food hack with the potential to become a viral sensation. Other foods inspired by street cuisine introduce audiences to new favorites such as Vietnamese pizza, which replaces traditional pizza crust with rice paper, and the K-Dog, or Korean corn dog, which coats a basic sausage, hot dog or fish with a rice flour or a yeasted batter.

“Particularly among young consumers, there is a real and sustained appetite for real deal flavors in the food they are buying and consuming,” Pham said. “These young consumers, particularly Gen Zers, are incredibly savvy and able to cut through all of the noise of modern-day marketing. Representation and diversity from both a flavor

and leadership standpoint are important, and consumers are craving hyper-regional cuisine but done right.”

Generational shift

As buying power continues its shift, Millennials and Gen Z are making their personal mark on the food industry. Led by a prioritization of clean-label eating and authenticity, these demographics are known for seeking out flavor, excitement and products that emphasize hyper-regional cuisine.

With excitement possible in each discovery, favorite new products can then be shared through food-centric videos, podcasts and in a variety of online communities including Asianfoodnetwork.com, one of the largest Asian food communities in the world.

These encounters could also include small nuisances such as taking an interest in incorporating traditional Asian foods in a modern way. Sweeteners like black sugar are offering a new twist on familiar products and food innovators are tempting new audiences with achara, a Filipino pickle, and kokuto, Okinawa brown sugar.

The possibilities throughout the category are truly endless, and consumers have the ability to pick and choose just how far down the rabbit hole they might want to travel.

Once the journey begins, one may never know what might strike a note that prompts deeper exploration. Within the category, one can rest assured there are a multitude of culinary nuances and complexities from which to take inspiration.