



Get your palates ready — 2024 promises to deliver new and exciting flavor variations, especially from cuisines beyond our country's borders and in foods that combine different types of flavors entirely.

Expect, for instance, to see additional variations on the sweet-mixed-with-savory theme.

Maeve Webster, president of Menu Matters, said one example of this could be the use of richer, more complex flours like buckwheat and heritage grains.

Why? Because they can be used in desserts to create "a more savory — but still approachable — experience," Webster said.

Coming at the trend the other way, look for cacao to be used in non-sweet applications including entrees and savory cocktails, she added.

Other flavors to keep an eye on in 2024, Webster said, include pistachios in applications like marzipan, dusts and sauces; and tallow, lard and other meat-based fats in "unexpected applications."

International influences

New flavors will continue to find their way into Italian foods in 2024, said Mike Kostyo, Menu Matters' vice president.

"We continue to see a revitalization in Italian foods, with new, next-generation ingredients and flavors showing up in menu items and on retail shelves."

Think cheeses beyond burrata, Kostyo said, with options like Taleggio, and spicier and bolder Italian flavors like arrabiata and vodka sauce taking space from traditional marinara.

On the bakery side, look for Mexican flavors to exert a greater influence in 2024, Kostyo said.

Conchas, churros, and tres leches cakes are likely to be big.

Another big ethnic foods influence on bakery will continue to gain steam this year, as well, he added.



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"Thinking longer-term, Asian flavors and aesthetic influences in classic baked goods are growing in independent bakeries and high-end restaurants so retailers may want to start thinking about how to evolve baked goods in the next three years."

Truffles will likely see their profile raised thanks to a menu decision made by a high-profile foodservice chain, Kostyo said.

"Now that Popeye's has added TRUFF hot sauce to the menu, we'll see truffles continue to move into traditionally inexpensive categories," he said. "And it can be great for catering options to add a little premium note to an event."



In search of the next pumpkin spice

Looking ahead to fall, retailers will need to keep a close on a seasonal favorite that may be due for a reexamination, Kostyo said.

"We have definitely seen pumpkin spice peaking, and now operators are looking for other unique flavors to differentiate themselves. Pumpkin spice will still have a place for years, but look for fruit flavors and compound flavors to keep the seasonal menu exciting."

Apple pie spice is a good candidate to challenge pumpkin pie spice in 2024, said Suzy Badaracco, president of Culinary Tides Inc.

On the fruit side, new flavors that enter the market via new branded varieties will continue to be big in 2024, Kostyo said.

"You see consumers asking friends and family if they've tried that new apple variety or that sweet grape variety that they just tried for the first time. It's keeping the category exciting."

The use of tropical fruit flavors has also been growing, particularly in foodservice, with flavors like passionfruit, tamarind and dragon fruit showing up in more recipes.

"Supermarkets should be prepared to act on that," Kostyo said.

Pickle-flavored foods have been hot for a while, and don't expect that to change in 2024, said Amy Marks-McGee, president of Trendincite LLC. Get ready, she said, for some new twists on the theme that few, if any, saw coming.

"Although not new, pickle-flavored products never go out of style. From collaborations and condiments to snacks and ice cream, in 2024, I anticipate more unexpected applications featuring pickle flavors."

Pizza, street food and beyond

New and unexpected flavors will also find their way into pizza this year, Marks-McGee said.

Comfort food favorites like mac and cheese and Thanksgiving dinner staples could well show up as pizza toppings, likely on an LTO basis. Also look for new alternative pizza crust flavors.

DATASSENTIAL FORECASTS

'24 TRENDS

Food and beverage intelligence company Datassential has released its 10th annual list of food and flavor trend predictions for 2024 and beyond.

"Each year, our team of industry experts pinpoints the new foods, flavors and beverages gaining traction across the industry, from fine dining to fast food, bringing in information from our proprietary AI-powered platform that reveals trends even before they go mainstream," according to Datassential.

This year's Annual Trend report also features new consumer data around key themes like health, indulgence and value, generations from Boomers to Gen Alpha, and a high-level look at cuisine, tech, consumer, and operator trends.

Datassential has been predicting food trends for longer than anyone else in the industry, using a team of unrivaled experts, supported by a proprietary AI-driven prediction tool that boasts 98% accuracy.

Over the last decade, the company has correctly predicted the growth of flavors including yuzu, ube and gochujang.

10 FLAVORS TO WATCH FOR 2024

- Violet/Floral
- Mustard Seeds
- Spicy Ranch
- Caesar everything
- Spam
- Shawarma
- Shaved Ice
- Cresto De Gallo Pasta
- Mexican Beers
- Sweetened Condensed Milk





Another trend to keep a close eye on in the year, Marks-McGee said, are street-food flavors — like those found in churros, elote and tacos — making their way into snacks.

Sweet-and-savory combinations will continue to be big in 2024, Badaracco said.

In fact, there's a whole new vocabulary to describe them.

"Swalty, swokey, swicy."

In the fresh produce category, look for varieties like car acaras, clementines, meyer lemons, blood oranges, pomelos and key limes to be big this year, Badaracco said.

Ghost, ancho, serrano, Carolina reaper and other regional and varietal peppers should also get a lot of attention, as will variety apples and pears, she predicted.

New flavors for ISBs

With the growth of brands like Crumbl cookies, in-store bakeries should also lean into their cookie offerings, with unique, ever-changing flavors and attractive presentations, Kostyo said.

But as is true for all perimeter departments, value must be top-of-mind.

"Obviously value is the most important consideration to consumers, so every brand needs to consider their value proposition in 2024," Kostyo said. "Younger consumers continue to act differently from their more senior counterparts when it comes to perimeter purchasing, so

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supermarkets will continue to need to experiment with technology, marketing, and flavors and formats to attract them and turn them into loyal users."

Among the questions in-store departments must keep in mind: Are the flavors and ingredients that these younger consumers expect showcased, whether that's Mexican and Asian flavors, clean-label foods, bold and spicy flavors or social media-worthy foods? A younger consumer may be more likely to be purchasing options from the deli for a charcuterie board, or seafood at the counter for salmon tacos.

And, as another example, Kostyo said: retail delis may consider adding a spicy rotisserie chicken to their prepared foods lineup. "Continue to rethink the norms in every department to stay on-trend."

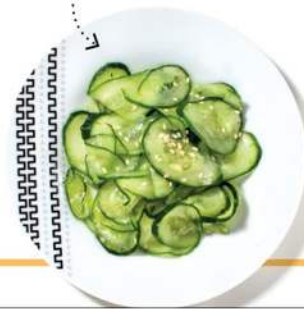
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We're proud to release food and flavor trends for the 10th consecutive year based on industry-leading data and research."

Renee Lee Wege, Datassential

10 FLAVORS in the Inception stage of Datassential's Menu Adoption Cycle

- Amba
- Scamorza Cheese
- Checca
- Shiso
- Nepitella
- Sunomono
- Grains of Selem
- Nam Prik Pao
- Hojicha
- Toasted Rice Powder



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TURNING UP THE HEAT

The Hot Plate, Tag's Food and Beverage Center of Excellence for brands and agencies, has released its 2024 Flavor & Trends Forecast, and spicy is front and center. The report shares flavorful highlights of the latest ingredients, cooking techniques, and culinary ideas predicted to drive innovation in the food and beverage industry in North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe.

Here are a few of the top trends that made the highly craved forecast for 2024:

- **WILD NOT MILD:** Beyond its tantalizing heat, spicy foods offer a sensory adventure, awakening taste buds and triggering endorphin rushes, providing a thrilling dining experience.
- **BALKAN CUISINE:** The fusion of Mediterranean, Eastern European, and Middle Eastern influences create a sensational medley of tastes, attracting food enthusiasts who seek adventure.
- **SUPREME FLAKE:** The croissant, known for its traditional layers and flaky texture, has become a canvas for artistic reinterpretation with its multiple flakey layers and decadent fillings.

"Because the culinary world is becoming more global and is ever evolving, understanding future palate preferences is pivotal for F&B brands to stay ahead of the curve," said Andrea Flanders, Tag Canada's chief client officer. "Our 2024 Flavor & Trends Forecast is a valuable resource, brimming with insights, data, and innovative trends that will help revolutionize the culinary, experiential landscape in 2024."

This year's forecast also features four 'petits fours' or bite-size trends that deserve attention, such as Climatarian Diet and Generative AI, which made the list. Each of the four trends has great potential to affect the future of food; for example, AI is already revolutionizing the food industry with AI-developed recipes and flavor profiles.



lozanghi, Mira Zengulite - stock.adobe.com

“This is hands-down one of my favorite thought leadership initiatives our team develops each year. Andrea and I both have had the pleasure of seeing them in action for nearly a decade now, and their culinary expertise, creativity and quality is truly unmatched.”

Olivia McCormack, Tag Canada

Is plant-based also flavor-forward?

Highly processed plant-based (not plant-forward) may have peaked in some categories, including meat (though not seafood) substitutes, Webster said.

And looking at fresh foods sold in grocery perimeter departments in general, expect stronger efforts to create more differentiation in categories in which there typically hasn't been much, Webster said.

"Think about how many apples there are available but not so with extremely familiar and popular categories such as watermelon and potatoes. To make these fresh and intriguing, we're going to see more concentrated efforts here."

Inflation has certainly had an influence on shopper behavior, Webster said, but it's been somewhat counter-intuitive with consumers no longer willing to compromise on categories they believe are truly important to them at the significant expense of less important categories.

"Stress from domestic and global uncertainty will continue to fuel escapism spending in all industries which could lead to significant economic problems later as consumers wrack up more debt. Economic uncertainty and a few years of restaurant industry turmoil is driving more consumers to at-home preparation, from full scratch to prepared customization." 