



Food and Beverage Trends For 2020

By: Fred Theobald, 12/05/2019

Food trends tend to start in one place and spread out around the world. Some of the trends start in Europe, others in the USA, while others may start somewhere in Asia or South America.

With technology today allowing people to know what is going on in nearly every corner of every country, a food trend can start anywhere and spread around the world or merely live a short life in the originating market.

So, predicting what people will eat and want to find in local stores has become tougher and tougher on those who have to make the hard decisions on what to put into inventory from the local suppliers or import from far off places.

But, here we will try to give some insight into what may be a growing trend that purchasing managers, wholesalers and distributors should closely watch so they do not fall behind their competitors. The thoughts here have come from exploring what people with more expertise are projecting for food trends in 2020.

As one reads through this list, it is apparent that full container loads of one SKU are probably not going to be the norm. LCL shipments or consolidated shipments of multiple products from multiple manufacturers is more likely to be the case, which is where our Company, The Esus Group, LLC will be a great source for bringing in many and unique products. Just a thought.

1. Plant-based foods continued growth.

As an avowed carnivore it is difficult for me to imagine the world population turning totally to plants for food, but the trend does show that more and more people are moving away from flesh foods to things that grow in the dirt, on bushes and on trees.

Don't get me wrong, I do enjoy a good salad and pasta dish (has to have meat in the sauce, however), so I am not totally against plants. I just don't see them as the mainstay in my diet or much of the world's diet in the



foreseeable future.

I do, however, agree that the trend is for more plant-based foods. So, be on the lookout for unique plant foods for the more upscale market segments. The foods are usually more expensive, I have found, so I still believe the more common meat driven diet will continue to dominate for some time to come.

For Food Service providers I would expect demand for more plant-based foods will likely grow faster in this segment than in the regular retail food store segment, especially in more upscale restaurants.

But, we do see even the major fast-food outlets offering plant-based alternatives to the regular burger-driven menu.

2. Foods that fit "Gut Health" diets



Part of the force behind many of the diet trends is the population's awareness of eating healthier diets. While many of these consumers are young adults to middle-aged adults, many are older, which is new.

As many of the nations' population is aging faster than the young are coming into the world, this aging population has taken a greater interest in their health and eating healthier than their parents. They exercise more and take a greater interest in their food intake.

And as we age, our digestive system doesn't always seem to function the same as it did 10 years or even 5 years ago. Probiotic supplements and other "gut foods" are gaining a spot in the market in many developed countries. While this market segment has been steadily growing, the segment has been small, but there are many who think this segment is going to take off in 2020.

If your customer base is aging, or if it is more towards the middle-aged, upper middle class income, then you may want to closely watch this segment.

3. Organics continue their rise

Organics and "Natural" foods will also continue to trend upwards. These products are trending upwards for many of the same reason probiotics are trending - a fast growing older population in many countries and people more closely leaning towards, what may or may not be classified as healthier foods. Unfortunately, though, these products also continue to be more expensive and out of reach for many households.

Part of the reason for the higher costs is, of course, smaller production runs, but I also suspect it has something to do with supply and demand. As the demand for these products increases, and as the supply lags behind the demand, then prices will remain higher than "ordinary" foods.

I also suspect it has something to do with the economic situation of those who have picked up on these trends - they are richer than the average person. I could be wrong, but I have to believe suppliers are pricing the products higher just because they can.

So, if you serve a higher economic clientele, you may want to increase your inventory and selection of these products.

4. Newer spices and flavorings

I recently read an article about the spice called sumac as an up and coming spice, and when I first read it, I was confused because sumac used to grow in our backyard and was treated like poison ivy - one stayed as far away as possible.

But, it turns out this is a spice that comes from berries common to the Mediterranean region, especially southern Italy, and the Middle East. Who knew?



The reddish colored berries are dried and crushed into a powder that is used much like many countries use lemon; it adds a sour, citrusy note to foods, and is used much like lemon would be, as well as rubbed on foods like kabobs.

Other spices that have already gained growth in many markets are tahini and za'atar, which is actually a mixture of spices.

While the spice segment may be small, as restaurants and foodies look for new and exciting flavors, it may be prudent to be ahead of the crowd and have these newer spices available while you are still able to place a nice margin on them.

6. Other Nut Products

The market for alternative nut products, such as almond and cashew butters, almond milk, and other nut products seems to be gaining a foothold or foodhold outside of Northern European and the US marketplace.

We are getting more inquiries about these products from countries in the Middle East, parts of Asia where they had not been great selling items, and other similarly, and formerly, less interested markets.



7. Cannabidiol Foods (CBD)



I had not heard much about cannabidiol foods until I read about a sports figure who took some gummy bears made with CBD, who had an anxiety attack during a flight. I thought he had taken this food laced with cannabis and had a high while he was . . . well, high.

It turns out that was not the case at all. CBD foods gained traction in 2019 and are expected to really take off in 2020.

The compound found in cannabis has been used in

medicine for thousands of years, I am told, and has been used to help relieve symptoms of chronic back pain, anxiety, inflammation and many other medical conditions.

9. New Hydration Products

Low alcohol beverages showed good growth in 2019 with hard seltzers and hard sodas/soft drinks. Consumers, especially younger adults, started moving to the lower alcohol products so they could enjoy a drink in the evening with friends, while not feeling terrible the next morning at work.

The group of products also includes lower sugar content drinks and alcohol infused still water, if you can believe it. Major beverage houses, including companies like Anheuser-Busch have pushed much of this market growth because they have the advertising funds to mass market these products.

I suspect the trend will continue as some of the smaller players get gobbled up by major players when market share reaches a point where the major player sweeps in and takes small companies hard-earned effort to build a local or regional position to the next level.



10. Healthy Snacks



Health consciousness isn't reserved for main courses. The healthy snack segment has been growing for years and should continue to expand, but at a much faster rate, into 2020.

Part of this trend includes getting away from fried foods like chips, and moving to products that have been produced through a process where the snack is "puffed" or popped.

Not only is the production process different, but so are the ingredients and flavors. Products are made from whey protein, vegetables, yuca root, and alternative grains, while flavors have taken on a broader range with the addition of different spices than were the norm.