

# U.S. FOODLINK

The bi-monthly newsletter for importers of U.S. foods

Vol. 21 No. 5



## FROM OFF BRAND TO ON TREND: The Remarkable Growth of U.S. Private Label

After years of contending with negative stereotypes and “off-brand” connotations, the U.S. private label category has managed to reposition itself as a premium, value-driven option that can deliver on price, quality, and taste – and the pandemic played an integral role in that.

“Covid was a catalyst for an interest in private label. It led people to try new products and really understand the specifications and the quality of those specific items,” said Pam Ofri, Director of Own Brands at Wakefern Food Corp., during a session over the evolution of private label at the 2024 Food & Beverage Forum hosted by Forvis Mazars.

“I can only speak for Wakefern, but we try hard to be a national brand quality or better. The ‘or better’ part is why we put a lot of time and investment into quality, because Wakefern is the stamp on every product,” Ofri added.

This strategy seems to have worked in retailers such as Wakefern’s favor, as private label food and beverage sales in the U.S. climbed to an all-time high of \$271 billion in 2024, increasing by 3.9% year over year and significantly outpacing the 1% growth seen from national brands, according to data compiled by Circana and cited by the Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA).

That record-breaking volume is reflected in an influx of value-driven innovations, leveraging contract packers, boutique ingredient suppliers, and co-branding deals to launch products that feel premium yet cost significantly less, thereby increasing their appeal to cash-strapped consumers.

Let’s explore a few of the latest innovations and key trends seen in the U.S. private-label sector as of late, and how global importers can harness them to their benefit.

*(Continued on page 2)*



**Food  
Export**  
Midwest USA™



[www.foodexport.org](http://www.foodexport.org)

# The Remarkable Growth of U.S. Private Label *Continued*

## 1 Value Plus: Tiered Pricing Meets Elevated Offerings

In this tough economic environment, inflation-weary shoppers still want to indulge, but only if the math works. This ongoing tension has paved the way for “value plus” banners such as Walmart’s Bettergoods, which is the retailer’s biggest new brand that has debuted in two decades. Launched with roughly 300 items across frozen, dairy, snacks, and beverages, Bettergoods leans on its three pillars – culinary flair, plant-based formats, and “made without” claims – to capture consumer dollars, all while keeping 70% of its SKUs priced at \$5 or less.

Target’s minimalist Dealworthy line and Kroger’s premium Private Selection extensions also rely on a similar formula of tiered pricing paired with elevated flavors.

Consumer perceptions of private-label products have significantly evolved, too, with 44% of survey respondents expressing that store brands are usually a good value for the money, 40% believing that store brand products are a good alternative to name brands, and 35% feeling that some store brand products are either equal to or higher in quality than national options, according to a recent survey conducted by NielsenIQ.



## 2 Functional and Low- or No-Sugar Drinks

Functional beverages are all the rage these days, and retailers are well aware of this trend. Walmart’s in-store “Modern Soda” bay formalized the category that brands like OLPOP, Poppi, and Zevia built – fiber-fortified, gut-healthy, or zero-sugar sodas in flavors that drip with nostalgia – and private labels are no exception.

Rolled out nationwide in 2024, Great Value Sport undercuts Gatorade by roughly 30% while offering both regular and zero-sugar electrolyte SKUs in classic fruit flavors.

Beyond hydration-focused beverages, retailers are also experimenting with cold-brew coffee concentrates, sparkling tonics, and collagen-infused waters. Import-ready inputs such as prebiotic fibers, botanical extracts, and natural sweeteners are in high demand as well, as retailers race to replicate the function-plus-flavor formula that’s resonating so deeply with health-conscious consumers.

## 3 Snacks That Blend Nostalgia, Protein, and Clean Labels

U.S. shoppers are increasingly drawn to snacks with nostalgic appeal, such as freeze dried candy bits from

Texas startup Sow Good, as well as high protein meat snacks like those from Chicago based Chomps. At the same time, organic popcorn maker LesserEvil has perfected the concept of “clean indulgence” so successfully that The Hershey Company acquired the brand for about \$750 million in April. With private label buyers keeping a close eye on these micro trends, consumers can expect to see more store brand offerings soon— from freeze dried fruit crunches and grass fed jerky packs with eco friendly claims to better for you popcorn popped in avocado oil.

## 4 Globally Inspired Frozen Meals and Snacks

The frozen aisle is notably brand-agnostic for many U.S. shoppers, and grocers are capitalizing on this phenomenon. According to Circana data, unit sales of private-label frozen processed meats increased by 33% for bacon, 14% for breakfast sausage, and 13% for chicken strips in 2024. Concurrently, retailers have been layering in world cuisines ranging from Korean BBQ dumplings and Indian tikka bowls to Mediterranean falafel patties, which are oftentimes produced by mid-sized specialists, such as Deep Indian Kitchen or plant-forward market disruptors like Tattooed Chef. In addition, modern consumers appear to be prioritizing convenience as much as they are value, and they’re increasingly seeking out microwave-ready rice blends and other frozen meals and snacks that are quick and easy to prepare. That poses opportunities for brands, retailers, and suppliers alike.

## 5 Plant-Based 2.0: Dairy, Bakery, and Beyond

While the plant based sector overall continues to face challenges, certain categories are seeing strong growth—evident in the success of oat milk frozen desserts and meat free wings from a new product line. Kroger’s Simple Truth brand has nearly doubled its plant based offerings, adding items like almond milk ice cream, pea protein crumbles, and vegan tortellini. Recent mergers and acquisitions further validate the category, such as PepsiCo’s \$1.2 billion purchase of Mexican American snack maker Siete Foods, known for its grain free tortilla chips—underscoring the steady consumer demand for allergen friendly and culturally authentic products.

### What’s Next for Private Label?

With industry analysts predicting that store-brand penetration in the U.S. could climb to 30% of grocery sales within the next few years and potentially close the gap with Europe, the playbook is clear: Pair value and convenience with innovation and internationally inspired flavors.





# Frozen Fare 2025: Four Innovations Filling American Freezers

From chef-driven convenience entrées to globally inspired desserts incorporating trendy flavors like ube, the frozen aisle has never been more vibrant – and Americans are eating it up. The U.S. frozen food market is the largest in the world, accounting for roughly 39% of the global market share, according to data from Conagra’s “The Future of Frozen Food 2025” report.

The frozen meals category, which includes everything from family-sized meals and pizzas to breakfast items and handheld products like burritos, has benefited from this trend, representing 32% of all frozen sales, which totaled \$28.9 billion in the 52 weeks ending October 20, 2024, according to data compiled by Circana.

Let’s dig into a few of the latest trends and innovations happening within the \$91.3 billion global industry.

## Elevated Heat-and-Eat Meals

American consumers are busier than ever, it seems, and they often gravitate toward frozen meals because they are quick, easy, and convenient to prepare – while also being healthier and more affordable than most fast food. Although U.S. consumers’ budgets have tightened, their expectations for flavorful and high-quality eating experiences have grown. This has paved the way for premium frozen dinners that can cater to these needs – particularly those that have celebrity endorsements, such as Massachusetts-based Martha Stewart Kitchen, a line of frozen entrées, desserts, appetizers, and side dishes launched in partnership with Marquee Brands.

Restaurant cross-overs have also been gaining traction – from P.F. Chang’s Home Menu line to Wendy’s burger patties, which Kroger began selling in the spring – offering an elevated restaurant-like experience at home without any delivery fees.

## Snackable Minis & Bites

Bite-sized snacks and appetizers have also grown in popularity as of late, with consumption rising 31% year over year and sales totaling \$2.4 billion annually, according to Circana. However, their popularity varies by generation, as younger demographics like Gen Z and Millennials are more

likely to purchase mini snacks than older generations.

Savory options account for most of the category’s consumption and have grown by 36%, reflected in frozen products like Bertolli’s Arancini Breaded Risotto Balls and Toasted Ravioli. The trend even extends to the breakfast day part, as frozen items like mini donuts and egg bites are also experiencing noteworthy growth.

## Better-For-You Indulgence

Many of today’s consumers prioritize their health and wellness, but that doesn’t mean they’re willing to forgo dessert. In fact, they want the best of both worlds – a sweet treat without a sugar crash – and food companies are delivering just that.

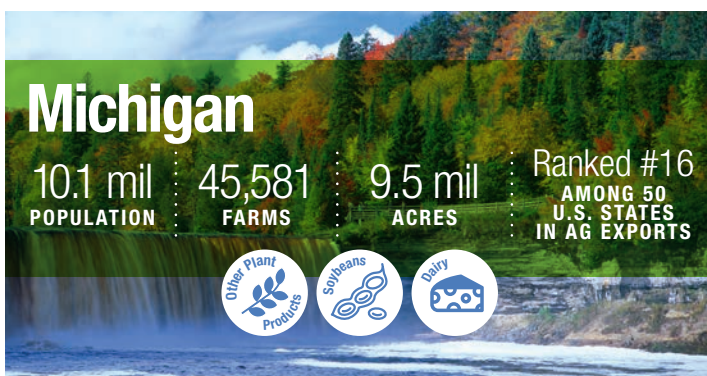
Austin, Texas-based GoodPop offers 40-calorie organic mini ice cream pops, while other brands round out the frozen treat aisle with keto-friendly and GLP-1 medication-friendly offerings and frozen desserts incorporating “functional” ingredients such as collagen or adaptogens. Plant-based options like fruit-forward sorbets and oat milk mochi are also gaining steam.

## Globally Inspired Street Food

While international flavors have been trending in the U.S. for a while now, street food in frozen formats is particularly gaining momentum, reflected in the category’s impressive 26% growth and \$543.5 million in sales over the past two years. According to data from Circana, the top five fastest-growing global street foods include: bao buns (+583%), tacos (+54%), samosas (+32%), empanadas (+31%), and dumplings (+18%). Younger consumers – particularly Gen Zers – are especially drawn to these items, as the young cohort is 24% more likely to purchase globally inspired street fare than their older counterparts. Interesting innovations include Ayo Foods’ flash-frozen West African Jollof Rice and Sukhi’s Punjabi samosas paired with chutney packets.

It’s clear that frozen foods have moved beyond “TV dinner” stereotypes, thanks to the influx of premium products offering healthier ways to indulge and passport-worthy flavors, and the trend is likely to continue.

## Featured U.S. Midwest & Northeast State Profiles







## Brooklyn Cured

*Brooklyn, New York*

At Brooklyn Cured, our flavor profiles are inspired by the cultural diversity and culinary history of Brooklyn neighborhoods that have attracted hard-working people from all over the world. We started by selling our meats at local farmer's markets, and now our products are available at top grocery stores throughout America. We make products that are unique and diverse, like Smoked Beef Salami, Tuscan Red Wine Beef Salami, and Beef Bresola, with the hope that everyone can enjoy charcuterie and have a seat at the table.

Whether it's through family stories, cherished memories, or cultural ties, Brooklyn's influence reaches across the country. Our cured meats are crafted in this spirit of heritage and community, inviting you to enjoy flavors that pay homage to the culinary diversity of our home borough.



## Chowarma Company

*West Bloomfield, Michigan*

Chowarma Company is a manufacturer of the Best Tasting Grab n Go - Fresh Meals. Grocery Retailers & C-Stores can add a fresh breath to their product offerings and provide great value to their customers with the Heat & Serve Mediterranean shawarma, kabob and other delicious authentic Italian, Asian and Mexican meals that are wholesome without any added fillers or preservatives. Meals are made fresh to order and frozen to seal in the freshness.



## Fortune Favors, LLC

*Cottage Grove, Wisconsin*

**Fortune Favors: Artisan Candied Pecans Redefining Global Snacking** Fortune Favors transforms the artisan snacking landscape with our exceptionally crafted candied pecans, meeting the escalating worldwide appetite for guilt-free luxury treats. Our innovative culinary technique maximizes the natural richness of American-cultivated pecans, delivering confections containing merely 7% sugar—dramatically below conventional candied varieties that often contain over 50% sugar content.

Our quartet of signature taste experiences—The Classic, The Spicy, The Everything, and The Mesquite—appeals to international flavor preferences while preserving simplified recipes featuring only four to six ingredients. Every option remains vegan, gluten-free, and entirely plant-derived, targeting essential nutritional requirements across global consumer bases.

Achieving consecutive annual revenue growth of 100% since 2018 alongside placement in over 2500 American retail establishments, Fortune Favors has validated compelling marketplace demand. Our Wisconsin manufacturing hub guarantees unwavering product excellence and logistical dependability, while our upscale market positioning taps into the \$17.5 billion worldwide premium specialty nut industry. We provide complete international expansion assistance featuring co-packing services, adaptable packaging solutions, and promotional resources enabling overseas distributors to capitalize on this outstanding product segment.



## Herr Foods Inc.

*Nottingham, Pennsylvania*

A recognized leader in the snack food industry, Herr Foods, Inc. is headquartered in Nottingham, PA. The family-owned-and-operated company began 79 years ago in Lancaster, PA, and now employs over 1,500 people. Our export line of quality snacks consists of more than 40 items including potato chips, tortilla chips and cheese curls. We export to over 50 countries. Our full line of snack foods offers competitive pricing and attractive packaging.

The export division's objective is to provide our distribution partners with a variety of great tasting snack products to mutually increase net profits. Herr's line of export products is based on our best-selling snack foods. It is complemented by cheese dips, salsa and other unique products specially selected for export success.

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**





## Global Brand and Export Development, LLC

*Naperville, Illinois*

**FOUNDERS STORY** - In 2013, when Lauren Mariel's mom was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer, Lauren's world was turned upside down. Seeking an outlet, she built a 500-square-foot kitchen with her dad's help, and from that, LIVE LOVE POP!™ was born. What started as a personal mission to spread joy, and love has now grown into a national brand. Each of our seven popcorn flavors supports a different non-profit, like our Truffle Salt flavor that funds breast cancer research in honor of Lauren's mom, who is now in remission.

Our popcorn is made in small batches, just as Lauren's mom taught her, resulting in a unique, signature flavor. We pride ourselves on creating the best-tasting, low-calorie snacks—only 50 calories per cup—that are non-GMO, Gluten-Free, vegan-free, and kosher. As a WBENC Certified Women-Owned business, we are committed to quality, care, and giving back. Join us in our journey of Selfless Snacking, spreading love and hope with every bag!



## Klein's Kosher Ice Cream

*Brooklyn, New York*

Klein's non-dairy ice cream tubs stand out as the ultimate indulgence for those seeking a guilt-free, dairy-free frozen treat. Crafted with unwavering commitment to flavor and quality, these tubs are celebrated for their rich and creamy texture, rivaling traditional dairy ice creams. What sets Klein's apart is its meticulous selection of premium, plant-based ingredients, ensuring a luscious taste that doesn't compromise on dietary preferences. Enjoy Klein's non-dairy ice cream in nine delicious flavors: Neapolitan, Vanilla, Vanilla Chocolate, Vanilla Fudge, Cookies 'n Cream, Coffee Royal, Mint Chip, Caramel Fudge, and Cookie Dough. Additionally, Klein's offers a full selection of kosher ice cream, ices, and sorbet, available in a variety of options, including dairy, non-dairy/vegan, sugar-free, all-natural, no sugar added, nut-free, reduced fat, and gluten-free. Whatever your dietary requirements, at Klein's, we're passionate about treating everyone the same. [Koshericecream.com](http://Koshericecream.com)

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**



## Health Garden of NY Inc.

*Paterson, New Jersey*

Today, Health Garden is the only company offering a full line of non- GMO, gluten-free, kosher, low-glycemic sweeteners and condiments. Health Garden products are free of artificial chemicals and additives. They do, however, have one major side effect: uncontrollable smiling.

**Our Mission** - At Health Garden, we believe that a healthy lifestyle and positive outlook on life go hand in hand. Indeed our customers' happiness is our priority, which is why we offer only the highest quality all-natural, low-glycemic sweeteners.



## Leelanau Cellars

*Northport, Michigan*

**Witches Brew** Leelanau Cellars has crafted affordable, award-winning wines for over 50 years in northern Michigan, and the family-owned winery has grown into one of the largest in the Midwest, known for quality, value, and seasonal favorites.

Its popular wine, Witches Brew, has become America's favorite spiced mulled wine. This fall tradition is infused with warming notes of cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger, and it can be enjoyed chilled, warmed, or devilishly hot—a must-have for autumn gatherings, cozy nights, and everything in between.

Beloved nationwide, Witches Brew is now available in 43 states and gained even more momentum after Target and Trader Joe's picked it up in all stores nationwide last fall. With its bold flavor, festive flair, and loyal following, Witches Brew continues to grow in popularity every year.

**Farm Fresh Bubblys** For the past six years, Farm Fresh Wine Company has steadily grown a loyal following, thanks to its commitment to crafting all-natural fruit wines that celebrate the freshest flavors of the season. By focusing on high-quality ingredients and approachable sweetness, Farm Fresh has become a favorite for those seeking something fun, flavorful, and true to its roots.

One of the brand's most popular offerings is the Farm Fresh Bubbly Moscato line—a lightly sparkling blend of Moscato wine and real fruit, available in Raspberry, Blueberry, Blackberry, and Peach. In addition to bottles, the Bubbly Moscatos are also featured in convenient cans, making them perfect for on-the-go enjoyment at picnics, tailgates, and backyard get-togethers.



## Martin's Famous Potato Rolls and Bread

*Chambersburg, Pennsylvania*

Martin's Famous Pastry Shoppe, Inc., headquartered in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, has been producing delicious potato rolls and bread since 1955. Using time-tested recipes, the Martin family continues to deliver exceptional baked goods that are loved by millions across the nation and around the world. Martin's focuses on baking the best products by using the highest quality ingredients, such as high protein, unbleached wheat flour, real milk, potatoes, butter, and pure cane sugar. These premium ingredients result in a soft, pillowy texture, and buttery-sweet flavor that complement both savory and sweet sandwiches and meals. For more information, visit <https://foodservice.potatorolls.com/>.



## Nutty Naturals

*Paterson, New Jersey*

At Natural Cravings, we're all about turning everyday snacking into something fun, flavorful, and unforgettable. Our mission is simple: deliver high-quality, affordable, and innovative snacks that excite your taste buds and keep you coming back for more. With a wide variety of products and packaging options, we make snacking an adventure. Our products contain no artificial colors or synthetic additives.

What makes us stand out? Bold flavors, creative ideas, and packaging that pops off the shelf. We stay ahead of trends to create treats that look amazing and taste even better. At Natural Cravings, it's not just about the snack—it's about the joy in every bite.

Our Yogurt Covered Pretzel Collection is a crave-worthy mix of creamy sweetness and satisfying crunch. Flavors include Coconut Crème, Blueberry, Strawberry, Orange Creamsicle, Key Lime, Raspberry, Lemon Crème, and classic Yogurt—each one a playful twist on a timeless treat, crafted with the quality Natural Cravings is known for.

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**



## Righteous Felon LLC

*Exton, Pennsylvania*

Righteous Felon is a fast-growing, rebellious premium meat snack brand redefining the better-for-you snacking category with bold, craveable flavors and clean-label, high-protein products. Drawing inspiration from the craft beer movement, the brand combines culinary creativity with cheeky storytelling, delivering all-natural beef, pork, and turkey snacks that resonate with today's health-conscious consumer. With a rapidly expanding omnichannel footprint and over 10,000 retail doors—including Costco, Amazon, Tractor Supply, and Giant—Righteous Felon is scaling nationally while maintaining its artisanal roots. The brand's core products—jerky, meat sticks, and biltong—are made from U.S.-sourced, antibiotic-free meat and seasoned with twice the flavor of the competition. Backed by a fiercely loyal customer base and best-in-class repeat rates, Righteous Felon is not only winning shelf space—it's building a movement at the intersection of health, humor, and hustle.



## Route66 International, Inc.

*Hackensack, New Jersey*

Route66 International Inc. has been a trusted supplier to restaurants, chefs, and foodservice professionals since 2016. As a minority-owned, innovation-driven company, we specialize in premium, health-conscious ingredients designed to meet the needs of diverse global markets. Our state-of-the-art U.S. production facility ensures consistent quality, freshness, and flavor in every batch.

Our Seaweed Topping with Almonds is an instant flavor and texture booster, combining crisp roasted seaweed with crunchy roasted almonds, sesame seeds, sugar, and salt. The almonds add a subtle nuttiness, the sesame seeds contribute a gentle toastiness, and the seaweed imparts a natural umami that enhances and elevates any dish. Packaged in a convenient 135g dual-opening bottle, it allows for precise sprinkling or generous seasoning—perfect for rice bowls, salads, noodle dishes, sushi rolls, and more. Vegan, gluten-free, and with no added MSG or artificial additives, it's an ideal furikake-style garnish for international kitchens seeking premium, ready-to-use seasonings that minimize labor, maximize flavor, and offer versatile menu applications.





## Simply Organic Maple

*Waterville, Vermont*

Pure Vermont Maple – Crafted for the World, Made in the USA  
Carbon Zero Produced – Single Source Non-Blended

At Simply Organic Maple™, our family-owned and operated farm in northern Vermont nurtures 17,000 maple trees across 400 acres to produce the world's finest organic, single-origin maple syrup. We sell exclusively to international markets, dedicating our full focus and resources to strengthen and support our global distribution partners.

More than just syrup, Simply Organic Maple™ provides maple candy, maple cream, and maple granulated sugar – crafted with zero carbon emissions - to keep you ahead of carbon-neutral standards. Flexible bottling and packaging options make us a trusted partner for distributors, gourmet retailers, and specialty food markets worldwide. Reviving the market for Vermont Pure Maple Syrup for the world to taste. [www.simplyorganicmaple.com](http://www.simplyorganicmaple.com)



## US Greens, LLC

*Lamed, Kansas*

US Greens is a family-owned, third generation company that has been producing quality greens for more than 70 years. The company grows and manufactures alfalfa, barley grass, broccoli, chard, kale, oat grass and wheatgrass powders. All of our premium whole leaf greens are grown on certified organic fields in Kansas.

US Greens' products are certified organic, certified gluten-free, non-GMO Project Verified and Kosher. The greens are used in sport and nutritional supplements, protein bars, smoothies, juices, and pastas. For more information, pricing, or samples, please contact: Allen Levine [allen@USGreens.net](mailto:allen@USGreens.net) or Marisa Ford [marisa@USGreens.net](mailto:marisa@USGreens.net) [USGreens.net](http://USGreens.net)



## Value Wholesale dba Prefer Products Brands

*Oak Park, Michigan*

Discover the authentic taste of the Mediterranean with Royal Fine Foods, a premium private label brand offered by Value Wholesale. From rich cooking oils and fragrant spices to flavorful cheeses, tahini, and sweets, Royal Fine Foods brings quality and tradition to every table. Our extensive product line also includes essentials like tomato paste, beans, vinegars, and breadcrumbs ... perfect for creating delicious, wholesome meals. Value Wholesale, headquartered in Metro Detroit, MI, provides efficient global distribution and outstanding service to retailers. Ready to stock your shelves? Visit [www.ValueWholesale.com](http://www.ValueWholesale.com) to open an account and start your order today.



## Grace Ryan Organics dba Struesli

*Newtown, Connecticut*

Struesli is redefining the granola category with a clean, modern twist. Born out of a private chef's mission to create a nutrient-dense, grain-free option for clients with dietary restrictions, Struesli is made with simple, organic ingredients—no oats, no added sugar, no fillers. Instead, it features gut-friendly tiger nuts and premium nuts and seeds. Three blends available in 9oz and 2lb sizes.

Struesli is naturally vegan, paleo-friendly, and gluten-free, appealing to the growing number of consumers seeking better-for-you breakfast and snacking options. Perfect on yogurt, smoothie bowls, salads, or straight from the bag. Based in Newtown, Connecticut, Struesli is ready to grow through thoughtful retail partnerships and export opportunities. If you're looking for an elevated granola alternative that checks all the wellness boxes, Struesli is the one to watch. <https://struesli.com/>

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**

# news briefs

**A new report from the Harris Poll shows 72% of Americans are concerned about tariffs – representing an 11% increase since mid-Jan.** Additionally, 60% of respondents expect tariffs to raise prices, and 66% say they're more likely to buy from brands that show empathy.

**For Gen Z, eating and drinking are multi-sensory experiences** – and texture is just as important as taste, creating a fun and interactive experience.

**GLP-1 medications could be responsible for a U.S. volume loss of 1.2-2.9% soon,** according to a report from Big Chalk. Roughly 11.2% of domestic consumers currently use a GLP-1 drug, with an additional 8.3% considering starting one in the next 12 months.

**A new study reveals that consumers are more open to trying plant-based eggs when integrated into familiar dishes** like pancakes over standalone formats. While sensory concerns remain, past positive experiences can increase purchases, reported *Vegconomist*.

**Michelob Ultra is winning over wellness-minded drinkers by positioning beer as a lifestyle choice, not just a weekend indulgence.** Its low-cal, fitness-friendly appeal offers a playbook for beer brands attempting to stay relevant.

**Despite being more budget-conscious in 2025, many consumers are still willing to splurge when it comes to purchases they deem emotionally rewarding.**

According to a survey by Optimum Retailing, 72% of consumers have made an unplanned, in-store discretionary purchase within the past month.



**Gen Z and Millennials can't get enough of "Summerween," sparking early seasonal candy sales and Halloween-themed celebrations.** Brands that have tapped into this cultural moment are winning attention with creative campaigns and shareable experiences.

**Functional chocolate is on the rise, boasting add-ins like lion's mane mushrooms and collagen.** Building on a long history of using chocolate for perceived health benefits, makers are experimenting with flavors to mask functional ingredients while hoping consumers justify purchases as healthy rather than indulgent.

**When asked which foods and drinks Gen Zers wanted to experience in sauce form, 10% of survey respondents referenced a soda** – some by its brand name; others by its flavor profile.

**The Spaghet, AKA the "recession Aperol spritz," may be the drink of the summer,** offering a more economical alternative to the traditional cocktail by incorporating Miller High Life into the mix. Searches for the beer cocktail rose 65% in H1 2025 YoY – and 1000% from 2022, reported *Business Insider*.



## U.S. FOODLINK

### FOOD EXPORT-MIDWEST & FOOD EXPORT-NORTHEAST STAFF

**Brendan Wilson**  
Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

**Michelle Rogowski**  
Chief Operating Officer/Deputy Director

**Laura England**  
Chief Communications Officer/  
Deputy Director

**Teresa Miller**  
Chief Program & Partnership Officer

**Gina Donio**  
Marketing & Communications Manager

**Food Export Association of the Midwest (Food Export-Midwest)**  
309 W. Washington St., Suite 600  
Chicago, IL 60606 USA  
312.334.9200

**Food Export USA-Northeast (Food Export-Northeast)**  
One Penn Center, 1617 JFK Blvd., Suite 420  
Philadelphia, PA 19103 USA  
215.829.9111

**www.foodexport.org**  
Comments, Questions,  
email: [info@foodexport.org](mailto:info@foodexport.org)

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The U.S. Foodlink newsletter is available every other month, in many countries around the world. Find out how to access the newsletter in your country by sending an email to [info@foodexport.org](mailto:info@foodexport.org).



Food Export - Midwest & Food Export - Northeast



Food Export - Midwest & Food Export - Northeast



[foodexportsusa](https://www.instagram.com/foodexportsusa)



[foodexports4941](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



Food Export - Midwest & Food Export - Northeast

### MISSION STATEMENT

The U.S. Foodlink newsletter and e-mail bulletin are brought to you by the Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA-Northeast, two state regional trade groups located in the U.S. that promote exports of U.S. food and agriculture. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast administer many services through Market Access Program (MAP) funding from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the USDA. U.S. Foodlink was created to provide readers credible data and information in an easy-to-read format.

Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast administer many services through Market Access Program (MAP) funding from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the USDA. Persons with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or alternate means of communication of program information should contact us. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast prohibit discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. To file a program discrimination complaint, go to <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast are equal opportunity employers and providers. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast do not tolerate fraud and are vigilant in preventing fraud in any of their programs. Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast reserve the sole right to accept or deny companies into their programs. For complete participation policies and our code of ethics, visit: [www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions](http://www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions).