

FOOD EXPORT ASSOCIATION OF THE MIDWEST USA AND FOOD EXPORT USA - NORTHEAST

U.S. Foodlink

Connecting Midwest and Northeast U.S. Food Suppliers with Worldwide Buyers



Emerging Food Trends for Summer 2026



Includes Featured
U.S. Suppliers and Products
Ready for Export

While trends like global flavors and functional beverages have become well established, a new wave of consumer preferences is shaping the U.S. food landscape.

For international buyers sourcing U.S. products, emerging trends such as texture-driven innovation, functional “beauty from within” beverages, and a return to simple, minimally processed foods are gaining momentum and present new opportunities.

Back-to-Basics: Fresh, Simple, and Nutrient-Dense

Consumer demand continues to shift toward fresh, minimally processed foods, particularly items found along the perimeter of grocery stores. Products such as fresh produce, salad kits, and ready-to-eat prepared meats are benefiting from the dual appeal of convenience and health.

This trend is further reinforced by the growing use of GLP-1 medications in the U.S., which are influencing purchasing behavior. Consumers using these treatments are increasingly opting for smaller portions of nutrient-dense, high-quality foods. As a result, demand for



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Emerging Food Trends for Summer 2026

continued

products with shorter ingredient lists and recognizable components is rising, reflecting a broader “back-to-basics” approach to nourishment.

Fruit consumption is also expanding, particularly among younger consumers. Gen Z and Millennials now account for nearly 56% of total produce volume, with fruit increasingly used across multiple eating occasions, from breakfast to snacking.

At the same time, the U.S. juice category is undergoing repositioning. Manufacturers are shifting away from perceptions of high sugar content and instead promoting 100% juice and no-sugar-added options as premium, naturally wholesome beverages.

Texture Takes Center Stage

Beyond flavor, texture is emerging as a key driver of consumer preference and product differentiation. Recent data shows that 72% of consumers would consider switching brands if a product’s texture does not meet expectations.

This trend is especially pronounced among younger demographics. Approximately 75% of Gen Z and 80% of Millennials report that texture is as important as taste, driving demand for products that deliver unique sensory experiences. Descriptors such as “crunchy,” “chewy,” “smooth,” and “velvety” are increasingly featured in product marketing and packaging.

Chewy textures, in particular, saw 46% growth in menu penetration in 2025. Products like gummy candies and mochi-based desserts appeal to younger consumers for both taste and interactive “playability.” At the same time, crispy and crunchy formats, such as classic fries and snackable freeze-dried fruits and vegetables, continue to perform strongly.

This focus on texture is also influencing beverages. Cold foam additions, for example, saw a 78% increase in menu penetration in 2025, while ready-to-drink beverages are incorporating functional ingredients alongside enhanced mouthfeel to elevate the drinking experience.

Functional Beverages and the Rise of “Beauty from Within”

Functional beverages continue to evolve beyond traditional health benefits like hydration and energy. A growing segment of products now targets holistic wellness, particularly the connection between gut health and skin health, often referred to as the “gut-skin axis.”

This trend is expected to accelerate through 2026 and beyond, as consumers show increasing interest in products that support both digestive health and physical appearance. Beverages that combine ingredients such as collagen, prebiotics, probiotics, and postbiotics are gaining traction as “dual-action” solutions.

Additionally, products designed to support sleep and recovery, such as mushroom-based teas and lattes containing adaptogens, magnesium, and amino acids, are expanding within the functional beverage category. These offerings align with broader consumer interest in wellness routines that deliver long-term benefits.

Shifting Perceptions Around Oils and Ingredients

Consumer scrutiny of ingredients is also intensifying, particularly regarding seed oils. What was once a niche concern has entered the mainstream, with 39% of U.S. consumers reporting they are actively avoiding seed oils due to health perceptions.

This shift is contributing to increased interest in alternative fats, including traditional options such as beef tallow, which saw significant growth in menu usage in 2025. At the same time, demand for transparency and simpler ingredient sourcing continues to influence purchasing decisions across categories.

These trends reflect a broader shift in U.S. consumer priorities toward health, functionality, and sensory experience. For international buyers, this creates opportunities to source products that align with:

- Clean-label and minimally processed positioning
- Texture-driven innovation across snacks, desserts, and beverages
- Functional benefits tied to wellness, beauty, and recovery
- Premium, better-for-you reformulations of traditional categories

U.S. suppliers that effectively combine these attributes, and clearly communicate their benefits, are well positioned to meet evolving global demand.



Next-Gen Sauce Trends Gain Momentum



Sauces continue to play a central role in how consumers personalize meals, offering a convenient and affordable way to enhance flavor across dining occasions, whether at home, in foodservice, or on the go.

They are particularly appealing in households with diverse taste preferences, as sauces allow individuals to customize flavor intensity without altering the core dish. This flexibility, combined with growing interest in bold and global flavors, is driving innovation across the category.

The following trends highlight where the U.S. sauce and condiment market is heading.

Health and Simplicity Shape Sauce Innovation

As health and wellness priorities continue to influence purchasing decisions, demand for cleaner, simpler formulations is extending into the sauce category. Consumers are increasingly seeking condiments made with recognizable ingredients and minimal processing, contributing to the rise of clean-label dressings and sauces.

At the same time, interest in sauces made with ingredients traditionally associated with wellness, such as garlic, olive oil, and fermented components, is growing. This reflects a broader shift toward products that align with perceived health benefits while still delivering strong flavor.

The increasing use of GLP-1 medications in the U.S. is also influencing consumption patterns. As consumers eat smaller portions, there is greater emphasis on maximizing flavor, contributing to rising demand for bold, concentrated sauces such as hot sauces and chili-based condiments.

Flavor Mashups Continue to Evolve

While sweet-and-spicy (“swicy”) combinations have been popular for several years, the category is expanding into more complex flavor mashups. Combinations that blend sweet, smoky, and spicy elements, such as maple paired with chili and barbecue, are gaining traction.

Hot honey remains a leading example of this trend, but new variations are emerging, including blends that incorporate ingredients like Sriracha or other chili-based sauces. These products appeal to consumers seeking layered, multidimensional flavor profiles.

Creamy and spicy mashups are also growing in popularity. Hybrid sauces that combine familiar formats, such as ranch, mayonnaise, or barbecue, with bold heat are resonating with consumers looking for both comfort and intensity in a single product.

Global Flavors Drive Continued Innovation

Global flavor exploration remains a key driver of growth in the sauce category, with increasing interest in regional and street food-inspired profiles.

Emerging condiments such as amba, a tangy, spiced mango sauce rooted in Middle Eastern cuisine, are gaining visibility, while established global flavors like mole, gochujang, and ponzu continue to expand their presence in both retail and foodservice.

Citrus-forward flavors are also gaining momentum, particularly ingredients like yuzu, which is being incorporated into sauces and dressings to deliver bright, acidic notes that complement a wide range of dishes.

These trends reflect growing consumer openness to international flavors and present opportunities for products that deliver authenticity while remaining accessible to a broad audience.

These emerging sauce trends reflect broader shifts in U.S. consumer preferences toward bold flavor, ingredient transparency, and global influence. For international buyers, this presents an opportunity to source products that not only enhance everyday meals but also meet evolving expectations around quality, versatility, and sensory appeal.

Featured U.S. Midwest & Northeast State Profiles

New York

20 mil
POPULATION

30,650
FARMS

6.5 mil
ACRES

Ranked #4
AMONG 50 U.S. STATES
IN AG EXPORTS

Dairy, Other Plant Products, Soybeans

Nebraska

2 mil
POPULATION

44,479
FARMS

44 mil
ACRES

Ranked #5
AMONG 50 U.S. STATES
IN AG EXPORTS

Beef and Veal, Corn, Soybean Meal

Rhode Island

3 mil
POPULATION

1,054
FARMS

59,076
ACRES

Ranked #8
AMONG 50 U.S. STATES
IN AG EXPORTS

Other Plant Products, Other Livestock Products, Other Poultry Products

Illinois

12.7 mil
POPULATION

71,123
FARMS

26.3 mil
ACRES

Ranked #3
AMONG 50 U.S. STATES
IN AG EXPORTS

Soybeans, Corn, Other Grains

Food Export: Supporting Your Success in Promoting U.S. Products

50% Cost Reimbursement for Eligible Social Media Promotions

Improving Your Outreach Using Social Media

As global markets become increasingly digital, social media has become an essential tool for reaching and engaging consumers. Importers can leverage social media platforms to effectively promote U.S. products, build brand recognition, and drive sales within their local markets.

Through Food Export's Branded Program, U.S. suppliers can partner with importers to implement impactful social media marketing campaigns, with 50% cost reimbursement for eligible activities. This support helps reduce financial risk while expanding promotional reach.

Key benefits of using social media include:

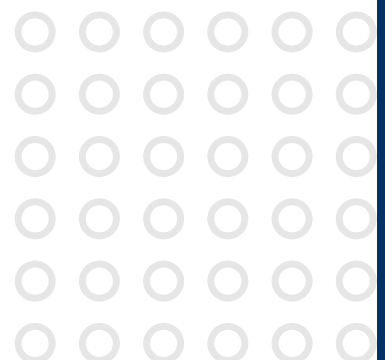
- ✓ Launching new products and promotional campaigns
- ✓ Increasing brand awareness and customer loyalty
- ✓ Delivering targeted and data-driven advertising
- ✓ Driving retail and e-commerce sales
- ✓ Enhancing customer engagement and service

Eligible reimbursable activities may include:

- ✓ Paid search and display advertising (e.g., Google, Amazon)
- ✓ Influencer and content creator partnerships
- ✓ Development of promotional videos and short-form content
- ✓ Social media advertising campaigns across platforms
- ✓ Search engine optimization (SEO) to improve visibility

Visit Food Export's website to learn more about importing Food and Agriculture Products from the U.S.:

<https://www.foodexport.org/import-from-the-us/>



How the Partnership Works

To participate, your U.S. supplier must apply and be approved for Food Export’s Branded Program. Once approved, suppliers can collaborate with you to develop a customized marketing plan tailored to your market.

Branded Program support can be passed along to importers through financial arrangements such as reimbursement via wire transfer or as a credit toward future purchase orders.

Eligible products must contain at least 50% U.S. agricultural content and be clearly labeled with U.S. origin (e.g., “Product of U.S.A.”). Importers will need to provide documentation of promotional activities to the U.S. supplier, who then submits the reimbursement request to Food Export.

Examples of Social Media Reimbursed by the Branded Program



Promotional Video
YouTube videos showcasing new company products at events in Vietnam.



Influencer Marketing
Xiaohongshu influencers created content promoting the company’s brand and products in China.



Instagram Ad
Instagram advertisement promoting the company’s dog food brand in Singapore.



SEO Advertisement
Search and display ads on Google and Amazon promoting the company’s products in Brazil.



Promotional Videos
Promotional video created to promote the company’s brand in Korea through events and online marketing campaigns.



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Blackwood Pet Food, LLC

LISBON, OHIO

Blackwood® is a U.S.-based premium pet food brand rooted in quality, nutrition, and trust. Since 1978, our team in Lisbon, Ohio has crafted thoughtfully developed recipes formulated by PhD pet nutritionists—with zero recalls in our history.

Our formulas are slow-cooked to help retain vital nutrients and are enhanced with Zinpro® ProPath® minerals to support healthy digestion, skin, coat, and immune function.

From dry kibble and wet food to toppers, oven-baked snacks, and single-ingredient freeze-dried treats, Blackwood offers a complete lineup of clean, nutrient-dense options for pets at every age and stage.

Explore the full line at blackwoodpetfood.com or contact us at info@blackwoodpetfood.com.



Buckaroo & Company, LLC

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Rollicking Buckaroo Pepper Jam and Seasoning Blends is an award-winning specialty food brand known for bold flavor, quality ingredients, and a spirited western-inspired identity. Based in Evanston, Illinois, the brand offers a line of all-natural, gluten-free, and vegan pepper jams and seasoning blends designed to bring sweet heat and savory depth to everyday cooking. Its pepper jam varieties range from Mild to Extra Hot, giving consumers and chefs versatile options for glazing, dipping, topping, and recipe development. The seasoning blend collection is crafted to enhance meats, seafood, vegetables, and plant-based dishes with distinctive flavor profiles that are both approachable and memorable. Rollicking Buckaroo has built a loyal following through farmers markets, craft fairs, foodservice outreach, and specialty retail opportunities. With a focus on flavor, creativity, and accessibility, the brand continues to grow by offering products that inspire home cooks and culinary professionals to add excitement, character, and a little kick to every dish they create. <https://www.buckaroopepperjam.com/>

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.



Sartori Cheese

PLYMOUTH, WISCONSIN

Since 1939, Sartori has been a fourth-generation, family-owned cheesemaker dedicated to one simple mission: to make the best cheese in the world. Using world-class milk sourced exclusively from local family farm partners, every wheel begins its journey within hours of milking, ensuring exceptional freshness, quality, and craftsmanship in every bite.

Blending Italian heritage with American innovation, Sartori has become a leader in award-winning artisan cheese, earning over 400 national and international honors. At the heart of the portfolio is BellaVitano®, a Sartori original introduced in 2008, known for its rich, creamy texture and bold, unexpected flavor profiles, from Merlot and Espresso to Black Pepper and beyond.

Each BellaVitano cheese is carefully hand-finished by master cheesemakers, either rubbed or soaked to the rind, then aged to perfection to develop its distinctive depth and complexity. The result is a truly unique collection of cheeses designed to surprise, delight, and offer something for every palate.



Dar Baklava, LLC

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

As a pediatrician and marathon runner who also has a sweet tooth, Sherif Badawy (the founder of Dar Baklava®) thinks indulgence should still be good for you. After moving from Egypt to the US, he found store-bought baklava overly sweet and lacking quality, so he set out to reinvent his favorite confection with a healthy twist. Inspired by baking masters in the Middle East, his version is packed with premium nuts, minimal sugar, a balanced sweetness, and a crisp texture that's never soggy. Crafted with care, and made with real ingredients, his baklava and other snacks in Chicago prove that great taste and nutrition can go hand in hand. Dar Baklava® purpose is to make the world a better place by bringing community and Middle Eastern food culture to the world in snackable format for everyday use (Snacklava®: single-serve snack packs) and giftable one (Nutlava®: mix baklava gift boxes).



Dave's Pet Food LLC

LONGMEADOW, MASSACHUSETTS

Here at Dave's Pet Food, we make straightforward, no-nonsense dog and cat food. Real protein, simple ingredients, and none of the fillers you didn't ask for.

Picky eater? We've met a few. That's why we offer everything from smooth pâtés to hearty stews and gravy-style recipes, plus non-prescription options for pets with specific dietary needs.

Our recipes are made with strict quality controls and in accordance with AAFCO guidelines, so they're as reliable as they are tasty. Good food, done right, at a price that doesn't break the bank. www.davespetfood.com



Ginseng Up Corporation

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Ginseng Up began its journey in 1981 with a mission to introduce the benefits of ginseng to mainstream consumers. At a time when traditional soft drinks dominated the market, concepts like "functional" beverages and "adaptogens" were largely unfamiliar. Ginseng Up emerged as a pioneer in the functional and health-focused beverage category, initially launching its original Ginseng Up drink and subsequently expanding its range with fruit-based flavors that highlighted the benefits of ginseng.

Now in its 44th year, Ginseng Up Corporation stands as a domestic and international beverage company, offering a range of "natural" and "crafted" carbonated and non-carbonated drinks. As a fully integrated, multi-platform company, Ginseng Up encompasses branded products, contract packaging, private labeling, and the production of ingredients, concentrates, and extracts. The company also provides beverage consulting services. Committed to growth and innovation, Ginseng Up remains dedicated to delivering quality products that meet the evolving needs of both existing and new consumers.



Janet's Finest Compotes

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Janet's Finest Compotes is a specialty food brand rooted in family tradition and crafted in small batches in the Midwest. Built on their mother's original recipes, the company has spent over 25 years perfecting a line of thoughtfully balanced fruit compotes that pair beautifully with cheese, elevate everyday meals, and inspire creative entertaining. Now led by Jessica Amel and Angela Kmeck, the brand blends heritage with innovation, introducing unexpected flavor combinations like jalapeño-infused compotes that deliver both sweetness and gentle heat.

In 2026, Janet's Finest earned a Gold Sofi™ Award for its Peach Berry Jalapeño Compote, highlighting the brand's commitment to standout flavor and quality. Designed with versatility in mind, their products move seamlessly from cheese boards to glazes, sandwiches, and cocktails, making them a favorite among specialty retailers and food lovers alike, and home cooks everywhere.

Marieke®
GOUDA

Marieke Gouda

THORP, WISCONSIN

Marieke Gouda produces all-natural, premium, award-winning cheeses crafted with passion using raw milk from our own dairy farm in Thorp, Wisconsin. Every step of the process, from caring for our cows to milking to aging, happens under Marieke's watchful eye. Our dedication to traditional Dutch cheesemaking methods ensures authentic flavors and unparalleled quality. Aged over 60 days on Dutch pine planks.

<http://www.mariekegouda.com>

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.



Mayasari LLC dba SoyaMaya, Artisanal Tempeh Products

GREENSBURG, INDIANA

SoyaMaya™ Artisanal Tempeh Products was founded by Mayasari Effendi, who immigrated to the United States to pursue higher education. Mayasari began her journey by opening Mayasari Indonesian Grill, bringing authentic flavors Indonesia to Midwest, USA.

Inspired by what was missed from home, Mayasari combined traditional Indonesian fermentation with locally sourced U.S. soybeans in Indiana, USA, to create SoyaMaya Protein Tempeh Chips. These clean-label snacks are made from high-quality soybeans, combining high protein non-GMO and high-oleic soybeans to deliver a nutritious, plant-based snack rich in Vitamin B12 and plant-based protein. They are vegan, gluten free and contain 0g fat per serving.

SoyaMaya is more than a product – it is a movement. For every bag sold, five cents are donated to support children's education, with a vision to expand this impact globally. Buyers are welcome to contact Mayasari directly to order sample products. Learn more at www.MayasariTempeh.com. Let's make the world a better place- one bite at the time.



Nikigo Sauce LLC

AVONDALE, PENNSYLVANIA

Food allergies are a growing concern across the globe, but have been difficult to address in popular East Asian cuisines that use soy sauce as a key ingredient. NIKIGO Original Soy Free Sauce looks and tastes like real, premium soy sauce, but contains no soy, wheat or gluten. This unique and revolutionary product is made from fresh mushrooms, sea salt and water, but does not have a mushroom-y taste – just authentic, rich, delicious umami flavor. Perfect with sushi, and can be used as a like-for-like replacement for soy sauce or tamari in any recipe. Created by Nicole Gordon, whose mother descends from Japanese immigrants to Hawaii, and who developed a number of serious food allergies as a young adult. Also available: Hawaiian-Style Teriyaki Sauce and mentsuyu-inspired Noodle Sauce & Broth Concentrate, a delicious and easy vegan ramen-broth concentrate. All allergy-friendly. www.nikigo.com



Pork King Good

CUDAHY, WISCONSIN

Pork King Good is a proudly quirky pork rind company that was founded by a woman whose passion for pork and a low carb way of living helped her to lose 100 lbs. and to reverse her pre-diabetes. Incredibly popular across the keto diet community, Pork King Good continues to innovate with totally unique flavor profiles that have taken the pork rind market by storm. Pork King Good Pork Rinds are free of any artificial ingredients and are cooked in their own pork fat, producing the lightest & most fluffy, melt-in-your-mouth chicharrónes out there in bold & unique flavors that have shaken up the snacking industry. There's a definite gap in the market for low carb and high protein savory snack options, and we're striving to fill that void with an innovative and versatile line up of flavors to suit every taste. To perfectly sum up our mission, "we're just making the snacks that we want to eat ourselves" and sharing them with the world (all while maintaining a sense of humor). www.porkkinggood.com



Primal Pet Foods

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Primal Pet Foods is a leading manufacturer of freeze-dried raw foods, treats, and toppers for dogs and cats. Our premium pet brand is committed to making products that provide the highest quality of life for pets and their parents.

The Primal Pet Foods brand began in 2000 when the company founder Matt Koss wanted to give his ailing dog a better quality of life. He learned about the benefits of feeding pets a raw diet that addresses their ancestral, biological needs.

We are pet lovers who pioneered raw nutrition for pets and have been creating premium quality, protein-rich recipes for dogs and cats since 2001. Today, we have demonstrated through peer-reviewed research what we've always known to be true: when pets eat minimally processed foods according to their biological needs, they get more time in their prime!

Primal remains committed to making raw nutrition convenient and accessible to more pets, and their parents with a portfolio of complete and balanced recipes for dogs and cats in formats such as Kibble in the Raw, Freeze-Dried Raw Nuggets and Freeze Dried Raw Pronto.

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.



Chef FLO-K Foods

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

At Chef FLO-K Foods, every bottle of Afric Sauce carries a story – my story. Growing up, food was the heartbeat of my family and community. Our meals were filled with vibrant flavors, rich traditions, and a sense of togetherness that turned every gathering into a celebration. Those early experiences taught me that food is more than nourishment. It's culture, connection, and love on a plate.

Driven by the passion, I set out to create a sauce that would capture the soul of African cooking while fitting seamlessly into today's kitchens. After years of perfecting recipes and balancing authentic spices with fresh ingredients, Afric Sauce was born. Bold, versatile, and true to its roots. Whether drizzled, dipped, or simmered, it brings unforgettable flavor to any dish.

Today, I'm proud to share Afric Sauce with families, foodies, and flavor-seekers everywhere. Through Chef FLO-K Foods, my mission is simple: to celebrate African culinary heritage and bring people together through taste. Each bottle is crafted with care, rooted in tradition, and made to inspire joy at your table just like it did at mine.



Swanson Health Products, Inc.

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

Since 1969, Swanson Vitamins has been a cornerstone provider of quality vitamins, supplements and natural health solutions to wellness seekers around the world. As a trusted partner for international buyers, our products are third-party tested and manufactured in GMP-certified facilities in accordance with the FDA to ensure guaranteed purity, potency and reliability for our customers. If you are interested in becoming an authorized distributor, please reach out to our Global Business Development Team at gbd@swansonhealth.com or +1 701-356-2700. www.swansonvitamins.com



Rosewood Dairy Inc. dba Renard's Cheese

ALGOMA, WISCONSIN

For four generations, Renard's Cheese has been a family-owned and -operated cheesemaking business in Door County, Wisconsin. We continue to practice the art of producing award-winning cheeses with the knowledge that has been passed down through the generations. We offer more than 50 varieties of cheese, and each one showcases our dedication to the artisanship of handcrafted cheeses. Our cheeses have been recognized nationally and globally, winning numerous awards. Our selections include Cheddars, Colby, Farmers, Muenster, Brick, Marble, Monterey Jack, Mozzarella String, Smoked String, and over 50 flavor-infused specialty cheeses. To this day, our gourmet cheeses are still handcrafted the old-fashioned way, with minimal automation. Our sustainable practices and support for our local agriculture give back to the community, with all of our milk coming exclusively from small, local farms. While many things have changed over the years, the Renard family heritage and iconic cheese recipes remain the same. www.renardscheese.com



Zolli Candy

WALLED LAKE, MICHIGAN

Tap into the fastest-growing candy segment with Zolli Candy - delicious, fun, zero-sugar candy for all ages. Our dye-free, vegan, diabetic-, GLP-1, keto- and allergy-friendly, gluten-free products offer broad consumer appeal and help clean teeth. A women-owned, mission-driven brand, Zolli Candy has been named to the Inc. 5000 for five consecutive years and reaches 800K+ followers across social channels. With over 1 billion organic viral video views, the Zolli Candy community and content drive discovery and sales across markets and channels. Through our Million Smiles Initiative 501(c)(3), we provide oral health education to millions of students and families. Discover proven top sellers and exciting innovations, including SOUR Zolli Pops, Zolli Drops and Zaffi Taffy + Vitamin C, Zolli Fruit Drops + Vitamin C, and Elderberry Zolli Pops + Zinc. Contact us at sales@zollipops.com to bring Zolli Candy to your market.

Fun Zolli stuff to Watch Love & Share! Take a minute to watch & smile with Zolli!

<https://www.youtube.com/@Zollicandy/shorts>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@zollicandyshop>

<https://www.instagram.com/zollicandy/>

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: FoodLink@foodexport.org.

GLP-1 Trends Reshape Eating Habits: GLP-1–driven consumption patterns are reshaping U.S. eating habits, with consumers favoring smaller portions, simpler ingredients, and nutrient-dense foods. This shift is increasing demand for high-quality, flavor-forward products that deliver more value per serving.



Dairy Innovates for Functionality:

Dairy manufacturers are responding by developing products that balance indulgence with functionality, incorporating protein, fiber, and other nutrients to meet demand for more nutrient-dense options.

Foodservice Visits Decline: Rising prices are impacting dining behavior, with 31% of diners visiting restaurant chains less frequently. Additionally, 45% report that their preferred chains have changed over the past year, according to Tillster’s 2026 Phygital Index Report.

All-Day Breakfast Expands: All-day breakfast continues to move beyond the morning daypart, with manufacturers innovating more portable formats. Lunch occasions involving frozen breakfast items increased by 18% last year, according to Circana.



Global Flavors Gain Ground:

Global flavor adoption continues to grow, with younger consumers showing increased interest in foods such as sushi. This reflects more adventurous palates and a greater appreciation for texture and variety.

Stress Management Shapes Consumption: Approximately 60% of U.S. consumers report actively managing stress through supplements and indulgent foods. Chocolate, for example, is associated with supporting mental well-being for 34% of respondents.



Pet Food Demand Accelerates:

Pet food demand remains strong, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z consumers who increasingly prioritize pet nutrition. Products offering clear health benefits and ingredient transparency are gaining traction.

Creatine Expands Beyond Fitness: Creatine is evolving beyond traditional sports nutrition, with new formats and broader adoption across demographics. Consumers are increasingly exploring their role in supporting muscle health and overall wellness.

Demand for Authenticity Rises: Consumer demand for “real” food experiences is increasing, driven by expectations around transparency, quality, and meaningful product differentiation, according to Menu Matters’ 2026 Consumer Needs Report.



Snacking Driven by ‘Retail Therapy’:

“Retail therapy” continues to influence purchasing behavior, with increased demand for both indulgent and better-for-you snack options, according to Circana insights.

Technology and Packaging Pressures Emerge: Food and consumer goods manufacturers are preparing for increased use of AI in supplier management, alongside growing pressure to rethink packaging formats amid microplastic concerns.

Affordability Challenges Persist: Despite updated dietary guidelines, nearly half of Americans (47%) report not fully adhering to recommendations. Affordability remains a key barrier, with higher grocery costs cited as a concern, according to Numerator.



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