



HOTELS: NEWS

Health-conscious food trends explained

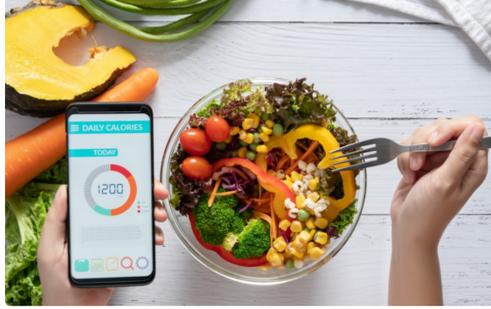
[Facebook](#) [Tweet](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Email](#) [Share This](#)[Comment](#) [email editors](#) [Print](#)By [Guest Contributor](#) on 6/15/2021

In 2021, consumers' desire for health-conscious options has arguably reached an all-time high. It's no wonder that physical wellness is a renewed priority for consumers in the face of a global pandemic.

After spending months in lockdown at home, the combination of moving too little and eating too much has taken its toll. Many reached for comfort food to cope with stress and fear, which translated to weight gain. With restrictions being lifted and life gradually returning to normal, consumers find themselves determined to reverse recently-formed bad habits and settle back into healthier lifestyles.

Contributed by Ambra Torelli, founder of Wholesome Lux, a healthy food and trend consulting agency for the luxury hospitality space

In the contemporary luxury landscape, high-end hotels and restaurants must rise to the occasion to compete. This begins with understanding the needs and desires of the modern, health-conscious consumer. By designing new menus and refreshing existing ones, luxury resorts will not only keep up with the trends, but position themselves ahead of the curve. These are seven health food and beverage trends topping the charts in 2021.



1. A move towards health

During the pandemic, many people have eagerly embraced educating themselves on the importance of using food as medicine, particularly herbs and vegetables. They began actively choosing to lead healthier lifestyles, leaving behind unhealthy eating and drinking habits and transitioning to more nutritious diets.

Home kitchens saw a lot of action in 2020. After learning more about what goes into specific dishes with the increase of at-home cooking, consumers now expect the same level of transparency from the restaurants where they dine. More than ever before, diners demand fresh, locally-grown, homemade ingredients.

As plant-based and flexitarian diets become more popular and people seek out foods that are equally good for the environment and themselves, there's no doubt that consumers will turn to products made from healthy and sustainable ingredients in the long term.

Especially in a luxury dining setting, a boring protein with a side of steamed veggies won't cut it for the modern health-conscious consumer. The eater who habitually seeks out healthy alternatives to traditional comfort food expects the luxury hospitality industry to offer innovative, creative, exciting dishes.

And following the pandemic, as more businesses opt for a greener and more sustainable approach to cooking, the growth of the healthy-dining market is guaranteed to maintain its momentum.

2. Goodbye to gluten

Demand for gluten-free offerings continues its steady rise and shows no signs of slowing down.

In fact, the global market for gluten-free food is projected to spike considerably between 2020 and 2025, from US\$5.6 billion to a whopping US\$8.3 billion.

As of 2019, more than one-third of shoppers were estimated to be committed or casual gluten-free shoppers. Among the top reasons reported for the transition to a gluten-free diet were "trying something new," as well as the belief that going gluten free is beneficial to one's health. Of consumers who exclusively buy organic, 18% said they avoid gluten.

While the origin of the gluten-free diet is rooted in findings related to Celiac disease dating back to the 1940s, many modern consumers unaffected by the disease are opting to go gluten free for a variety of other reasons, such as "non-celiac gluten sensitivity" (NCGS), gluten intolerance, and the desire to stay away from what's commonly referred to as an "antinutrient." In addition to that, researchers also suspect that gluten may block nutrient absorption due to its tendency to cause inflammation.

Whether a critically necessary dietary shift or a voluntary one, the consumer trajectory is clear: Gluten-free is here to stay.

3. Alternatives to dairy

From oat-based milk to vegan cheese, coconut-milk-based ice cream and plant-based chocolate, the array of dairy-free products is experiencing constant growth.

According to a new market research report published by Meticulous Research, the dairy alternatives market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 11.2% from 2020 to 2027, reaching a whopping US\$4.89 billion.

Experts estimate that around 68% of the world's population suffers from lactose malabsorption. Beyond lactose intolerance, consumers may hope to reduce their bad cholesterol or lower their blood pressure by cutting dairy from their diets.

In this day and age, dairy-free products appeal not only to consumers who must avoid dairy allergens or to the growing cases of lactose-intolerant people opting for dairy alternatives, but also to those interested in doing good, not just for their own bodies, but also to protect the environment and its animals.

Animal welfare and carbon footprint reduction were not at the forefront of past generations' minds as they scanned menus and strolled down grocery aisles. Today, these concerns are revolutionizing the way the modern consumer makes decisions about food and beverage.

Growing ethical concerns regarding animal abuse through modern dairy farming methods and the high nutritional benefits associated with alternative products are the key factors leading the growing trend of millennials adopting flexitarian and vegan diets, significantly changing their purchasing habits compared to earlier generations.

Every single food category is affected by the uptick in demand for dairy-free products. From aperitif to dessert, dairy-free consumers don't necessarily intend to skip on indulgence, so the challenge therein lies in developing and refining dairy-free options that don't feel like a downgrade.

4. Plant-based revolution

The United States is among the most concentrated vegan populations in the world. Up from about 1% of the U.S. population in 2014, as many as 6% of American consumers now report being vegan, representing a 500% increase in just seven years.

That said, when we talk about plant-based diets in 2021, the conversation is no longer limited to veganism or vegetarianism.

In considering the implications and effects of the plant-based movement, two clear buckets of consumers emerge: those who choose strictly plant-based diets, and those who seek out plant-forward options for the sake of nutrient density, other concerns related to personal health, and the environment.

"Historically, chefs have looked at plant-forward dishes in an all-or-none way—vegetarian or vegan," says Yuri Kraslovsky, executive chef of Barilla Pasta. "While that might appeal to a vocal minority, chefs are now discovering a middle way, where limited amounts of animal protein are included and popular dishes are remade with less meat and more legumes or veggies."

While vegans and vegetarians make food and beverage decisions based on strict guidelines, the plant-forward eater and drinker may not rule out any one ingredient, instead aiming to consciously reduce their intake of animal products. Their food and beverage decisions reflect this intention, and so must the menus at the establishments they choose to patronize.

5. Sustainability matters

Once more deeply rooted in animal welfare and personal health, today's plant-based and plant-forward consumers are likely to also put the health of the planet at the forefront of their food and beverage decision-making.

In April of 2021, *Epicurious* announced that it would no longer publish beef recipes. The brand released an article breaking down the unprecedented decision to its followers, explaining that the "shift is solely about sustainability, about not giving airtime to one of the world's worst climate offenders. We think of this decision as not anti-beef, but rather pro-planet."

Another major announcement came from New York City's three Michelin-star restaurant, Eleven Madison. Chef Daniel Humm made the executive decision that upon reopening following pandemic-related closures, the restaurant would no longer serve meat or seafood. He went on to say that "the current food system is simply not sustainable, in so many ways."

With sustainability research continually emerging and concerns about our collective contribution to the climate crisis on the rise, this globally-minded trend can only be expected to gain traction year over year.

Now that trends are shifting more toward plant-centric, flexitarian approaches that emphasize a wide array of plants and high-quality fish, ensuring that you offer sustainable seafood is key in this business. Following the success of the "Seaspiracy" documentary on Netflix, consumers are more interested than ever before in knowing how their fish is sourced.

Sustainable fishing promotes the recovery of fish stocks and their habitats, which are crucial for the livelihoods of coastal communities. By understanding how to responsibly source and offer a wide variety of wild-caught and farm-raised fish and shellfish, your business will contribute positively both to the health of the environment and that of your guests.

6. Global cuisines at home

Incorporating global dishes on your menu can be an excellent way to celebrate cultural diversity and show respect to other food traditions, while keeping health trends in mind.

From the Mediterranean diet to Latin-American and Asian cuisine, embracing different food cultures proves a robust and exciting avenue for innovating and adding more tasty, healthy options to your food offerings.

And consumers are seeking them out. This past year, the sales of exotic spices and flavors, such as sumac, harissa, and za'atar, recorded major growth.

By incorporating healthy global recipes into your menus, you can rebalance the macronutrients on the plate and add more legumes or whole, gluten-free grains to your dishes, designing vegetable-centric creations in which produce is the focus (and animal products may be utilized as garnishes or sides).

Many global cuisines, such as Japanese and Mediterranean (Greek in particular), have a long-held history of emphasizing the consumption of whole grains, beans and lentils, leafy greens and vegetables, omega-3-rich small fish, iodine-rich seaweed, and plant-based proteins like tofu.

Here's an insider tip: To merge the growing interest for global cuisines and health, try to elevate your menu by adding dishes that are typical of the "Blue Zones"—regions of the world that are home to the longest-living humans and whose populations typically avoid processed food, meat, dairy, and sugary foods and beverages.

These cuisines rely on vibrant, nutrient-rich foods, such as a variety of vegetables, beans, whole grains and fresh herbs, which seem to play a key role in the globally-recognized, exceptional health of their inhabitants.

By promoting the longevity-inducing abilities of dishes typical of Blue Zones—such as the islands of Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Ikaria in Greece or the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica—you can show your guests that you've put serious effort into developing delicious, yet healthy, recipes to offer a taste of the world in this unusual time.

7. Functional foods for functional lives

"Functional foods" is an umbrella term for all of the foods believed to promote optimal health and help reduce the risk of disease.

As mentioned, since the beginning of the pandemic, eating habits have shifted considerably. The health-conscious consumer began placing more emphasis on immunity-boosting foods and beverages as they sought natural ways to strengthen their immune systems.

RealSimple notes that as of the end of 2020, "Consumer interest in immune-boosting food and beverage is up 23% month over month (with an increase in vitamin and probiotic-rich foods and drinks is up 7%, and interest in gut health is up 2.5% (with a significant 40% boost in the last year)."

Vitamin-C-rich ingredients, fermented products that promote gut health (such as kefir, kimchi, tempeh, miso, and sauerkraut), probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, and foods that generally promote gut health, have a healthy halo, or are linked to immunity, are all recording increased popularity and demand.

After a taxing period in our lives, and consumers are also increasingly seeking ingredients that promote stress relief, mental wellness, and calmness, effects that can be achieved through botanicals and herbs that boast wellness-boosting properties and are rooted in ancient traditions, such as that of traditional Chinese medicine.

Known as "adaptogens"—natural substances that enhance the resistance of the human body under external stress conditions—these ingredients are hot on the market. From turmeric to ginseng, ginger to ashwagandha, and tulsi to reishi, formerly obscure food and beverage components are popping up on product labels like never before.

[Facebook](#) [Tweet](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Email](#) [Share This](#)[Comment](#) [email editors](#) [Print](#)

Post a comment

Name Subject Comment

CANCEL

SUBMIT

Comments are limited to 2000 characters.

Note: Promotional messages or sales solicitations are not appropriate. Messages containing racist, sexist or vulgar language will be removed and can be cause for membership cancellation. Personal attacks do not further the professional dialog and will not be tolerated. For more information see [Terms of Use](#).

Comments

The Airbnb Effect: Experiences over stays

People on the move: Accor, Kempinski, Fife Arms

Accor starts recruitment, internship drive

New focus on connection with outdoors

Briefs: Rocky recovery in U.S. | Cerberus, Highgate partner again

[more stories >>](#)

More choice, control and value for multi-unit buildings.

[Learn More >](#)