



## NUTRITION CONNECTION

# TOP 7 FOOD TRENDS OF 2022

## WHAT'S HEATING UP THE KITCHEN THIS YEAR

BY CHRISSY CARROLL, MPH, RD

**WITH THE CONSTANT EVOLUTION** of the food industry, you can always expect to see unique trends popping up. While you don't need to jump on every fad that comes along (memories of purple ketchup and fat-free potato chips come to mind), it's helpful to be aware of what's popular in the world of food. Many of these trends can drive demand for particular menu items in all realms of food service.

Here are seven of the top food trends this year, and how they may apply to your work.

*This list was compiled using insights from the 2022 Fancy Food Show, the 2022 National Restaurant Association "What's Hot Report," and Pinterest Predicts 2022.*

### 1. MUSHROOMS

While mushrooms have always been a popular ingredient, they are certainly having a spotlight moment right now. In addition to traditional culinary uses, we're seeing this fabulous fungi in all kinds of innovative product categories—think mushroom jerky, mushroom tea, and crunchy mushroom chips. While those specialty products may be cost prohibitive on an everyday basis, they could certainly make a fun addition to a special event.

#### Culinary Notes

Mushrooms are an umami-rich ingredient, adding depth and complexity to your meals. Umami is the fifth taste sense, often described as savory, which occurs when the taste buds detect glutamate (an amino acid found in mushrooms as well as other foods like aged cheese, cured meats, and tomatoes).

#### Nutrition Notes

Mushrooms are a low-calorie food that is both filling and a good source of antioxidants. Irradiated mushrooms—those which are grown under a special UV light—are also high in Vitamin D, making them one of the few food sources of this nutrient. Many people fall short in their Vitamin D requirement, so providing these mushrooms can be a great way to help ensure your population meets their needs.

In addition, several recent studies link mushrooms to cognitive health among older adults. For example, a study in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found that higher consumption of mushrooms was linked to reduced odds of mild cognitive impairment. Another study in the *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* found more frequent mushroom consumption was correlated to a reduced risk of dementia. And a study in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that higher mushroom intake was linked to better performance on certain cognitive tests in older adults.

#### Ways to Use Them

- Add finely chopped and sautéed mushrooms to ground beef when making burgers and tacos. This helps stretch the meat, enhance the nutrition profile, and create a great texture.
- Add sautéed mushrooms to pizzas and pastas.
- For a special event, consider a "build your own ramen bowl" buffet, featuring noodles, broths, veggies, herbs, proteins – and of course, mushrooms.
- Add mushrooms to a pot-pie recipe (traditional or plant-based).



- Feature them on your breakfast menu, from mushroom omelets to mushrooms on toast, to a mushroom and potato hash.

## 2. PLANT-BASED PRODUCTS

The plant-based movement shows no signs of slowing down, with more people wanting to explore meatless options. In fact, the National Restaurant Association noted plant-based foods would be the #2 hottest culinary trend of 2022, trailing only behind sustainability.

While some embrace a plant-based diet for health reasons, others are motivated by environmental concerns—or to simply follow the latest trends.

### Culinary Notes

Plant-based products can range from standard wholesome ingredients (like lentils and whole grains) to processed



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**FOLLOW THE LATEST TRENDS.**

plant-based meat alternatives. While some of the old vegan “meats” had tastes and textures that were clearly far from any cow or chicken, newer products have dramatically improved the visual, textural, and taste qualities. This could be a good option for those looking to reduce their animal intake without sacrificing flavor.

### Nutrition Notes

Unfortunately, improvements in plant-based “meat” taste coincide with high amounts of processing, and certain products have nutrition attributes that are slightly worse than their animal-based counterparts. For example, some popular brands of plant-based patties contain more calories, saturated fat, and sodium than plain lean ground beef patties (when compared ounce for ounce).

That said, minimally processed plant-based foods—like fruits, vegetables,

whole grains, beans, and lentils—are a smart addition to any meal plan. These ingredients can be used both in place of as well as alongside animal-based products, highlighting a “plant-forward” movement that can be universally appreciated.

In addition, research suggests a “flexitarian” approach (plant-forward eating that still includes some meat) may improve certain markers of metabolic health, lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

#### Ways to Use Them

- Use lentils in a sloppy joe recipe to stretch the meat, saving money and adding more fiber.
- Create homemade veggie burgers using ingredients like beans, lentils, sweet potatoes, or other nutritious ingredients.
- Make soups, stews, and chilis that use beans and lentils.
- Host a special “make your own smoothie” event, where participants can choose from a variety of plant-based ingredients. Consider blending in silken tofu as an option to add calcium and protein to a plant-based smoothie.

### 3. PROBIOTIC FOODS

With an increasing focus on gut and immune health, probiotic foods—those which contain live cultures of beneficial bacteria—are exploding in popularity. Common probiotic foods include yogurt, kefir, kimchi, and traditionally-fermented sauerkraut.

#### Culinary Notes

Probiotic foods are a great way to add a punch of flavor to meals, as they often have a tangy or acidic profile. They can be incorporated into all sorts of dishes, from breakfast smoothies to savory entrees.

Keep in mind that heating up probiotic-rich foods can destroy the helpful bacteria. For example, sourdough starter contains probiotic cultures before cooking, but these are destroyed in the baking process. As such, it's important to carefully incorporate foods like yogurt and kimchi without excessive heating if retaining live cultures is the goal.

#### Nutrition Notes

While all probiotic foods contain live cultures of helpful bacteria, they don't necessarily have the same strains or amounts. Because of this, doctors will typically recommend probiotic supplements rather than foods for certain gut health issues, as they can more carefully ensure the correct type and dosage.

Even so, probiotic foods may be beneficial to include in the diet on a regular basis for supporting gut health. They

may be particularly beneficial in long-term care settings, where frequent use of antibiotics and other medications could affect the microbiome.

#### Ways to Use Them

- Create a make-your-own yogurt parfait station for breakfast.
- Provide condiments like sauerkraut and kimchi for sandwiches, hot dogs, and burgers.
- Make dressings, dips, and smoothies using yogurt.
- Offer kefir as a beverage option.

### REDUCING ADDED SUGAR

helps people stick with nutrition guidelines, may naturally limit less-nutritious options, and potentially supports better blood sugar control and overall health.

### 4. REDUCED SUGAR OPTIONS

As people worry about the risks of consuming too much added sugar, they are searching for healthy alternatives that still taste delicious. This trend is becoming more prevalent in corporate wellness, university meals, and school nutrition.

#### Culinary Notes

Reduced sugar options include purchasing or creating products via three different methods, each of which has culinary implications:

- a) Reducing added sugar without substitutes—for example, baking with less sugar than called for in the recipe, or purchasing products formulated with less added sugar.

When it comes to baking, sugar plays an important role in not only flavor but also texture. As such, reducing sugar can be a bit tricky—but not impossible. In many recipes, you can reduce the sugar by up to one-third without a noticeable difference in quality, but this requires testing to confirm.





- b) Using an artificial sweetener (sucralose, aspartame, etc.)—for example, purchasing fruit cups that are packed with sucralose-sweetened water instead of heavy syrup, or baking with an artificial sweetener instead of sugar.

Most artificial sweeteners taste sweeter than regular sugar. When baking with these alternatives, you may need to alter the amounts used to create the right level of sweetness in the finished product (unless using a manufactured 1:1 baking substitute). Note that some people are moving away from using artificial sweeteners due to personal concerns or preferences, which may impact demand for these products.

- c) Using an alternative sweetener (i.e., stevia or monk fruit) or sugar alcohols (most commonly erythritol)—for example, purchasing chocolate milk that is sweetened with monk fruit, or baking with alternative sweeteners instead of sugar.

Alternative sweeteners can sometimes have unintended consequences in cooking or baking. For example, stevia may have a bitter aftertaste, and erythritol can cause a cooling sensation in the mouth.

Of these three methods, the first (simply reducing added sugar without substitutes) is typically the cheapest and easiest option to start with and offers the least risk of potential side effects. Interestingly, when people limit excess sugar intake, they may perceive foods as sweeter after time—potentially reducing the amount of total sugar needed to satisfy the taste buds.

## Nutrition Notes

Reducing added sugar helps people stick with nutrition guidelines (less 10 percent of calories from added sugar per day, according to the Dietary Guidelines), may naturally limit less-nutritious options, and potentially supports better blood sugar control and overall health.

In fact, a microsimulation study in *Circulation* estimates that if the United States was able to reduce 20 percent of sugar from packaged foods and 40 percent from beverages, it could prevent more than 2 million cardiovascular disease events and approximately 750,000 cases of diabetes.

However, introducing artificial or alternative sweeteners in their place may cause issues for some people, depending on the type of sweetener, amount used, and their individual physiology. For example, large amounts of sugar alcohols can cause digestive upset and diarrhea in some people.

## Ways to Reduce Added Sugar

- Purchase products that have less added sugar. The new food label highlights the amount of added sugar per serving, making it easy to compare across brands.
- Test reducing the sugar in baked goods by one-fourth to one-third, and evaluate customer satisfaction with these options.
- Make fruit-based desserts where the fruit lends a natural sweetness, allowing for less overall added sugar in the recipe.

- Create smoothies without added sweeteners.
- Use warming spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves to add flavor without sugar to certain dishes.

## 5. ANCIENT GRAINS

Quinoa, amaranth, sorghum, millet, teff...these are just a few of the ancient grains that have seen a resurgence in recent years. These nutrient-rich ingredients offer a delicious and satisfying alternative to more common grains like wheat and rice.

### Culinary Notes


Ancient grains can be used in all sorts of dishes, from hot breakfast cereals to lunchtime salads to dinner-worthy casseroles. Some (but not all) ancient grains are also gluten free, making them a good choice for those with celiac disease. However, these products tend to be pricier than more common grains, which can be a challenge for menu inclusion.

### Nutrition Notes

Ancient grains provide nutritional value similar to other whole grain products, typically providing a healthy source of carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, fiber, and some protein. Choosing any type of whole grain (ancient or otherwise) offers benefits compared to refined grains, including reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, reduced inflammatory markers, and reduced risk of metabolic syndrome.

### Ways to Use Them

- “Power bowls” can be a trendy menu item in school and college foodservice programs. Try offering an ancient grain alongside vegetables, a protein source, and sauces. A buffet-style bowl concept can be quite successful, where students can customize their own bowls with a variety of these ingredients.
- Add ancient grains to soups and stews for extra heartiness.
- Incorporate cooked grains into lunchtime salads.



**SOME ANCIENT GRAINS**  
are gluten free, making them a good choice for those with celiac disease.

## 6. ALL THINGS OATS

This humble whole grain is not only nutritious, but also incredibly versatile and inexpensive, making it perfect for everything from breakfast to dessert. With trending TikTok recipes featuring various oatmeal combos and baked oat recipes, Generation Z is embracing this “oat-ally” awesome option.

### Culinary Notes

Oats can be cooked and eaten as a simple breakfast cereal, but they also work well as a binding ingredient or thickener in recipes. Oats can also be pulsed in a blender or food processor to create a coarse flour that can be used in dishes like pancakes, waffles, and cookies.

### Nutrition Notes

Oats are a good source of a specific soluble fiber called beta glucan. This fiber plays a role in supporting gut health and regulating cholesterol levels. In addition, oats contain vitamins, minerals, and polyphenols to support overall wellness, and their unique combination of nutrients may play a role in supporting immune health.

### Ways to Use Them

- Oatmeal makes a cost-effective breakfast option in any foodservice setting. Offer a variety of toppings to balance the meal, like fresh fruit, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, and yogurt.

- Overnight oats are a popular a la carte breakfast choice at the high school and college level. These can be prepared ahead of time for an easy grab-and-go meal that may be eaten cold.
- Use oats as a substitute for breadcrumbs in meatloaf.
- Top a fruit crisp with an oat-based layer.
- Use oat flour to add extra nutrients to breakfast options like pancakes or muffins.

## 7. GLOBAL FLAVORS

The United States is a rich tapestry of diverse threads, each representing different cultural practices and preferences, and with this comes unique cuisines and flavors. The demand for authentic versions of international dishes will continue to grow, as will the wider use of once-rare ingredients from other countries.

For example, Pinterest noted that searches were skyrocketing for Norwegian recipes, Filipino recipes, South African recipes, and Arabic food—some as high as a 200 percent increase in interest year over year. Similarly, the National Restaurant Association noted increased demand for Vietnamese, Singaporean, Argentinian, Brazilian, Chilean, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican cuisine.

Foodservice programs can incorporate global flavors into their menus to appeal to the growing diversity of their customer base. This may be more pressing in school, university, and corporate wellness settings, but will also become a priority in long-term care as the current population continues to age.

### Culinary Notes

When incorporating global flavors into your menu, it is important to be cautious about issues of cultural appropriation in execution and cultural respect in menu naming. For example, if presenting a dish as authentic to a certain culture, it would be wise to have a chef from that culture create the recipe.

### Nutrition Notes

Cuisines from across the world often feature nutrient-rich ingredients like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins, as well as robust and powerful flavor profiles. Nutrition and foodservice professionals should practice cultural competency and feature menu items that respect their clientele's preferences.

It is also important to research allergens in new-to-you ingredients. For example, dukkah—a spice-based condiment common in Egypt—typically contains nuts, which may not be widely known. Naan, a delicious flatbread made in Indian cuisine (and others), often contains ghee and/or yogurt, which is a concern for those with dairy allergies.

### Ways to Incorporate International Flavors

- Consider surveying your audience to learn what types of cuisines they may enjoy seeing on the menu.
- Explore plant-forward dishes that are common in many cultures, like a chickpea curry or mushroom ramen.
- Experiment with new ingredients in dishes that are already on your menu. For example, try gochujang sauce on grilled chicken sandwiches, or use harissa in a roasted vegetable dish.
- Consult with chefs that specialize in certain cuisines to develop new menu items.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Food trends come and go, but the ones that stick around are usually based on sound culinary and nutrition principles. By keeping an eye on these trends, you can ensure that your menu is not only delicious and nutritious, but also relevant to your customer base. **E**



## REFERENCES

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**CHRISSY CARROLL, MPH, RD** | [chrissy@snackinginsneakers.com](mailto:chrissy@snackinginsneakers.com)

Chrissy Carroll is a registered dietitian, freelance writer, and brand consultant based in central Massachusetts.

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- Which prominent taste sensation do mushrooms elicit in cooked dishes?
  - Sour
  - Umami
  - Salty
- Which of the following is FALSE regarding the plant-based product trend?
  - Brands have made major strides in taste and texture of plant-based products
  - Some plant-based "meats" have more saturated fat and sodium than lean ground beef
  - All animal products must be eliminated to benefit from plant-forward eating
- Which of the following menu items would likely be the best source of probiotics?
  - Chicken sandwich topped with kimchi
  - Sourdough toast with peanut butter and jam
  - Flatbread made with yogurt as an ingredient (cooked on a flat top)
- The Dietary Guidelines currently recommend less than what percent of calories come from added sugar?
  - 5 percent
  - 10 percent
  - 15 percent
- Which of the following muffins may have a bitter aftertaste?
  - Blueberry muffin made with one-fourth less granulated sugar
  - Blueberry muffin sweetened with stevia
  - Blueberry muffin sweetened with honey
- Which food is rich in beta glucan, a soluble fiber that may play a role in gut health and cholesterol regulation?
  - Yogurt
  - Kombucha
  - Oats
- Which is NOT a best practice when incorporating international dishes and ingredients?
  - Be aware of potential allergens in new ingredients
  - Consult with a chef from a particular culture to develop authentic recipes
  - Name menu items however you would like



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