

SRG

CulinaryTrends™
2019

SRG's Culinary Trends report, now in its sixth year, is the result of a deep and broad exploration of the global food landscape.

An elite foodie group composed of the internal SRG Culinary team and external Culinary Council—more than 175 food experts, sociologists, chefs, nutritionists, and other trend-spotters—gather clues from far and wide to piece together the food trends for the upcoming year.

The puzzle for 2019 is complete.
The theme: optimization

Never before has hack-finding been so prevalent in setting trends. In an era of uber-consumption of technology, it's not surprising that trends across all segments, including food, are stemming from the desire to improve all aspects of the human experience.

Leveraging machine learning of consumer preferences to determine an optimal menu mix and to streamline supply chains is a more obvious example of this optimization driver. Biohacking the diet for increased cognitive function and enhanced physical appearance and performance is also a way to get the most out of something. So are proactive farming methods and crop selection for regeneration, sustainability, food scarcity, and food safety. Lastly, flavor exploration—the trial and adoption of “new” tastes—is, at its core, an effort to optimize the eating experience to take the best bites out of an increasingly fast-paced yet optimized life.

Elizabeth Moskow
Creative Culinary Director



Headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, SRG is a nationally recognized brand consultancy and creative agency. The agency has expertise in consumer insights, brand strategy and positioning, new product innovation, advertising, and design.

With deep experience in all things consumer and culinary, it is responsible for \$10 billion in incremental value for clients over the past five years alone. SRG has been ranked on *Outside Magazine's* Best Places to Work list for the past eight years and was also recognized by *Ad Age* as a 2016 and 2017 Best Place to Work.

FEED YOUR MIND

Recent research supports a strong connection between gut health and cognitive function, placing neuronutrition top of mind. We're starting to see a quorum of products across categories in CPG and foodservice, leveraging ingredients from antioxidant-rich dark chocolate to spearmint to MCT oil and "good fats" to adaptogenic herbs and mushrooms designed to provide clarity, balance, memory enhancement, and peace of mind.

In the past year, there have been 300+ new product launches mentioning nootropics. Datassential



2018 saw the launch of 3,000+ new food products featuring collagen. Datassential

The phrase "you are what you eat" has never been more front and center, especially if you are looking to feel young and beautiful. Ingredients like collagen, seaweed and algae, vitamin C, and hyaluronic acid purport to not only keep skin, nails, and hair supple, but to keep your gut lining fortified for that inner to outer glow.

ABOUT FACE

A GRAIN OF TRUTH

Eureka! Now that cavemen may have consumed grains, what's a paleo or grain-free food tribe philosopher to believe? Believe this, ancient grains like fonio—"the new quinoa"—or new strains of grain like Kernza—the darling of the organic regenerative farming movement—offer nutritional benefits like vitamins, fiber, fats, and essential amino acids. Look for fonio to fill bowls and Kernza to sprout its way onto the cereal shelf in 2019 and beyond.



FUGGEDABOUT FOOD

Despite having more choice than ever when it comes to food, some consumers, when faced with option overload and a shortage of time, seek to forget about food altogether by employing periodic fasting. Others are turning to scientifically formulated meal replacements that provide nutrition and satiety without the "hassle" of eating. Foodservice and CPG sell products to these "food avoiders" by creating high-fat-supportive snacks and nutrient-dense meal replacements.

BITTER IS SWEET

First came the kale love, then brussels sprouts moved into the side dish spotlight. Now, a whole new crop of bitter veggies—from broccoli rabe to dandelion greens, collards, and endive—are appearing in dishes of all kinds. But it doesn't stop there. From the increasingly popular spritzes of bitter aperitifs like Aperol to the rise in craft cocktail bitters, the flavor is making a splash in beverages too. From salads to snacks and sodas, bitter is indeed sweet.

Menu references to the term "bitter" have risen more than 22% in the past four years and are projected to grow an additional 18.1% in the next four. Datassential SNAP! and Haiku.



ROOTED AND RAVISHING

The plant-based revolution is here. Get used to it! Diners are hungry for heartier veg-centric options that can replace the meaty, satiating bites they crave. From center-of-plate stars to stealthy swaps in favorite snacks, vegetables like cassava, Japanese yams, parsnips, jicama, and even the classic white potato are all stepping into the resistant-starch spotlight in delightful new forms.

BUTTER IS THE NEW BACON

As the foundation of global cuisine—from Indian ghee to classical French mother sauces—butter is not only a staple, but a craveable ingredient. Butter takes center stage on Instagram with drool-worthy coffee, breakfast, donut, and even burger offerings. It's also popping up in the form of a butter bomb, the new chocolate truffle-style dessert for those on extremely low-carb high-fat diets. Move over, bacon. Now there is something butterier!

Butter mentions on U.S. restaurant menus are at an all-time high at 64%. Datassential



"One word: celtuce. I suspect it will gain mainstream attention and become the new kale." Hosea Rosenberg; *Top Chef* winner and Owner of Blackbelly and Santo

The romaine lettuce scare of 2018 raised concerns about food safety, but also brought lettuce into the spotlight. We're now seeing the spread of the salad staple, as lettuce is being juiced to form the basis for canned and bottled hydration beverages. Exotic varieties like celtuce and hydroponically grown lettuces are also showing up as callouts on restaurant menus by variety and grower.

LETTUCE BE FRESH

DATA MINING DINING

Want a customized dining experience? Artificial intelligence is the hot dish being served up in the food industry right now. This technology can be leveraged to foresee food and flavor trends happening in real time. Tech companies like SpoonShot, Foodpairing, Analytical Flavor Systems, and FlavorWiki are employing machine learning to support new product and menu development to pinpoint ever-changing consumer preferences as they happen.

"Machines are able to analyze huge data sets in a matter of seconds or minutes. It's clear that this technology allows food companies to be more agile and connected to the changing desires of the consumer." Kishan Vasani; Founder of SpoonShot



FERMENTATION WITHOUT THE FUNK

Diners are moving beyond the functional benefits of bacteria to embrace the fermentation process of various molds and fungi for its delicious, savory effect. From Japanese koji used to quickly age meats to the cheesy, umami flavor of nutritional yeast and the meat alternative of tempeh, all eyes are on fungal fermentation techniques that drive flavor forward.