

# Trend Alert: Adaptogens

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While some take their coffee with extra cream or even a dash of cinnamon, Four Sigmatic is proposing a unique alternative: mushrooms. The blend promises increased productivity, focus and mental creativity due to naturally occurring compounds found in mushroom varieties like Lion's Mane and Chaga.



So in late April, those of us attending the Hartman Group's 2018 Food Culture Forecast sat inside a hotel ballroom and sipped the fungi-infused beverage as we listened to presenter Davey McHenry talk about a growing consumer awareness of, and demand for, products that address brain health and functioning.

In fact, mental health is the second most-mentioned health priority by American consumers (#1: weight control). Which makes it a unique and highly attractive area of innovation exploration.

## WHY IT'S HAPPENING

Despite advancements in technology and the ability to multi-task from anywhere, adults today are busier and more stressed out than ever before. Consider the following:



in the number of hours worked each week by American families since 1969



in the minutes commuting to work each day since 1980



each week caring for children in the household since 1965

Source: "The New Convenience." A.C.T. Food Culture Forecast 2018. The Hartman Group. April 2018.

And that's led to a sizable increase in the number of consumers who say it's taking a toll on their mental health:

- 55% of all households are treating or preventing anxiety and stress
- 61% of Millennials say they're treating or preventing anxiety and stress
- 31% of teens say they feel overwhelmed<sup>1</sup>

So it shouldn't be a surprise that we're seeing an increase in products like foods, beverages and supplements that utilize adaptogens (substances that help manage stress) and nootropics (substances that increase cognitive functioning).

## WHAT WE THINK

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**New innovations that provide mental health benefits are ripe for growth, but require approachable and educational messaging to entice consumer trial.**

Many of the adaptogens and nootropics used today are completely unfamiliar—and even unpronounceable—to the vast majority of consumers. Food marketers will need to utilize branding, naming and messaging to clearly communicate sought-after mental health benefits. Manufacturers will also need to provide basic education on ingredients and their origins in marketing communications to make products approachable to the mass market.

## WHAT'S NEXT

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Take a cue from the following brands on how to successfully market food and beverage products that promise enhanced cognitive functioning:

### Brain Alchemy Latte by Project Juice

A new offering by the San Francisco-based restaurant and juice company, Project Juice, this company also uses a clever yet descriptive name for its new adaptogen coffee drinks like "Matcha Energy" and "Golden Immunity"

The website describes it as a "therapeutic and deeply nourishing formula for the brain." It

also utilizes the packaging to educate the consumer on the definition of adaptogens. Key ingredients of their Brain Alchemy latte include:

**Lion's mane** (mushroom) and **guta kola** (Chinese herb); both credited with increasing cognitive functioning

### Brain Dust by Moon Juice

A super-food powder blend created by the company Moon Juice. The name 'Brain Dust' is described on its website as Edible Intelligence™, which efficiently and succinctly communicates its key benefit to the audience.

The product description, "an adaptogenic blend of super-herbs and super-mushrooms that help combat the effects of stress" gives the consumer a high-level understanding of the key cognitive benefit. Key ingredients include:

**Rhodiola root extract**, which is credited with increasing resistance to stress, and **ashwagandha leaf extract**, which is said to treat anxiety and stress



### Tulsi Clarity Herbal Tonic by Goldthread

One of a variety of herbal tonics from Santa Monica-based Goldthread Herbs, I like how the company has named its concoctions by what mental state consumers can achieve upon consumption.

The description—Sweet and fragrant, with just a touch of spice, tulsi...has rejuvenating effects upon the body, mind and spirit"—also provides both education and approachability to the consumer. Key ingredients of Tulsi Clarity include:

**Tulsi**, an herb credited with reducing stress and increasing energy, and **lavender extract** which promotes calmness



Just some *Thought for Food*™

1 "The New Convenience." A.C.T. Food Culture Forecast 2018.  
The Hartman Group. April 2018.

**Questions, comments or want to  
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