

Trends are patterns of change grounded in an evolving culture

Consumer attitudes and behaviors don't live in a vacuum, but are instead situated within the context of an ever-changing cultural ecosystem. "Trends" are the patterns of change in consumer demand for products and services that occur within this ecosystem over time.

Over the decades, the food and beverage industry has witnessed a broad range of trends:

- E.g., the rise of mocktails/non-alcoholic beverage alternatives in the 2020s
- E.g., the gastro-pub, craft-beer boom of the 2010s
- E.g., the demand for low carb from the 90s into today


Businesses must not only understand what trends are, but *why* they are, in order to meaningfully participate in them. Understanding emerging trends helps businesses sharpen the view of the future and identify opportunities to not only grow but flourish tomorrow.



Table of Contents

This report is organized into three sections, each with sub-sections. Slide numbers for the start of each section/sub-section are listed to the right.

IDEAS IN FOOD 2024 – REPORT CONTENTS

	experience & exploration	<u>9</u>		supportive wellbeing	<u>20</u>		intentional consumption	<u>30</u>
	food as fashion	<u>10</u>		flavor-forward wellness	<u>21</u>		purposeful packaging	<u>31</u>
	satisfying the senses	<u>11</u>		“better for you” backlash	<u>23</u>		sustainable shipping	<u>34</u>
	recipe m-AI-nia	<u>14</u>		wake up, wind down	<u>24</u>		fighting food waste	<u>35</u>
	revamping retail	<u>15</u>		pausing for play	<u>26</u>		trust in transparency	<u>37</u>
	powerful partnerships	<u>17</u>		stopping stigma	<u>27</u>		disability justice	<u>39</u>
	high, low, LTO	<u>19</u>		pretty & potent	<u>29</u>			
							Top 10 Takeaways	<u>40</u>

Move over Erewhon: Gen Z is helping turn Walmart into an experiential destination

Consumers share and discuss products online, but connectedness today is also about continuing the thread of online inspiration into real life experiences – particularly with food and beverage.

Walmart is adeptly setting itself up to connect with Gen Z by bringing products with a strong online presence into the store, including some exclusive brand partnerships.

It is carving out a niche as a physical destination for exclusive brands launched by creators adored by Gen Z, such as those from football star and Taylor Swift-significant other Travis Kelce (**Travis Kelce's Kitchen**) and the D'Amelio family (**Be Happy Snacks**).



Walmart has already established itself as a leader in organic sales, and now carries a growing roster of premium and better-for-you brands, many of which offer exclusive flavors or SKUs at the retailer.

With an emphasis on products relevant to Gen Z, Walmart is positioned to compete with natural and organic stores as a destination for exploration that may include – but is not bound by – wellness or premium criteria. It sets an example for other mainstream retailers that they too can speak to fun and exploration, which has traditionally been owned by the specialty/natural channel.



Van Leeuwen, which became famous for its premium, simple ingredient ice cream and unusual stunt flavors, released several flavors in Spring 2023 that were exclusive to Walmart, including a Hidden Valley Ranch flavor, playing into the high-low trend (see page 19)

Eco-friendly packaging – which has become a baseline purchase criterion – must also be practical

Packaging is the most visible way in which brands can highlight their sustainability efforts. Once viewed as a “nice to have” attribute that increased quality perceptions but was unlikely to (on its own) persuade consumers to switch brands or pay more for a product, sustainable packaging is quickly becoming a “must have” as consumers place a greater burden of responsibility on companies.

As more mainstream brands make the switch to sustainable packaging (e.g., Cup of Noodles), **a lack of company progress in this realm risks negative consumer perceptions. In addition to sustainable, packaging should also be functional and convenient - it should be easy to use and easy to dispose of – and should not require drastic behavior changes for the consumer.**

84% of consumers want to see more companies take the lead in developing more sustainable packaging solutions¹



Cup of Noodles recently announced they are switching from their iconic Styrofoam cup to paper due to negative environmental impacts and the release of possible carcinogens when microwaving. While incremental, the move signifies a larger trend is afoot. Brands should be thinking, “If Cup of Noodles can be more sustainable, so should we.”



Yeo Valley Organic yogurt is doing away with single-use lids, a change implemented to reduce plastic waste. In addition to using fully recyclable cardboard-plastic cups, the company has developed a reusable lid that is also dishwasher safe. Shoppers can obtain the lid online by using “Yeokens”, on pack codes which can also be used to make donations to various charities. While it might not be convenient for some to order a lid online, for others, the fun and even nostalgic experience of swapping “Yeokens” for free stuff can also create an engaging experience.