

# Top ten food trends for 2007

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Which way are consumer food trends heading? Although consumers are constantly bombarded with messages about healthy eating, encouraging them to cut down on fats, sugar, salt and junk food, obesity levels are at an all time high. And while TV cookery programmes, celebrity chefs and cookery books have never been more popular, sales of ready meals, convenience foods and take-aways are increasing. Unprecedented levels consumer interest in the market for celebrity chefs and dieting demonstrates a consumer desire for healthier, better food, which is all part of the global consumer trend towards wellness. But when will this desire become a reality?



The food industry is responding to consumer desires for healthier foods through new products, changed ingredients and healthier brand extensions; however, there are a number of other overlapping, related and parallel trends which are likely to surface. Euromonitor has identified ten key consumer trends that are expected to shape the food industry in 2007.

## 1. Wellness foods- still flavour of the day

In response to Governments, health organisations and consumers, food companies are producing more foods with lower salt, less unhealthy fats, more grains and fibres and also more functional ingredients. Similarly organic foods have gone mainstream and are now even being sold by Wal-Mart. Functional - nutritionally enhanced – foods combine nutrition and medicine and offer unlimited scope for new product development. Recent examples include a carbonated green tea drink with ginger and caffeine that burns calories rather than adding them, vitamin-enhanced beer and dark chocolate sold as an antioxidant.

## 2. New world foods – to boldly go

There is infinite scope for and real interest in new foods sourced from 'new' places. Superfruits like the purple açai berry from the rain forest, which has already achieved a market in health food shops could make the transition to mainstream. Some analysts have suggested that Peruvian cuisine – a marriage of Italian, Spanish, Indian, Japanese and native cookery - could be the next big ethnic food. Coconut is finding new uses such as natural juice while fruit soups have also been mooted as holding consumer potential.

## 3. Ethical/Environmental eating – save the planet

This trend overlaps with wellness since both espouse organic and free range foods. However ethical eating goes beyond natural taste and health and into the realms of green politics and anti-globalisation. It includes concepts of 'Fair trade' and 'sustainable' and also 'food miles', which bring together the related concepts of locality and seasonality. Good farming practices in terms of the treatment of livestock are also part of this trend.

## 4. Ethnicity – in search of adventure

Ethnic flavours that draw inspiration from distant cuisines are increasing in popularity in Europe and the US: Vietnamese cuisine is becoming popular and, in cities, sushi is now a mainstream restaurant cuisine, and, in some locations, a mainstream supermarket offering. Spanish/Hispanic cuisines and South American restaurants are identified by some analysts as trends with potential consumer appeal.

## 5. Water - pure and simple and never out of fashion

Premium imported, flavoured, enhanced and oxygenated waters account for a major proportion of the beverage market. In the US, for example, there are water bars, water menus, along with water sommeliers in restaurants to help pair water with foods.

## 6. Specialities – specialising the ordinary

Making ordinary foods special, such as the way water can now be viewed as having health or other benefits, is another growing trend. An example is salt, which has been diversified into gourmet sea salt, Hawaiian Red, Black Lava, Sel Gris, pink salt from the Andes, Tahitian vanilla salt etc.

## 7. Portion control – size is everything

Portion control is one of the keys to dieting. This principle is also having a key influence on types and presentations of food. In addition to tapas and the Greek meze, there are Japanese versions: small plates served at taverns called izakayas. Manufacturers are also

developing calorie-controlled mini portions of snacks and confectionery as a response to healthy eating trends.

## 8. The constant diet – plans and foods

Dieting will remain a preoccupation and a growth area as the problems of plenty feed through and trickle down into a higher proportion of the populations of developing countries. Similarly, an increasing number of consumers will be subjected to greater stress and time pressures which will make eating healthily a greater challenge. Euromonitor International forecasts more personalised diets, tailored to individual needs. This may mean body types, metabolisms, lifestyles and tastes.

## 9. Provenance – consumers no longer take their foods on trust

Consumers will increasingly care about where their food comes from. This overlaps with both wellness eating and ethical eating, but is also a food trend and consumer preoccupation in its own right. Consumers in the Internet age no longer accept anything less than transparency. Consumerist scandals, of which Dasani was only one of many examples, have made some consumers sceptical, some cynical but almost all consumers wary and unwilling to take anything on trust.

## 10. Traditional values – retro eating

Consumers, particularly boomers and generation X, tend to be sentimental about foods which evoke a rose-tinted view of the past and a sense of tradition. For the younger demographics, this concept of retro eating can be fun and in all cases it is the idea rather than the actuality which is important. There is an association with foods that are additive-free and pure which, ostensibly, predate mass production and factory farming. And there are as many new angles to retro eating as there are hindsight re-interpretations of history.

## Outlook

Appeasing today's consumer is no small feat. Food products need to address health concerns with features such as whole grains, probiotics, omega-3, antioxidants, carotenes, vitamins, sugar free and low salt, together with a dash of the three E's – ethnicity, exoticism and ethics - and to top it all off, they need to be packaged in convenient, calorie-friendly portions.

More information on [packaged food research](#)