

The Top 17 Food & Drink Trends for 2026



If 2025 was the year of 'girl dinners' and everything pistachio, what's on the menu for 2026? These are the food and drink trends you need to know.

**THE FOOD
MARKETING
EXPERTS.**

Plant Points

The message, established by 2018's global Gut Project, is finally getting through: alongside our five-a-day, we should all be eating 30 plants per week. To support the health of both body and mind, no two plants should be the same. The good news? All plants count - including coffee and (dark) chocolate. Mixed packs of salad leaves, tins of beans and shakers of seeds are all handy hacks for boosting plant points.

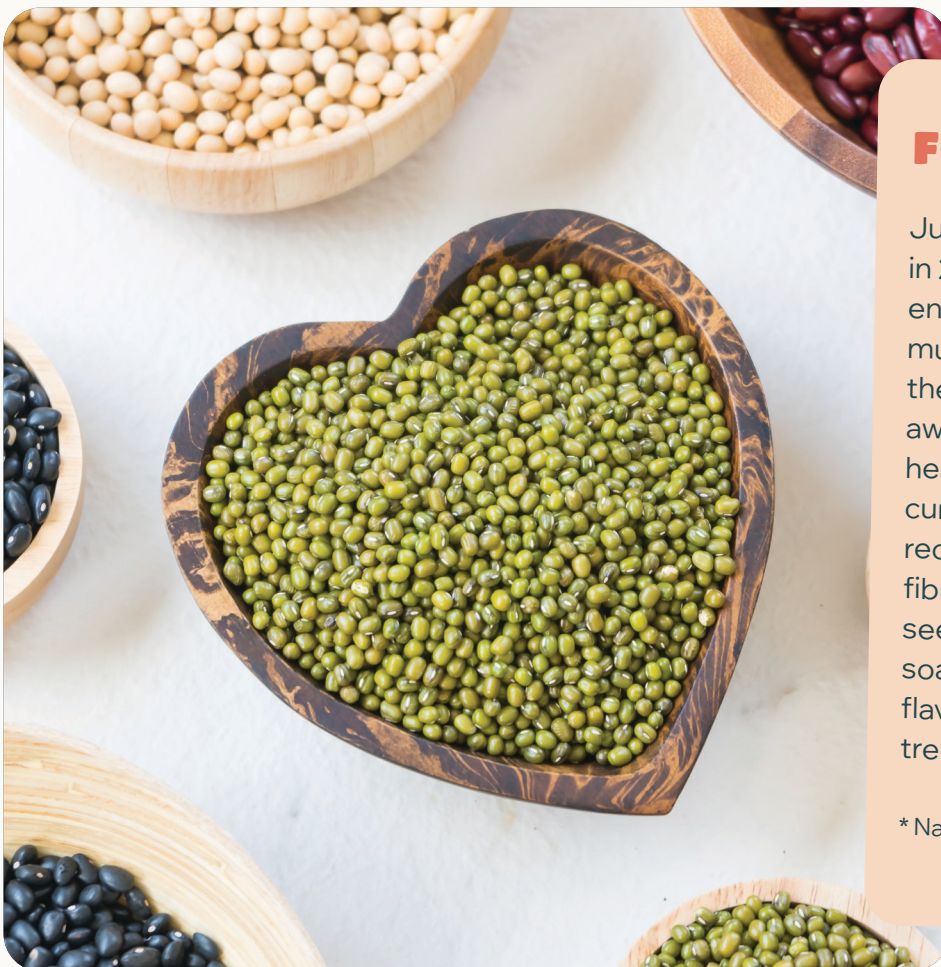
* Waitrose Weekend



Full Fiber

Just as protein took centre-plate in 2025, with increased intake encouraged for the benefit of muscles and metabolism, fibre will be the focus for 2026, thanks to greater awareness of the importance of gut health. With 96% of the population currently failing to consume the recommended 30g/day, sales of fibre-rich foods like beans, pulses, seeds and wholegrains are set to soar. 'Fibremaxxing' - the art of flavourful fibreloading - is already trending on TikTok.

* National Diet & Nutrition Survey 2025



The Carb Comeback

They're affordable and full of that all-important fibre: carbs have finally come in from the culinary cold. As we move away from fad diets towards a culture of eating for health and happiness, potatoes, in particular, are having a moment. Thanks to viral brands like Spud Bros and Spudman, famed for their baked and loaded potatoes, the coolest way to cook them is in their jackets.

* BBC Good Food



Vinegars

"I personally think people are going to start getting into vinegar more, because we've seen the rise of olive oil, butter and spicy condiments, yet still haven't gotten into the world of acidic and tangy - my personal favourite! I think people are going to begin playing around with, for example, white balsamic. I'd recommend my Mamie's - my French grandma's - vinaigrette, made using red wine vinegar which is super common in France."

Condiment Claire, author of The Condiment Book
[@condimentclaire](#)

'Better' Wine

“On the wine front it’s about less but better, with more people than ever taking a more mindful approach to what they drink. And I’m hoping we’ll see the first ever non-alcoholic still wine that actually tastes a bit like wine..”

Helen McGinn, founder of The Knackered Mother’s Wine Club and Saturday Kitchen wine expert
knackeredmotherswineclub.com



'80's Throwbacks

A craving for comfort food is bringing our childhood favourites back to both restaurant menus and shop shelves. The hottest decade? Thanks to the culture-dominating TV series Stranger Things, which reached its explosive finale on New Year’s Eve, it has to be the 1980s. Puddings, in particular, will take a nostalgic turn: think Swiss roll and custard, Black Forest gâteau, banoffee pie, cheesecake, profiteroles. . .

* Tastewise



Meat Feast

With sales of both plant-based 'meats' and seafood hitting a plateau, there's been a measurable swing back to eating meat. Consuming in moderation and favouring higher-quality, ethically reared cuts, 37% of us report eating more meat over the last 12 months. A desire to increase intake of lean protein and also get back to basics, avoiding highly processed foods, are said to be the driving factors.

* Datassential 2026 Trends Preview



Super Snacks

As GLP-1s rise and appetites fall, small plates are increasingly taking the place of main meals: according to new Waitrose research, 57% of us have already switched to snacking from three meals a day. A focus on recipes and ready meals that deliver maximum nutrition within smaller portions is the result - take the just-released Marks & Spencer Nutrient Dense range, promising to "pack more flavour, fibre, vitamins and minerals into every bite".

* Marks & Spencer



Brown Butter

Kickstarted by chef Thomas Straker's viral All About Butter series - which has clocked up a boggling billion views and counting across TikTok and Instagram - butter is firmly back in foodie favour. With the UK market set to top £2 billion by 2030 (up from £1.6 billion in 2024/5), artisanal and flavoured versions are leading the charge. Expect to see burnt butter, toasted until the milk solids brown to produce a nutty profile, everywhere.

* Waitrose Food & Drink Report 2026



Fricy flavours

Got hooked on hot honey in 2025? This is the 2026 equivalent. Literally a mash-up of 'fruity' and 'spicy', 'fricy' taps into world food traditions - think Mexican and Thai - for sharpening sweet fruits with salt, chilli and citrus. Online retailer Sous Chef is already seeing increased demand for 'fricy' condiments like Mexican chamoy (pickled fruit, lime and chilli, up 64% in three months) and Japanese yuzu kosho (fermented chilli and citrus, up 28%).

* BBC

Grow Your Own

“I think 2026 will see all us veg growers embracing messiness. Gone are the days of perfectly hoed rows of carrots and exquisitely neat bean canes. It takes too long, it’s too expensive and it isn’t that sustainable. Instead, we’ll see more up-cycling, making do and allowing the garden to be a bit free. Which I think is certainly more joyful.

“I also think 2026 will see people growing with their gut microbes in mind. Expect to see more interest in fibre-packed cruciferous plants like kale and fermenting-friendly crops like cabbage.”

Kathy Slack, grower, blogger and author of cookbook *From the Veg Patch* and memoir *Rough Patch*
kathyslack.com



Global Outlook

As our palettes become increasingly adventurous, global cuisines famed for their big and bold flavours move further into the mainstream. From sweet-meets-spicy Korean, Malaysian and South American dishes to Haitian (fried plantain and pork, mushroom rice, pickled slaws) and Keralan (curries heavy on the cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and coconut) are predicted to be popular.

* Datassential 2026 Trends Preview

Functional Drinks

We're not just seeking foods with health benefits - we want our drinks to do us good too. Everything from ferments which bolster the gut microbiome, like kefir and kombuchas, to electrolyte-loaded sodas and adaptogenic coffees, blended with energy-, focus- and wellbeing-boosting herbs and mushrooms, are on the up - #mushroomcoffee is fast taking over from #matchalatte on social media, with almost 100,000 tags on TikTok alone.

* Waitrose Food & Drink Report 2026



Vodka on the Rise

“London bartenders will try to tell you there’s a big move towards tequila cocktails, like the Margarita and Paloma, and rum to a certain extent. However, out in the real world, your average home consumer and market town pubs/bars, the undeniable growth spirit is vodka, premium and flavoured. It’s kind of replaced gin. .. all those flavoured gins are now manifesting themselves as vodkas. If you look at most people’s buying habits, if they are buying a spirit to make cocktails, then it’s vodka.”

Steve the Barman, Master Mixologist & YouTube Creator
[SteveTheBarman.com](https://www.stevethebarman.com)

Frozen Planet

Frozen food is no longer the poor relation: the freezer drawer is, according to the 2026 Waitrose Food & Drink Report, not “just a storage unit, but a gourmet destination”. This shift is being fuelled by growing demand not only for time-saving premium ready meals and ready-to-prepare items, but also for cost-effective, plant-packed options like packets of pre-cut vegetables and fruits.

* Waitrose Food & Drink Report 2026



Comfort Foods

“I think comfort foods are so on trend now because the little luxuries and treats we can have at home are more affordable and enjoyable than going out. I also think family-style portions of comfort foods, puddings and mains alike, will be hitting the shelves, from Wellingtons and lasagnas to sticky toffee puddings and traybakes.”

George Hepher, founder of George's Bakery and author of cookbooks Rebel Bakes and Comfort Bakes
[georgesbakery.co.uk](https://www.georgesbakery.co.uk)





Cocktail Hour

Whether you're going out for drinks or mixing your own at home, cocktails remain king in 2026. From contemporary riffs on classics - a rise in sales of flavoured tonics suggest even the good old G&T is evolving - to mini measures, spritz twists, ready-to-pour mixes and increasingly innovative low and no options, the drinks list is ever-expanding.

* Waitrose Food & Drink Report 2026

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