

# TOP 10 TRENDING FLAVORS IN READY MEALS

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## CONSUMER EATING HABITS HAVE CHANGED

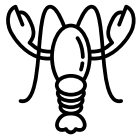
This analysis of new product introductions shows a move toward high-flavor, creamy dairy ingredients that came at the same time as the pandemic. As consumers have turned to comfort foods and home cooking, it's expected this trend will continue to be big. And since many children are home from school, parents are also looking for more convenient meal options that will not only feed their kids but the whole family at home.<sup>1</sup>

Here we'll look at the top 10 ready meal flavors showing up on new product introductions in the past two years, as well as other key trends taking hold in this fast growing segment.



# TOP 10 FLAVORS TRENDING IN READY MEALS<sup>3</sup>

1. Cheese
2. Macaroni and cheese
3. Chicken
4. Cheddar cheese
5. Vegetable
6. Meat
7. Shrimp
8. Three-cheese, four-cheese, mixed cheese
9. White Cheddar
10. Beef



Consumers are reporting both an increase in dieting and seafood consumption. Shrimp/seafood ready meals have grown exponentially from 2018 and contrary to popular belief, pair well with cheeses and other dairy products.<sup>2</sup>

As you can see, cheese and dairy dominate the top 10 overall. Furthermore, when it comes to flavor callouts on ready meal boxes, cheese had the most mentions at 44 products in the past 2 years. Some popular products highlighting these flavors include:

- **Hamburger Helper** Cheesy Fajita
- **Cheetos** Mac 'n Cheese
- **Luvo Performance Kitchen** Creamy Cauliflower Mac & Cheese
- **Blake's** Chicken Pot Pie
- **Giovanni Rana Organic** Chicken Alfredo Tagliatelle with Fresh Spinach
- **EVOL** Vegetable Enchiladas



Source: Mintel GNPD





## VARIETAL CHEESES ARE ALSO ON THE RISE IN FLAVORS

Cheddar cheese is the most popular cheese variety, with 70 introductions the past 2 years, but people are gaining a wider knowledge of other cheese types—and they're finding them in ready meals.<sup>3</sup>

- White cheddar grew 78% over prior years
- Parmesan cheese grew 27%
- Alfredo callouts grew 13%
- Three/four/mixed cheese still grew 9%
- Vermont cheddar, goat cheddar, asiago, romano and blue cheese have all seen significant growth

Some popular products with these new varieties include:

- **Lean Cuisine** Four Cheese Cannelloni
- **Homemade Crafted by Local Crate** Cheesy Baked Penne Primavera with Ricotta, Parmesan & Mozzarella
- **Simply Nature Original** Goat Cheese Macaroni & Cheese
- **Prego** Creamy Three Cheese Alfredo Rotini Meal



Source: Mintel GNPD



# DAIRY IS OFTEN AN UNSUNG INGREDIENT HERO

Dairy is a big part of ready meal ingredient formulations, even if it doesn't get called out on the principal display panel. These ingredients add complementary flavor, texture and added nutrients. Milk leads the list, while other ingredients still make significant contributions.

In order of popularity on label:

- Milk shows up in 40% of new products
  - Skimmed milk powder
  - Whole milk powder
  - Milk solids
  - Milk proteins
- Cream on 29%
- Cheese cultures on 29%
- Yogurt
- Buttermilk powder
- Whey
- Whey protein concentrate (for 17g protein claim)<sup>3</sup>

Some popular products with dairy in their ingredients lists:

- **Great Value** Mixed Lasagna with Meat and Spinach
- **Luvo Performance Kitchen** Vegetarian Creamy Cauliflower Mac & Cheese
- **Benihana The Japanese Steakhouse** Rocky's Choice
- **Williams Sonoma** Cauliflower au Gratin Starter Kit
- **Deep Indian Kitchen** Chicken Tandoori with Spinach
- **Bear Creek Country Kitchens** Grown-Up Truffle & Mushroom Mac & Cheese
- **Life Cuisine Low Carb Lifestyle** Meatlovers Cauliflower Pizza Bowl
- **Great to Go from Market District** Mushroom & Green Chile Enchiladas with Avocado Salad Meal Kit
- **José Olé** Chicken Fajita Burrito Bowl
- **Great Value Artisan Crafted** White Cheddar & Black Pepper Macaroni



Source: Mintel GNPD



Source: Mintel GNPD



# PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES ARE ALSO DECISIVE FACTORS

“Organic” and “free from” statements are still an important part of labels. In fact, 11% of ready meal introductions had organic claims.<sup>3</sup> Additionally a “natural” label is most influential both when shopping and when purchasing food prepared outside the home.<sup>2</sup>

Top attributes in ready meals:<sup>3</sup>

1. Microwaveable
2. No additives/preservatives
3. Ethical - environmentally friendly package
4. Ease of use
5. Ethical - recycling
6. Social media
7. Low/no/reduced allergen
8. Gluten free
9. GMO free
10. Organic

Some marketplace examples include:

- **Simple Truth Organic Deluxe** White Cheddar Macaroni & Cheese
- **Good Food Made Simple Organic** Cilantro Lime Chicken Entree
- **Amy's Garden** Vegetable Lasagna
- **Amy's Indian** Palak Paneer Meal
- **Lean Cuisine** Mango Chicken with Coconut Rice



Source: Mintel GNPD





# INTERESTED IN ENERGIZING YOUR READY MEAL PROGRAM?

DFA Ingredient Solutions can help you with formulations that allow you to make many nutritional/ingredient statements such as:

- No artificial colors or natural colors only
- Kosher
- Halal
- Organic
- Non-GMO

Whether you want to develop a unique flavor profile, achieve a cleaner label, save money or enhance dairy taste in popular ready-made dishes – from creamy pot pies to cheesy lasagna – we're here to help. Keep exploring!



[Dairiconcepts.com](https://dairiconcepts.com)

Source 1: Datassential, Covid-19 Report 33: Life Goes On, September, 2020

Source 2: IFIC, Food and Health Survey, 2020

Source 3: Mintel GNPD Analysis of Ready Meals – North America only; Past 24 months, August 2020

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