

# COVID-19'S IMPACT ON FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY TRENDS FOR 2021



As vaccination numbers increase and we see an end in sight from the uncertainty of the past year, it's with realistic optimism we look forward to the coming period of growth. To properly deliver what consumers will be looking for on their menus – both at home and away – DFA Ingredient Solutions is tracking emerging consumer trends food manufacturers, foodservice operators and food retailers should know to succeed in 2021. Below we will discuss some of the most noteworthy market trends we have identified that can be traced back to the emergence of COVID-19.



## 1. THE AT-HOME EXPERIENCE

For many apparent reasons, we've seen a shift in the market to at-home experiences with meal kits and take-and-bake items rising in popularity. As consumers have grown more accustomed to these newer formats and increased confidence in their cooking skills, this food industry trend should continue for the foreseeable future. However, the desire for healthfulness and visibility as to where their food and beverage ingredients come from is also increasing in importance.

Restaurants are innovating, but with a slower transition back to full capacity, home cooking will remain popular. However, meals kits from chefs and other foodservice operations will still have a place with America's consumers.<sup>1</sup>



## 2. FAD DIETS TO FOOD FACTS

There has been an increased focus on healthfulness over the past ten years that's likely linked to the growing number of consumers who say that they're following a specific diet – some of which fall squarely in the category of "food fads." A recent year-end survey revealed "plant-based" and "gluten-free" top the list of diets heard about most in the news (22% and 16%).<sup>2</sup> There are also evidence-based diet trends that truly do have staying power.





### 3. FINDING THE NEW COMFORT

It's understandable that people increasingly turned to comfort foods over the last year. In fact, 1 in 4 consumers claimed eating more nostalgic, feel-good dishes<sup>2</sup> and 15% have eaten more indulgent and treat foods.<sup>1</sup> Many of the comfort foods on the rise in Q3 of 2020 were easy, grab-and-go items. For the upcoming generation of consumers, "comfort" will mean a lot more than mac & cheese and burgers – it can mean global flavors, new brands they grew up eating, and healthy options that make them feel better. If foodservice operators, food manufacturers and food retailers alike are going to succeed in 2021, it's important that they respond accordingly.

What are consumers most looking forward to from restaurant food that they haven't been able to get from home since the pandemic began?<sup>1</sup>

33%

Craving specific dish from certain restaurant

32%

Variety: more options than I have at home

30%

Craving dishes that are hard to make at home

21%

Global foods and flavors

20%

Craving indulgent foods



### 4. REFOCUSING ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Consumers are reading labels and still care about what's in their food, regardless of their dietary preferences. Plant-based items will continue to be a current, relevant food trend into 2021, as 28% of people said they have been eating more protein from plant sources during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

Building on a growing interest in health food products with natural – and fewer – ingredients, consumers will start to look for labels that go far beyond the government-required information to detail the product's environmental and social impact.



## 5. FEWER PEOPLE AVOIDING SUGAR

Because of COVID-19, we've also noticed certain beverage trends emerge. The most notable being fewer Americans are avoiding sugars like they have been in the past. Currently, 74% are trying to avoid or limit sugars, compared to 80% in 2019.<sup>2</sup> The top ways they are doing so is by drinking water instead of caloric beverages (60%) and limiting consumption of certain foods and beverages (42%).<sup>4</sup>

While the food and beverage industry is always dynamic, the challenges we've all faced over the last year have accelerated, amplified and altered many of the consumer food trends on the horizon. With the right partners like DFA Ingredient Solutions, you can react quickly to emerging food and beverage trends and go to market with innovative products and recipes. Many of our offerings can help with consumer food trends like cleaning up labels or replacing sodium with ingredients like ASCENTRA®.



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Our culinary and R&D teams can create great-tasting applications that deliver on customer demand. View examples here and take the next step by ordering samples for experimentation.