

3 Trends Reversing Course Due to COVID-19 Influence

Revealed by Culinary Tides' 2020/21 Trends Report

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As part of our ongoing work, we have been tracking the political and economic unease here and abroad, well before the onset of COVID-19. What the spread of COVID-19 has caused, is an amplification and acceleration of the Tide that was already rolling in. It's no less significant for its abruptness and shock value, but pandemics can have the effect of shaping and altering the trajectory of already identified trends.

It can be difficult to know which trends are most likely to rise above the noise over the next 12 months as the situation is still very much in flux. It can be even more confusing trying to decide which will resonate most with your brand and customers. This report's forecasts offer insight into how and why the current climate will affect trends for 2020/21. We help you navigate, trend by trend, what to expect during the immediacy of this crisis and what the long-term effects could be in shaping the future of these trends. Understanding that a trend is coming is only valuable if you know how to strategically leverage it.

The "*Shifting Sands: Trends Shaping the Food Industry in 2020/21*" report is a cross-analysis of 214 prediction lists for 2020 put forth by 162 industry experts. In all, more than 1,700 individual predictions were evaluated for their potential during the coming year, however only well supported predictions are included in the final report. All trends in the report are anticipated to remain in focus throughout 2020 and into the first quarter of 2021.

3 Trends Expected to Reverse course due to COVID-19 Influence:

- Food and beverage trends are pulling back to a more conservative position as consumers exhibit a Stall pattern of behavior, which characterized by caution, that is now being amplified and accelerated by COVID-19.
- Three key patterns are expected to reverse course due to COVID-19's effect – the low /no alcohol trend, the faux meat trend, and sustainability purchasing behaviors.

Sober Curious Reversal

The Settings for beverage establish the tone for the experience. The Settings forecasted seems split between alcohol and non-alcohol-based venues, which is in line with earlier predictions supporting the sober curious. However, COVID-19 will reverse this trend, and a rise in alcohol consumption is anticipated. When times are difficult, consumers drink.

Overall, alcohol consumption is expected to rise - and the balance of which type of alcohol is consumed with shift between categories. Hard seltzer is expected to hold her ground during COVID-19, but wine and beer will move forward, while complex cocktails will lose ground. Single spirits and simple cocktails (think gin & tonic) should remain steady. Boomers, Gen X, and older Millennials will be the first to cause this pattern change. Younger Millennials and Gen Z are more likely than the other gens to hold onto their sober curious stance.

Spirits will be focused on global classics, but will be taking a more reserved role this year. When consumers are feeling positive, cocktails lead beverage. When they are not feeling confident, cocktails take a back seat to beer and wine. Cocktail styles will showcase regional and historic classics, but no experimentation here. Regarding beer, the same pattern of regional darlings will emerge, with no clear leader. The classic cocktails are a throwback to simpler times and nostalgia. Global ciders from the US, UK, and Spain are anticipated, as are single varietals such as apple, pear, berry, and cherry. Hybrids will infiltrate here too. Hard sodas will grow up a bit to be fruit forward, spiced and nitro infused.

Faux Meat Reversal

Proteins will be more approachable and less extreme but there are some outliers with links to sustainability, history, or both. As for the trend reversal, within the protein trend, the interest in faux meat will be one of the trends which COVID-19 will upend. It is clear from research that faux plant-based meats are consumed by meat

eaters, not vegetarians, with curiosity being their driver. As sales numbers on these products continue to slide, COVID-19 will push meat eaters back to animal protein at an accelerated pace, while vegetarians will celebrate plants being plants.

Plant protein will learn to stand on her own while maintaining her individual personality. Dairy is another category which has been maligned lately, but now has a set of conditions which may allow her to shine. Dairy has the winning combination of health attributes and comfort, but she needs to stand up for herself. A newer, more promising direction, which supports the current mood, is to hybridize the categories – an alliance between animal and vegetable protein, with vegetables maintaining their natural integrity and voice.

Sustainability Spending Reversal

For the third reversal, expect sustainability sales to de-escalate due to cost, not desire. There is blurring between sustainability and health making them more interlinked than they were in past years. The usual suspects will show up and include food waste and conscious indulgence. Reduced consumerism, composting, and embracing the ugly (produce) will remain despite COVID-19 because they don't present a cost barrier. When consumers experience financial difficulties or uncertainty, sustainability is one of the first things they will step away from, even if temporarily. They will be looking for no cost sustainability solutions to satisfy their drive. Trust issues underly decreased spending behaviors, while fear of uncertainty is underlying their stricter savings behavior. Sustainability spending will bounce back, however its return will be linked directly to economic health and consumer confidence.

All insights taken from Culinary Tides, Inc.'s 2020 report "*Shifting Sands: Trends Shaping the Food Industry in 2020/21*" <https://www.culinarytides.com/trends-forecast-report>