

Created by

MorganMyers, a G&S Agency

Tracking Flavor's Journey
from *Buzz* to *Basket*

The 2026 Food & Flavor Trends Report



MorganMyers
a G&S Agency

Time for a **flavor drop**

Flavor is one piece of how we experience food, but it can set long-term preference and wields serious purchase power. It's cultural. It's psychological. It evokes nostalgia and cues comfort. It brings us into community, whether that's around the dinner table or with the latest viral video.

The inaugural **MorganMyers 2026 Food & Flavor Trends Report** examines how up-and-coming flavors will shape the food scene in the next year and beyond. The report pressure tests these emerging flavors against different generational cohorts to understand the how's and why's of flavor: influences, discovery, purchasing behavior, marketing approaches and more.

And now, a little about us.

We've been at this food and ag marketing thing for more than 40 years. Foodies, farmers, strategists and creatives alike call **MorganMyers** home, where we spend our days helping food and farm brands, associations, and commodity boards feed the world.

The impetus for creating this flagship report started quietly. Passing trends we were seeing "in the wild" back and forth via work chats and team meetings. Exploring new foods in our own kitchens, at our favorite restaurants and during office gatherings. Bringing ideas to our food clients. It only felt right to memorialize these inspirations and passions into a more robust trend tracker. Plus, we conducted extensive original research to go deep into the minds of consumers nationwide and unpack how a flavor becomes a trend, and how a trend moves to a pantry staple.

From our table to yours: We're excited to share this first edition with you, and we're already salivating over what will be trending next.

What's inside

It's not enough to follow flavor trends. As a food and farm marketing communications agency, we also want to dissect what makes a flavor a trend in the first place, and why certain ones become staples (here's looking at you, pumpkin spice) while others fade away (rest in peace, Sriracha).

To get there, we conducted three widespread research campaigns:

- We surveyed consumers nationwide about how they discover flavors and what drives them to trial.
- We then surveyed household grocery shopping decision-makers to understand the drivers for long-term trend adoption.
- To discover what's happening now with flavor trends, we extensively analyzed consumer search trends, menu development and retail sales.

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From spark to staple

Every flavor follows a path. It's not random. It's a system that explains why some trends stick and others fade.



SPARK: Flavors first catch attention in chef circles, niche media and social buzz. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of shoppers actively follow flavor trends and another 33% notice them regularly.



SAMPLE: Limited runs, foodservice appearances and co-branded trials give shoppers a first taste. Seventy-eight percent (78%) say free samples are their top trigger to try something new.



SHIFT: Broader recognition comes as flavors appear in packaged goods and at retail. Family recommendations (69%) and grocery promotions (59%) turn curiosity into purchase.



STAPLE: True integration happens when flavors win repeat purchase and fit into everyday cooking. Yet only 12% of new flavors reach this stage.

Food brands and organizations can unlock growth by moving shoppers through each stage with intention. Spark awareness, lower the risk of sampling, drive recognition with retail presence and family approval, and finally, cement loyalty through recipe versatility and value.

UP NEXT:

What flavors are trending now — on their way to becoming the next pantry staple?



Top 10 Flavors of 2026

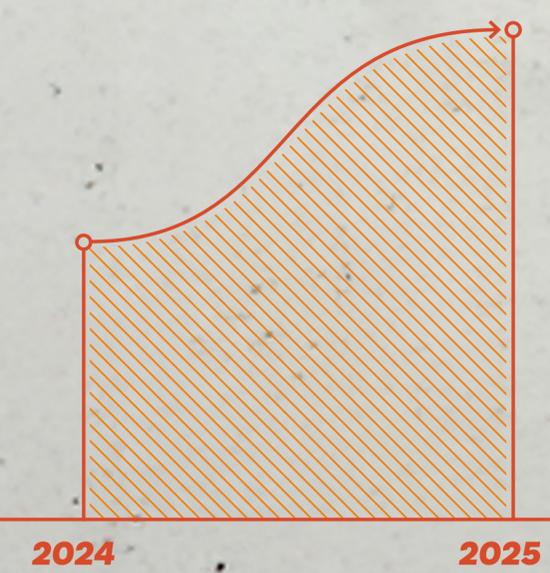
Explore the list of what's
new and what's next in the
world of flavor.



Flavor of the Year:

Hojicha

Move over, matcha. Hojicha is a Japanese roasted green tea known for its smooth, nutty taste, and we're dubbing it the flavor of 2026. Low in caffeine and high in antioxidants, its health and wellness benefits coupled with its sweet-and-smoky flavor profile have catapulted this green tea into other product categories — from lattes and ice cream to savory sauces and baked goods.



+173.9% jump
in Hojicha latte searches YoY

Piri Piri

Piri piri (also spelled peri peri) sauce is an irresistible blend of spicy, tangy and smoky, igniting taste buds and redefining how chefs and food lovers think about heat. This chili-based sauce, rooted in African and Portuguese culinary traditions, is giving consumers what they crave: authentic, adventurous and bold global flavor.

Macadamia Nut

Macadamia nuts are quickly becoming a plant-based powerhouse in today's culinary landscape. With rich, buttery texture and subtly sweet flavor, macadamias bring to the table nutrient-dense indulgence across all kinds of applications — from elevated desserts and nut-based milks to crusted proteins and keto-friendly snacks.

Floral Infusion

Wake up and smell the roses: The flower power is real. From drinks to desserts, today's chefs, mixologists and everyday consumers are craving floral on the menu. It's more than aesthetics — floral ingredients bring subtle complexity, wellness appeal and just the right amount of whimsy to culinary creations.



Miso Caramel

The ultimate flavor fusion, this trend marries the deep umami of fermented miso with the rich sweetness of caramel in sauces, cookies, and ice creams that are equal parts comforting and complex. It also satiates the rise of global flavor exploration, creating a bold taste that delivers salty, sweet and slightly savory all at once.



Black Sesame Paste

Long celebrated in East Asian cuisine for its deep, roasted aroma and velvety texture, black sesame paste is making waves in contemporary creations like desserts, glazes, dressings and spreads. It's also rich in calcium, iron and antioxidants, adding to its appeal in the functional foods space.

Black Cocoa

Dramatic hue, intense flavor, sophisticated edge — black cocoa is having a moment. As consumers crave bold aesthetics and indulgent experiences, black cocoa delivers both in the form of cakes, cookies, ice creams and baking powders.





Fancy Butter

We love an underdog, and butter appears to be having its own kind of comeback. Consumers are leaning into its simplicity and its versatility, turning to small-batch, artisanal brands that celebrate slow food, local ingredients and rich indulgence.

Chili Mango

This trend packs a tasty punch, combining tropical sweetness with fiery spice for an adventurous, sensory-rich experience. Chili mango is heating up the culinary world — literally — from gourmet snacks and sauces to craft cocktails and desserts.



Coconut Pandan

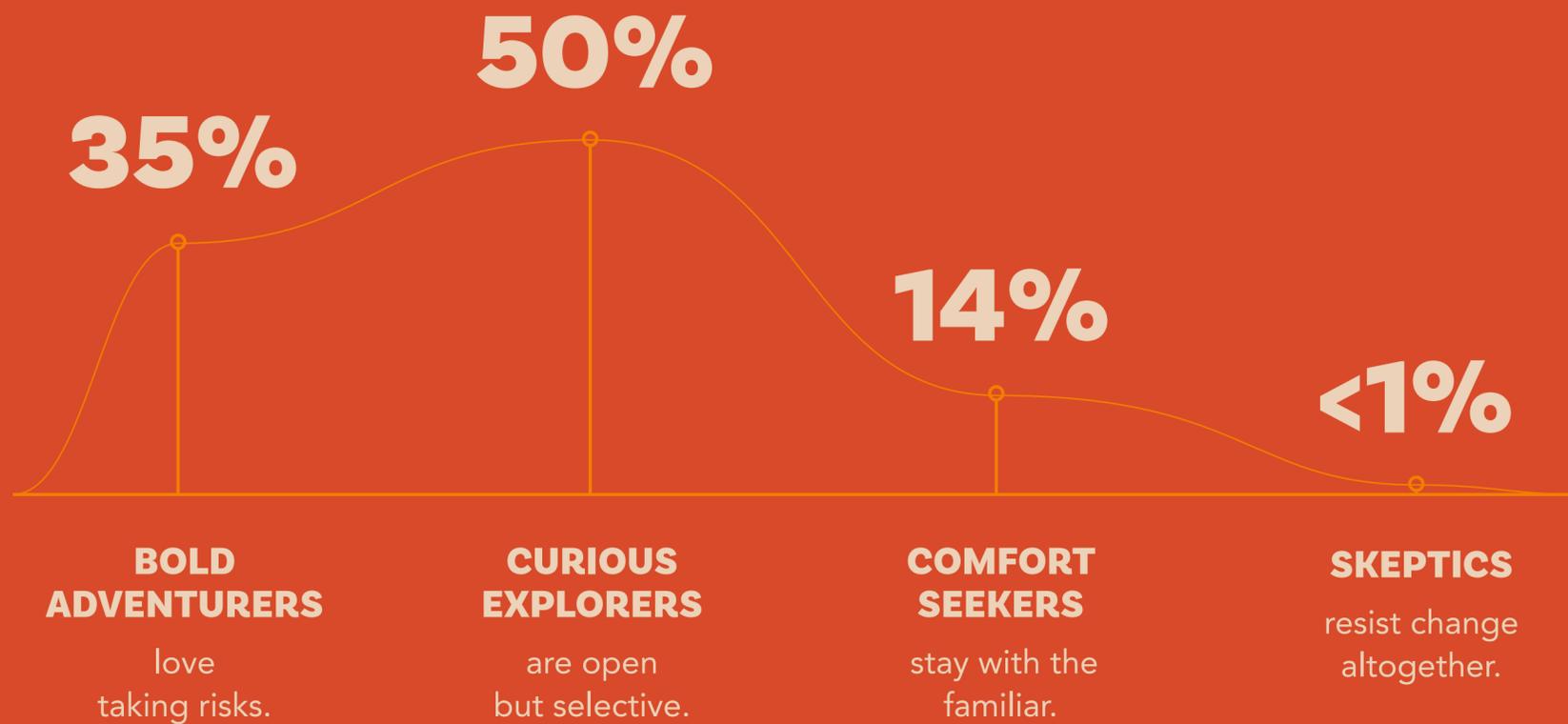
With a naturally sweet aroma, striking green hue and exotic flavor profile, this Southeast Asian-inspired pairing hits all the senses. The trend is captivating chefs, foodies and wellness enthusiasts alike in the form of lattes, ice creams, and pastries.





Four mindsets, one opportunity

Not all shoppers chase flavor the same way. Some sprint toward the spark, others wait until it feels safe. Our segmentation shows how mindsets shape the journey from buzz to pantry.



With
85%
 of shoppers at least somewhat open to new flavors, the door is wide.

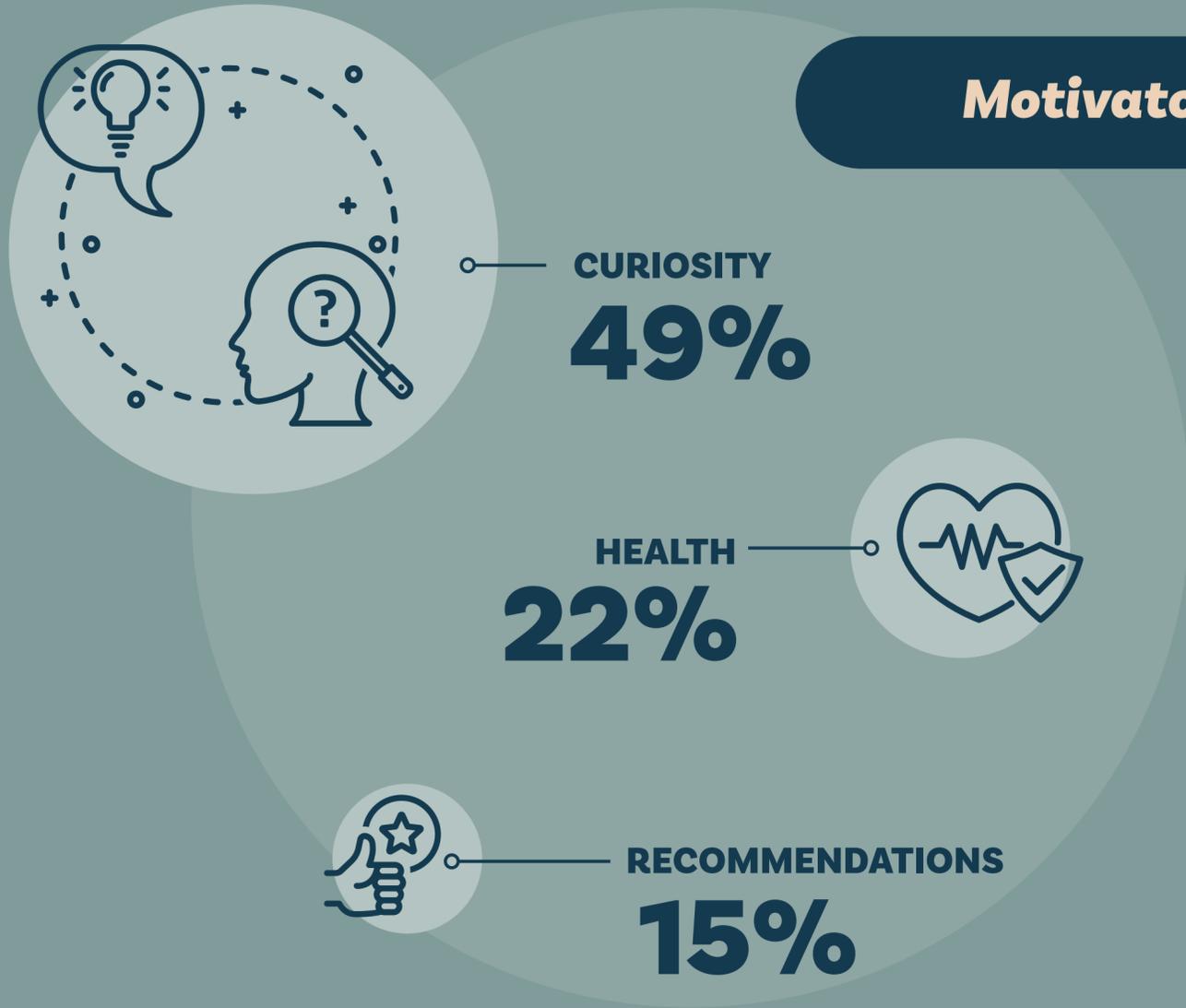
Food brands and organizations can design entry points for every group with bold innovation for risk-takers, safe twists for the cautious and clear reassurance for the comfort-seekers.



Discovery drives

Curiosity is the strongest motivator

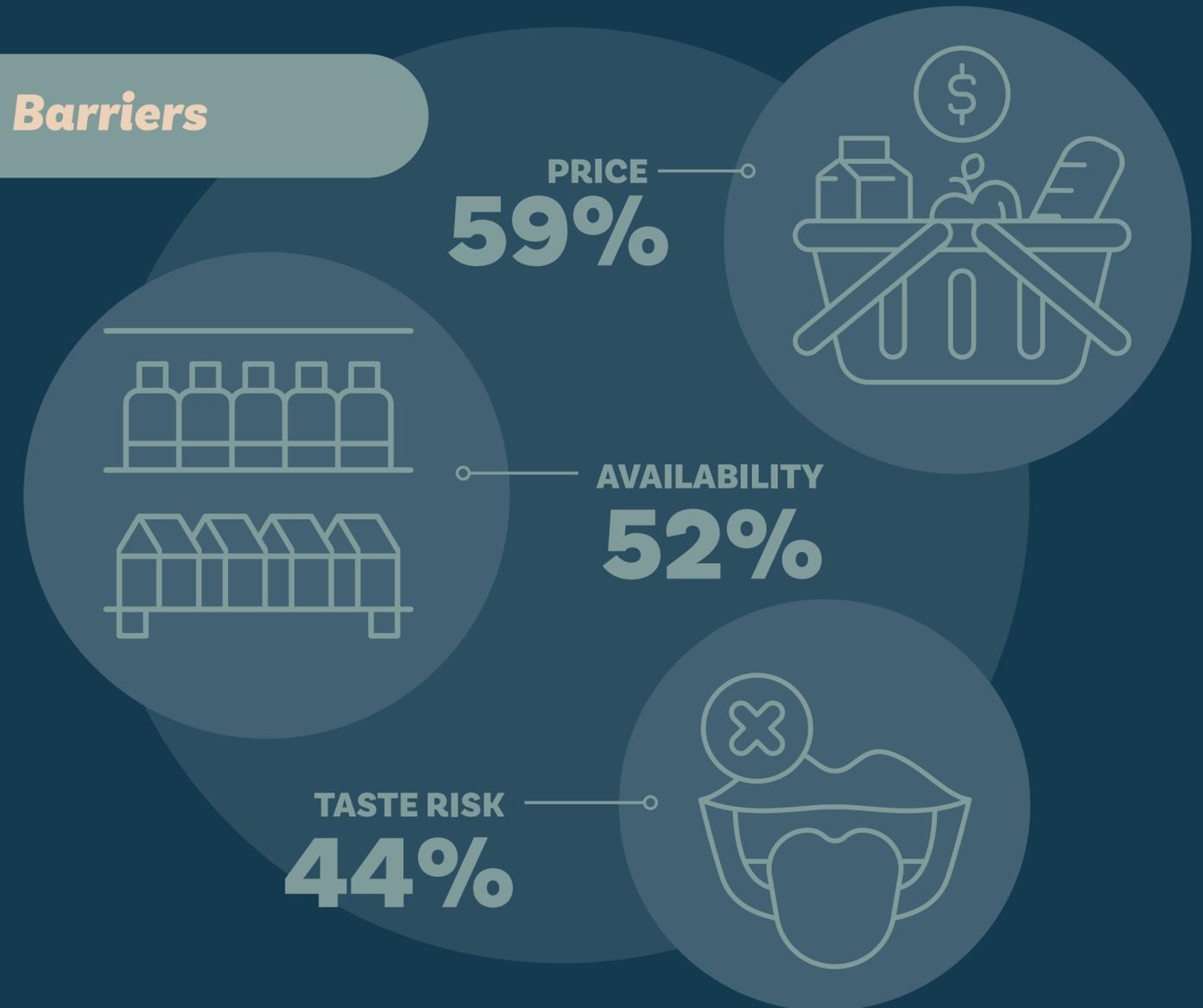
Motivators



Barriers block

But price and access slow momentum

Barriers



Awareness is everywhere, but influence lives at home

Shoppers notice new flavors across channels, but their decisions are shaped by those closest to them.

DISCOVERY

INFLUENCE

75% grocery

69% family recommendations

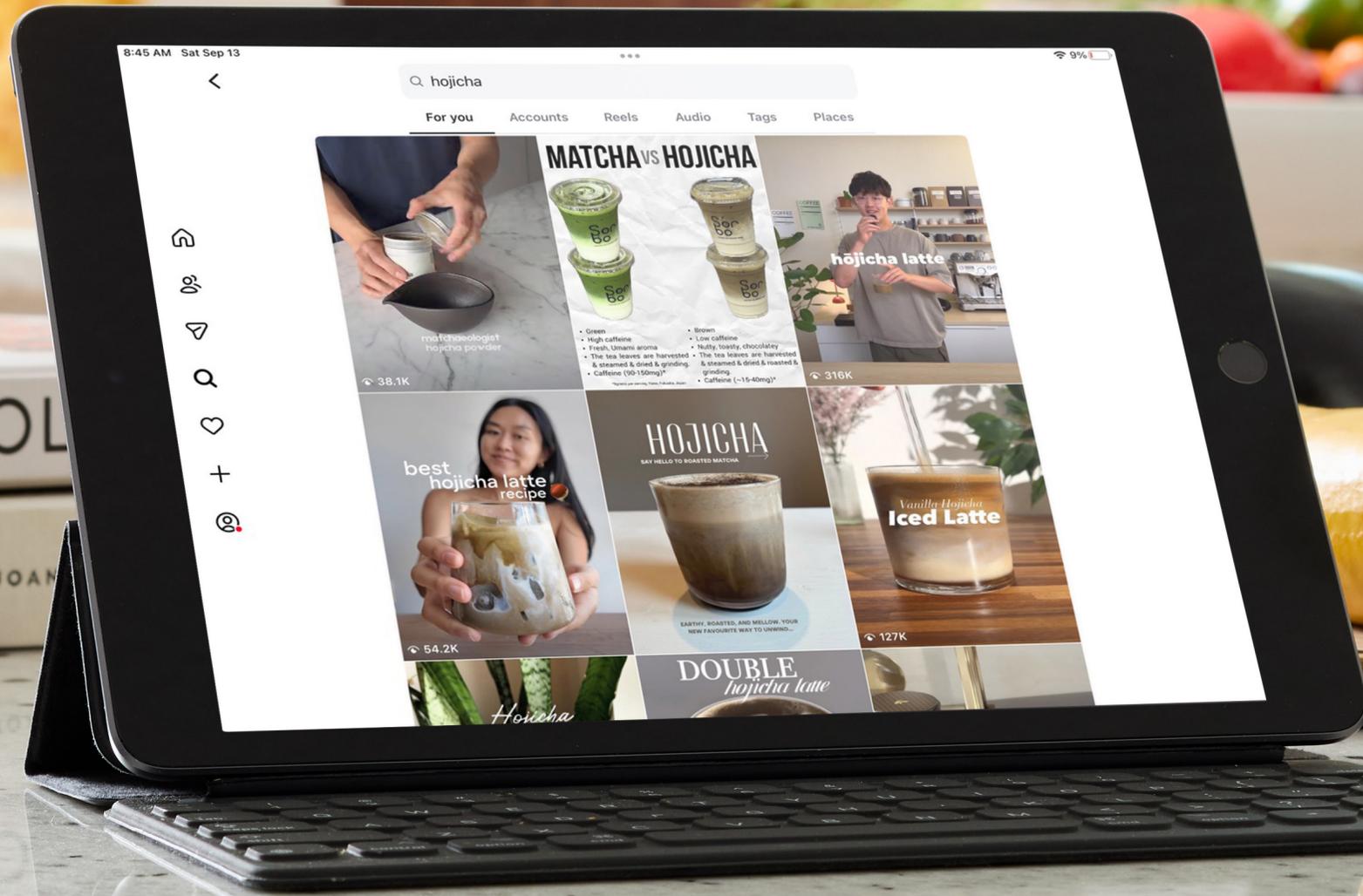
60% social media

61% in-store displays

56% restaurants

59% promotions

Food brands and organizations can use social to spark awareness but must win with family trust and grocery visibility to shift flavors into carts.



The young love spice, the older love their butter

Age shapes how shoppers engage with flavor and what earns their loyalty.

Marketers should tailor flavor storytelling by generation with bold sparks for Gen Z, practical twists for millennials and Gen X, and trusted classics for boomers.

GENERATIONS SET THE PACE

Gen Z

AGE: 18-29

Eager for variety, trend-driven, global heat.

73%
often try new flavors



MARKETER STORYTELLING FLAVOR:
BOLD SPARKS

Millennials & Gen X

AGE: 30-60

Balance novelty with family practicality — seeking flavors both indulgent and offering functional health like macadamia.

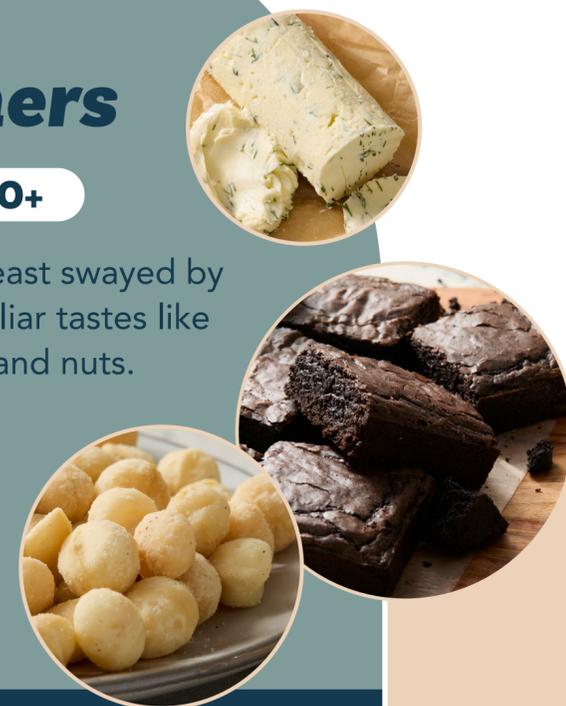
60%
of Gen X cite spouse or kids
as strong influencers

MARKETER STORYTELLING FLAVOR:
PRACTICAL TWISTS

Boomers

AGE: 60+

Tradition keepers, least swayed by social, loyal to familiar tastes like butter, cocoa and nuts.



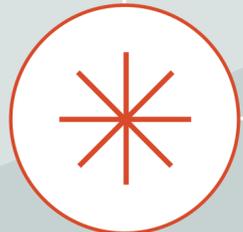
MARKETER STORYTELLING FLAVOR:
TRUSTED CLASSICS

Where discovery really happens

The spark may start with social buzz, but it's grocery decision-makers who decide which flavors get noticed and bought.

A flavor isn't truly on the map until it shows up where shoppers are already making decisions: in the aisle, on a menu or through trusted voices at home.

Top Influencers



29%
SOCIAL MEDIA



51%
RESTAURANTS



66%
GROCERY DISPLAYS



59%
IN-STORE
PROMOTIONS



69%
FAMILY
RECOMMENDATIONS



Discovery Sources

Trial is where buzz becomes behavior

For grocery decision-makers, curiosity alone does not move a flavor forward. The first step has to feel safe.

TRIGGERS

78% free samples

62% bundling with familiar products

63% discounts

59% seasonal launches

Food brands should reduce risk with trial. Sampling, coupons, seasonal tie-ins and co-promotions are the fastest ways to move shoppers from spark into shift.



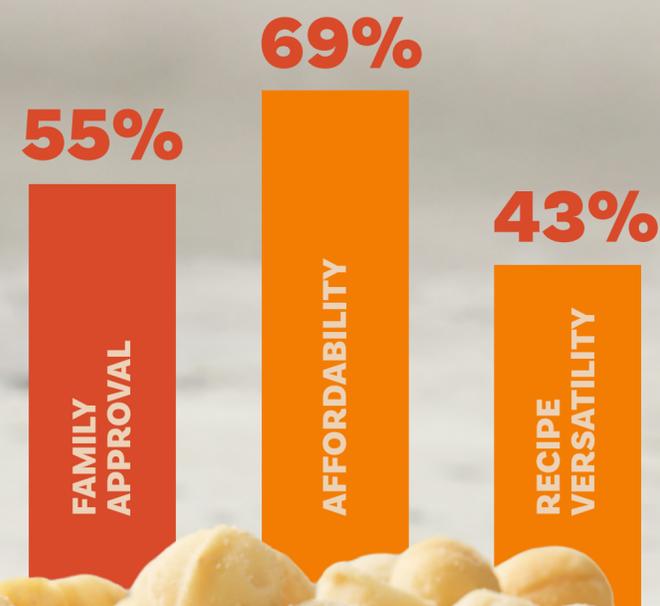
The leap few flavors make

Marketers can earn loyalty by positioning flavors as versatile and family-ready with packaging and messaging that make repeat purchase easy.

Most flavors never graduate from trial to repeat purchase. Decision-makers decide what stays in the pantry.

Only **7.7%** say new flavors almost always become repeat buys

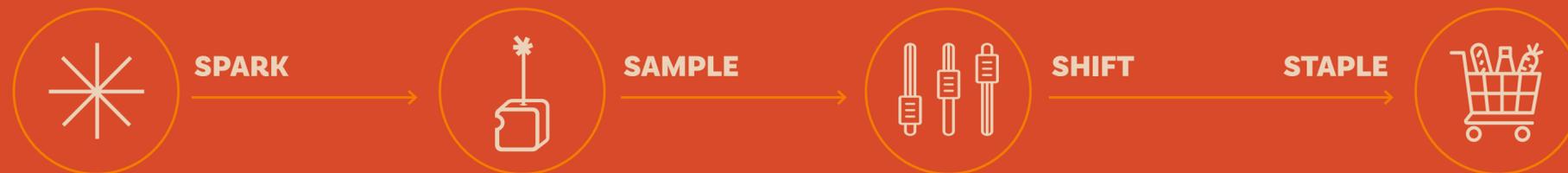
Just **12%** of flavors reach staple status



The playbook for flavor adoption

GENERATIONS TURN TRENDS TO STAPLES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

The spark→sample→shift→staple path is not theory. It's the framework for how flavors move from buzz to pantry. Generations play different roles, but the rules are universal.



Beyond generational focus, the most effective levers cut across audiences.

Food brands and organizations who use these levers don't just chase trends. They own them. They transform them. They create the staples of tomorrow.



Gen Z

FLAVOR PROFILE:

Thrive on bold launches and social buzz.

LASTING IMPACT:

They are accelerators who turn sparks into cultural fire.

Millennials & Gen X

FLAVOR PROFILE:

Respond to familiar with a twist and flavors that fit family routines.

LASTING IMPACT:

They are gatekeepers who decide what enters the cart.

Boomers

FLAVOR PROFILE:

Lean on premium comfort and trusted classics.

LASTING IMPACT:

They are anchors who make sure a flavor endures once the novelty fades.





Research Methodology and Report Attribution

MorganMyers conducted two online surveys in September 2025:

SURVEY 1 ▼

A nationally representative sample of 361 U.S. adult consumers — cited on Pages 4, 10 – 13.

SURVEY 2 ▼

A nationally representative sample of 328 U.S. household grocery purchase decision-makers — cited on Pages 14 – 16.

Both surveys were conducted online. Each carries a margin of error of +/- 5%.

Attribution and Use

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Contact edavis@morganmyers.com to access additional research conducted for this report and hi-res images of the photography shared.



About MorganMyers

In the field or at the table, the food marketing expertise at MorganMyers runs deep. For 40+ years we've been helping great food and beverage CPGs, associations and commodity boards that feed the world.

Comprised of foodies, chefs (both certified and self-described), strategists and creatives, we're passionate about telling the stories behind our food in ways that build trust and have a lasting impact — through consumer outreach, retail marketing, nutrition communications, foodservice relations and trade support.

With team members located nationwide, we offer the full suite of marketing communications tools for food and farm organizations, including digital, social, earned media/PR, influencers, creative, paid media, events, research and branding.

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Ready to create meaningful movement of your own — or just want to chat about our report? *Get in touch.*

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