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Every year, new surveys are conducted to determine changes in consumer preferences in food, particularly in flavors. These surveys are taken in person, over the telephone, by mail and/or online with attempts made to reach a representative cross-section of consumers. The results are tabulated and food manufacturers and restaurant owners agonize over the results in an attempt to provide their customers with the new favored tastes.

The results of these surveys may indicate general trends, such as spicier, more vegetables and fruit, healthier, more chicken, or less chicken. Other results are more specific. Here are some popular flavors and flavor trends right now:

- 3-Dimensional tastes.
- Charred octopus tentacles.
- Cured meats such as Charcuterie and Salumi.
- Fermented foods such as sauerkraut and kimchi.
- Geranium leaves and hibiscus flowers.
- Gochujang (Korean hot sauce) and barrel-aged hot sauces.
- Green tomatoes.
- Hamburgers served between two griddled donuts.
- Smoke flavor in trout, salmon, potatoes, crème fraîche and even water.
- White strawberries.
- Yuzukosho seasoning made of fermented yuzu peel, salt and chili peppers.
- Zip-code honey.

You must wonder, however, if people are asking for these specific flavors, they must have tasted them somewhere. Somehow they have already been introduced to these tastes. Therefore, essentially someone has already introduced a new trend, which the surveyed consumers list as the new flavor trend they would like to enjoy, and the restaurants then add it to their menus as a trendy new item. It's your age-old "chicken or egg" situation.

Regardless of which came first, how do these flavor trends start and develop into mainstream favorites?

Movies and Books:

- A growing trend in movies is 3-D, providing the viewer with a feeling of being part of the on-screen action. The 3-D trend in food flavors combines taste, touch, feel and aroma; adding entertainment to the food, as well as personal emersion.

- From the Hunger Games come such recipes as Lamb Stew with Dried Plums, from Harry Potter came Treacle Fudge, Big Kahuna Burgers from Pulp Fiction and Coconut Layer Cake from Django Unchained.

Television and Cable Channels:

- If a food ingredient, cooking style, flavor or spice is even mentioned by Oprah Winfrey, it is an immediate “must-have” for thousands of viewers.
- Health gurus expound the benefits of adding familiar flavors such as cinnamon and cayenne to foods, as well as more exotic flavors such as lavender.
- Being featured on the Dr. Oz show has even brought the much maligned mayonnaise back into flavor favor, although made with new ingredients.
- The multitude of cooking shows have introduced flavors that are new, exciting and suddenly desirable.
- Authors of nutritional or health books appear on both daytime and late-night talk television promoting their favored flavors and spices.

News Media:

- Mediterranean food and flavors became highly sought-after following numerous publicized health studies showing longer life spans for people consuming that type of diet.
- News reports of the dangers of pesticides propel a trend toward organic foods and natural flavors. Terms such as “grain-fed” and “cage-free” are trends consumers are looking for in both manufactured and restaurant foods.

Colors:

- Recommendations from the USDA’s Diet and Human Performance Laboratory focus on a “superfood color chart” for optimum health. Consumers want to see those bright colors available on the menu of their favorite restaurant.
- Studies have shown that people tend to enjoy colorful food more, and unconsciously believe brightly colored food just tastes better. This is true even if the food is otherwise identical to a plainly hued alternative.

Exposure to other countries and cultures:

- As people travel around the world, they experience the local cuisines and learn to enjoy the different flavors of many countries. They return home and seek out sources close to home for those same flavors.
- Neighbors from different ethnic backgrounds share food and recipes. Restaurants are opened, featuring the foods from a home country or

- region. This exposes consumers to flavors they had never before tasted; and if they like that flavor, they request more.
- World events, such as the Olympics, introduce consumers both directly and indirectly to the flavors of other countries. During the Olympics in British, Columbia, Canada, spectators ate specialties such as crab cakes, pumpkin French toast and a pastry filled with chocolate and smothered in cream. Newscasters reported on the delicious food and, along with the satiated on-site audience, brought home a new flavor trend.
 - The London Olympics really did not introduce new flavor trends, but the upcoming Russian Olympics surely will have their own contributions.

Government:

- In June of 2011, the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion replaced the well-known food pyramid with MyPlate as their symbol of the primary food groups and recommended consumption.
- This new guideline changed how many people eat, prompting new experimentation and the developing of new recipes and family meal planning.
- Two specific changes, the replacement of white rice with brown rice and white flour with whole-wheat flour, created new flavor trends to meet these new guidelines.

Many factors go into the development of flavor trends. Rather than being the catalyst for new flavor trends, the yearly surveys appear only to identify the trends that have already begun.