

WHAT'S HOT

TRENDS
22-23

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CARBON TRUTHS

Carbon miles are the new calories – and consumers want to ‘eat’ less. Climate-friendly diets gain traction, and businesses respond with increased transparency and ‘carbon labelling’ (despite the fact that carbon along the supply chain is difficult to measure). And it’s not just about carbon reduction, or being ‘carbon neutral’; the goal is ‘carbon negative’ or ‘active’.



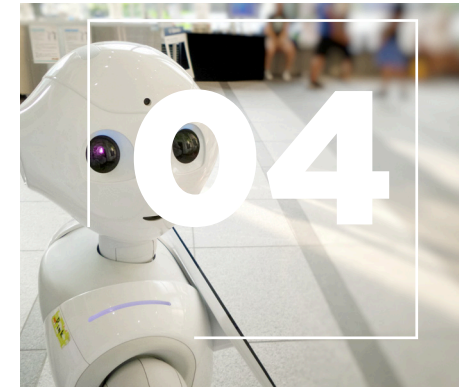
LAB TO FORK

Cultivated protein (aka cell-based, or lab-grown) is the next frontier in motherless meat. Regulatory hurdles are jumped, and price points lowered to make it commercially viable at scale. And there’s opportunity to explore beyond meat; companies are using processes like precision fermentation, to make lab grown milk, honey, cheese, chocolate and more.



SEA FARMS

Sea plants, the next big superfood? Seaweed, dulse, kelp and samphire appear on more and more menus, and microalgae is used to make anything from milk to burger patties. And chefs and marine scientists alike are getting excited about zostera marina, a seagrass being harvested for its grains, and lauded as ‘the rice of the sea’.



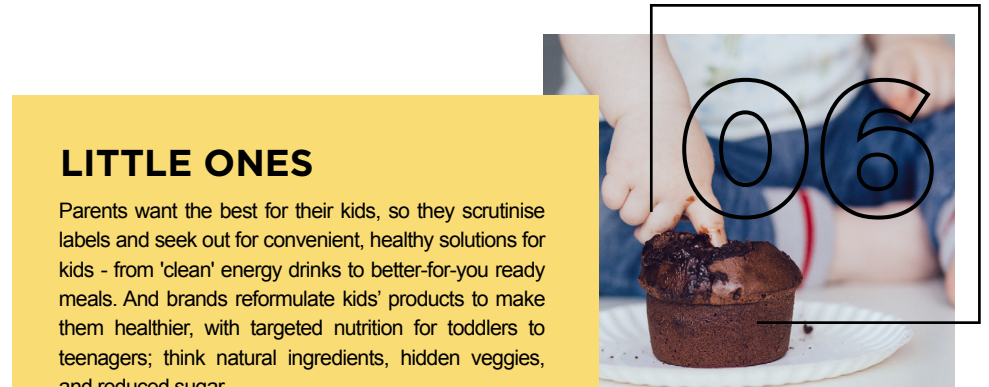
SEAMLESS ORDER & DELIVERY

Friction free service gathers pace. Digital kiosks, voice recognition and cameras make the ordering process seamless; cashierless checkouts, lockers, vending machines, drive through and curb side collection make picking up orders easier. Meanwhile robots do everything from meal prep to service; and delivery disruption continues at pace on all fronts.



SAME BUT HEALTHIER

The backlash against ‘ultra-processed’ and HFSS grows, driving innovation around ‘better for you’ alternatives. Brands look to ‘natural sweeteners’, swapouts (e.g. grain free flour), salt substitutes and more to make healthier products. And they work to ‘clean up’ products perceived as highly processed with fewer, all natural ingredients.



LITTLE ONES

Parents want the best for their kids, so they scrutinise labels and seek out for convenient, healthy solutions for kids - from ‘clean’ energy drinks to better-for-you ready meals. And brands reformulate kids’ products to make them healthier, with targeted nutrition for toddlers to teenagers; think natural ingredients, hidden veggies, and reduced sugar.

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FINE EATING, NOT DINING

The future lies in 'fine eating', not 'fine dining' – i.e. focus on the food, without the formality. This fuss free approach is driving a resurgence in bistros and brasseries, gourmet wine bars and the new generation of gastro pubs – same Michelin-grade food as any leading restaurant, but in a more relaxed setting...

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LOOK EAST

The cultural influence of Korea & Japan is surging. Cooks dive deeper into Japanese food and get creative with cuisine mashups, sweet formats and pantry staples. Meanwhile Korean film, fashion music and art sweeps the world. The K-craze draws consumers to Korean dishes like tteokbokki, bulgogi, fried chicken and Korean corn dogs.

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SENSORY EXPLORATION

The pandemic created a newfound appreciation for taste and smell. So now we want to explore and experiment! Dishes are elevated with bigger & bolder flavours, and brands use scents to transport us to happy places. And touch! Now we can physically interact, we want to use our hands and play with our food.

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NOVEL NOSTALGIA

Consumers channel their inner child through whimsical concepts and nostalgic experiences – arcade games, immersive movie nights, ice cream trucks, etc. And they indulge in childhood favourites like s'mores, hot dogs, custard, jelly and ice cream floats – but this time round, with a grown-up touch thanks to gourmet ingredients, CBD, booze and more.

SIMPLE SUPPERS (TIKTOK)

As we get busier, the need for simple, mid-week meal solutions resurfaces. Consumers look to TikTok for how-to videos and recipe hacks with fridge/pantry staples. One pot/pan recipes abound; so too do recipes with just a few, affordable ingredients and upcycled leftovers. And who needs an oven, when you've got an air fryer or microwave...

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GUT-BODY-AXES

Gut health moves even higher up the health agenda, as we better understand how it interacts with our lungs, skin, brain and immune function. A new wave of gut friendly products are boosted not just with fibre and probiotics – but also pre- and post-biotics. Experts highlight the benefits of a diversity diet on the gut microbiome (30+ plants a week).



INGESTIBLE BEAUTY

Trying to find the fountain of youth, consumers are seeking out beauty-driven, functional food and drink boosted with ingredients like collagen, hyaluronic acid, biotin, protein, Vitamin C and 'super' fruits like acai berries, camu camu and acerola cherry. Probiotics and other gut-friendly ingredients also feature, as we learn more about the gut-skin-axis.



OTHER WORLDS

The gaming world is attracting an increasingly large and diverse audience. Brands, meanwhile, blur lines between real and virtual worlds with game-inspired products. And it's not just virtual worlds that have us fascinated... but also other worlds altogether. Our obsession with outer space is reaching new heights, driving a surge in cosmic concepts.



NEW & OLD FARMING

The effects of mass industrial agriculture have been catastrophic, so we look for solutions in the farming world – both new (e.g. robots, vertical farms, AI) and old (e.g. regenerative agriculture, agritech, gene editing and fairtrade farming incentives). The long terms goals include healthier soil, fewer pesticides, decreased carbon miles and better produce.



PLANT FINE DINING

Plant based is mainstream, and at last(!) the fine dining world is catching up. Michelin awarded more stars to plant-forward restaurants, and big names like NYC's Eleven Madison Park have announced new plant-centric menus. Fine dining chefs meanwhile use novel techniques and ingredients to prove that plants are also capable of deep umami flavours.



UPCYCLING

Upcycling 'waste' ingredients into new products, is about so much more than using veggie offcuts to make soup! Technology has given us the power to turn apple peels into handbags, oranges into electricity and shrimp shells into natural food flavouring. There's also strides in turning food waste into plant-based protein and fibre. And that's just the start of it...

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CLOSED LOOP COOKING

The launch of Michelin's 'green star' means restaurants that work sustainability into business models gain recognition. Many have sought to take total control over their supply chain – setting up their own rural farm, for example. Some go even further with regenerative farming. And to close the loop entirely, they find creative ways to repurpose food waste.



MORE MEXICO

Consumer appetite for authentic and regional Mexican cuisine is bigger than ever. Trending dishes include churros, elote, mole, tortas, birria and (of course!) tacos. And if you need something to wash it down? Try a paloma, margarita or micheladas. Or if you're going NoLo (no/low ABV) – there's also tepache, agua fresca and Mexican-style hot chocolate.

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PAYING DUES

For many, working in restaurants comes with a long list of concerns including low wages, bullying and safety concerns. The industry is stepping up with initiative to improve working conditions and staff retention. Wages are also a top priority; restaurants have started building liveable wages into food prices and ensure transparent tipping practices.

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