

Consumer Experimentation and Interest in Health and Wellness Highlight the Flavor Forecast for 2011

A willingness to experiment and an interest in health and wellness define the consumer taste trends for 2011. For more than a decade, McCormick has identified changing consumer palettes and emerging trends in taste and flavor pairings in its annual Flavor Forecast. To create its forecasts, which have recently expanded to include grilling and holiday cooking, McCormick taps into a network of researchers, trend experts, chefs, test kitchens, food technologists, and sensory analysts.

According to McCormick, spice consumption in the United States is at an all-time high, currently exceeding 1 billion pounds per year (1). A typical consumer pantry now contains 40 or more spices, reports McCormick, compared to just 10 in 1950 (2). And, it's not only Americans who are increasingly reaching for the spice cupboard. Global Industry Analysts Inc., a publisher of off-the-shelf market research, says the demand for spices and herbs is growing worldwide. According to its research report, "Spices and Seasonings: A Global Strategic Business Report," the global market for spices and seasonings is forecast to exceed 4 billion pounds by 2015 (2).

For McCormick, which also produces Flavor Forecasts for the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, and France, the spice market is indeed global. McCormick has identified five "Currents of Change" in the use of spices and herbs:

Spirit of Discovery

A hunger for international culinary adventure is propelling exploration of unexpected ingredient combinations and unique ethnic profiles. Restaurants are focused on regional cuisines, mobile food mania, and the growing accessibility of new ingredients and techniques that make it a cinch to add global flair with flavor.

Flavor with Benefits

Flavor is delivering more than great taste. As science continues to reveal the promising health benefits of wholesome ingredients, eating for wellness is more achievable—and more enjoyable—than ever before. Inherently "good" foods can nourish the body while balancing the mind's desire for delicious flavors.

Invigorating and Uplifting

Foods and flavors that are cooling, exhilarating, or psychologically recharging can stimulate the palate and dial up the thrill of eating. Exciting pops of spicy, sour, herbal, and sweet flavors surprise the senses and bring new energy to dining.

Soul Satisfaction

From hearty and sustaining to rich and indulgent, there are moments when it takes comforting favorites to sooth the mind, heart, and taste buds. Consumers have returned to sitting down and eating together, although cooking habits and "families" have evolved to suit changing lifestyles and palates.

Craveable Contrasts

The interplay of contrasting tastes, textures, and visual cues can answer the intrinsic need for change, adding fun and excitement to the basic pleasures of eating. An endless variety of customizable and do-it-yourself food options make it possible to truly have flavor your way.



Interview with McCormick

We recently sat down with Nancy Farace, McCormick, food insight strategist, to discuss McCormick's 2011 Flavor Forecast and its implications for food developers.

- Q. The last time we wrote a similar article with McCormick representatives was in 1998. The focus of the article was snack foods. A lot seems to have changed in terms of the willingness of Americans to experiment with new foods and flavors. Have you seen a significant change since your first Flavor Forecast was published in 2000?**
- A.** The American palate has grown in acceptance and expectation of new flavors. Ethnically influenced flavors have continued to inspire new products for virtually every area of the food market. In 2000, bold flavors and textures were one of the driving trends. Now, in 2011, we are seeing America's preference for more complex and intense taste experiences as a dynamic reflection of a new flavor confidence. Food decisions in 2011 will be influenced by the intrinsic links between food and mood, flavor and fulfillment, nourishment and gratification.
- Q. Many of your flavor combinations are very exotic. How do you think these unusual flavors might translate into prepared foods?**
- A.** One of the leading trends shaping this year's report is "craveable contrasts," which comes to life in the 10 flavor pairings. Mixing and matching different tastes, textures, and visual

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cues adds fun and energy to the basic pleasures of eating. We select each pairing for its attributes of color, texture, aroma, visual, and sensory appeal. Sometimes the pairings are very complimentary, while some of them are more about creating a contrast. An example is goat milk and green peppercorn: it's got exciting contrasts—the silky smooth goat milk with the crisp green peppercorns, as well as the cool and creamy flavor of the goat milk with the pungent flavor bite of the peppercorns. McCormick's Flavor Forecast sets the stage for vision and flavor trends over the current year—and 2 to 3 years out. Ancho chile pepper and hibiscus create a lively Latin-inspired pairing of contrasts—the tart, floral notes of exotic hibiscus pair well with the lingering heat of the ancho chile pepper, creating a feast for the eyes and the taste buds. Chocolate and chiles have been a long-standing pairing—our chefs have created chocolate fudge ancho cupcakes with hibiscus buttercream frosting.

Q. The health benefits of certain spices are becoming better known. Do you think this affords an opportunity to create a larger variety of value-added products?

A. Consumers will continue to look for foods that offer intrinsic benefits, whether consumed at or away from home. People are looking for believable, achievable, and approachable health and wellness. Spices and herbs add flavor to foods, improving our diets because the added flavor comes without added sugar, salt, or fat.

Q. Along a similar line, can you tell us about the McCormick Science Institute?

A. The McCormick Science Institute (MSI) is a research-driven organization. Its mission is to support scientific research and disseminate information on the health benefits of culinary spices and herbs. The institute is led by nutrition scientists and guided by a Scientific Advisory Council consisting of internationally renowned scientists and health professionals from leading research institutions. The MSI provides information on its website for the sole purpose of educating visitors on the current body of scientific findings on the health benefits of culinary spices and herbs. All funded MSI research is focused on advancing the scientific study of the health-enhancing properties of culinary herbs and spices in areas that McCormick considers to have the potential to impact public health.

McCormick's Top 10 Flavor Pairings for 2011

Fennel and Peri-Peri Sauce
 Pickling Spice and Rice Vinegar
 Roasted Curry Powder and Wild Mushrooms
 Caramelized Honey and Adzuki Red Beans
 Ancho Chili Pepper and Hibiscus
 Thyme and Stone Fruits
 Mustard Seed and Vermouth
 Cilantro and Nut Butters
 Herbes de Provence and Popcorn
 Green Peppercorn and Goat's Milk



Q. The Flavor Forecast mentions a return to “sitting down and eating together.” Do you think consumers demand more from their cooking in terms of taste and sophistication than they did in the past—in other words, comfort food that’s not necessarily their parents’ comfort food?

A. We like to call this trend the “next generation weeknight dinner”—new traditions, new flavors, more contemporary. We’ve also seen the increased involvement of kids in determining meal choices. Look for family meals to include world flavors on the dinner table. Comfort food stems from a memory, a feeling, or the power of suggestion—stimulating the mind and the heart as much as the taste buds. American’s have a hunger for “feel-good” favorites—foods that nourish the body and the soul, whether a family favorite or a new tradition.

Q. What do you see as some of the significant differences in the Flavor Forecasts by country?

A. McCormick teams pair up with some of today’s most innovative and forward-thinking food professionals to create the Flavor Forecasts. Key contributors collaborate across the teams, so the reports are truly a global reflection of the flavors to come. Of course, the biggest difference is in the pairing of ingredients based on the regional flavor trends of each country—the black figs and springbok flavor pairing in South Africa, for example, is reflected in the fig and rosemary pairing for meats in the Flavor Forecast Grilling Edition for North America.

Q. What would you say is the most important take away for food developers, given the trends you’ve identified?

A. Think about the mind of the consumer, their passion for good food and great flavors and their desire to create an eating experience for themselves and others. Use the science of the pairings to bring complimentary and contrasting elements into flavor pairings. The pairings typically don’t stand alone—incorporate them into the layers of flavors that create excitement for the consumer’s eating experience.

References

1. Global Industry Analysts. World spices and seasonings market to reach 4687.86 million pounds by 2015, according to new report by Global Industry Analysts, Inc. Press release, January 20, 2011.
2. McCormick and Company. McCormick Flavor Forecast 2011 announces top flavors for the coming year. Press release, December 2, 2010.

Nancy Farace is a food insight strategist at McCormick & Co., Inc. in Hunt Valley, MD, the company’s worldwide headquarters near Baltimore. Farace is responsible for promoting flavors, spices, and herbs to the industrial food market. As an adamant foodie and flavor expert, she is a key member of the Flavor Forecast marketing development team. Her experience and knowledge provide important insights regarding current and future trends and the flavors that will pave the way. Her food industry experience spans industrial, restaurant, and consumer product goods. In addition, she serves as a certified innovation facilitator for McCormick’s Create IT process. Farace is a member of the Institute of Food Technologists, the American Marketing Association, and Women in the Flavor and Fragrance Industry. She has a degree in food science, with a minor in journalism, from the University of Florida, Gainesville. She has completed ACF and RCA culinary course work and owns a niche catering business. Farace can be reached at Nancy_Farace@mccormick.com.