

The Top 10 Healthy Food Trends to Expect in 2022

Plant-based eating continues to reign, but alcohol-free drinks, seeds, and ethnically diverse foods are also on the rise this year.



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Medically Reviewed



Plant-based convenience foods and nonalcoholic spirits are just a few of the ways food is giving your health a boost in 2022.

No one ever knows exactly what a new year will bring, but the interest in healthier eating that has accompanied the ongoing [COVID-19 pandemic](#) doesn't appear to be fading anytime soon, and that's a good thing.

It may come as no surprise that [plant-based](#) foods continue to be exceedingly popular, with sales increasing almost twice as quickly as those of overall food sales, per the [Good Food Institute](#). "I am really excited about seeing more people following a [flexitarian](#) eating plan," says [Laura M. Ali, RD](#), a culinary nutritionist in Pittsburgh. "It gives people who may not want to become [vegetarian](#) or [vegan](#) the ability to eat more plants but still incorporate some [seafood](#), meat, dairy, and [eggs](#) occasionally."

Of course, COVID has continued to affect our [grocery shopping habits](#) too. "The pandemic has caused supply chain shortages, as well as an increased awareness of food waste," says [Christina Badaracco, MPH](#), a registered dietitian in Washington, DC, who focuses on sustainability.

We asked nutrition experts about these and other factors that influence what we'll be eating in the year ahead, and these are the healthy food innovations and trends they say we can expect to see in 2022.

1

Plants, Plants, and More Plants



ZENB

The plant-based packaged-food category is more expansive than ever — and consumers are excited about this. Indeed, 65 percent of people say that they've eaten plant-based meat alternatives in the last year, according to a 2021 [report](#) from the International Food Information Council.

“The plant-based movement ties into a number of trending consumer priorities, including health protection, environmental stewardship, and ethically driven eating,” says [Cynthia Sass, MPH](#), a registered dietitian in private practice in Los Angeles. “My clients constantly tell me they feel better physically and feel good about how they are spending their food dollars when they eat more plant-based foods.”

“Plant-forward products will continue to be on trend — not only for their known health benefits but also because of their relationship with sustainability,” says [Keri Gans, RDN](#), a nutritionist in New York City and author of *The Small Change Diet*. “More and more consumers are becoming concerned with where their food comes from and how it affects the environment. Those companies that share a positive environmental story will be sought after.”

When it comes to new finds, keep an eye out for smoothie-ready frozen [dragon fruit](#) and passion fruit from [Pitaya Foods](#), pea pasta from [ZenB](#), vegetable-based (think tomato, sweet potato, carrot, and butternut squash) pizza sauce from [Otamot](#), and vegan cookies from [Real Cookies](#). You can do your online plant-based grocery shopping at [PlantX's curated store](#), and you can even get local plant-based finds — such as hummus shakes from the Hummus & Pita Co. in New York City — shipped to your doorstep via [Gold Belly](#).

“I am loving the persistence of plant-forward eating, along with [eating with sustainability in mind](#),” says New York City-based registered dietitian [Maya Feller](#), author of *The Southern Comfort Food Diabetes Cookbook*. “Both of these trends focus on increasing whole and minimally processed plant-based foods that provide a plethora of phytonutrients that impart health benefits.”

RELATED: [10 Veggie-Loving Instagrammers to Inspire Your Plant-Based Diet Goals](#)

2

Recycled Ingredients



Barnana

Up to 40 percent of America’s food supply is wasted, per the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), and recycling leftover ingredients could help reduce that amount significantly. “Recycled food simply means new food or products created from recycled ingredients or by-products from the food manufacturing process,” explains [Erin Hendrickson, RDN](#), a food-waste expert in Nashville. The practice, which has been gaining traction over the past few years, gained some attention during the pandemic when bare supermarket shelves made some manufacturers realize the importance of further reducing waste, she says.

These products may use words like “upcycled” or “recycled” on their labels. Some examples include [88 Acres Seed’Nola](#), an allergy-friendly granola that is made from leftover end pieces; [Barnana Banana Bites](#) and [Otherworld pancake and waffle mixes](#), both made from upcycled ingredients; and [Rind’s skin-on dried fruit](#), which use both the peel and the fruit. “Many rinds and produce skins are edible but typically get tossed,” says Hendrickson. “Rind Snacks not only limit food waste but also offer increased vitamins, [antioxidants](#), and [fiber](#) by utilizing the rinds.”

3

Alcohol-Free Options



Ritual Zero Proof

The [Whole Foods Market 2022 trend report](#) lists [alcohol-free spirits](#) as a top upcoming trend. “Post-pandemic isolation has created a growing interest in health and well-being, causing a surge in both functional beverages and alcohol-free drinks,” says [Jessica DeGore, CDCES](#), a registered dietitian and licensed nutritionist with a virtual private practice based in Pittsburgh.

You’ll see everything from alcohol-free spirits, wine, and [beer](#) to fancy sparkling water that can serve as a [mocktail](#). “Millennials and Gen Z have embraced sober-curious culture and have made sobriety more popular and normal,” adds DeGore. “Limiting [alcohol](#) has obvious health benefits, such as decreasing the incidence of many diseases, [mental health](#) problems, and driving accidents.”

And then there’s the [calorie](#) difference. “People want lower-calorie options that still feel like they’re having a little celebration,” adds [Lisa Andrews](#), a registered dietitian based in Cincinnati.

Want to toast with an alcohol-free choice? Sip a booze-free [Curious Elixirs](#), or make your own mocktail with [Ritual Zero Proof Tequila](#), [Damrak Virgin Gin](#), or [Ceder’s Distilled Non-Alcoholic Gin](#). Or choose alcohol-free [Gruvi Dry Secco](#); nonalcoholic craft beer from [Athletic Brewing](#); or [Suntory All-Free](#), a sparkling malt and hops drink with zero calories and zero alcohol.

Beverages With Benefits



Elements

Along with alcohol-free drinks, beverages that claim to do more than just quench your thirst are on the rise, per the Whole Foods report. These so-called “functional beverages” claim to help with everything from [stress](#) relief to [gut health](#) to [immunity](#). The category isn’t new, but it’s expected to grow as “increasing awareness of health is anticipated to propel the demand,” according to a May 2021 report by [The Business Research Company](#).

“I started seeing more functional beverages pop up at food shows and expos several years ago — but at the time, I didn’t think they would take off,” says [Kelly Jones, RD](#), a sports dietitian and owner of [Student Athlete Nutrition](#) in Newtown, Pennsylvania. “Now, many plant-based functional beverages are widely available, everywhere from Whole Foods to Walmart, showing that it’s something consumers really want and are enjoying.”

You’ll find [Koia](#), [Poppi](#), and [Olipop](#) with prebiotic ingredients for [microbiome support](#), [Elements](#) and [Remedy Organics](#) with [adaptogenic ingredients](#) such as [ashwagandha](#) and maca root, [probiotic](#) juice shots from [So Good So You](#), and functional sparkling water meant to harness your energy from [Good Idea](#).

“People are finally catching on that these products aren’t intended to be meal replacements or cleanses but instead staples in your eating pattern that are tasty and can fill nutrient gaps,” says Jones. There are caveats, of course. “It is important for consumers to be aware of how their bodies may react to beverages that are regulated as supplements versus as foods and to check with their doctors to ensure the ingredients don’t interfere with medications,” she notes.

RELATED: [9 Alcohol-Free Drinks to Enjoy in the New Year](#)

5

Seeded Foods



Simple Mills

While foods made with sunflower seeds are a top 2022 trend, per the Whole Foods report, all seeds are trending. One reason for the major popularity uptick? Seeds are a nutritionally similar replacement for nuts, an increasingly common [food allergen](#). A [study published in April 2021 in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*](#) shows that the annual incidence of peanut allergies increased from 1.7 to 5.2 percent between 2001 and 2017.

“Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in products that use seeds as a key ingredient, and I’m excited to see this trend continue to rise in the coming year,” says [Nicole Stefanow, RDN](#), a culinary dietitian nutritionist in Ramsey, New Jersey. “Seeds may be tiny, but they deliver big on nutrition.” Indeed, all seeds boast a trio of fiber, [protein](#), and heart-healthy [fats](#).

Sunflower seeds in particular may have heart-health benefits, suggests a [study published in July 2021 in the *Journal of Food Science and Technology*](#). The study of 60 men with [high cholesterol](#) found that those who regularly ate bread made with sunflower seed flour had a significant reduction in their [body mass index](#) (a measure of weight per height), [LDL](#) “bad” [cholesterol](#), total cholesterol, and [triglycerides](#).

Seeds make great snacks on their own, but you can also find them in [Health Warrior's Pumpkin Seed Bars](#), [Go Raw sprouted-seed bars](#), [Simple Mills Seed Flour Crackers](#), and [AshaPops Popped Water Lily Seeds](#).

6

TV Dinners 2.0



Daily Harvest

“With the working-from-home switch that the pandemic brought, more families and individuals are looking for convenience,” says [Karla Giboyeaux, RDN](#), a clinical dietitian in New York City. “For people who have a hard time meal planning and cooking at home, gourmet ready-made meals are convenient.”

Found in the supermarket’s refrigerated or frozen section, these prepared meals are tastier and more nutritious than those of the past as well (although sodium levels can vary, so if you are watching your intake, checking nutrition labels is a good idea). Capitalizing on another trend, many are plant-based, like [Freshly's Purely Plant meals](#) and those from [Factor 75](#). Frozen straight-to-your-door picks include [Mosaic Foods](#) and [Daily Harvest](#).

“Many of my clients want to reduce waste and limit their trips to the grocery store to save time,” says [Christa Brown, RDN](#), a private-practice dietitian in Woodbridge, New Jersey. “They also want gourmet food and the ability to diversify their meals without the hassle of finding a recipe and learning how to cook it properly and shopping for all the ingredients.”

Just know that this option can get pretty pricey, so make sure you budget it out or use it as a limited-time solution.

7

Plant-Based Omega-3s



Del Monte

For years, the [omega-3s](#) conversation has been all about EPA and DHA, the omega-3s fatty acids you'll find in fatty fish like salmon. But we can't dismiss their plant-based sister, ALA. While you need a plentiful amount of ALA omega-3s for your body to convert them into EPA and DHA, we're hearing more and more about the nutrient's benefits — and food sources that score high in ALA. [Research published in 2016 in the Journal of the American Heart Association](#) revealed that people with a high risk of a heart attack who supplemented a high-fish diet with ALA omega-3s — in particular, from walnuts, [almonds](#), and hazelnuts — had a significantly reduced risk of death. In fact,

walnuts are the only nut that provides an excellent amount of ALA, according to [research published in October 2019 in *Nutrients*](#).

“Plant-based omega-3 fatty acids are going to be a food trend of interest,” says [Andrew Akhaphong, RD](#), a registered dietitian at Mackenthun’s Fine Foods in Minneapolis. “Since the pandemic hit our nation, many consumers have sought ways to make their budget last longer, as the costs of certain products have increased due to supply chain disruptions. Many people have decided to change their dietary habits toward sustainable food options, such as plant-based foods.”

Look to foods like [Toodaloo Slow Your Roll Maple Trail Mix](#) made with walnuts, [Del Monte Fruit and Chia Cups](#), and [Seapoint Farms Dry Roasted Edamame](#).

8

Globally Inspired Foods



Saffron Road

While the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) may have paused global travel, people seem to be compensating by exploring more with their palates. This includes spices like [turmeric](#), which are traditionally used in ethnic dishes, as well as packaged foods from and inspired by other countries.

“International travel is still affected by the pandemic, with many countries on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s high-risk list,” says [Melissa Altman-Traub, RDN](#), a plant-based dietitian in Jamison, Pennsylvania. “Consumers are enjoying global flavors and dishes at home. The popularity of Korean shows and K-pop, for example, have helped fuel increased interest in Korean foods such as japchae and gochujang.”

You’ll find packaged foods with international flavors, including [Saffron Road Thai Red Curry Simmer Sauce](#), vegan Caribbean pizza from [Clo-Clo](#), and [Zelos Greek Shepherd’s Souvlaki + BBQ Mix spice blend](#). You can also easily get your hands on [exotic fruit deliveries](#) from Melissa’s Produce, Icelandic chocolate from [Omnom](#), Japanese snack boxes from [Bokksu](#), a monthly snack shipment via [Snack Crate](#) of around-the-world eats, or a curated delivery of international foods from [Try the World](#).

Tasting the globe also stems to new wine finds: Try chardonnay and malbec sparkling wine from [Mascota Vineyards](#) in Argentina, or an organic bottle from the [Montecucco Sangiovese](#) vineyard in Tuscany.

RELATED: [The Healthiest Ingredients in Indian Food](#)

9

Oats as the New “Dairy”



Kate's Real Food

Got [oats](#)? Oat milk hit the scene several years back, and now there are a plethora of products made from the dairy alternative that are suitable for vegans, vegetarians, and anyone who is [lactose intolerant](#) or following a dairy-free diet.

You can purchase oat-based ice cream and yogurt from [Oatly](#), oat-based creamer from [Laird Superfoods](#), and oat-milk “cheese” from [Oatzarella](#). And don’t forget [Oat Haus granola butter](#) or oat-based energy bars from [Kate’s Real Food](#). You can even find canned oat milk lattes from [La Colombe](#), and [Mast](#), an oat-based “milk” chocolate bar that’s a favorite of [Lauren Manaker, RD](#), a dietitian in Charleston, South Carolina.

“Oat-based dairy appeals to many people, as it avoids any nut allergy concerns,” adds Badaracco. “Oats also provide both soluble and [insoluble fiber](#), which are important for the health of our bodies and our gut microbiota.” Oats also provide micronutrients like manganese and iron, [per USDA data](#).

10

Lower-Sugar Foods



Serenity

“Americans eat far too much added sugar, so I’m always excited to see new products designed with lower amounts of unnecessary added sugars,” says [Samantha Cassetty](#), a New York City–based registered dietitian and coauthor of [Sugar Shock](#). “As people

are getting savvier about added sugars and how a sugary diet can influence your risk of illnesses like [type 2 diabetes](#) and [heart disease](#), they're seeking products that are using less added sugar. I've seen cereals sweetened with dates and flavored yogurts that contain no or low amounts of added sugar, to name a few. I'm excited to see more of these enter the scene in 2021."

These products include [cocoa-sweetened cereal](#) from Three Wishes; [grain-free puffs](#) sweetened with cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and clove from Serenity Kids; and allulose-sweetened chocolate from [SkinnyDipped](#).

"Now that the food label has officially been updated, it's easy to spot added sugars on the nutrition facts panel," says Cassetty. "With the label updates, many products have either been reformulated or introduced with less added sugar than we've seen in the past. Keep in mind that even when a product has a reasonable amount of added sugar, you still need to check the ingredients to make sure it's also made with mostly whole-food ingredients such as [oats](#), nuts, and seeds."