



WAITROSE  
& PARTNERS

# FOOD & DRINK

## REPORT 2024-25

THE TOP TRENDS / DRINKS HOTLIST / TOP OF THE SWAPS / 2024 TIMELINE / FUTURE FLAVOURS



# THE JOY OF GOOD FOOD

We surveyed a panel of 3,239 customers in October 2024 for the insights in this year's *Waitrose Food & Drink Report*

We've seen a shift in our customer shopping habits this year, especially when it comes to the products they're putting in their baskets. Cost of living still counts, but we're seeing the beginning of a return to indulgence, with many spending more on key parts of their weekly shop – particularly bread, meat and dairy.

This reflects the other main trend we've seen this year – a growing interest in sustainable farming. Words like 'regenerative' and 'heritage breeds' have moved from niche and agricultural to more mainstream, as people have come to recognise the value of sustainable food systems to our environment.

If there's one thing we know about our customers, it's that they love food. As the world lurches through the unknown, sourcing, preparing, sharing and enjoying great food has become a constant pleasure – and Waitrose shoppers see this as a way of life, not an added extra. We're here to facilitate that, through careful sourcing, innovative recipes, inspiring ingredients – and most of all, helping people to take delight in cooking and eating good food.

We know that our customers love dining out and are all over the latest culinary trends, so it's no surprise that they're looking to recreate the restaurant experience in their own kitchens. We've seen this with the storming response to our No.1 range, with restaurant-inspired ready-meals such as gourmet curries and wood-fired pizzas flying off the shelves.

In the same vein, the Ottolenghi range has enabled our customers to pimp up home-cooked meals, with the beloved chef's signature cooking style translated into an array of marinades, spice blends and sauces. We've also seen strong demand for

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**OUR CUSTOMERS LOVE DINING OUT, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT THEY'RE LOOKING TO RECREATE THE RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE IN THEIR OWN KITCHENS**



**JAMES BAILEY**

Executive director, Waitrose

Dishpatch, the meal-kit delivery service that collaborates with leading chefs, including Angela Hartnett and Michel Roux, to deliver a unique home-dining experience.

With nearly 200 new and improved products, the relaunch of our No.1 range was perfectly poised to cater to this growing demand for food that feels luxurious and delivers on provenance as well as quality. As a result, we've seen record sales and a constellation of awards – our new No.1 British Wagyu Sirloin Steaks won Gold at this year's World Steak Challenge, and our Christmas range has received more gongs than ever.

Particularly beloved has been our Glorious Treacle Glazed Turkey Crown, the success of which sums up what customers have been looking for recently. It's well-sourced, with meat from animals farmed to high welfare standards, and it's a premium product – perfectly brined for tenderness, and topped with treacle-cured bacon.

Leading the way in ethical and environmental standards has always been a priority at Waitrose, and earlier this year, we unveiled plans to support even more of our farmers in the transition to regenerative agriculture. Farming for Nature is an exciting initiative that commits us to sourcing all our UK meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables from farms that use regenerative practices by 2035.

This builds on our commitment to reach net zero across Waitrose's UK farms by the same year, and by 2050 across the whole supply chain. Many of these principles are already in place at the Leckford Estate, our farm in Hampshire.

So whatever the next year brings, Waitrose will continue to ensure that your table is a place of comfort, joy and quality.

# BACK TO THE CHOPPING BOARD

# SCRATCH

Top chefs are openly embracing kitchen shortcuts, with Vivek Singh of The Cinnamon Club using canned tomatoes for a butter chicken recipe. More home cooks are sharing their hacks too, from frozen fish fingers to sauce in a jar. What's your secret weapon?



# COOKING

(WITH SHORTCUTS)



# 61%

cook from scratch to reduce the amount of ultra-processed foods they eat

## ULTRA-PROCESSED PEOPLE

Our awareness of ultra-processed foods (UPF) was raised in 2023, thanks in no small part to Dr Chris van Tulleken's bestselling book *Ultra-Processed People*. His eye-opening, rigorously researched account of ultra-processed foods and their effect on our health turned many people towards cooking from scratch, with unprocessed or minimally processed ingredients.

According to Waitrose research, 61% of home cooks say that concerns about ultra-processed foods have inspired them to cook from scratch more, compared to a year ago. But we remain time poor, and are still reluctant to splash out on a lengthy list of niche ingredients that we might only use intermittently.

## ONE-STOP SHOP

We've seen a growing trend in cookbooks which centre around a familiar ingredient or cooking method, such as Ed Smith's *Good Eggs*, Anna Jones' *Easy Wins* or Rukmini Iyer's *Roasting Tin* series. They appeal to customers who want to cook but might not have the time to spare.

So, too, do culinary shortcuts that make scratch cooking quicker, cheaper or easier. To this end, Waitrose customers have loved flavoured butters for fish and steak, and pre-prepared proteins such as our marinated tofu or easy to cook chicken breast and meat joints. "We've looked at how long people are prepared to cook for on a weekday evening," says Waitrose senior brand development chef Zoë Simons, "and we've found that 30 minutes is a real sweet spot."

## ON THE PULSE

The search for simple scratch cooking ideas has also boosted sales of quality canned and jarred foods, including fish, legumes and vegetables. Indeed, 2024 could be called the year of the bean, with brands such as Bold Bean Co revolutionising the way we cook, eat and think about pulses.

"They have made the category more premium and foodie," Waitrose innovation manager Lizzie Haywood says of Bold Bean Co's minimally processed, ready-to-eat jarred beans.

But perhaps the most surprising driver of this trend has been Yotam Ottolenghi. The godfather of the 25-plus ingredient recipes is the creator of a range of spice blends available at Waitrose.

"Spices cost cupboard space as well as money," says Maddy Wilson, director of Waitrose own brand. "These, along with Waitrose Cooks' Ingredients spices, enable you to just have a few, without filling cupboards with spices which will inevitably go stale and need throwing out."

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WE'VE LOOKED AT HOW LONG PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO COOK FOR ON A WEEKDAY EVENING – 30 MINUTES IS A REAL SWEET SPOT



# IN IS THE NEW OUT

Restaurant-quality but budget-friendly. It's no secret that we're cooking and hosting at home more. Whether you're a pro in the kitchen or just love good food, we're finding clever ways to level up



## YES, CHEF!

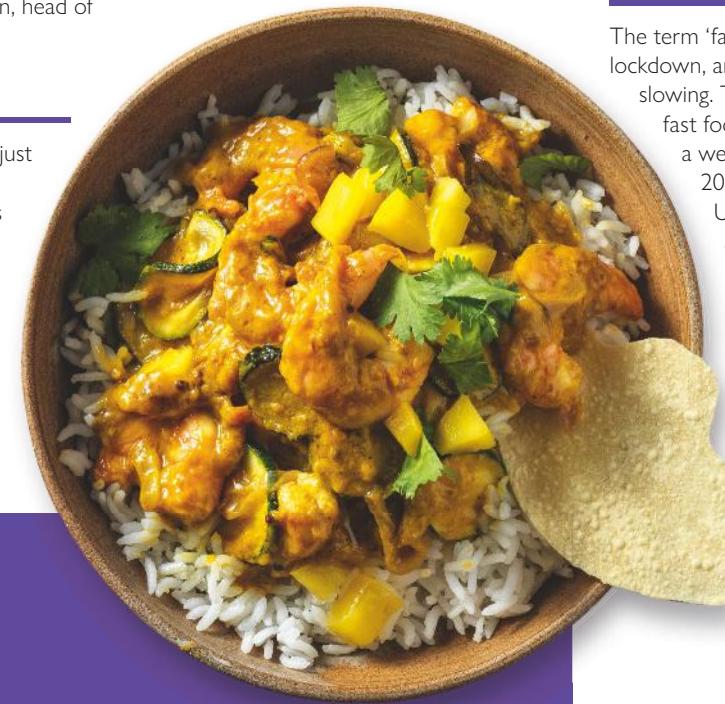
The publication of Jay Rayner's first cookbook, *Nights Out at Home*, wasn't just the culmination of years of research by the author and food critic. His collection of restaurant recipes for home cooks encapsulates a prevailing trend for enjoying restaurant-style food without stepping foot outside the house. "The hangover from the cost of living [rises] and Covid lockdowns is that we go out for meals less, and cook at home more," says Maddy Wilson, head of Waitrose own brand.

## SAUCES LEVEL UP

Of course, Jay's book caters for just one end of the spectrum – the culinary enthusiast who hoovers up (and actually cooks from) restaurant tomes such as those from Brutto and Dishoom. There are plenty who would rather buy quality ready-meals to replicate the maximum-taste, minimal washing-up experience of a restaurant.

72%

of those surveyed say Indian food is the most popular fakeaway to attempt at home



To that end, beloved restaurant chains including Wagamama and Leon, and even high-end independents such as Fallow and Ottolenghi, have released sauces and condiments for supermarkets. In October, the two Michelin star Indian restaurant Gymkhana launched four cooking sauces and two marinades at Waitrose, giving home cooks easy ways to recreate those familiar flavours in their kitchen.

## FAKEAWAY

The term 'fakeaway' first trended in lockdown, and that shows no sign of slowing. The number of adults ordering fast food via a delivery service once a week or more has fallen since 2022, but sales of Waitrose Urban Pizzas and No.1 curries are rising. Meanwhile, Dishpatch – the meal kit service which brings dishes from high-end restaurants and chefs to your door – is as popular as ever. Sales were up 55% on Valentine's Day, with Michel Roux's Beef Wellington Banquet the most popular.

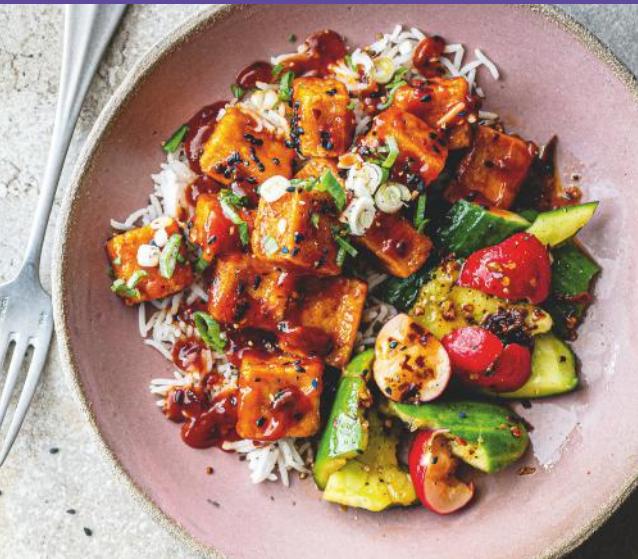
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THE HANGOVER FROM COST OF LIVING [RISES] AND COVID LOCKDOWNS IS THAT WE GO OUT FOR MEALS LESS, AND COOK AT HOME MORE

55%

of those surveyed would opt for a homecooked meal over a takeaway

# BREAKING FREE OF THE RECIPE



There's been a rise in younger cooks embracing the no-recipe approach. That means freestyling is where it's at right now, to create simple, nourishing and stunning content for social media

## INSTINCTIVE COOKING

Cookbooks such as *Easy Wins* by Anna Jones, Samin Nosrat's *Salt Fat Acid Heat* and *Mob One*, by a collective of chefs and creators, simplify the cooking process and give you the confidence to draw on your skills and experience. Instead of prescriptive recipes with precise instructions which the cook deviates from at their peril, they offer guiding principles within which people can do their own thing.

The authors provide "elements you can dial up and down, allowing the cook to express themselves," says Waitrose senior brand development chef Paul Gamble. Although 70% of customers aged over 45 still use traditional recipe books, food waste social impact company Too Good To Go says that one in five 16- to 24-year-olds throw food away because they don't know what recipes will work with it.

## THE NO-RECIPE RECIPE

TikTok is full of culinary hacks, and 72% of young people report that they feel confident making a meal without a recipe to follow. 'No-recipe recipe books' give readers a framework that can be adapted to the time available and ingredients they have to hand.

This shift ties into several other key trends, including the reduction of food waste (use what vegetables and herbs you have, these cookbooks insist), and a focus on a few quality ingredients rather than long rarefied lists.

## PICKY TEAS

At its most extreme, it's the 'picky tea' trend, a collection of cheese, meats, crudité's and dips flung together for dinner with friends or for a solo supper, that went viral this year. "It's food as something flexible, rather than something that is either right or wrong," says Paul Gamble.



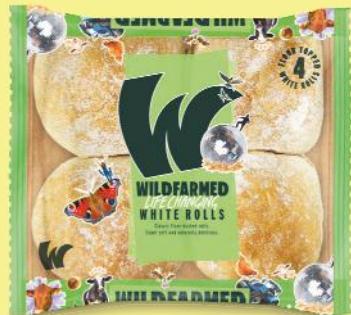
# 70%

of customers aged over 45 who were surveyed still use traditional recipe books

# STRONG ROOTS



# DOWN TO EARTH



Protecting the planet is an overwhelming task, but looking for ways to make our food more sustainable is a good place to start – and the ways to do it get more tempting by the day

# 59%

of respondents said they were more likely to buy a product if it had sustainable credentials

## DIGGING DEEPER

After decades of focusing more on our health than the planet's, we are waking up to the ways in which the two are connected – through the type and variety of plants we consume, the health of our soils, food waste and plastic packaging. Mintel says that 79% of shoppers choose products with a sustainability claim. A better understanding of the link between healthy soils and nutritional produce has seen them seek out products and dishes referencing 'regenerative' and 'organic', or that are sourced from the 'wild'.

"Healthy eating has historically been focused on you and your body – but now that focus is expanding beyond our own wellness to the community and the environment," says Waitrose insight manager Marisa Arkle.

## FUTURE-PROOFING

Earlier this year, we unveiled our Farming for Nature initiative, which has seen us working to support more than 2,000 British farmers to move to nature-friendly farming practices, helping to boost financial

resilience of farms in the long-term and fighting the effects of climate change. At the Leckford Estate, the Waitrose farm in Hampshire, we have been farming regeneratively since 2020.

Waitrose has committed to work with British farmers to produce food in harmony with nature, and to source meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables from UK farms which use regenerative practices by 2035.

"We hope this will help protect British farmers against the effects of climate change, enhance nature and ensure that customers can buy the best and most delicious British-grown produce for many years to come," says Andrew Hoad, head of the Leckford Estate.

## BRANDS THAT DO BETTER

Passionate, high-profile chefs such as Chantelle Nicholson and Tommy Banks have helped raise the profile around regenerative farming, as have dynamic enterprises including Wildfarmed and Golden Hooves, a cheese produced from regeneratively farmed milk, which will be

available on Waitrose shelves next year.

Wildfarmed, a producer of regeneratively farmed grain, has been in store since May in the form of bread, rolls, flour and the Leckford Farmhouse Loaf, produced in collaboration with the Leckford Estate.

"Wildfarmed has made regen fun and accessible," says Waitrose senior brand development chef Will Torrent.

## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Customers dining out and in have shown more interest in ancient wholegrains and pulses, for the role they play in regenerative farming and their health benefits.

Sales of stoneground flours, made from emmer, spelt and rye, shot up as people realised how much better they are for them and for the soil – Waitrose speciality flour sales are up 18.2% year-on-year overall.

With all this in play, Regenuary – a grass-roots movement encouraging shoppers to buy more regenerative sources of animal protein throughout January, rather than cutting it out – is set to be bigger than ever in 2025.

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THE FOCUS ON HEALTHY EATING IS EXPANDING BEYOND OUR OWN WELLNESS TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

# COUNTING PLANTS NOT CALORIES



More is more when it comes to nutrients, and a great way to achieve this is by increasing your plant intake. We're still here for the smoothies, but there are new ways to up the plant count

## DATA-DRIVEN DIET

After decades of poring over the backs of packets and counting calories, health-conscious consumers have a new rule that's more fun to follow. Thanks to Professor Tim Spector and his pioneering research into gut health and its effect on our bodies, we now know a healthy diet means maximising the range of plants you consume each week. Ideally, he says, we should eat 30 different plants or more, along with fermented foods such as kefir and kimchi.

His research, and the blood-sugar monitoring apps that have followed, prove health is not so much about counting calories, as it is understanding our gut and boosting the diversity of the microbes within it. Research from Mintel shows 67% of consumers now include foods that promote good gut health in their diet.

"Rather than health being about taking things away, we've seen more interest in positive health, and adding nutrition to your plate," says Waitrose nutritionist Jo Lunn. "It's not about cutting out certain foods or even whole food groups."

"We've spoken about personalised nutrition for years," adds Waitrose innovation manager Lizzie Haywood. "But Zoe and other blood sugar tracking apps have made it more mainstream."

## SERVING SIMPLICITY

Zoe's Daily30+ Wholefood Supplement, developed by Tim Spector and launched in Waitrose this year, enables customers to add variety quickly and easily to their daily meals, as do ready-meals such as Waitrose

Mixed Bean Salad, which has 10 plants. "Eating more plants encompasses so many trends, including the move toward plant-based, and the popularity of fermented foods and pulses," says Lizzie.

Sales of fermented foods continue to rise (7% year-on-year for kefir and kimchi), but so too do sales of wholegrains, nuts, dried fruit and seeds. The likes of avocados, quinoa and blueberries are no longer regarded as faddish 'superfoods', but seen as part of a balanced, healthy diet.

## JUST PLANTS

A greater interest in the sourcing, processing and environmental credentials of the food we buy is driving customers towards plant-based dishes containing identifiable plants and processing methods.

Increasingly, customers would rather plant-based proteins come from nuts or tofu, rather than synthesised 'meat'. The Waitrose PlantLiving range caters for this via marinated tofu, vegetarian 'nduja made from sun-dried tomatoes, chilli and paprika, and mushroom and chestnut burgers that celebrate plants rather than trying to recreate beef, pork or chicken.

## ROUGH IT UP

Also fuelling the 'more is more' approach to plants is a renewed interest in fibre, the macronutrient du jour after years of protein with everything.

"Most UK adults are not eating enough fibre for a five-year-old, let alone an adult, so everyone benefits from increasing the fibre in their diets," says Jo.

“**RATHER THAN HEALTH BEING ABOUT TAKING THINGS AWAY, WE'VE SEEN MORE INTEREST IN POSITIVE HEALTH, AND ADDING NUTRITION TO YOUR PLATE**”

# PURE



It's back to basics for many of us, due to a growing awareness about ultra-processed foods. We're turning away from low-fat, highly processed products in favour of old-fashioned ingredients

# & SIMPLE

## SAY NO TO LOW

Our concerns around ultra-processed foods and a renewed appetite for indulgent treats have led to an aversion to anything processed which is low fat or high in artificial sweeteners.

"There's been a lot of bad press around so-called 'healthy' products which aren't nutritious and don't taste great," says director of Waitrose own brand Maddy Wilson. "The growing awareness of UPFs in our diets has seen many customers going back to basics and embracing a much simpler approach to their diet."

## TREAT YOURSELF

For some people, following a low-fat diet has resulted in an increased intake of sugar, and an awareness that moderate, natural fat intake is a good thing has continued to fuel sales of whole milk dairy products.

Although Waitrose is reducing the sugar content of sweet treats where possible, Waitrose nutritionist Jo Lunn says the focus is on "taste and quality ingredients and a more responsible approach to nutrition, rather than resorting to adding sweeteners".

"There will always be an element of calorie watching when it comes to dessert," says senior brand development chef Will Torrent. "But if people do treat themselves, they want something that tastes amazing – a sweet, indulgent lemon tart and a tiramisu full of booze and cream, because that's what makes it taste so great."



# “

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF BAD PRESS AROUND SO-CALLED 'HEALTHY' PRODUCTS THAT AREN'T NUTRITIOUS AND DON'T TASTE GREAT

# 54%

of those surveyed proactively avoid processed foods

# EMBRACING BASIC



We eat with our senses, so knowing the back story makes for double the enjoyment. Our tastes reflect an interest in how our favourite foods are made, and how we can buy the best of it when our kitchens aren't set up for cottagecore hobbies

## TRUST THE PROCESS

The premium we now place on time cuts both ways – we want to speed up cooking after work, but we also want to slow down our pace of life, a lingering trend from lockdown and the growth of crafting on social media. Time is an ingredient, not a commodity, and one which customers increasingly appreciate in the food they buy, and in their lives and culinary endeavours.

“We know our customers are on the lookout for foods which are not processed, or are minimally processed, and there's been a raised interest in age-old techniques due to this trend,” says Waitrose innovation manager Lizzie Haywood.

As a result, restaurants and retailers are increasingly highlighting fermentation

or ageing times, and the story behind the food they serve, be that 40-day dry-aged beef, the No.1 Sourdough Baguette made with a 25-year-old levain rye dough or six-month barrel-aged miso. Food lovers are attempting to recreate some of these processes themselves, making kimchi, butter and pickling at home.

## ORIGIN STORIES

People also want to understand the craft behind the food they buy – 61% of Waitrose customers this year said they love food with a story. “Pies with slow-cooked meats are proving popular, and people appreciate the expertise behind making the pastry for a pie,” says Waitrose product developer Simona Cohen-Vida-Welsh.

## KEEPING IT REAL

This interest in people and production is being reflected in food photography, as much as in the narrative and branding around food. “We're moving away from retouched, pristine shots of finished dishes to something which grounds the food in where it comes from – which is about the process rather than the end result,” says Waitrose insight manager Marisa Arkle.

Think beef joints slowly ageing in a cellar luminous with Himalayan pink salt bricks, rather than a plated-up steak; cabbages being shredded and massaged with salt and spice, rather than a bowl of perfect kimchi. It's not the polished finish we want to see – it's the messy process that makes it.



# 38%

of respondents make bread from scratch

# 28%

have tried their hand at pickling in the past year



# TAKING A FLUID APPROACH

# ZEBRA STRIPING



The definition of drinking has become, well, liquid. There's a whole scale of choices between 'something soft' and 'something strong' and it's up to you which you choose, and in which order. This is how the numbers suggest our drinking habits are shifting

## DRINKING, BUT MAKE IT STRIPY

The no and low trend is here to stay – not least because those who do like a drink are wanting in on it.

Drinkers have, of course, long opted to have a glass of water alongside their wine or cocktail. But now the concept of alternating between an alcoholic drink and a non-alcoholic one – known as zebra striping – looks increasingly palatable.

## FILL YOUR CUP

"The way customers consume alcohol has changed," says head of beer, wine and spirits Pierpaolo Petrassi. Where once a 'session'

meant parking yourself in a pub for hours, now it's become "more syncopated, with food and a variety of different drinks that may or may not contain booze", he adds.

The days when one type of wine would see diners through a whole meal are waning too. "People are buying with a particular focus, they want interesting producers and stories, and feel less draconian about what matches with what," says Pierpaolo.

"At Waitrose, no and low sales are up by nearly a fifth and the range and popularity of reduced alcohol products is increasing all the time. We're seeing 10% ABV gins and tequilas and lower alcohol beers which are more like 2% ABV," he adds.

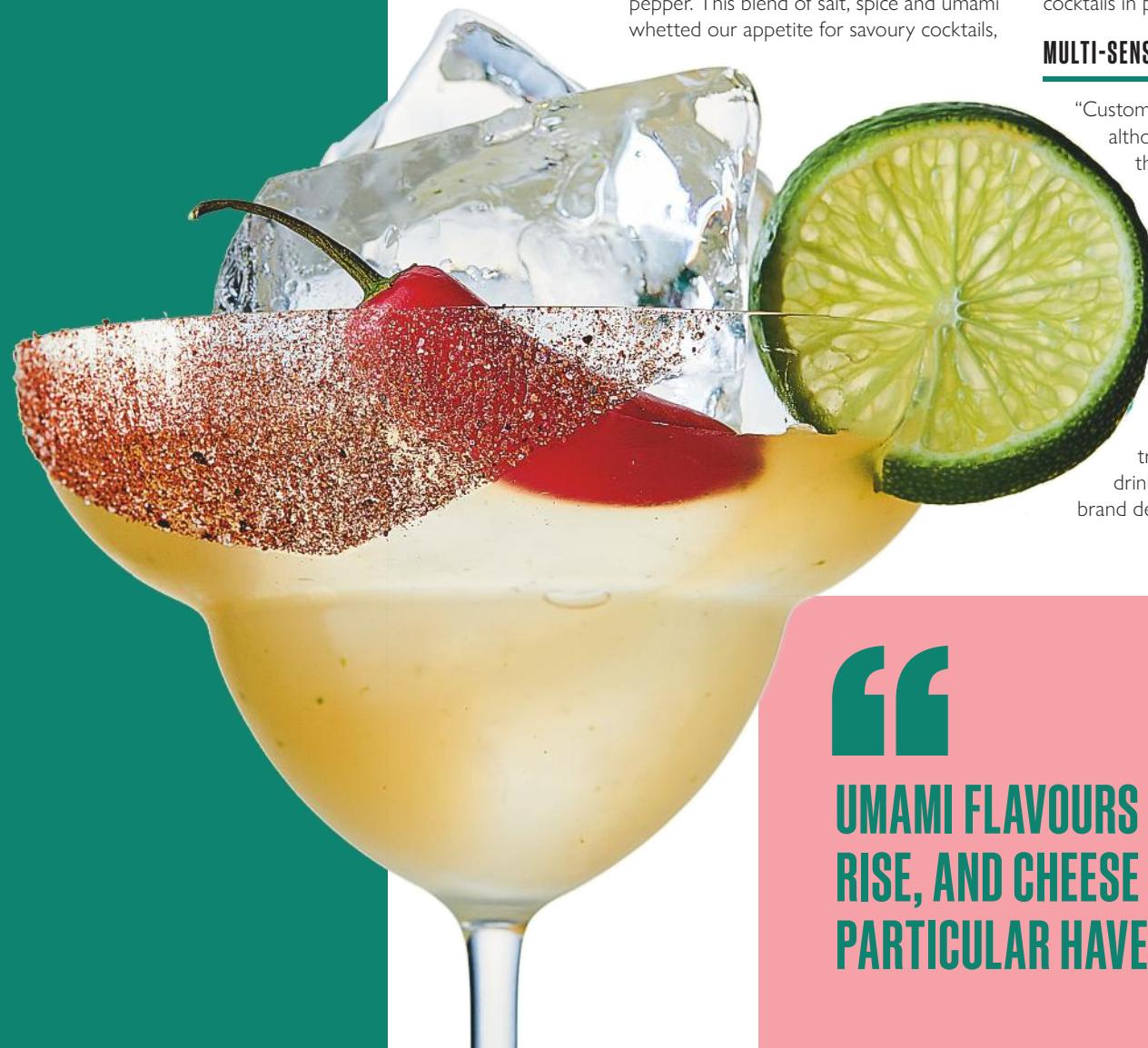


NOW THE IDEA OF ALTERNATING BETWEEN AN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE AND A NON-ALCOHOLIC ONE – AKA ZEBRA STRIPING – LOOKS INCREASINGLY PALATABLE



# MINE'S A FETA BRINE MARTINI

Anyone for feta brine? Mixologists have always loved to raise eyebrows, but we're now shaking things up at home, too – and the kookier the cocktail, the better



## DO THE TWIST

Last year was all about the gilda martini, which is topped with a stick bearing an anchovy, an olive and a slice of pickled chilli pepper. This blend of salt, spice and umami whetted our appetite for savoury cocktails,

as have techniques such as fat-washing and garnishing with oils, and the increasingly ubiquitous spicy margarita. Drinks company Diageo reported earlier in the year that umami flavours are on the rise, and cheese cocktails in particular have been trending.

## MULTI-SENSORY MIXOLOGY

“Customers are becoming braver, although there is a need to keep things relatively simple,” says Pierpaolo Petrassi. “You can’t assume everyone has a massive back bar at home, but recipes with interesting mixers and garnishes are popular.” The great thing about the savoury cocktail trend, whether it’s a caviar martini out or a feta brine martini at home, is that “it transforms the occasion from a drink to an experience”, says senior brand development chef Will Torrent.



**UMAMI FLAVOURS ARE ON THE RISE, AND CHEESE COCKTAILS IN PARTICULAR HAVE BEEN TRENDING**

# FOR ALL SEASONS



Once the favourite ice-in-glass tippie of pub gardens, we've seen rosé go from drab to glam of late. What's made us get back into blush?

## ROSÉ ALL DAY

It's not just rosé-tinted spectacles – in the past few years, preconceptions around pink wines have meaningfully shifted. It was once confined to whenever the sun shines and the mercury rises, but now it's a drink for all seasons. And these days, you're just as likely to find a bunch of blokes enjoying a bottle of rosé in the pub.

In part, this is because rosé has got better – and much more diverse. “We've moved from a market that was dominated by medium or medium-sweet styles 15 years ago to much paler, drier rosés, which can be consumed as a white wine would,” says Pierpaolo Petrassi.

## DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Provençal rosé brands such as Whispering Angel and Mirabeau are as much status symbols as they are drinks. Yet, as customer confidence in and understanding of rosé has increased, darker, more complex rosés have risen in popularity. The notion that colour denotes quality – a hangover from sweet, jam-coloured Californian Zinfandel – is diminishing as people learn about skin contact and different grape varieties.

“Darker rosés are on trend,” says Pierpaolo. “They are more complex, so they can stand up to food. We launched the Aglianico Rosato and Susumaniello in the Loved & Found range earlier this year, and it's proved really popular.”

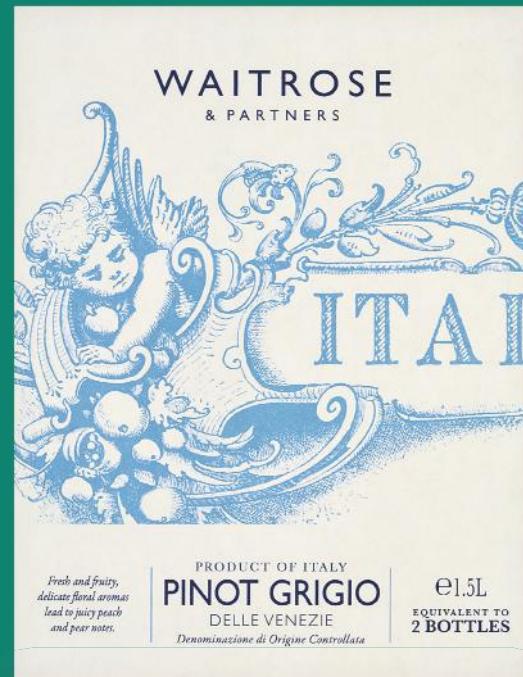
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IN THE PAST FEW YEARS,  
PRECONCEPTIONS  
AROUND PINK WINES HAVE  
MEANINGFULLY SHIFTED



## BRING YOUR OWN

## BOX



When the industry innovates to reduce its carbon footprint and combat waste, we should raise a toast – and the wine doesn't have to come from a bottle



### FAVES ON TAP

Forget the boxed plonk which fuelled parties in the 80s – boxed wine is back, and there's more choice than ever. "There has been some uncertainty around this format, but now we're seeing recognisable and iconic brands step into this space," says Waitrose wine buyer Emma Penman.

La Vieille Ferme and Waitrose Blueprint are two which have attracted customers this year. "We want to change the narrative around boxed wines," adds Emma. "They can be premium. We're working hard to bring our customers' favourite wines in."

### JUST THE ONE

As well as being good for keeping a crowd watered, boxed wines are also – perhaps counterintuitively – good for moderating our drinking. The shelf life is longer than a bottle – six weeks after opening – making boxed wine a perfect alternative should you fancy a one-off midweek glass.

"We've had a lot of feedback about people wanting to have the odd glass of wine after work, without opening a bottle," says Emma. It's the same reason canned wine is growing, with sales up 36% this year. Canned wine – or 'vin in a tin' – lends itself

as much to after-work treats as it does to train trips and picnics, with brands including Les Dauphins and The Uncommon bolstering customer confidence.

### LIGHTENING THE LOAD

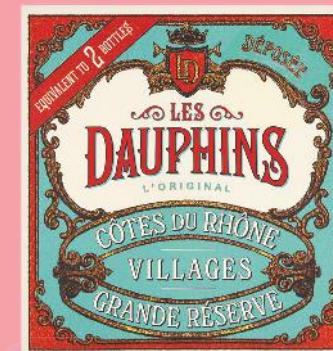
There's an environmental side to this, too. Cans and boxes have a smaller carbon footprint than glass because they are lighter and take up less space – but for now this factor is still secondary to price and taste.

In 2023, Waitrose was the first retailer to move all permitted small format wines out of glass and into cans. Fast forward to 2024, and we have sold 25% more wine in alternative formats, growing our share of this important segment.

# 25%+

more wines were sold in alternative formats in 2024 compared to 2023

“WE'RE SEEING ICONIC BRANDS STEP INTO THIS SPACE. BOXED WINES CAN BE PREMIUM



# TAKING CARE OF YOU

# BIG BUNS



Indulgence is back, and this time it's buttery. With greater understanding of the benefits of eating for pleasure comes a willingness to make sure we're maximising those 'treat' moments. Chocolate butter? We're here for it

## GET FLAKED

Croissants have been huge for years now, both literally and as a culinary trend. In 2013, the craze took the shape of the cronut – a doughnut crossed with a croissant – and last year saw croissant cubes go viral, hand-dipped in different flavours.

This is the year that we embraced the crookie – the croissant stuffed with cookie dough. "We trialled them in two of our stores and just couldn't keep up with demand," says senior brand development chef Will Torrent. "The hybrid croissant isn't going anywhere."

Where we first had almond, we now have pistachio, and in place of the croissant cube, we have croissant cups, a cupcake-croissant hybrid from the Waitrose No.1 range in salted caramel and cinnamon.

## SHARING'S CARING

This is partly down to what's known as the 'lipstick effect'. Even in economic downturns, most purse strings can stretch to affordable treats such as lipsticks and lip-smacking pastries. This has not been confined to croissants – sales of choux buns, éclairs and other sweet, indulgent pâtisserie have been soaring at Waitrose.

"This year, it's all about giant and oversized," says Waitrose senior brand development chef Paul Gamble. That's why we have launched a giant cinnamon knot for Christmas 2024. "A lot of it is driven by social media," adds Paul. "But there's a sharing side to it too. You can get it with friends to experience together, and it's a relatively cheap indulgence."

## BON APPÉTIT

It's against this backdrop, and a general hankering for comfort in a turbulent world, that there's been a resurgence of interest in all things French – the creamier and more buttery the better. Every month has brought a new bistro opening, from Josephine in London to Bavette in Leeds.

But you don't have to be in a French restaurant to find evidence of the revolution taking place. Everything from doughnuts to savoury dips are being crème brûlée'd, thanks to bakeries such as Bread Ahead, which brûléed a doughnut this year, and restaurants including The Barbary, which launched in Notting Hill with brûlée of pepper and feta.

## SPREAD JOY

Butter is also back in a big way, fuelled by chef Thomas Straker, who became the poster boy for it on social media a few years ago. As well as continuing the enduring #buttertok trend with recipes for flavoured butters and churning your own, he has since launched his own brand, All Things Butter. His chocolate flavour, recently launched at Waitrose, packs a punch, says head of own brand Maddy Wilson.



“2024 IS THE YEAR THAT WE EMBRACED THE CROOKIE – THE CROISSANT STUFFED WITH COOKIE DOUGH”





The animals we share our homes with may live there rent-free, but it's clear that looking after a pet is also a way of taking care of yourself. Remember that next time they pinch food from the table

# PAW-FECT PARENTS



# 23%

of owners who responded said they spend between £51-£100 a month on pet food

## DOG TREATS GET A GLOW-UP

This year, Waitrose launched its first mince pies for dogs, the latest in a growing line of anthropomorphised treats designed for our fur babies. According to Mintel, more than half of UK consumers now own a pet, and with society embracing single and child-free lifestyles, they are increasingly seen as part of the family – to the point where the owners consider themselves pet parents.

## CHOSEN FAMILY

Pet food and pet care, once confined to canned meat and a trip to the vet if necessary, is now holistic, with Mintel reporting that owners are looking to promote overall pet health and wellbeing.

Many retailers, including Waitrose, have expanded ranges to include pet-friendly versions of ice cream and chocolate, and Waitrose now has dedicated freezers in a number of shops, to accommodate frozen fresh pet food.

In recent years, sociologists have coined the phrase 'multi-species family' to describe this intimacy with our furry friends, and a desire to include them in occasions such as birthdays and Christmas. Against this backdrop, Waitrose's new Paw-Some Mince Pies are just pawfect.

# SPICE? THAT'S IT



Gone are the days when the only heat we could handle was Colman's Mustard. We're now drizzling pizza with hot honey and making spicy margaritas as standard

## GET SPICY

Earlier this year, the world's leading pepper farmer created what is believed to be the world's hottest chilli in South Carolina. And while we've not quite reached two million Scovilles on these shores, our desire for spice still ranks second highest in Europe.

Sales of hot sauces have exploded. Sriracha and gochujang, previously little known outside Thailand and Korea, are now store-cupboard staples, with sales at Waitrose rising 5% in the past 12 months.

"We have turned up the heat in our own brand launches," says senior brand development chef Zoë Simons. "Expect to see more and more products marrying chilli with sweeter things. Hot honey is definitely the new salted caramel – it's become the new normal."



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WHILE WE'VE NOT QUITE REACHED TWO MILLION SCOVILLES ON THESE SHORES, OUR DESIRE FOR SPICE STILL RANKS SECOND HIGHEST IN EUROPE

# PANTRY



# GLOW-UP

Food can be good for the mood long before it's on your fork. Sustainability, branding, health properties and a dose of hype can all make a product a must-have. And if you want to treat yourself to a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of salt on your ice cream, lean in



## QUALITY CONTROL

Pastries are not the only foods to have gone premium in 2024 – this is also the year that pantry staples were pimped up, or to use the buzzword of the day, been 'yassified'. We've seen a fuelled interest from food-loving customers in the provenance of store-cupboard stalwarts, while social media has made them more brand-savvy.

A pantry stocked with premium, ethical and – crucially – pretty brands such as Belazu and Citizens of Soil has become a status symbol. *House & Garden* magazine asked earlier this year if a trendy bottle of olive oil was the new wine when it came to dinner party gifts from guests.

The same could be said of olives, nuts, honey, vinegar and even salt. Maldon's Chilli Salt was added to shelves this year, Willy's Cider Vinegar has become a cult product and Waitrose has launched hand-stretched Italian No.1 Black Truffle Grissini Breadsticks and No.1 Cacio e Pepe Straws for the ultimate store-cupboard treat.

## YOU DO YOU

We're having breakfast for lunch, dinner for breakfast, bacon for dessert and ice cream for starters. Although everyone will have devoured a bowl of cereal or egg on toast late at night at one point, 2025 looks like the year consumers will fully embrace a more maverick mealtime approach.

Mintel reports: "Despite consumers' intentions to eat healthily, cook meals from scratch and stick to a set grocery budget, these do not always happen." More often than not, they're eating what they like, when they like, and with what they like to have it with – hence the enduring popularity of the fridge forage and carpet picnic.

To cater for our rebellious appetites, and the growing demand for new and exciting food brands, Waitrose has launched BrandsNew, a platform designed to attract, support and nurture new brands such as Ottolenghi, Wildfarmed and Zoe Daily 30+, with plans to launch more new and exciting products onto shelves in 2025.



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THEY LIKE,  
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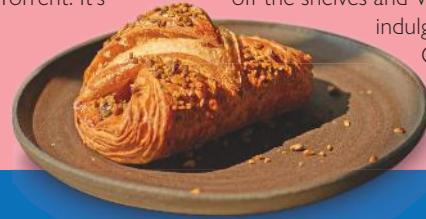
◀ GOING OUT

COMING IN ▶



# HAZELNUT PISTACHIO

This was the year the world went nuts for pistachio, with the pretty green nut gracing everything from pesto to tiramisu. “Chocolatiers and pastry chefs have loved pistachio for years – but unlike hazelnuts and almonds, it has never really become mainstream,” says senior brand development chef Will Torrent. It’s expensive, but it’s an indulgence that really delivers, whether it’s bursting out of a



croissant or brightening up a herb-cruste rack of lamb. Searches for pistachio are up 19% year on year, and the green-eyed searchers are being richly rewarded. The Waitrose No.1 Cracking Pistachio Egg made headline news this Easter, No.1 Pistachio Tiramisu is flying off the shelves and Waitrose launched an indulgent No.1 Croissant in October that’s filled and topped with pistachios.



# FLAVOURED GINS CREAM LIQUEURS

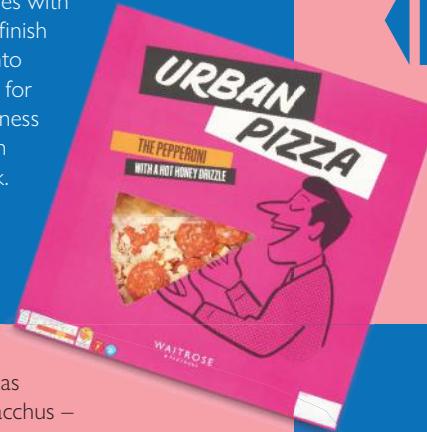
Once the darling of the drinks world, gin sales have been on the decline in recent years – particularly flavoured gins, sales of which are down by 23% compared to a year ago. In their place, we’re seeing cream liqueurs that are rich, sweet and perfect for Christmas, served over ice. This year, Waitrose added a blonde chocolate cream liqueur to the No.1 range, an indulgent digestif inspired by the beloved No.1 Blonde Chocolate bar.



# SWALTY SWICY

Sweet and salty isn’t going anywhere fast, but there’s another popular taste profile on the block – sweet and spicy, aka swicy. Hot honey is everywhere this festive season – on cheese, hams and puddings – and it’s not just for Christmas. Earlier this year, Waitrose released a pepperoni pizza under its Urban

Pizza range which comes with a hot honey drizzle to finish it off. The trend taps into our increasing appetite for heat, as well as a weakness for combinations which sound wacky, but work.



# HONEY PEANUT BUTTER

Driven by the rise and rise of artisan peanut butter, the high protein nutty spread has become the must-have breakfast ingredient thanks to social media. Waitrose sells more than 3.5 million jars a year, with customers incorporating peanut butter into sweet treats to add that extra protein kick. It’s also become the breakfast spread du jour, seen as delivering that much needed morning protein punch, while being less sugary than honey.



# SAUVIGNON BLANC BACCHUS

Sauvignon Blanc is second only to Pinot Grigio as the most popular white wine in the UK, but Bacchus – named for the Roman god of wine – is catching up. The grape, which thrives in British soils, produces wine with a similar aroma and flavour profile to New Zealand Savvy B, but with a fraction of the carbon footprint – and the added pleasure of supporting the best of British. Bad weather blighted the 2022 crop, which led to a fall in sales of all English wines last year. But 2023 was a bumper harvest, which means prices have come down and Bacchus is bigger than ever. For too long, Sauvignon Blanc has been the poster child of white wine, but Bacchus does a similar job, says Pierpaolo Petrassi, head of beer, wine and spirits. “It’s fresh, aromatic, and customers are recognising that it’s a locally sourced alternative.”



# INSTANT RICE INSTANT NOODLES

TikTok’s ‘make them fancy’ trend, which sees simple store-cupboard ingredients pimped up, has accelerated demand for instant noodles this year. What was previously seen as a studenty staple has progressed to consumers making fancy additions to their instant noodles for the ultimate fakeaway dish – just add chilli oil, eggs, sesame seeds, spring onions and seaweed for a gourmet meal in.



# TIMELINE OF TASTE

Each month brings a new online edible obsession – and it inevitably ends up on our plates. Here are 12 trends that we couldn't leave alone in 2024

## JANUARY

## BONE BROTH

The annual quest for health and comfort led customers to bone broth, helped by fans such as Kylie Jenner, Davina McCall and Gwyneth Paltrow. Searches for the broth – said to boost collagen and aid digestion – were up 163% at Waitrose, and #bonebroth had nearly 300 million TikTok views.

## MARCH

## TIM TAMS

Australians flocked to Waitrose when it was announced that stores would start stocking Tim Tam chocolate bars, known as 'Aussie gold'. Searches for Tim Tams at waitrose.com the next day rose 202%. The treat consists of two malted biscuits coated in a layer of chocolate with a chocolate cream filling.

## MAY

## SAKE

Although many people in the UK have yet to try this ancient Japanese rice wine, interest this year has grown rapidly. Searches at waitrose.com were up 241% in May and on World Sake Day (1 October), Waitrose extended its range to include sparkling and plum options – perfect for pairing with food.

## JULY

## CHOCOLATE MUFFINS

Norwegian swimmer Henrik Christiansen was a TikTok hit when he showcased 'the best thing' about the Paris Olympic Village – chocolate muffins. Customers responded, with chocolate muffin sales up 24.8% from July to August, while chocolate muffin recipe searches soared at waitrose.com.

## SEPTEMBER

## RICE PUDDING

A sudden cold wind and a bout of nostalgia saw demand for rice pudding spike. Customers appeared to embrace retro puddings as a whole, with rice pudding recipe searches up 66%. Searches for other nostalgic puds rose too, with spotted dick up 800% and plum and blackberry cobbler up 150%.

## NOVEMBER

## CELEB BOOZE BRANDS

From Kylie Minogue's signature rosé to Margot Robbie's Papa Salt Gin, the celebrity-branded booze bubble shows no sign of bursting. New brands at Waitrose included Blackeye Gin from former rugby union stars Mike Tindall, James Haskell and Alex Payne, and Jeremy Clarkson's Hawkstone Lager.



## FEBRUARY

## HASH BROWNS

The #hashwich, a sandwich made using hash browns instead of bread, took TikTok by storm in February. Sales of hash browns increased by 24.8% year on year at Waitrose, as it became clear that these deliciously crispy shredded potato snacks were no longer just for breakfast.

## APRIL

## OTTOLENGHI X WAITROSE

Yotam Ottolenghi launched his first own-brand spice blends and sauces exclusively at Waitrose, and they were a big hit, with sales in the following weeks 97% higher than forecast. The bestseller was Ottolenghi Pomegranate, Rose & Preserved Lemon Harissa, with Shawarma Marinade a close second.

## JUNE

## PICKLE JUICE

'Powered by pickle juice' screamed the headlines in the build-up to a superb run by England's footballers at this year's Euros, as it was revealed that the team uses it to prevent cramp. Pickle juice searches at waitrose.com hit an all-time high in mid-June and pickled gherkin sales at Waitrose rose 7% year on year.

## AUGUST

## CUCUMBER SALAD

Cucumber sales rose by 17.5% at Waitrose in mid-August, thanks to TikTok's grip on young food lovers. The cucumber salad recipe from Logan Moffitt (aka the cucumber guy) was so popular with his 4.8 million followers that farmers in Iceland struggled to keep up with demand.

## OCTOBER

## CHOCOLATE BUTTER

The flavoured butter trend gets bigger and better every month – and October was no exception. This was when Waitrose launched chocolate butter from Thomas Straker's new brand All Things Butter, a rich, sweet creation that cries out to be spread on pancakes, toast, waffles and more.

## DECEMBER

## GIANT CINNAMON KNOT

Showcasing this year's trend for supersized pastries are the giant Waitrose Cinnamon Knots – a hand-sized version of the ones that have proved so popular. Made by third-generation bakers in Holland, they are eminently shareable and finished with cinnamon and caramelised sugar.

# A TASTE OF THE FUTURE 2025

**Any on-trend restaurant menu will contain at least one out-there ingredient, as delicious as it is mysterious. Thanks to this sneak peek at 2025's headline flavours your taste buds will be pumped to try them – and your food nerd credentials will be glowing**

## TOUM

This garlicky sauce is set to go mainstream in 2025. It's a creamy emulsion of garlic and olive oil from Lebanon, where it's a popular accompaniment to a host of meat-based dishes including rotisserie chicken, shawarma and grilled, meat-stuffed pittas known as arayes.

Middle-Eastern stuffed pittas, arayes, are already fast becoming a popular staple of Lebanese restaurants and street food stalls in the UK. In spring, Berenjak founder Kian Samyani opened a shawarma kitchen called Shatta & Toun in London's Arcade Food Hall, while the eponymous restaurant Toun opened in Mayfair in October.



## YUZU

Sour yet fresh, sweet yet bitter, this wrinkly yellow citrus fruit packs a surprisingly complex punch. But even though yuzu – a relation of a mandarin orange – has been the darling of Michelin-starred chefs for a while, it has yet to hit the mainstream. Next year, this looks set to change. Mintel has named it one of its flavours to watch for 2025, particularly when it comes to innovations around sweets, desserts and drinks.

London has its share of yuzu-infused dishes and cocktails, including a chocolate mousse at Naifs and Silverleaf's yuzu martini. In the UK, 29% of sweet eaters say they would be encouraged to try sour flavours in a new product. Yuzu ticks those boxes, not least because a little goes a long way. Also set to hit the mainstream is yuzu kosho, a fermented Japanese condiment made with chillies, salt and yuzu peel.

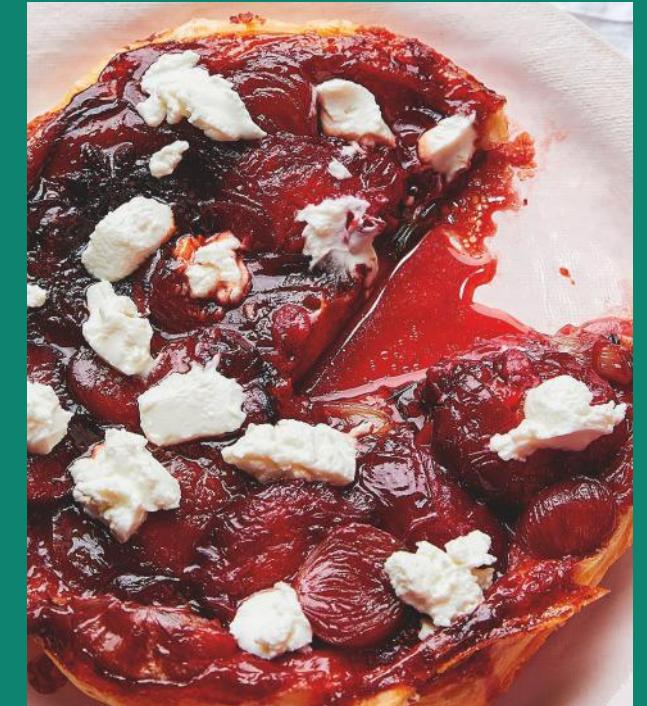


## JUNIPER

Not just for gin and venison, juniper berries are set to be big in 2025, particularly (and somewhat ironically) in alcohol-free drinks such as flavoured waters, cold-pressed juices and herbal teas. Their piney, peppery, citrusy notes work well in soft drinks, lending them freshness and complexity while reducing the need for sugar or sweeteners.

Junipers also tap into the growing interest in Nordic cuisine and a cultural shift toward more natural flavourings. Their culinary potential is ripe for further exploration, and while their compatibility with dark, gamey meats is well known, they also pair well with pickles, salmon and even roast potatoes.

Spiced berry jam, roast chicken and chef Ravinder Bhogal's plum and shallot tarte Tatin with goat's cheese are just a few of the recipes in which juniper berries – available in the Waitrose Cooks' Ingredients range – appear at waitrose.com.



## TONKA BEAN

The flavour and scent of the South American jungle-born tonka bean has been beguiling bakers and chefs, who grate it onto desserts, soups and even mashed potatoes, or use it to infuse custards, crème caramel and ice creams.

The intensity of the spice means it's only ever used in small, safe quantities, to impart its signature notes of vanilla, almond, cinnamon and even coconut, according to what it's paired with. In Manchester, chef Eddie Shepherd has cured root vegetables with tonka beans and beetroot, while in London's trendy Levan, you'll find apricot, tonka bean and vanilla whipped into a retro syllabub-style dessert.

## SOUR CHERRY

Another budding source of 'sour power' in the kitchen is the sour cherry – a catch-all term for a number of cherry varieties that have been loved for centuries in their countries of origin, but are only now coming to the fore in the UK. Sour cherry is another flavour to watch for 2025 – and not just because, according to a TikTok trend in June, sour sweets can help stave off panic attacks.

In April, a study of Italian and American adults revealed that one in eight actively enjoy intensely sour flavours, and the sour cherry is particularly appealing to bakers and pastry chefs who want to go beyond conventional sour sources, such as lemon and lime, and tap into the growing appetite for 'next-level sour'. This sour cherry trend can already be seen at Waitrose, which stocks them in the Cooks' Ingredients range and also immersed in dark chocolate from Forest Feast.



## PILPELCHUMA

Billed as the harissa of 2025, pilpelchuma is a Libyan chilli paste – a wonderful blend of roasted peppers, garlic, cumin, and a hit of chilli that adds a kick to any dish and lends itself perfectly to the nation's growing taste for heat.

It's great for livening up sauces and stews or stirring into roasted vegetables for extra oomph. Adventurous Waitrose customers have been going wild for Ottolenghi Pilpelchuma, which launched onto shelves earlier this year, as they look to expand their culinary horizons for 2025.

Yotam says: "I am particularly excited for people to taste the pilpelchuma, a deliciously spicy pepper, garlic and chilli paste that I love – I think it's going to be the next harissa."



## CRISPY CHILLI OIL

Hot, savoury, crunchy and aromatic – no wonder crispy chilli oil has set our palates on fire. Waitrose Cooks' Ingredients Chilli & Garlic Sauce joins a long and growing line of variations on this addictive blend of chilli flakes, oil, garlic, soy sauce and other ingredients which can include (but are not limited to) peanuts, fish sauce and shallots.

For years, Lao Gan Ma was the go-to brand, but the pandemic saw several restaurants bottle up their own hot takes for people to buy in lockdown. The crisp component comes from the high density of chilli flakes, which have been crisped up in the oil. Its addictive nature comes from that textural component, and the hit of hot umami.

It's used as a cooking ingredient, to add spice, umami and aroma, but it's also beloved as a condiment for spooning over eggs, stirring through noodles and for dipping pizza or flatbreads into.





# FOOD & DRINK REPORT 2024-25