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Report Name: Food and Beverage Trends to Watch for 2026

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Report Highlights:

Thailand's food and beverage industry is shaped by several major trends, including holistic wellness, convenience and premiumization, sensory-driven and layered experiences, and shifting population and socio-economic dynamics that are being met through food technology innovation and food business reactions to consumer demands and expressed preferences. Together, these trends reflect a vibrant market focused on well-being, experience, and inclusivity that ensures Thailand remains a food destination.

Overview

Holistic wellness is at the forefront, with gut health and functional nutrition driving demand for products like psychobiotics, fermented foods, and green superfood beverages. Convenience and premiumization are redefining frozen and instant meals, as consumers seek high-quality, nutritious options that fit busy lifestyles. Sensory-driven dining is gaining momentum, with restaurants and brands creating immersive, multi-sensory experiences that engage all five senses and deepen emotional connections to food. The rise of the Silver Economy is prompting innovation in texture-modified and nutrient-rich foods for seniors, while the "Affordable Premium" shift is making gourmet flavors accessible through affordable, single-portion treats. Together, these trends reflect a market focused on well-being, experience, and inclusivity.

Holistic Wellness with Gut Health

The food and beverage industry in 2026 is increasingly defined by a focus on holistic wellness, with gut health taking center stage as the foundation of overall well-being. Consumers now view the gut as the "gateway to holistic wellness," recognizing its role in supporting metabolic stability, healthy aging, and the critical gut-brain connection. This shift reflects a proactive approach to health, moving beyond addressing problems to prevent them. A major evolution within this trend is the rise of "psychobiotics" with specific probiotic strains and prebiotics designed to influence the central nervous system.

Consequently, products featuring prebiotics, probiotics, and postbiotics are surging in popularity, with consumers specifically seeking psychobiotic formulations linked to neurotransmitter regulation, stress reduction, anxiety relief, and better sleep. Traditional fermented foods like sourdough, vinegar tonics, and high-quality dairy are being embraced for their natural digestive benefits, while green powders are gaining traction as "green insurance," offering a comprehensive daily intake of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants for those with fast-paced lifestyles. These innovations align with a broader movement toward functional nutrition, where food and beverages are designed not just to nourish but to enhance physical and emotional health.

The Thai brand Oh! Juice has become a prominent leader in the green superfood beverage market, offering a viral line of ready-to-drink (RTD) products infused with functional ingredients. Their green smoothies and dairy-based beverages provide a daily nutritional boost, incorporating premium green powders and high-end algae ingredients such as Blue Majik and organic spirulina powder.

Convenience and Premiumization (Gourmet Frozen and Instant Meals)

Convenience remains a top priority for consumers, but the demand for quality and sophistication has redefined the frozen and instant meal categories. Gourmet frozen meals and reimaged instant options are on the rise, driven by the busy, online-centric lifestyles of Gen Z and Millennials. This is perfectly exemplified by the MAMA OK (Oriental Kitchen) series, which upgrades the traditional instant noodle experience with thicker, premium textures and trend-led flavors like Salted Egg and Truffle, specifically

targeting younger consumers seeking "convenience without compromise." These shoppers favor products that deliver premium quality, clean-label ingredients, and minimal preservatives. Functional nutrition is also a key driver, with frozen and instant meals increasingly tailored to specific dietary needs, such as high-protein, fiber-rich, or gluten-free options. The trend toward global sophistication is evident in offerings like bone broth-based instant ramen or high-profile collaborations like the Nongshim x Jay Fai partnership. This specific launch combines the mass-market appeal of Korean Shin Ramyun with the Michelin-starred expertise of Thailand's street food icon, delivering an authentic Tom Yum flavor that blends health benefits with elevated, globally inspired taste. Additionally, innovations like single-serve pour-over lattes are redefining convenience by delivering barista-level quality at home. This dual focus on functionality and premiumization ensures that these products meet the growing demand for time-saving solutions that feel closer to thoughtfully prepared, home-cooked meals.

Dining-Retail Integration

Blurring the lines between dining and lifestyle, Thailand's leading food brands are redefining how consumers engage with their favorite restaurants. Exclusive, limited-edition merchandise is allowing restaurants and chefs to extend their dining experiences into retail. Brands now offer items such as branded apparel, take-home artisan products, and specialty packaged foods inspired by their menus and events. Bar B Q Plaza exemplifies this approach, transforming its restaurant into a lifestyle brand by selling its famous BBQ sauce alongside exclusive apparel and collectibles featuring its "Barbergon" mascot. Diners can leave with signature sauces, curry pastes, or custom keepsakes that commemorate their visit. Similarly, After You Dessert Cafe has expanded into retail with pancake mixes and ready-to-go Kakigori cups, letting customers enjoy their favorite treats at home. This integration of dining and retail not only creates new revenue streams but also strengthens brand loyalty, allowing customers to maintain a lasting connection with their favorite restaurants and chefs.

Modern Nostalgia

In 2026, nostalgia in Thailand's food scene is being reimagined with a modern edge, as consumers seek both comfort and innovation. Classic recipes are being updated with new techniques, healthier ingredients, and global influences, making heritage dishes feel fresh and relevant. For example, Meat Avatar transforms the beloved Crispy Pork (Moo Krob) into a plant-based version that preserves the iconic texture while offering a guilt-free alternative. Third-culture flavors are also on the rise, reflecting diverse cultural identities. Kad Kokoa, for instance, crafts world-class chocolates from Thai single-origin cacao, telling the story of local terroir through a global stage.

These products often tell a story, connecting consumers to the personal narratives behind the food. Meanwhile, authenticity is being redefined, moving beyond rigid definitions of tradition to embrace creativity and evolution. Thong Smith leads this evolution by elevating the humble boat noodle from a street-side staple to a premium dining experience featuring Wagyu beef, while Guss Damn Good captures the essence of "bold nostalgia" by transforming specific memories of childhood snacks or

iconic local beverages into unexpected craft ice cream flavors. This approach allows brands to honor the essence of heritage while adapting it to modern tastes, creating offerings that feel both familiar and exciting.

Complex Flavors

Flavor innovation is evolving toward complexity, authenticity, and adventure, moving beyond simple tastes to layered, multi-sensory experiences. The "Tri-Layer Flavor System" combines sweet, spicy, and sour or tangy dimensions to create craveable profiles that prevent flavor fatigue. Regional specialties are gaining popularity, with dishes like Isaan-style green papaya salad showcasing regional authenticity and character. Comfort foods are being modernized with umami depth, such as miso glazes or desserts, while texture is becoming a key flavor driver, integrating elements like crispy chili oil or puffed grains. These trends reflect consumers' desire for deeper, more engaging flavor experiences that balance nostalgia with innovation.

Lay's Thailand exemplifies this trend with its "Esarn Hot Pot" (Jim Jum) chips which capture the unique herbal, sour, and spicy flavors of the Northeast, going beyond generic "Thai spice" to deliver genuine regional taste. While Lay's is a great mass-market example, Simaya Chocolate, an artisanal chocolate brand, is pushing boundaries further by infusing chocolates with savory Thai curry flavor such as their "Khao Soi" bar featuring Northern curry spices and crispy noodles. These trends reflect a growing consumer appetite for flavor experiences that balance nostalgia with bold, new creativity.

Intentionally Sensory Food

In 2026, food is designed to engage all five senses, making eating a fully immersive experience. The focus is on texture, with foods offering dynamic contrasts like "crack, pop, and melt" through ingredients such as freeze-dried pieces and crispy oils. A standout local example is Rolling Pinn Bakery, which has mastered this by engineering cookies with a signature "gooey" molten center and crispy exterior, creating a hyper-sensory mouthfeel that serves as the ultimate comfort indulgence. The bakery also offers cakes where customers blow edible glitter for visual flair, and chocolate spheres that must be cracked with a small hammer to reveal the filling inside. This adds a layer of playful physical engagement and auditory crunch to the eating experience. Brands also use aroma, color, and visual cues to evoke emotions and memories, turning food into a source of comfort and well-being.

Restaurants are embracing immersive dining, using technology like projection mapping and scent synchronization to create multi-sensory meals. For example, North Restaurant in Bangkok offers a pop-up event that highlights Lanna Gastronomy. Guests experience innovative dishes, storytelling through visuals and sound, and curated scents that connect them to the origins of the ingredients, creating a unique and authentic dining journey.

The Silver Economy: Food for Longevity

As Thailand transitions into a "Super-Aged Society," with more than 20 percent of its population aged 60 and above, the food and beverage industry is adapting to meet the needs of the growing "Silver Economy." This demographic shift is fueling a market expected to achieve substantial growth over the next decade. Innovation is advancing beyond traditional supplements to include "Texture-Modified Foods" (TMF) tailored for seniors with dysphagia. These products use molding technologies to create purées that closely resemble real fish or meat, prioritizing both dignity and appetite. A prime example is the award-winning "Pork Knuckle Trio" from Chulalongkorn University, which reimagines the beloved Khao Kha Moo by using a cholesterol-free emulsion gel to mimic the melting texture of pork fat and restructured lean meat, allowing seniors to enjoy this iconic comfort dish without the health risks. Additionally, a trend toward "medical-grade tastiness" is emerging, with products fortified with essential nutrients such as calcium, protein, and brain-health nootropics marketed as appealing lifestyle choices rather than clinical necessities. This approach integrates longevity and wellness seamlessly into everyday dining.

The Affordable Premium Market Shift

As economic conditions get tougher and household debt rises, people are changing how they spend their money. Many are cutting back on expensive fine dining and luxury experiences. Instead, they are looking for small treats that feel special but don't cost too much. This trend is especially clear in convenience stores. For example, 7-Eleven is working with well-known chefs to offer high-quality ready meals at affordable prices (69–89 THB / \$2.20 – \$2.90). These offerings allow consumers to enjoy gourmet flavors and premium ingredients in a convenient, everyday format, bridging the gap between luxury and affordability.

Another reason for this change is the increase in single-person households. More people are living alone, so there is a growing demand for "Solo Sets" or single-portion luxury items like a tray of high-grade wagyu beef or a slice of premium dessert. These products let people enjoy something special without breaking their budget or wasting food.

Attachments:

No Attachments.