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Gen Z Drives Surge in Spicy, Functional, and Nostalgic Beverages

Bold flavors and health-focused drinks reshape menus as younger consumers seek novelty and immersive experiences in beverage choices

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Spicy alcoholic drinks, matcha, and pickle-flavored beverages are gaining popularity among Generation Z, according to a recent report by Tastewise. The report, which analyzed billions of data points from April 2023 to April 2025, highlights significant shifts in beverage trends driven by younger consumers' preferences for bold flavors and functional benefits.

Tastewise's Summer F&B Playbook examined social media conversations, recipes, menus, and foodservice data to identify what is trending in the food and drink sector. The findings show a clear rise in demand for playful and adventurous drinks. Interest in spicy alcoholic beverages has increased by 6% year-over-year. Drinks such as the "Spicy Sauvy B," a white wine mixed with jalapeños, and variations of the classic Spicy Margarita are becoming more common both online and in bars. Producers are responding to this trend; for example, Moth Spicy Margarita was launched at Sainsbury's this spring, and London venues like Cavita and Corrochio's have added spicy cocktails to their menus.

Non-alcoholic beverages are also evolving. The summer of 2025 has seen a surge in drinks that offer functional benefits, with 77% of consumers seeking beverages that provide more than just refreshment. Celebrity involvement has helped fuel this trend. Snoop Dogg recently partnered to launch Iconic Tonics, a line of cannabis-infused and functional drinks. The global market for functional beverages is projected to reach $200 billion by 2030.

Mushroom-based drinks are another area of growth, with consumer interest rising 11% year-over-year. Ingredients like reishi and lion's mane mushrooms have become more mainstream, showing a 14% increase in menu mentions. Prebiotic drinks have seen a 29% increase in interest, while hormone-supporting beverages have grown by 19%, according to Tastewise data.

Nostalgia also plays a role in current beverage trends. There is renewed interest in soda fountain drinks and retro flavors. At the same time, consumers are looking for novelty. Pickle lemonade has seen a dramatic 239% increase in consumer discussions, while pickle flavor in non-alcoholic drinks is up 19%. Matcha continues to grow in popularity as well, with a 43% year-over-year increase in interest. It is appearing more

frequently on menus and social media, often combined with flavors like strawberry, ube, salted honey, or pistachio.

The report notes that Generation Z is particularly interested in high-protein foods and beverages, with a 27% growth in this category. While some industry experts say it can be difficult to predict exactly what Gen Z wants from their drinks, research suggests that the experience surrounding the drink is just as important as the beverage itself. Data from CGA shows that while half of all consumers are drawn to venues offering experiences such as live music or sports screenings, this figure rises to 54% among Gen Z.

Some brands are already leveraging these insights by creating unique experiences around their products to attract younger consumers. As beverage trends continue to evolve, producers and venues are adapting quickly to meet the changing tastes of Generation Z.