

# WORD OF MOUTH...

GETTING MOUTHFEEL RIGHT UNLOCKS THE TRUE TASTE, FOOD EXPERIENCE

They say that you eat with your eyes – but the reality is that you don't, you eat with your mouth and it's that 'mouthfeel' that is becoming increasingly important to consumers. A report that explores the texture and feel in the mouth has been released by Tate & Lyle highlighting nine future trends in the future of food, beverage and mouthfeel.

**G**etting mouthfeel right in food formulation is crucial in unlocking taste, which is the primary reason people choose certain foods and drinks. In essence, mouthfeel is about the texture and sensation experienced when consuming food and beverages. This includes how food looks, tastes, sounds and feels, forming the overall taste experience and playing a critical role in how consumers enjoy their favourite foods and beverages.

A new report, The Future of Mouthfeel, has provided trends and insights, highlighting key opportunities for brands and manufacturers within the mouthfeel category.

In partnership with Kantar, Tate & Lyle has identified nine dynamic mouthfeel trends in the food and beverage industry including 'hyper-crunch', 'mouthfeel mimicry' and 'climate-proof food'.

"Brands that succeed in the long-term will be those bringing new, exciting textures to market – and even more importantly, those that can

anticipate and adapt to changes affecting taste and mouthfeel. Factors like climate change, busier lifestyles, and consumer demand for healthier alternatives will continue to drive product reformulations, and brands that actively work to keep their core products tasting great will thrive," says Marina Di Miguell, global marketing director texturants and proteins at Tate & Lyle.

The report highlighted that there is opportunity to meet the latest mouthfeel trends by knowing how the new demands intersect with broader





food and beverage trends.

But it's not an easy task to engineer mouthfeel, and Tate & Lyle say there are a number of factors to consider, including optimising costs and still meeting affordability, sustainability, healthier food requirements and the many other drivers of future foods.

#### TREND 1: HYPER CRUNCH

Hyper crunch is described as the "next generation of crunch, snap and sound".

According to the report, one of the major areas of innovation within this trend comes in wet foods and finding ways to maintain texture.

"Today, crunch is bold and seen more often in savoury foods, with combinations like pickles in cheese blankets or air-fried pasta. Consumers are even adding baked rice to their salads in an effort to experience that crucial crunch," says the report.

"Tomorrow, crunch will appear more frequently in sweet categories with more exotic twists.

We can see examples in creations such as a viral chocolate with crispy kinafa filling (also known as 'Dubai chocolate') or the 'crackle coffee', iced coffee cups coated with a layer of chocolate that crackles when you squeeze the cup. Toasted hot cross buns with ice cream will offer contrasting textures."

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## WHAT IS MOUTHFEEL?

There's more to food than just flavour - although flavour is the primary attraction for a consumer. Mouthfeel is a part of the overall 'taste experience'. Tate & Lyle say it is the texture and sensation you experience when consuming food including the look, tastes, sounds and feels in your mouth. It's like, the creaminess of your favourite chocolate bar - that's mouthfeel.

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**TREND 2: AIR**

In terms of mouthfeel, light and delicate will be on the menu.

"In contrast to crunch, air is all about making foods lighter, making them melt in your mouth and giving bubbly sensations that deliver both indulgent and calming mouthfeel."

Froths and foams are a recent example of this category – adding air to elevate.

But the report says consumers will be wanting an even more elevated experience, with "melt, pop, flake and fizzle on the tongue" and highlighted many opportunities for innovators, including packaging categories to protect a more delicate product.

**TREND 3: MULTI-LAYERED MOUTHFEEL**

This mouthfeel is more about a journey, with contrasts and combinations creating multi-dimensional foods, often with two, three or more textures in play.

Described as providing consumers with a more dynamic and engaging experience, it's a category for the unique and intriguing.

"From the dry crunch of a snack paired with a smooth, creamy dip, to the refreshing burst of a carbonated beverage with a chewy element, these multi-dimensional creations offer a memorable culinary experience."

The Tate & Lyle report says that the "combination of crunchier outer layers with wetter fillings, balancing contrasting textures, all adds something new and exciting to the eating experience", providing creative avenues and significant potential for innovators within the category.



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#### TREND 4: NEXT-GEN NATURALLY

This is a category that is driven by a consumer group that is increasingly seeking cleaner labels and ingredients, says Tate & Lyle.

That 'home-cooked' feel is important to the category, as is recognising the ingredients and trust in those ingredients.

"This shift spans from snack bars to everyday meals, as consumers increasingly look to avoid artificial additives and preservatives while still enjoying convenience. For some, it's about replacing highly processed elements with whole ingredients like fruits, vegetables, and grains; for others, it's about balancing naturality with time and budget constraints. As the pendulum swings between these preferences, the aim is for a future where convenient and accessible options are also more naturally formulated."

#### TREND 5: CONVENIENCE AND SHELF PROOF

The company says that minimal prep and longer shelf life is the "new frontier" with increasing demand for convenience with no compromise on taste or mouthfeel.

"They expect ready meals, snacks, and small dishes that maintain texture—even after extended shelf life."

"Innovative processing technologies, such as freeze-drying and vacuum-sealing, are crucial for preserving freshness and flavour in shelf-stable products. Recent innovations in ingredients also support the delivery of great mouthfeel in convenience foods. Starches are highly recognised for their functionality in keeping products fresh and tasty through freeze-thawing and long shelf life – and new innovations from Tate & Lyle are continuously pushing these boundaries."

The biggest hurdle within this category is the preservation of texture.



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#### TREND 6: MOUTHFEEL MIMICRY

Dairy and desserts are what this category is all about and the report breaks down three key points that address consumer needs and motivations within a category that wants indulgent products but prioritise health and affordability.

- **Compromise-free plant-based alternatives:** As demand for plant-based options grows, consumers seek indulgent, creamy textures similar to traditional foods.
- **Health mimicry:** Health-focused consumers want guilt-free versions of their favourite textures.
- **Accessible luxuries amidst the cost-of-living crisis.**

#### TREND 7: VEGGIE CELEBRATION

Consumers' desire more goodness in their diets but want creative ways of incorporating them. The trend is to eat not only more vegetables but greater variety, and today veggies are appearing beyond the dinner plate.

"Going forward, innovations will focus on incorporating veggies into beverages, snacks, baked goods, and salad dressings and sauces.

"Creative textures and unique combinations are driving innovation in harnessing the power of veggies to create them in new forms."



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### TREND 8: BLISSFULLY BOOSTED

Indulgence and functional benefits make up the cornerstone of the 'Blissfully boosted' category. It's a little like 'having your cake and eating it, too', where consumers want to have and experience all the foods that they enjoy while also knowing that what they are eating is providing added health benefits.

"This trend has a global reach, adapting to suit regional preferences. In Japan, there is a focus on skin health and relaxation, with functional foods tailored to enhance beauty and wellbeing. In the UK and US, convenience and natural ingredients are the priority, resulting in a wave of fortified snacks and beverages designed to deliver specific health benefits. Meanwhile, in China, traditional medicine is increasingly integrated into functional foods, tapping into the appeal of natural wellness solutions.

"For brands, the opportunity is there to deliver taste, texture, and visual appeal while seamlessly incorporating functional benefits."

### TREND 9: CLIMATE PROOF FOOD

"Rising temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns have had a significant impact on ingredients supply chains. As we move forward, these impacts are likely to be felt on stability and storage," the report says.

"Manufacturers must ensure they resist heat during transport to avoid 'heat shock', which creates gritty ice particles and unpleasant textures.

"Ambient and chilled products also face challenges: higher-fat foods may become rancid, sauces can separate, and dairy products are at increased risk for bacterial growth. In baked goods, moisture loss can lead to an unappealing dry mouthfeel."



For more information and to download the full Lyle & Tate report visit [www.tinyurl.com/MouthfeelReport24](http://www.tinyurl.com/MouthfeelReport24).

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