



# SUPER STARS

With consumer demand for healthier options growing, the burgeoning superfoods market comes under the spotlight. **Sheila Eggleston** reports on the trends



**Health continues to be one of the top mega trends** with today's consumers constantly searching for the next superfood that offers a new taste experience.

A superfood is described as "a nutrient-rich food considered to be especially beneficial for health and well-being" in the Oxford English Dictionary, and is a term that has caught on with savvy consumers, who are willing to pay more for it, and with operators that can capitalise on the trend.

In analyst Mintel's latest report, it says that between 2011 and 2015 there was a 202% increase globally in the number of new products launched with the terms "superfood", "superfruit" or "supergrain" attached to them, and last year alone, there was a 36% rise in food and drink products featuring these descriptors, of which US had the most at 30%, while the UK accounted for 6%.

Mintel says this trend has evolved because of consumer demand for highly nutritious products, with 43% of superfood products launched in the food category and 11% in the drink category.

Stephanie Mattucci, Global Food Science analyst at Mintel, says that the popularity of "super" products is clear as manufacturers globally are tapping into a



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demand for these nutritionally dense ingredients. In particular, the trend towards a wheat-free diet has resulted in more products containing "supergrains", with chia seeing the biggest rise in usage - up 70% between 2014 and 2015, while products containing teff, a gluten-free North African grain, rose by 31%, and those containing quinoa by 27%.

"Desire for healthier, less refined alternatives to wheat has fuelled the rediscovery of ancient grains," comments Mattucci. "Ancient grains offer an alternative to wheat but also come bundled with functional and nutritional components, and provide new flavours and textures. They are a great

way for free-from products to talk about health."

The research also highlights that 30% of UK pasta consumers believe pasta made with ancient grains such as quinoa is healthier than regular pasta.

"While the number of products containing ancient grains has been rising, we could next see the popularity of sprouting ancient grains," comments Mattucci. "There has been a return to this ancient practice, with controlled 'sprouting' being introduced, as the nutritive advantage of sprouted grains is being recognised."

Pulses have also come under the spotlight with the UN declaring that 2016 is the year of the



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pulse - an initiative aimed at heightening public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production aimed towards food security and nutrition. According to Mintel, over the past two years, products launched containing green split pea have grown by 126%, those with coral lentils by 62%, and with yellow split peas by 21%.

Usage of seeds has also increased over this period, with food and drink products containing chia seeds up by 70%, with pumpkin seeds by 27% and with sunflower seeds by 22%.

Turmeric, a time-old spice known for its anti-inflammatory benefits, will be the next added to the superfoods list, Mintel believes. "Turmeric has potential as an ingredient in supplements and functional food and drink products, particularly within products aimed at the growing senior population," explains Mattucci.

Another superfood leading the way is avocado, which has lately been elevated from a salad ingredient and guacamole to a must-have for all meal occasions, with more restaurants offering it in

smoothies, breakfast dishes and even desserts.

New additions on food-to-go retailer EAT's latest menu, for example, include three avocado-based breakfasts - gluten-free egg and avocado pot with ham hock, vegan avocado sourdough toast, plus the ultimate bacon, egg and avocado roll priced at £3.89, £3.49 and £4.50 respectively.

Other new dishes include more superfoods that address free from needs such as gluten and dairy-free quinoa and buckwheat porridge, vegan and dairy-free mango and coconut chia pot.

Research by HospitalityGEM shows people are more likely to eat healthily during the week, with indulgent treats back on the menu after work and at weekends, with 77% eating a "saintly" meal of superfoods at lunchtime and 71% at breakfast.

"The steep rise of the casual dining sector has led to an increase in outlets that serve healthy, saintly food and those that focus on more indulgent, sinful treats," comments managing director Steven Pike. "Superfoods are fast becoming part of the everyday vocabulary, and diet, as are treats in equal measure."


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Juice bars offer the ultimate healthy drinks, with the help of mixers and blenders that can take raw fruit and veg and make freshly squeezed drinks with even healthier profit margins.

Jestic says that its Zumex Multi Fruit is an advanced juicer that extracts the greatest amount of pulp-free juice from any fruit or vegetable via a centrifugal force and advanced filtering system. The company also distributes the Vitamix BarBoss Advance blender that features an automatic shut off allowing operators to prepare the juice and start the blend

before continuing with the customer's order, knowing it will automatically stop when finished. Mark Veale, Santos brand manager at Nisbets, says that its Santos high output juicer produces up to 100 litres per hour and provides fresh high quality pulp-free juice.

"Making drinks fresh to order in front of customers is a key selling feature," says Veale. "Customers will enjoy the theatre associated with it and also appreciate being served a quality beverage, which looks and tastes great."

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