

Top trends 2026: Growth drivers in the food & beverage market



What do consumers want, and what foods and beverages drive growth? Market research gives us some answers. The current 2026 Top Ten Trends from Innova Market Insights once again show that foods and beverages that promote physical and mental wellness are very much in demand from consumers – especially if they offer the perfect taste. Foods adapted to the individual requirements of consumers are popular, as are affordable or sustainable offerings. With new ideas for high-sales food & drink concepts, Hydrosol helps manufacturers of meat, dairy, and deli products address the trends of tomorrow.

High Protein Remains the Top Trend

“Powerhouse Protein” for overall wellbeing is the most important trend for this year, according to Innova Market Insights. Consumers are looking for protein-rich products, ideally enriched with vitamins and minerals, that support mental fitness as well as gut health and the immune system. Healthy aging, weight management, and athletic performance are further important criteria. Hydrosol has developed multiple concepts to meet these expectations, including a stabilizing system for meal replacement drinks. The system ensures stable emulsions with creamy mouthfeel and high satiation effect. The final product features high protein content and can also be declared as a source of fiber.

Wide Range of Delights

The many facets of indulgence are at the focus of the second Innova Top Trend: “Layers of Delight.” It is based on four pillars: comforting moments, mood enhancing, rich sensory enjoyment, healthier enjoyment. Familiar flavors are in demand as are new creations, and Hydrosol offers the right inspirations for both. For example, with one of the stabilizing systems from the Stabisol series dairies can make a trendy matcha latte. The system provides high stability and a pleasant mouthfeel. It can be combined with plant proteins and offered in a range of flavors. Another advantage is that there is no sedimentation during storage.



Another Hydrosol stabilizing system also promises special indulgence through the simple production of mayo sauces and of bread spreads featuring smooth texture and good spreadability.

Individual Moments

Convenience is a common denominator in the expectations of different target groups that Innova addresses together in the Top Trend “Made for Moments”. Whether small portions for single households or family packs, consumers are looking for varied formats in snacks, fresh meals, and individual portions. The choice of new flavor sensations should be at least as varied. DIY ice cream in pouches is one example. The product is easy to make on a UHT line with the help of a new

Stabimuls series compound. After filling into pouches it can be sold in stores in liquid form, or deep-frozen just before consumption, for example at a kiosk. Creative compositions in various flavors can be made to meet customer demand. Thus, these DIY ice creams give dairies access to a new category. Other special snack moments are provided by reduced-fat meat snacks with crispy bite and bold smoked paprika flavor. These protein chips offer a real alternative to fatty potato chips, and combine high protein content with irresistible indulgence. With the help of this flexible stabilizing system the snacks can be made of fresh or cooked meat products, as well as meat cuttings or restructured marinated meat.

Affordable Products

With increasing economic pressure, value for money remains an important criterion for consumers at the point of sale. “Worth Every Bite” is the Top Trend for this. Store brands are growing in popularity among all age groups, and Hydrosol offers the right solutions for many categories. One of these is its





functional system for vegetable fat cream featuring extended shelf life, a firm and stable foam structure, and higher whipping volume. The fat content can be adjusted between 12 and 28%. This vegetable fat cream can be made in freeze-thaw stable or plant-based alternative versions as well. Hydrosol also offers solutions for cost-efficient meat products. In ground meat products like burger patties, nuggets, or meatballs these functional systems improve binding and so enable reduction of the meat proportion without reduction in quality. The same goes for emulsified products like hot dogs and cold cuts. The formulations can be individually tweaked depending on the amount and type of meat, while retaining the accustomed quality. Thus, they deliver appealing texture and bite even with low meat content. A stabilizing system for mayo sauces with fat content from 10 to 20% rounds out the line.

Sustainable Concepts

Sustainability is a key reason to buy in the premium category. Consumers will accept higher prices for sustainable products when brands credibly and transparently communicate that they either support local farmers and communities, contribute to the environment, use sustainable packaging, or offer better product quality or better taste. Innova Market Insights calls this ongoing Top Ten trend "Justified Choices". Hydrosol's answer is hybrid products. These combine the best of animal and plant-based ingredients without sacrificing taste and texture. The nutritional values are compelling, since less fat and more fiber are very attractive to consumers. The products offer improved nutrition, cost structure, and ecological footprints. They are also outstanding as clean label foods. Hydrosol has developed systems that enable protein-rich recipes with less saturated fatty acids, while ensuring dependable binding with varying vegetable contents for a wide range of hybrid meat products, from ground meat, burgers, and meatballs to nuggets and snacks. These hybrid products thus offer a wide range of possibilities for industry, retail, and food service.

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Hydrosol GmbH & Co. KG headquartered in Ahrensburg near Hamburg, Germany, is a fast-growing international supplier of food stabilizers, with subsidiaries around the world. Its specialists develop and produce tailor-made stabilizer systems for dairy products, ice cream and desserts, delicatessen foods, and ready meals, as well as meat, sausage, and fish products. With an international network of 20 subsidiaries and numerous qualified foreign representatives, the company is represented in the world's key markets. As a member of the independent, owner-operated Stern-Wywiol Gruppe with a total of 13 sister companies, Hydrosol can make use of many synergies. The company has access to the knowledge of some 125 R&D specialists and to the extensive applications technology of the large Stern-Technology Center in Ahrensburg, Germany, as well as shared production facilities and the Group's own logistics resources. This lets it offer customers a high degree of flexibility and innovation. With revenues exceeding 668 million euros and 1974 employees around the globe, the Stern-Wywiol Gruppe is one of the world's most successful international suppliers of food & feed ingredients.