

# U.S. FOODLINK

The bi-monthly newsletter for importers of U.S. foods

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## 2022 Will Ring in the New Year with an EMPHASIS ON HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Food trends in the coming year will continue to be impacted by the aftereffects as the pandemic, with interest in food with health benefits remaining high.

Additionally, “flexitarian” options will continue to expand as people look for complements for meat-based dishes that include plant-based substitutes and beyond, and consumers interested in supporting sustainability may start to discover upcycled products on a larger scale.

Health-conscious consumers may become interested in what is being called the “gut-lung axis,” a potential connection between the gut microbiome and the lungs. Recent research has shown that the gut’s role in our body’s immunity system could make it important in determining how well we fight off lung infections.

As a result, interest in gut health grew by 76% among consumers and 11% among businesses in 2021. The currently published studies found that a combination of five probiotic strains reduced symptoms of viral upper respiratory tract infections by over 27%, and with even greater efficacy among people over the age of 45 years.

As a result, probiotics and prebiotics could be hot categories in 2022, especially if additional research comes out in support of the gut-lung axis. These products are already popular due to their association with general health and being able to attribute more specific benefits to foods like yogurt will maintain their time in the spotlight if not generate additional growth.

“The gut-lung axis is just one of the many emerging benefits of maintaining a healthy gastrointestinal system,” Kishan Vasani, Co-Founder and CEO of Spoonshot, said. “While it may be too early to use this as a scientifically-backed claim just yet, this is an evolution of the growing interest in gut health. It also just underscores the importance of the food-as-

*(Continued on page 2)*



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## Emphasis on Health and Sustainability *Continued*

medicine credo that is increasingly gaining popularity among consumers.”

Health interest may also lead to consumers seeking out certain nutrient combinations. Initial studies into COVID-19 found that better immune systems reduced chances of contracting the more severe effects of the virus. The combination of vitamin C and zinc can boost immunity more than vitamin C alone, which has spurred on product launches with these two nutrients in 2021.

Other in-demand nutrients and ingredients include vitamin D and adaptogens such as echinacea, turmeric and ginger. Diets focused on supporting the immune system will continue to be in the spotlight through the start of 2022, according to Glanbia Nutritionals.

While the above trends target specific benefits, consumers are still interested in healthy foods in general. *Populist* expects the health snack trend to experience a resurgence in 2022, with low-sugar, high-protein and functional nutrition claims topping the list. Products such as upcycled juices and snack bars and CBD-infused peanut butter could be among the items destined to make headlines.

Another recurring trend is alternative milks, which are expected to expand in 2022. The number of options is continuing to grow with products such as oat milk, buckwheat milk, pistachio milk and macadamia milk, but the general drive remains the same: consumers want a healthier version of an existing product.

“Such milks can see growth as allergy friendly alternatives not just to dairy, but to all sorts of nuts and soy, making them potentially more inclusive,” Vasani said. “Eventually, plant-based milks like barley will emerge as a middle-market product and make it easier and more affordable for a wider audience to take up a plant-based lifestyle.”

Plant-based proteins will get a boost from higher meat prices, which have sent some shoppers looking for alternatives. Glanbia Nutritionals expects foods made with popular superfoods and plant proteins like pea, flaxseed, and hemp proteins to capitalize on this opportunity by appealing to health-conscious consumers while also packing nutritional benefits.



Those not interested in taking the plunge into a fully vegan lifestyle may be interested in flexitarian diets with a good combination of meat-based and vegan options. This will continue to evolve, leading to the rise of what nutritionist

and food trend researcher Hanni Rützler calls “real omnivores” who will be more culinarily open than flexitarians by incorporating not just vegan options but offal, in-vitro meat, insects and algae.

In the short term, *Populist* expects growing interest in this area to result in more food that’s a 50-50 mix of meat and vegetables, helping people reduce their meat intake without sacrificing flavor. It will also build interest in foods that have zero or even a negative carbon footprint, which is an offshoot of the increased interest in sustainability that appeared during the pandemic.

“We should take a fresh look at the emergency solutions we came up with during the crisis, because they just might be viable concepts for the future,” said Rützler in *Food Report 2022*.

Shoppers looking to limit their own shopping trips during lockdown developed a newfound appreciation for conservation efforts, studies found. This has led to the development of more zero-waste foods, including upcycled items that take former waste products and turn them into edible snacks and ingredients.

Business interest in upcycled ingredients increased 162% in 2020, though just 10% of consumers were familiar with the topic, according to a study in Food and Nutrition Sciences. However, 80% of consumers who became educated about upcycling said they would consider purchasing such products. The ongoing interest in sustainability means this is an excellent time for producers to educate the public about these possibilities.

Major producers are already working on the teaching effort, according to *Food Business News*. Mondelez International’s SnackFutures innovation hub has supported the launch of CaPao and Dirt Kitchen, two brands that utilize upcycled ingredients. Barry Callebaut studying ways to extract vanillin from hazelnut shells and Nestle SA is exploring uses for coffee fruit, cocoa pulp and other byproducts.

While no one can say for certain what we should expect in 2022, looking at current food trends and extrapolating from there is once again a good way to set the basic expectations. Even though the pandemic will likely become a memory next year, the impact it has had on the industry will be felt for some time.



# Shoppers Snack for Indulgence Above All Else, But Health Still Has Its Place



Consumers have been turning to snacks to fulfill a variety of needs. A survey by IRI found that 66% do so for enjoyment, 49% to satisfy their hunger and 31% to refuel their energy, just to name a few of the most popular reasons. With such a wide range of reasons to snack it's no surprise that the average number of daily snacking instances is up to 2.7 in 2021 compared to 2.4 in 2016.

While health is on many consumers' minds, by far the biggest recent growth has been in "true indulgent" snack categories like ice cream, potato chips and cookies. Sales were up 30% at the start of the year in this category, compared to 5% growth each for the "permissible indulgence" (crackers, fruit-based popsicles) and wellness (granola bars, cheese) categories.

Health claims are still a useful signifier for the right snacks, provided that they don't imply that flavor is being sacrificed. This has led to 41% of consumers looking for snacks with natural and organic claims in 2021, up three percentage points from 2018. Sales of organic snacks rose 7%, while natural products were up 5%.

Additionally, manufacturers shouldn't shy away from snacks that are more expensive but can prove their worth with better taste and ingredients. IRI found that 60% of all consumers, ranging from a low point of 50% of 18 to 24-year-olds to a high point of 68% of 35 to 44-year-olds, believe that premium snacks are worth the extra cost.



One category that suffered under the lockdowns but has promise in 2022 are on-the-go snacks. Consumers who were stuck at home didn't find much value in items designed to be easy to eat when traveling, particularly when there are options better suited to eating at home. This led to shoppers purchasing snacks in larger sizes, resulting in a 1% decline in unit sales, according to IRI.

However, as more people return to their old routines these items will be well-positioned for growth. Shoppers put a pause on smaller snack purchases as they sheltered, but the continued recovery will have shoppers looking for more on-the-go options.

"With re-emergence underway, bars are well positioned for a quick recovery and sustained five-year growth," said Beth Bloom, Associate Director – Food and Drink at Mintel. "In particular, bars have been at the forefront of BFY snacking trends, functional foods and specialized diets, especially those featuring plant-based proteins, which can help consumers get on track with wellness."

## Featured U.S. Midwest & Northeast State Profiles



# news briefs

**Sales of natural and organic products are on track to surpass \$300 billion by 2023.** This includes the food and beverage, supplements, household and personal care categories. According to key speakers at Natural Products Expo East, this pandemic-induced growth is expected to continue over the next three years, reported *Meat + Poultry*.

**Sustainability remains at the forefront of American consumers' concerns.** A report by the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council of North America found that 69% of supermarket shoppers say they try to reduce their impact on the environment as much as possible, reported *Supermarket News*.

**Companies across the food industry are refining and sometimes "redefining" their business models to better compete with Amazon.** Walmart is at the forefront, leveraging strong supply lines and adding speed and service, reported *Forbes*.

**The global plant-based alternatives market could grow to \$162 billion in the next decade.** This is up from \$29.4 billion in 2020, according to a report from *Bloomberg Intelligence*. Plant-based food alternatives are projected to reach 7.7% of the expected \$2.1 trillion global protein market.



**Fifty-four percent of Americans have tried alternative meat items available at popular fast food chains.** Additionally, 70% enjoyed the experience, according to Piplsay research.

**Plant-based food lost a bit of its luster in the second quarter.** Both Beyond Meat and Maple Leaf Foods said sales of their plant-based offerings fell below expectations, reported *The Food Institute*.



**There has been a gradual shift among consumers towards milk alternatives – especially the plant-based variety. This growth can be attributed to a growing vegan population and more awareness about lactose intolerance.** According to Future Market Insights, the dairy-alternatives market is estimated to be worth around \$16 billion (USD) by year's end.

**Pumpkin-spice drinks paid significant dividends for Starbucks when they returned to fall menus.** The weekend after Starbucks brought back its pumpkin spice latte in late August, the chain's visits spiked 20.8% and 19.3% on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, reported Placer.ai.

**The U.S. pork industry grew at an annual rate of 1.5% from 2001-2020.** That was four times faster than employment growth in all U.S. industries, a study from The National Pork Producers Council showed.



**Sports and energy drinks have seen significant sales growth over the past 12 months.** IRI data shows that supermarket dollar sales increased 16.4% year over year for the sports category, while energy drinks jumped 20.6%, reported *Supermarket News*.



## U.S. FOODLINK

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## Athena Brands, Inc. dba Green Mustache

Brooklyn, New York

Green Mustache is a Brooklyn-based, woman- and minority-owned business focused on creating innovative, delicious plant-based snacks. Everything we do stems from our commitment to plant-based living because we believe the food you eat should both feel good and BE good – for us and our world. To further that goal, we also strive to have zero food waste and achieve this by donating imperfect crackers from the production process to local farmers who use our scraps as animal feed.

Our Goldfish-inspired plant-based “cheese” crackers, Mustache Munchies, appeal to a broader demographic as they are also organic, gluten-free, dairy-free and made with clean, healthy ingredients, such as chickpea flour, pea protein, kale and chia. Not only do we care about what’s in our products, we care just as much about what’s not in them: no pesticides, chemical fertilizers or GMOs, no added sugars, no preservatives, and no artificial colors or flavors.

These crunchy crackers are a fan-stache-tic snack for the whole family and are also a creative option as a soup or salad topper. In keeping with our belief that healthy foods can be delicious and fun, our snacks are also in a whimsical handlebar mustache shape – it’ll be hard not to play with your food! [getgreenmustache.com](http://getgreenmustache.com)



## Red's Best

Boston, Massachusetts

Red's Best was founded in 2008 to serve fishermen from local coastal communities. All the seafood Red's Best sells is sustainably managed and responsibly harvested under U.S. regulations by local New England fishermen.

One of the highlighted products currently being exported is Winter Skate, which is offered both skin-on and skin-off based on your needs. Skate is a protein rich food low in cholesterol, sodium and fats, with a mild, ocean flavor and texture similar to a scallop. Red's Best can ship in 5, 10, or 20 KG cases. Barndoor Skate is also available in 20 KG cases. [redsbest.com](http://redsbest.com)



## Stonewall Kitchen

York, Maine

Stonewall Kitchen is a leading specialty food and home goods producer founded in 1991. Jonathan King and Jim Stott established the Stonewall Kitchen brand by selling jams and jellies at local farmers' markets with a flavorful line of distinctive and high-quality products. Over time, they expanded to include sauces, condiments, crackers and baking mixes, always focusing on innovative product development, beautiful packaging, and exceptional guest service.

Today, Stonewall Kitchen is the premier specialty food and home goods platform in North America, home to a family of premium quality brands including the flagship Stonewall Kitchen brand; the Michel Design Works brand of gift, home and lifestyle products, including bath & body, home fragrance, kitchen, tabletop and home décor; the Vermont Coffee Company brand of high quality, non-GMO, certified organic coffee; the Urban Accents brand of globally-inspired spice mixes, seasonings, and sauces; the Village Candle brand of fragranced candles, gifts and accessories; the Tilden Farms brand of pickled vegetables and cocktail cherries; the Napa Valley Naturals brand of olive oils, culinary oils, balsamic vinegars and wine vinegars; the Montebello brand of artisan organic pasta imported from Italy; the Vermont Village brand of organic apple sauce and apple cider vinegars; and the Legal Sea Foods brand of restaurant-quality seafood sauces and condiments. The company boasts more than 8,500 wholesale accounts nationwide and internationally; a thriving catalog and online division; a cooking school and café in York, Maine; and eleven retail Company Stores throughout New England. Stonewall Kitchen is proud to be one of the most awarded specialty food companies in the country. [stonewallkitchen.com](http://stonewallkitchen.com)

## Upcoming International Trade Shows with Food Export staff and U.S. Products

February 13-17, 2022	Gulfood Show – Dubai, United Arab Emirates
February 16-18, 2022	Super Market Trade Show (SMTS) – Tokyo, Japan
March 8-11, 2022	FOODEX Japan – Tokyo, Japan
March 28-31, 2022	FHA-Food & Beverage – Singapore
April 20-22, 2022	SIAL Canada – Montreal, Canada
April 23-24, 2022	CHFA West – Vancouver, Canada
April 26-28, 2022	Seafood Expo Global – Barcelona, Spain
June 7-10, 2022	Alimentec – Bogota, Colombia

For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).



## Federated Group, Inc.

Arlington Heights, Illinois

Life Every Day is the grocery food brand in our family of Life Inspired products. Life Every Day offers a wide variety of quality products that meet or exceed the value offered by national brand alternatives. So confident in the quality of Life Every Day products, each product offers the consumer a 100% Satisfaction, Double Guarantee.

This brand has been developed with the strong belief that gratitude is at the core of Life Every Day. Research has shown that gratitude can have a positive influence on a person's overall health and happiness. With this in mind, we have placed a statement of gratitude on each Life Every Day product. To maximize customer engagement and support of the brand, we encourage them to contribute their own gratitude statements through our website. These gratitude statements will be considered for placement on future Life Every Day products. [my-lifeeveryday.com](http://my-lifeeveryday.com)



## Agri-Dairy Products Inc

Purchase, New York

Agri-Dairy began selling to local food manufacturers in 1985 in the New York tri-state area. Customers came to us for competitive prices and found considerable value in the outstanding service and reliability that they received. Soon our customers were recommending us to others and Agri-Dairy began distributing far beyond the local area. Today Agri-Dairy has grown to be one of the largest suppliers of dairy products in the U.S. and exports several dairy ingredients to more than 25 countries.

Agri-Dairy International is leading the way into markets abroad, offering the same competitive advantages and service that is afforded to our domestic customers. To whatever scale we may grow or to whatever successes we may obtain we shall always be committed to the simple ethics by which we were founded: competitive pricing, outstanding service, and the reliability to be there for all of our customers' needs.

Products: Milk Powders, Whey Powders, Whey Protein Concentrates and Isolates, Lactose, Butter and other Dairy ingredients. [www.agridairy.com](http://www.agridairy.com)



## Fortified Nutrition

Germantown, Wisconsin

Evolved Snack Sticks are healthy meat snacks with real ingredients, no junk. Evolved Snack Sticks deliver the best combination of all-natural ingredients and taste – made for those seeking healthy, on-the-go, real-food protein snacks, that make your taste buds happy (and every purchase helps fight food insecurity).

We founded our company with a core value to make every single batch of meat snacks with thoughtful and caring intentions. The outcome is eating experience that is much more than “just a snack.”

Five savory flavors: Grass fed Beef | Cherries | Sweet Potato • Grass fed Beef | Uncured Bacon | Apples • Natural Pork | Uncured Bacon | Pineapples • Grass fed Beef | Honey Smoked Barbecue • Grass fed Beef | Sweet Chipotle [SnackingEvolved.com](http://SnackingEvolved.com)



## Cleveland Kitchen

Cleveland, Ohio

**DRESSINGS** Veggie Caesar is a creamy plant-based dressing with flavor from fermented cabbage, garlic, and herbs. Sweet Beet Vinaigrette offers a creamy, vibrant option blending fermented red cabbage, beets, and carrots. Backyard Ranch, the first fermented Ranch of its kind, boasts delicious herbs and vegetables and that real, ranch flavor. Miso Jalapeno packs a mouthwatering punch with fermented cabbage, green peppers, jalapeño, and miso. Garlic Italian offers creamy, garlicky goodness.

**PICKLES** Dilly Garlic Pickle Chips & Spears with no added sugars or preservatives, just a touch of turmeric to naturally keep our chips crisp and fresh. Made with fermented vinegar, these triumphant chips burst with garlic & dill flavors

**CLASSIC KIMCHI** – Vegan Kimchi with the thick, crunchy cut you love. We worked with local Korean chefs to develop this rich, fresh, spicy and delicious ferment. Enjoy on traditional Korean dishes, with eggs and avocado toast, or by the forkful! [clevelandkitchen.com](http://clevelandkitchen.com)

**For more information about these or other Featured Products please email: [FoodLink@foodexport.org](mailto:FoodLink@foodexport.org).**



## Fulfill Food & Beverages

*Saint Louis, Missouri*

Karuna Beverages makes award-winning prebiotic & antioxidant juice drinks and smoothies using whole plant ingredients. Our formulation approach is rooted in the Far East "Food Is Better Medicine" wisdom and backed by modern medical and nutritional science. As the innovator in creating prebiotic drinks made with unique superfood ingredients, Karuna is determined to solve rising health issues such as diabetes and obesity caused by the modern lifestyle. In addition to the must-have attributes such as no-added sugar and all natural ingredients, Karuna juices are low in calories and glycemic index and high in prebiotic fiber and antioxidants. Health benefits include improved digestive system health, boosted immunity, and sustained energy. Karuna is also the pioneer in using a hydroponic farm to grow bean sprouts as well as using whole plant ingredients in production to eliminate waste and lower carbon footprint. Karuna beverages were first launched in 2017 and are now distributed by national distributors including UNFI and KeHE in the U.S. We work closely with top retailers in both natural and conventional grocery spaces including Whole Foods Market, Fresh Thyme, Sprouts Farmers Market, H-E-B, Giant Foods, Giant Company, and Giant Eagle. [mykaurna.com](http://mykaurna.com)



## Floricon Partners

*Totowa, New Jersey*

The cleanest snack you can find! Our 100% grass fed beef and free-range turkey and chicken sticks are everyone's favorite snack. They come in a single wrapped 25 gram package. We also can ship them from any port making our all-natural meat easily accessible all over the globe. [floriconpartners.com](http://floriconpartners.com)



## Cherry Central Cooperative Inc.

*Traverse City, Michigan*

Cherry Central Cooperative is a multi-state group of growers and processors of the wonderfully delicious and nutritious Montmorency sour cherry. With hundreds of growers and factories in all major growing regions of Montmorency cherries in North America, we are the world's largest and most secure supply of Montmorency products. We process dried, frozen, frozen sugar-packed, puree, concentrate, canned, juice, and not from concentrate juice. We have supplied these wonderful products since 1973 as bulk ingredients, to foodservice distributors, provide private label packaging, and are excited to launch our new retail brand fruitHaven.

Montmorency cherries are unique in color, sweet/sour flavor, and have health benefits with dozens of studies with supporting evidence they help regulate sleep, support heart health, and fight inflammation in our bodies which is great for those suffering from gout or arthritis. [cherrycentral.com](http://cherrycentral.com)



## Mighty Cricket

*Ballwin, Missouri*

Mighty Cricket's sustainable protein products are winners with health and environmentally conscious consumers. Made with organic ingredients, Mighty Cricket offers clean protein powder supplements and high protein oatmeals free of gluten, dairy, soy, egg, nuts (except coconut), artificial ingredients, preservatives, antibiotics, and GMOs. Founded in 2018, the certified women-owned small business is growing quickly both domestically and internationally. [MightyCricket.com](http://MightyCricket.com)

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## Bar Harbor Foods

*Cutler, Maine*

The taste of wind, weather, and clear, cold water; it's not a flavor that needs improving. We create our New England Clam Chowder in small batches the way people on the Maine coast have been doing for generations. Loaded with juicy clams and simple, wholesome ingredients, it's as close to "Fresh Off the Docks" as you can get without being here!

Bar Harbor is firmly established as a premium brand of all natural, sustainable, shelf stable seafood. Bar Harbor uses MSC certified seafood, non-GMO ingredients, and no artificial preservatives or additives. The use of non-BPA lined containers is another example of the emphasis Bar Harbor places on providing consumers with health conscious, high quality foods.

The success of the Bar Harbor brand is its humble origins and hands-on methods of production. Every clam is sorted and shelled by hand. You can taste the difference!

[barharborfoods.com](http://barharborfoods.com)



## Carnivore Meat Company

*Green Bay, Wisconsin*

Vital Essentials® freeze-dried dog food is made from real meat to deliver essential nutrients that support vitality and overall wellness for dogs, naturally. No grains, gluten, artificial ingredients, flavorings or rendered by-products are used in the products. A custom 48-hour slow freeze-drying process locks in the natural flavor, texture and freshness of the meat, without compromising the nutritional value or sacrificing the great taste that dogs love.

Vital Essentials provides classic and exotic proteins in a variety of forms including Patties, Dinner Patties, Mini Nibs, Nibbles and Toppers. Pet parents can choose from Beef, Chicken, Turkey, Duck, Rabbit or Salmon.

Vital Cat® freeze-dried cat food is made with pure meat, organs and bones, made with only fresh, whole single-sourced animal protein to deliver essential nutrients and support vitality. Vital Cat provides classic and exotic proteins in a variety of forms that include Dinner Patties, Mini Nibs and Toppers. Pet parents can choose from Chicken, Turkey, Duck, Pork or Rabbit for a simple and convenient way to feed a raw diet.

[veraw.com](http://veraw.com)



## Bar B Que Specialties Inc.

*Lincoln, Nebraska*

Fat Boy Natural BBQ is a line of products created to enhance every meal and barbequing experience. Born from competitive grilling and incorporated in 2002, Fat Boy BBQ was created to market rubs used in competition. The skills mastered in these competitions and the knowledge obtained from other barbeque experts led to the development of our all natural barbeque products.

After traveling much of the U.S., we became educated on the benefits of using rubs in grilling and smoking meats to keep them juicy and tender. After using various meat rubs already available on the market, we developed one more suited to our operation. As more and more people became acquainted with our grilled and smoked meats, the request to purchase the rub became more frequent, and the company was formed to market it.

Over time this one rub evolved into our current line of sixteen rubs, several of which have won national awards. Each is distinctive in taste, heat level, and texture. Our rubs seal the meat surface to offer a juicy and flavorful meat product. They also make a great seasoning for a variety of casseroles, vegetables, and prepared meat dishes. [bestnaturalbbq.com](http://bestnaturalbbq.com)



## Healthy Food Ingredients

*Fargo, North Dakota*

Healthy Food Ingredients is an on-trend specialty ingredient supplier and exporter bringing food safety and supply assurance to protect your brand promise.

We start with a sustainable supply chain, backed by IntegriPure®, our innovative micro reduction process, to offer a full portfolio of ingredients including non-GMO, organic and gluten-free pulses, soybeans, grains, seeds, flax, expeller oils, and signature product Suntava Purple Corn™ with unique processing capabilities for milling, flaking and blending and consumer-ready products. Looking for a private label brand? We can help with that too!

We are dedicated to delivering safe, healthy, premium-quality ingredients in partnership with our diverse grower network. [hffamily.com](http://hffamily.com)

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