Flavorsolutions

# ASIAN FLAVOR INSPIRATION

## OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACE

TREND REPORT BITE

Consumers are moving beyond broad generalizations of Asian cuisine, embracing the distinct and regional nuances it offers. From redefining café culture to tingling taste buds, Asian food and flavors continue to influence innovations in the West. As diverse Asian flavors rise in popularity, brands can draw inspiration from dishes, desserts, and drinks to craft products with authentic profiles or flavorful fusions.

THEMES TO EXPLORE:

- Sichuan Surge
- East Meets Sweets
- Warmly Spiced
- Asian Fruit Flavor

"Asian cuisine includes so much—from China, Japan, India, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and more. It brings together a **wide variety of flavors, textures, and cooking techniques** with unique spice combinations, an assortment of fresh ingredients, unique sauces, and recipes."

*FSR Magazine, The New Wave in Asian Cuisine, 2025*

# Sichuan Surge

Thanks to the growth of Chinese chili crisp, Sichuan peppercorns are expanding into dumplings, bao buns, noodles, and more – perfect for a unique sensory-driven eating experience. The Sichuan peppercorn is prized for its earthy, lemony flavor and mouth-tingling taste and is the signature flavor in Chinese dishes like Kung Pao chicken, Dan Dan noodles and hot pot, making it great for meal and sauce applications. It also blends well with sweet, citrusy flavors and can add a surprising element to drinks, frozen treats and sweets.

U.S. **+12%** CANADA **+9%**

projected growth of SICHUAN PEPPER on menus.

*Datassential, '24-'28*


## TREND SPOTTED

SZECHUAN-STYLE SPICY PORK BAO from WOW BAO is fillled with tender pork, cabbage, ginger, garlic, and a chili crisp-gochujang sauce. Described as "a quick and easy way to satisfy when a craving for food with a "kick" hits."


JENIS SPARKLING CHERRY PIE ICE CREAM was launched in the summer of 2024. It is desribed as sour cherry and tingling Sichuan peppercorn ice cream with tart cherry jam and buttery shortbread crust.

# Warmly Spiced

Brands are weaving India's aromatic spice traditions into applications, creating layered, warming flavor profiles that resonate across palates. Indian cuisine, known for its heavily spiced dishes with subtle heat, expertly blends sweet brown spices—such as cinnamon, clove, and cardamom—into both savory and sweet preparations. Beverages like chai and turmeric golden milk, and bites that star 'masala' (spice blends) are gaining prominence on menus. Drawing deep inspiration from Indian culinary heritage, the result is lingering flavor that feels cozy, comforting, and complex.

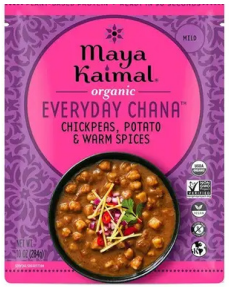
Warmly-spiced Indian profiles including golden milk, chana masala and korma have reached the proliferation stage by appearing at casual chains, college cafes, quick service restaurants, and traditional grocery.

-DATASSENTIAL MENU ADOPTION CYCLE, 2025


*Golden Latte @ Peet's Coffee & Tea, LTO Jan 2025*


## TREND SPOTTED

CONFUSION SNACKS, an Indian-owned snack brand, infuses nuts with a rich variety of Indian spices, including KASHMIRI RED CHILI POWDER, BLACK PEPPER, MANGO POWDER, AND CUMIN, delivering a uniquely flavorful experience.




MAYA KAIMAL'S EVERYDAY CHANA offers a CHICKPEA, POTATO, AND WARM SPICES flavor which is a cozy North Indian dish with ginger, coriander, cumin, paprika, cinnamon, black cardamom, and turmeric.



*Sources: Innova Market Insights; Datassential*

# East Meets Sweet

An increase in Asian-style bakeries in North American has redefined the sweet café experience. Centered around socializing, these spots cater to Gen Z's desire to connect and share with photo-worthy offerings, and fun flavors to match. Bubble tea with its popping tapioca pearls and chewy jellies delivers texture and alluring flavor like aloe and lychee. Tropical sweet flavors like ube and pandan can be found blended with rich creamy notes of coconut milk, cream cheese, or caramel in drinks and desserts. Also, deep, earthy flavors like matcha, red bean, black sesame, and taro unexpectedly elevate classic sweets and treats.

"Japanese bakery chain **Bread, Espresso &** enters the expanding U.S. market for East Asian bakery-café chains. South Korea's **Paris Baguette** and **TOUS les JOURS**, along with Taiwan's **85°C Bakery Cafe**, saw outlet growth last year, reaching 200, 130, and 79 locations, respectively."

- WORLD COFFEE PORTAL, JANUARY 2025


*Mou, milk bread filled with silky custard and whipped cream*


## TREND SPOTTED

Lauren Tran launched a Vietnamese-American bakery, BÁNH BY LAUREN, showcasing unique Southeast Asian flavors. This PANDAN CHIFFON CAKE WITH COCONUT MOUSSE highlights the naturally nutty, vanilla-like aroma of pandan, perfectly complemented by the rich, milky coconut cream.


TIGER BOBA LATTE featured at Taiwan-based 85°C Bakery Cafe includes milk with boba and brown sugar.

# Asian Fruit Flavor

Asian fruits are gaining mainstream popularity, with flavors like yuzu and calamansi joining classic citrus innovations. The vibrant fruits found in Asia appeal to consumers that like to travel through taste. Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines have tropical climates that support a diverse range of fruits—such as coconut, tamarind, pomelo, and calamansi orange—which play a defining role in their cuisines. Yuzu, a tart citrus fruit common in Japanese cuisine is becoming popular in North America and making appearances on menus and CPG items.

Social conversations about yuzu have increased by **10.8%** over the past year.

- TASTEWISE, 2025


## TREND SPOTTED

YUZU MISO GLAZE by OSMOM offers a harmonious blend of rich red and white miso paste, delivering deep umami, while vibrant yuzu peel and lemon concentrate add a refreshing citrusy kick, creating a perfectly balanced savory and tangy experience.


LUNAR X BONNIE'S SALTED KUMQUAT HARD SELTZER was developed and launched by two Asian Americans that set out to "perfectly blend the Asian flavors we love with the modern hard seltzer in a delicious, harmonious way." Other varieties include plum, tamarind, lychee and more. Learn more.

*Sources: Sources: Innova Market Insights*

# THE TAKEAWAYS

Asia's diverse culinary landscape offers a wealth of inspiration with each region's distinctive sweet and savory profiles. While umami and heat are well-known hallmarks, there's even more to explore. Elevate your Asian-inspired innovations by introducing unexpected elements—like the citrusy tingle of Sichuan peppercorn—to captivate curious palates.

Draw from the warmth of Indian curries and street foods by incorporating complex spice blends that add depth and richness across snacks, beverages, and meal applications. Celebrate the dynamic world of Asian cafe culture by exploring decadent flavor and texture. Or, give classic Western baked goods a refreshing twist by infusing them with vibrant fruit notes such as pandan and yuzu.

## YOU DESERVE MORE. LET'S GET STARTED.

What does true partnership look like? You deserve a flavor partner ready to turn these trends into the tangible.

Let McCormick Flavor Solutions market insight and research experts get to work for you. Translate these trends into bold new ideas for your brand. Increase market share and get to your "what's next." Our technical flavor, seasoning and product development experts are also at your service to help meet the labeling and flavor profile needs for your products to capitalize on this consumer trend.

From concept to manufacturing, we're here for you — every step of the way. Contact your sales representative or **click here** to chat us up.

### CHERRY BLOSSOM VINAIGRETTE

To bring to life an authentic taste of Japan, our PD team showcased a **cherry blossom flavor** in a vinaigrette. Delicate and floral, it offers a perfect balance of sweet, tangy and a hint of the exotic. It adds a light, elegant touch to salads, grilled vegetables and seafood dishes.

*Request Your FREE Flavor Sample Here*