



Mc FLAVOR FORECAST

2026

Opportunities in the Food & Beverage Space:

Attainable Opulence

Amid a dynamic global environment, consumers are using extravagant treats and experiences as an escape, bringing elevated flavors into everyday life, not just special occasions. Luxury now lives in the everyday—it's not about excess but about finding beauty in the moment and treating yourself a little along the way. This creates an opportunity to deliver more deep, complex flavors that bring intrigue to everyday food and drink applications.

Themes: Boozy Fruit | Warm Aromatics | Casual Luxury | Sour Surprise

OUR PREDICTION:

Expect to see more deep, complex flavors bringing intrigue to everyday food and drink.

“Flavor is emotion made tangible—consumers don’t need extravagance, they seek taste experiences that feel elevated, immersive, and deeply rewarding.”

- Cohen Aviram, Executive Chef, McCormick

Trend Bite

Boozy Fruit

The combination of alcohol and fruit creates a deep, complex flavor that is both playful and sophisticated. As boundaries blur, the flavors of spirits, beer and wines are making their way to fruit forward applications like sweets and ice cream. Also, as the zero-proof drink movement continues to grow, boozy flavors are showing up in unexpected places outside alcohol. With the bar cart now a source for inspiration, there is an opportunity for innovations with boozy fruity flavors.

Translated into taste by our experts:



Black Cherry Bourbon Cheesecake Bar: A decadent dessert experience in bar form — features the **flavors of rich, sweet-tart black cherry compote blended with the warmth of bourbon whiskey**, and balanced with **cheesecake notes** and an **Optify™ mouthfeel modifier**.



Blood Orange Cardamom Sour: A deep, complex, dramatic blood orange mocktail recipe with aromatic cardamom and warm pumpkin pie spices was crafted by our culinary team.

Warm Aromatics

Warm spices—such as cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger—are often the quiet heroes behind the comforting flavors of cold-weather desserts. These sweet brown spices also bring depth and sophistication, offering warm, complex, and subtly exotic notes that can elevate a wide range of applications into a rich, multi-sensory taste experience.

Translated into taste by our experts:



Five Spice Lotus Crunch Burger: From our chefs, this juicy burger recipe is an elevated take on the classic. It features a smoky Chinese Five Spice comeback sauce.



Chai Espresso Apple Chips: Featuring a **chai espresso seasoning**, this apple chip delivers a flavor experience that mirrors the comforting warmth of a freshly brewed cup of chai—with an added touch of espresso sophistication.

Trend Bite

Casual Luxury

Consumers are craving the thrill of escape from everyday routine with a touch of casual luxury through memorable experiences, welcoming ambiances, and bold flavors. Attainable opulence is about indulging in life's little luxuries through deep, layered flavors and immersive experiences that feel rich, sophisticated, and just a little extra.

Translated into taste by our experts:



Paris Chocolate: Influenced by French pâtisseries, this confection reimagines Dubai chocolate with a luscious filling layered with feuilletine pastry flakes and caramelized almonds for irresistible crunch. It features a **brown butter flavor and an Optify™ salt modulator.**



Sweet and Tangy Stuffed Chicken Tenders: An unexpected filling and tangy-sweet blood orange gastrique elevate this simple chicken dish.

Sour Surprise

As consumers seek deeper, more dynamic sensory experiences, sour flavors are gaining momentum—celebrated for their ability to add balance, brightness, and a vibrant punch. Sour fruits and splashes of vinegar represent an opportunity to deliver unexpected tastes. Utilize these flavors to tone down sweetness, balance spiciness, and add overall brightness to your innovation.

Translated into taste by our experts:



Black Cherry Apricot Shrub: Inspired by a classic acidic cordial, this modern zero-proof cocktail features **champagne flavor and Optify™ taste technology.** Dark sweet cherry and bright apricot are a fresh counterpoint to the tart vinegar in the application, and the overall experience is elevated by being lightly sparkling.



Citrus Ginger Black Currant Gummy: Featuring **sweet citrus ginger and black currant flavors**, this gummy is bright and flavorful with aspects of citrus and dark berry.

The Takeaway

In a time marked by global uncertainty, food and drink are often viewed as an escape. As luxury continues to be democratized, consider how ingredients and flavors can play into emotion when innovating. The right flavor can make familiar foods feel just a little more luxurious—without needing a white tablecloth.

[Click](#) to learn more about the McCormick 2026 Flavor Forecast® and check out all of the *Attainable Opulence* recipes.

Ready to translate trends in tastes?
We've got you covered.

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