

## FOOD BUSINESS NEWS 10.23.18

CINCINNATI – A team of product developers, chefs and innovators at The Kroger Co. predicts regional flavors, gut-healthy foods and natural sweeteners will be hot in 2019. The company has compiled a list of top food trends for the coming year, many of which may already be seen in the aisles of Kroger stores under the private brand names Simple Truth, Kroger and Private Selection.

“More than 135 years in the food industry has taught us a lot about food and about people,” Kroger said.



Kroger named eating styles as a trend, citing the various diets and lifestyles consumers are adopting in pursuit of improved health and wellness.

“More consumers are purchasing better-for-you products and subscribing to different eating styles, from vegetarian to flexitarian to keto and

paleo,” Kroger said.

The company offers products such as grain-free paleo friendly granola, avocado oil, gluten-free pizzas, date bars, frozen quinoa and red pepper omelet bites, beef jerky and tofu.

Gut-healthy foods is another trend expected to explode in the new year, inspiring the development of organic kombucha in flavors such as blueberry ginger and raspberry hibiscus, organic apple cider vinegar, Greek yogurt and probiotic low-fat milk.

“Medical studies show that a healthy gut is the foundation of overall wellness, and more than ever before, consumers are seeking foods that support self-care and healthy immune systems,” Kroger said. “Our consumers will find a growing number of products rich in probiotics – good bacteria – and flavor.”

Consumer demand for low sugar and natural sweeteners also is forecast to drive product development next year. Nearly half of consumers say they want to eat less sugar, according to Mintel research cited by Kroger.

“Many of our consumers are motivated to reduce or eliminate sugar and/or consume alternate natural sweeteners like honey and agave,” Kroger said. “New solutions and foods will continue to be added to grocery shelves to help consumers find products rich in nutrition and flavor and lean on sugar.”

At Kroger, products include organic blue agave light golden syrup, orange blossom honey, organic coconut sugar and flavored seltzers. Low-sugar options include yogurt, milk and cottage cheese.

Plant-based foods continue to gain traction as more consumers opt to reduce meat and dairy intake throughout the week. Last year, 31% of consumers participated in meat-free days once per week, according to Mintel research cited by Kroger.

“Our consumers are finding it is easier than ever before to incorporate more plant-based fare into their daily diets,” Kroger said. “By choosing to go meat or dairy free, whether for a meal, a Meatless Monday, Flexitarian Friday, or every day of the week, there will be more plant-based options available to power through the day.”

Product examples include coconutmilk and powdered coconutmilk creamer, meatless patties, greens and grains risotto, organic lentils, organic hummus and organic light red kidney beans.

Local, regional and global tastes are influencing flavor trends, as seen in a number of new products at Kroger stores, including barbecue sauces inspired by the Carolinas, Texas, Memphis and Kansas City, Nashville-style hot chicken potato chips, brown butter bourbon truffle ice cream, pimento cheese and harissa kettle chips and bourbon barrel cola.

“America’s culinary heritage is as varied as it is delicious,” Kroger said.