

Trending Flavors and Ingredients in Alcoholic Beverages – US – 2021

Report Price: £3695 | \$4995 | €4400

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and the alcoholic beverages market
- Flavor innovation opportunities
- Attitudes and behaviors regarding alcoholic beverage flavors
- Current and future flavor trends within the category

From 2020-21, the share of consumers going out of their way to try new flavors has dropped by five percentage points (to 18%), and the share that sometimes do so declined by eight percentage points (to 50%). This reflects not only the challenges to the category during the pandemic, but also the need to actively re-engage with consumers now and nurture their appetite for more diverse flavors.

The pandemic drove down on-premise sales, where many discover new flavors and ingredients, but drove up demand for Ready to Drink (RTD) cocktails, as well as at-home experimentation and online shopping. While on-premise sales have been rebounding, other pandemic-related shifts in behavior, such as more online shopping or a greater concern with health and safety, will have longer-term repercussions.

Beyond the uncertainty of the pandemic, category challenges include the tendency of younger generations to be consuming less alcohol in general, which is part of a broad-based interest in greater health and wellness. This, together with consumer interest in sustainability, will shape the category beyond the pandemic.

There is opportunity for bars and restaurants to re-engage consumers with new tastes ranging from popular fruity and dessert flavors to more nuanced savory, spicy and floral tastes. Off-premise, opportunity lies in more innovative, functional RTDs as well as via online retailers, subscription services and influencers. Focus should be on Gen Z, Millennials, parents and more affluent



“Flavor exploration overall, and especially through bars and restaurants, fell during the pandemic, but is reviving, as on-premise consumption gradually returns.

Opportunities are strong to continue to engage consumers online, and with new RTD offerings, as well as with functional and lower-alcohol drinks.”

– Amanda Topper, Director – US Research

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consumers, who consume more varieties and have more expansive tastes and more enthusiasm for innovation.

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- RTDs can expand with taste and convenience in mind
- Focus on women in particular with fruity, lighter and low calorie RTDs
- Offer more premium offerings, with nuanced tastes and quality ingredients

COMPANIES AND BRANDS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overarching wellness trends are reflected in trending claims, flavors
- Fruit flavors lead and are centerpieces in a wide variety of drinks
- Indulgent dessert flavors also abound in beers, ales and spirits
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