

Trends in Ice Cream Novelties

Giving consumers guiltless joy needs to be the primary goal of ice cream and frozen novelty innovations.



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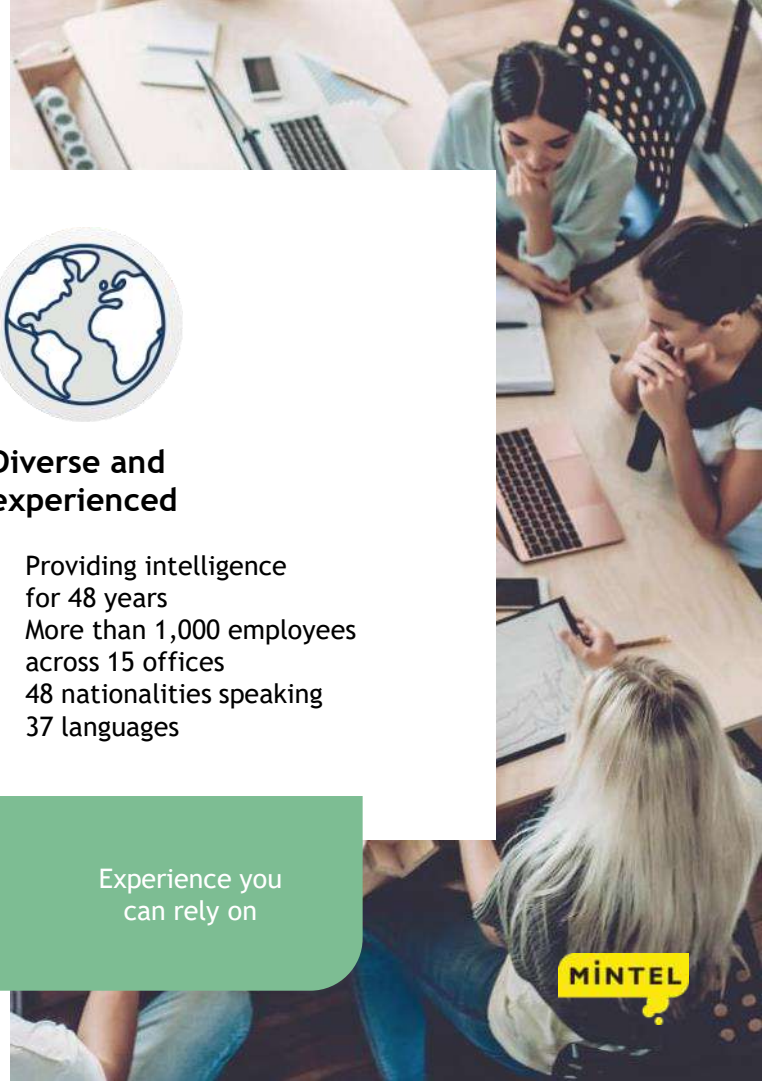
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It's been a tough decade...and we're only two years in

In early 2022, many consumers felt a sense of normality as COVID-19 restrictions started to ease.

Yet pandemic anxiety has been replaced by new anxieties, be it the increasing cost of living or the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.



During times of stress, consumers turn to comfort food

Once again, comforting food, such as indulgent ice cream desserts and novelties, is sure to be popular among consumers looking to manage their stress levels.

TO COPE WITH STRESS

35%

of [US consumers](#)* eat comforting foods to relieve stress

TO BOOST MOOD

54%

of [US consumers](#) agree that enjoying indulgent treats can benefit your overall wellbeing (eg happiness, mood)

BUT CONSUMERS FEEL GUILTY

53%

of [US consumers](#) agree eating indulgent food sometimes makes them feel guilty

Base: US 1,000 internet users aged 18+, 2,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: Kantar Profiles, [August 2021](#), [December 2021](#)



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Let's take away the guilt of guilty pleasures

Reassure consumers about their top concerns

Address the issues consumers are worried about. This could be proving value to address money troubles, using sustainable ingredients to address environmental worries, or by offering better-for-you options to address health concerns.

Offer comfort through the familiar

As inflation hits record highs, ice cream is well positioned to offer comfort food at an affordable price. Try nostalgic flavors, familiar inclusions and convenient formats.

Prove value through quality

Alleviate the guilt consumers may have with buying or eating a treat. Communicate taste and quality in order to prove value.

Spark adventure with new sensations

Offer consumers affordable joy. Play with sensory attributes to deliver safe excitement. Flavor, color, texture and even aroma are all at play.

REASSURE CONSUMERS AND BRING COMFORT



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Ice cream brands must adapt to counter inflation concerns

The stress and uncertainty of an economic crisis leads to an uptake in eating comfort foods such as ice cream and frozen novelties. However, rising inflation means it is ever more crucial to offer consumers value for money.

Consumers will continue to seek out small indulgences in the face of a global economic crisis that has already led to cost of living issues. In some markets, such as the US and UK, a [recession](#) is possible due to rising inflation.

IN AUGUST 2022

73%

of US consumers agreed they had been affected by increasing food and drink prices in the past three months

Base: US 1,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, August 2022](#)



Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

Offer consumers proof that ice cream is a worthy treat

Consumers are known to seek [simpler flavors](#) during a recession, highlighting the opportunity in the short term for ice cream brands to offer simple, nostalgic flavors.

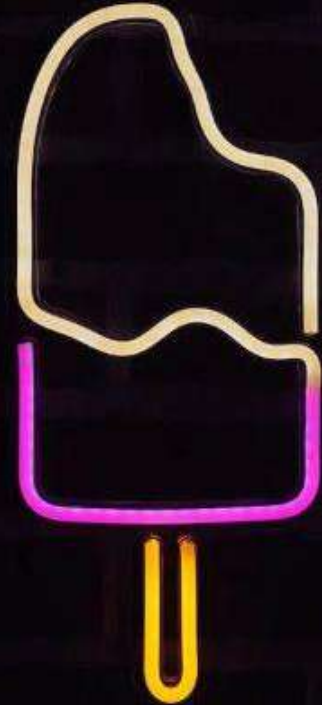
Ice creams featuring a [premium positioning](#) often highlight strong indulgence cues to justify clear value. These can relate to texture (eg dense/rich), processing method, ingredients or provenance.

Despite inflationary conditions, the largest portion of frozen treat shoppers select premium as a concept that would motivate more purchases of frozen treats.

35% of US consumers would be motivated to buy more frozen treats from a retail store if they were premium (eg artisanal ingredients, small batch production)

Base: 1,000 internet users aged 18+ who purchase frozen treats

Source: Kantar Profiles/Mintel, December 2021



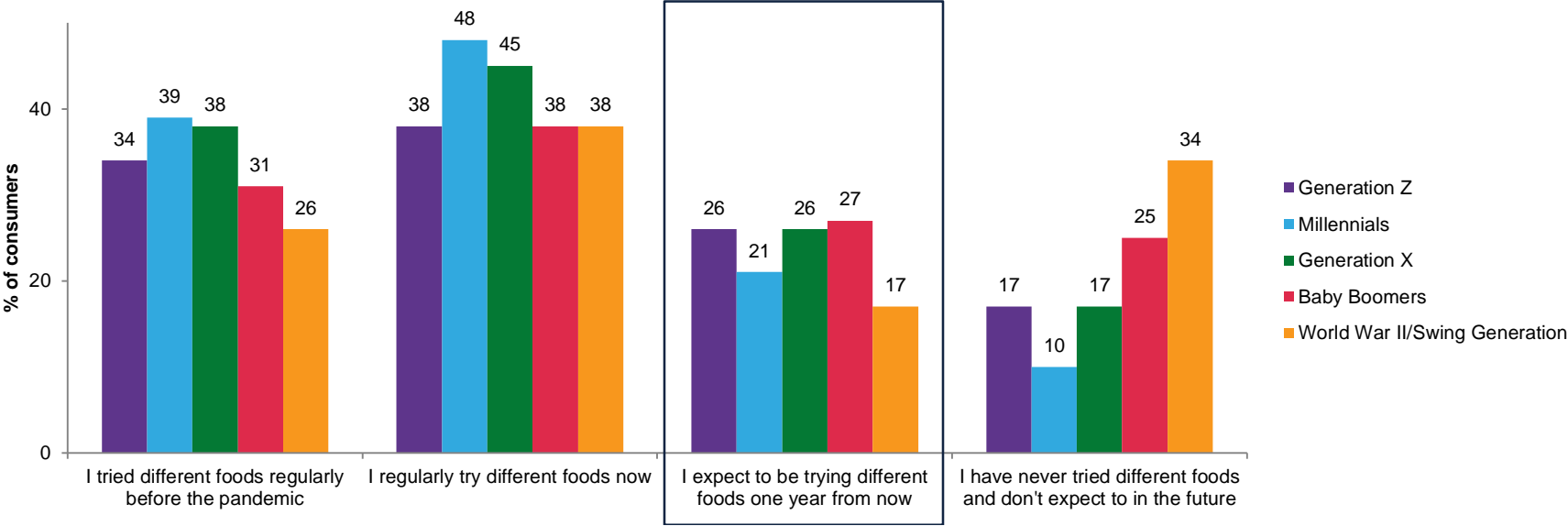
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2022: the year of the familiar

Only 24% of [US adults](#) expect to be regularly trying different foods in 2022.

US: COVID-19 changes to food and drink habits, trying different foods, by generation, 2021



Base: US: 2,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, March 2021](#)



Why simple flavors? New flavors can be risky when money is tight

Brands should not only look for flavors that can reassure consumers, but also flavors that consumers can confidently use for multiple occasions.

THINK BUDGET-FRIENDLY

46%

of [US consumers](#) don't try new flavors because it's too expensive

MAKE TRIAL EASY

30%

of [US consumers](#) don't try new flavors because they don't want to commit to a large portion

OFFER A BRIDGE TO THE FAMILIAR

41%

of [US consumers](#) are interested in trying new flavors that are similar to their favorites

Base: US: 2,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: Kantar Profiles/Mintel, October 2020



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Now is the time to push flavors that offer value

[Value](#) will be essential for many US consumers as we move through this next phase of the pandemic, especially as economic experts [predict inflation](#) and [food companies consider price increases](#).

Already, [brands are cutting back](#) and prioritizing core product lines to cope with labor shortages and [supply chain issues](#). However, this could be an opportune time to refocus on flavors that can offer consumers the most value when shopping for food and drink products.

Even back in November 2020, 34% of [US adults](#) said **higher grocery bills were the top factor** to *negatively* affect their finances during the pandemic. With [inflation](#) higher than it has been in the past 10 years, there will be a need to provide consumers with products that can help stretch their budgets.

BACK IN 2020

28%

of [US adults](#) say if the economy worsened, they would switch to less-expensive kinds of food

Base: US: 2,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: Kantar Profiles/Mintel, November 2020



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Ice cream screams for nostalgia

[Nostalgia marketing](#) came to the fore during the Great Recession in 2011. Facing uncertainty, consumers pine for reminders of a simpler time.

Given that consumers [associate](#) ice cream with childhood, ice cream is poised to tap into the need for nostalgia during the unsettling 2020s.



Conjure up feelings of nostalgia by bringing back throw-back products



Consumers want to be reminded of home, heart and heritage

Base: 1,961 internet users aged 18+ who have eaten desserts or candy in the past three months

Source: [Lightspeed/Mintel, April 2021](#)

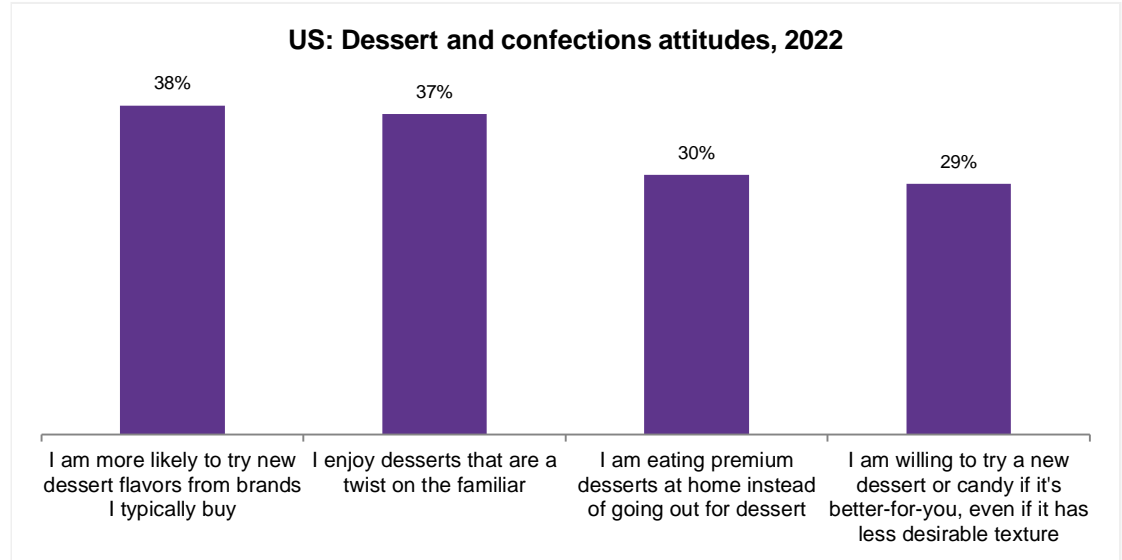


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Nostalgic ice cream offers consumers comfort during unsettling times

[Nostalgic flavors](#) can start in a single category and move into an array of other spaces as consumers enjoy foods that remind them of their pasts, families and communities.

Be creative in how to use nostalgia in product innovation and marketing by adding a nostalgic twist to a modern product, or linking ice cream to nostalgic occasions.



Base: 1,965 internet users aged 18+ who have eaten desserts or candy in the past three months

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, April 2022](#)



Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

Comfort flavor: birthday cake

The feel-good flavor evokes family and childhood. In the US, [80%](#) of desserts or candy consumers have tried or are interested in birthday cake flavored desserts or candy.



Birthday cake inclusions
[Birthday Cake Ice Cream](#) is described as vanilla frosting-flavored ice cream swirled with cake piece and candy sprinkle (US).



"Party like it's your birthday"
[Birthday Cake Greek Yogurt Bars](#) is a low fat, creamy birthday cake flavored frozen Greek yogurt with rainbow sprinkles and cake dough. Ridiculously creamy guarantee (US).



Birthday cake mochi treats
[Birthday Cake Cookie Dough with Ice Cream Soul](#) is a mochi-inspired ice cream treat made with premium vanilla ice cream wrapped in sprinkles cookie dough (UK).

Comfort flavor: S'mores

[S'mores](#) harken back to childhood rituals; in this era of unease, they have become the next big flavor across confectionery and sweet categories.



Epicly awesome ice cream
[Campfire S'mores Awesome Ice Cream](#) is described as the creamiest vanilla marshmallow ice cream with chocolate squares and a graham marshmallow swirl (US).



S'mores with less mess
[S'mores Ice Cream Cones](#) is described as white marshmallow flavor ice cream and light brown biscuit flavor ice cream with a chocolate flavor sauce (UK).



For summer entertaining all year
[S'mores Iced Cream Cake](#) with a mascarpone semifreddo cream, salted caramel sauce and marshmallows, topped with mallow meringue that just needs to be finished under the grill, to savor the magic of the campfire (UK).

Comfort flavor: Cereal + cereal milk

Cereal milk, especially ones derived from childhood favorites, is found in ice cream and other sweets. The nostalgic aroma is even found in cereal-scented [candles](#).



Milk Bar's cereal milk ice cream [Cereal Milk Ice Cream](#) is inspired by Christina Tosi's iconic cereal milk desserts at Momofuku Milk Bar. It is described as an ice cream with cereal milk and cornflake crunch that is said to taste like the bottom of the cereal bowl (US).



Cocoa Pebbles' launch for Pebble's 50th birthday [Cereal Milk Chocolate Light Ice Cream Swirled with Chocolatey Bedrock Bits](#)

"I'm a sucker for ice cream, even if the character reference is dated to my kids. I used to watch it and it makes me a little nostalgic." - Female, Midwest, 35-54



"Trashy good" [Cornflake Crunch Ice Cream](#) is a cereal milk ice cream with cornflake cookies (US).

Can nostalgia go too far?

The Miller High Life Ice Cream Dive Bars are designed to taste like a dive bar

According to [CNN](#), Miller High Life has partnered with Topsy Scoop, an alcohol-infused ice cream maker, to create an ice cream flavor that tastes like a dive bar.

"The treat features premium ice cream infused with High Life beer and other dive bar staples – including peanuts, a traditional bar snack; tobacco smoke flavoring, to replicate dive bar smell; caramel, because dive bars have sticky floors; carbonated candy, to replicate beer fizz; and dark chocolate, which is similar in color to dark wood and dim lighting."



Base: 1,965 internet users aged 18+ who have eaten desserts or candy in the past three months

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, April 2022](#)



Read on [mintel.com](#)

Space: the nostalgic flavor of the future

As a marketing theme, space will become less whimsical and more tangible. Space has long been a popular theme for marketers. But this has typically involved whimsical limited editions and sci-fi-style branding; stars, aliens and spaceships make for instantly-identifiable and kid-friendly designs, after all.

In the coming years, space will become more tangible than the [mythical](#) and [magical](#) flavor and color inspirations that have appealed to consumers looking for escapes from the reality of life on Earth.



[Galaxy Lollies](#)

Space will symbolize hope amid the intensifying crises on Earth

Space is an intriguing point of inspiration as shown by these 2022 launches. But innovation will also be shaped by space tech and consumers' growing veneration of space. The new space race will make space a signal of international cooperation. Led by upcoming missions from [the US](#) and [China](#), humans will get new familiarity with the cosmos.



Space inspires mystery 'Creation' [Coca-Cola Starlight Space Flavored Beverage](#) was the first new flavour from Coca-Cola's Creations line. Starlight was inspired by '[the magic and mystery of the cosmos.](#)' The company hopes the Creations drinks will revitalise appeal to Gen Z.



Papa John's says space is like chorizo [Papa John's Chorizo Pizza](#) is said to be 'the world's first space-inspired pizza.' Papa John's shared how chorizo is similar to space, according to Dr. Chris Welch, the former vice president of the International Aeronautical Federation.



Starburst sends messages into space [Starburst](#) invited TikTok users to send a question into space, with the winning entries sent via [SpaceSpeak](#) technology, which transmits messages into deepest space. The [#beamitupstarburst](#) hashtag gained over [60 million views](#) on TikTok.

Bring it back to Earth with trendy upcycled ingredients

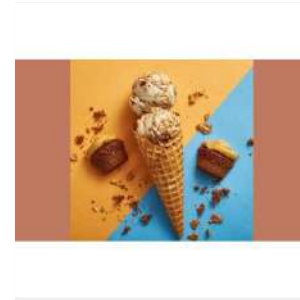
While consumers may be concerned about the environment, it's not a driving factor for purchase. Brands must **engage them with sustainability in a way that is fun and positive**. Upcycled ingredients are part of the fight against food waste, transforming foods from trash to value-added products. Already 56% of Canadians are concerned about food waste when purchasing food and drinks in stores.



Surplus bananas
[Banana Vanilla Ice Cream](#) from Denmark is said to be made with surplus bananas to minimize food waste. The product features an icon entitled 'begrens madspild', meaning 'limit food waste'. The packaging states 'less waste, more taste'.



Sourdough from Amass
Danish ice cream [Hansen Flødeis, Amass & Jalm&B Sourdough Ice Cream Stick](#) is said to have been made in collaboration between Hansens's Flødeis, restaurant Amass and the bread producer Jalm&B.



Upcycled Dark Chocolate Brownie Mix
US ice cream brand [Salt & Straw](#) partnered with upcycled ingredient supplier Renewal Mill to create a vegan ice cream incorporating the latter's upcycled dark chocolate brownie mix.

SPARK ADVENTURE WITH NEW SENSATIONS

Unexpected sensations in desserts are helping consumers approach life with a sense of wonder and lighthearted delight, in line with Mintel's 2022 Global Consumer Trend [Enjoyment Everywhere](#).



Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

There are many ways ice cream novelties can make consumers "feel good"

Novel textures and formats

Exciting flavors

Better-for-you ingredients

Playful colors and aroma

Make ice cream an unguilty pleasure by delivering on value and joy

OF US ICE CREAM CONSUMERS

23%

are buying ice cream more frequently because they are at [home more often](#), treating themselves and snacking on it more

Saving money is not worth it if consumers feel it may risk or diminish the indulgent experiences they have grown to expect in efforts to save.

This supports the notion that even as prices soar across categories, consumers are more likely to adopt a “**less-but-better**” approach to **treating**, or skip the purchase entirely, rather than trade down to economy concepts.

Miniature ice creams suitable for snackable treats or on-the-go consumption must deliver pleasure to consumers, but also good value, as low price is [the second most important influence on purchase](#) - after flavor - in the US.

Base: 431 internet users aged 18+ who are purchasing frozen treats more often than a year ago

Source: Lightspeed/Mintel, Feb 2021



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Snackable ice cream novelties can be unguilty pleasures

From bite-sized pieces to mini cones, cups and bars, snackable treat formats have been a staple of category innovation in recent years - accelerated by the pandemic.



[Cookie Dough Ice Cream 'Peaces'](#)
[Crispy Vanilla Flavoured Double-Layer Ice Cream](#)



[Vanilla and Chocolate Ice Cream Bars with Dark Chocolate](#)



[Vanilla Bean Poppables](#)

Snackable formants will make flavor experimentation feel less risky, especially for spicy flavors

[Ice cream launches with a spicy flavor](#) are niche, but share of launches is growing globally, albeit from a small base. Consumer interest highlights the opportunity for innovation in this space; 34% of [German Millennials who consume ice cream](#) are interested in ice cream with spicy flavors (vs 27% of all ice cream consumers).

[Millennials](#) are more likely than the average adult to enjoy breaking the rules when it comes to what they eat/drink (eg combining unexpected flavours). They are also an ideal target demographic; US [Millennials](#) are more likely to be weekly eaters of ice cream than other generations (39% vs 34% of all adults).



Focus on innovative flavour to target Millennials

Reassure consumers that adding hot spices will enhance, not overwhelm

There is an opportunity to combine sweetness with hot spice, a successful strategy in recent confectionery launches.

This appeals to [Millennials](#), who have more interest in chilli flavors in desserts/confectionery than other age groups.

Brands should also take inspiration from foodservice with the [hot honey](#) flavor, which is trending among dips/sauces and on proteins -- and appeals to [Millennials](#).



[Great Value Mango Habanero in Coconut Ice Cream](#) has a heat meter to indicate spice level



[Mango Chile Mexican Style Mini Ice-Pops](#) is in a refreshing mini format

Look at sweet spices beyond cinnamon

Unlike hot spices, sweet spices are perhaps a more natural pairing with ice cream due to their sweetness. The use of cinnamon as an ingredient in ice cream has remained steady at around 2% of global launches for the past five years.

The use of less-common spices such as cloves, nutmeg and cardamom is on the rise, albeit from a small base. Sweet spices such as cardamom and nutmeg are popular in Middle Eastern cuisine. These emerging flavors in ice cream are likely to appeal to Millennials, as this group tends to adopt new flavor trends readily.

SPICE APPEAL

21%

of US Millennials would try chai-flavored ice cream, compared to 14% of all US adults

Base: US: 1,904 internet users aged 18+ who have eaten dairy or dairy alternatives in the past three

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, June 2021](#)



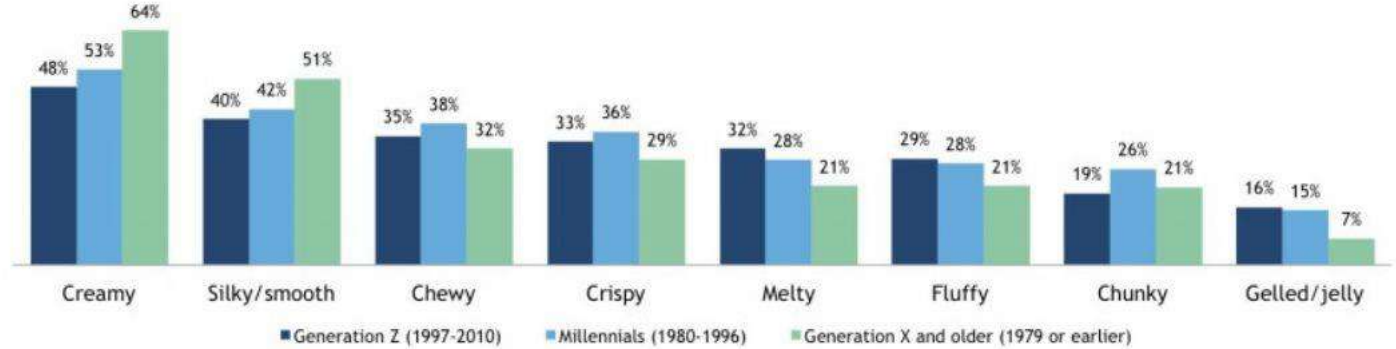
Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

Trendy innovation regarding texture will appeal most to the adventurous eaters of Gen Z

These younger consumers seek a greater range of other textures, especially those related to their segment of choice, candy (caramel, brittle, chocolate).

They are also more than twice as likely as older generation to be open to gelled/jelly textures, which can be found in fruit jellies popular in Asian cuisine and products such as boba teas, which have remained trendy with Gen Z.

US: Preferred dessert and confection textures, by generation, 2022



Base: 1,965 internet users aged 18+ who have eaten desserts or candy in the past three months

Source: Kantar Profiles/Mintel, April 2022



Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

Candy inclusions are safe yet exciting



A Smarties Pop-Up [Vanilla Ice Cream Sticks with Smarties.](#)

According to the manufacturer, it is an appropriate serving size specially developed for children (Netherlands).



This one will melt in your hands
[Salted Caramel Ice Cream Chills](#) is comprised of salted caramel ice cream with M&M's minis, milk chocolate coating and caramel chunks (Belgium).



Marshmallow dreams
[Vanilla Ice Cream Cone with Marshmallows](#) is a vanilla flavored ice cream with pastel colored marshmallows (Denmark).

Play with trendy textures, especially in non-dairy products

Brands should also use texture to add playfulness, especially for younger consumers. To date, brands have focused on improving the texture of non-dairy ice cream to better mimic the texture of dairy ice cream.

- [Canadian Gen Z consumers](#) are more likely than other age groups to seek unique textures in ice cream.
- In the US, Gen Z consumers show a higher preference than other age groups for [fluffy or chewy textures](#) in desserts.



[Trader Joe's Cold Brew Coffee and Boba Non-Dairy Ice Cream](#) (US)



[Bubble Tea Flavored Ice Stick](#) is silky smooth, with mellow, rich tea + milk aromas (China)

Other categories can provide texture inspiration



From snack bar to frozen treat bar [Dark Chocolate Almond Sea Salt & Nut Frozen Treat Bar](#) is a plant based product, described as a creamy almond bar made with ingredients that can be seen and pronounced. Features almonds as the number one ingredient (US).



Cereal nostalgia for new textures [Strawberry Crisp Sorbet Bars](#) are made with real fruit and are described as a vegan flavor bombs (US).

A variety of snacking and dessert categories received a boost from elevated spend on at-home eating, and bakery and co-branded fall in the top half of flavors that would motivate greater purchase of frozen treats.

In addition to the benefit of trending flavors, co-branding with private label bakery products or national brands found in the aisle can present more product/messaging placement opportunities.

Netflix's "Is it Cake?" challenge can move to ice cream

Look to other categories for inspiration for new shapes, textures, and formats to surprise and delight consumers.



Strawberries or ice cream?

[Sweet Strawberry Filled Ice Cream](#) is made with fresh strawberries, and instantly IQF frozen. It is said to be sour, sweet, delicious, refreshing and icy (China).



Waffles or ice cream?

[Waffle On Ice Cream](#) is described as a sweet slab loaded with caramelized sugar pieces jammed between two waffle biscuits and dipped in caramel white chocolate with hazelnuts and cookie crumb (Australia).



Spaghetti or ice cream?

[Spaghetti Ice Cream with Cream, Strawberry Sauce & White Chocolate](#) is a bourbon-vanilla ice cream with whipped cream, garnished with strawberry sauce and grated white chocolate is made with an Italian recipe (Germany).

Colorful paletas bring joy with fruit-based formulations

When [consumers](#) do want a healthy option for frozen treats, they are most likely to be looking for lower sugar options and fruit flavors.

These two attributes may have even greater leverage together, including labeling sugar as natural and from fruit



[Watermelon Flavored Organic Ice Pops](#)



[Coconut and Strawberry Ice Cream](#)

Could color changing ice cream be next?

In Spain, Manuel Linares, a chef and physicist invited an ice cream that changes colors when you lick it.

The invention dates back to 2014 and has been featured in various publications across Europe and in [People](#) magazine in the US.



Manuel Linares's XAMALEON ice cream and granita



Chemical engineer and blogger Britt Michelsen makes her own version

What does ice cream smell like?

Salt & Straw has launched a line of "culinary perfumes" to enhance the sensory experience of eating ice cream by adding new aromas - and evoking emotion in new ways. The edible scents were created in coordination with Portland perfumery Imaginary Authors. The companies created three scents that are designed to enhance the ice cream eating experience.



A Cloud of Cocoa

[A Cloud of Cocoa:](#) "Like stepping into the back kitchen of your favorite old-world bakery. Rich and robust, combining a luxurious smoky warmth with malty cocoa."



A Swoon of Citrus

[A Swoon of Citrus:](#) "A bright invitation to sun-soaked days. Both intense and subtle, energizingly juicy, tart citrus is balanced by an herbal nuance."



A Plume of Blooms

[A Plume of Blooms:](#) "Playful, yet enchantingly alluring. Honeysuckle and jasmine intertwine, evoking a euphoric spell of untamed blossoms in late spring."

Use different senses to evoke emotions

Mintel's [Sense of the Intense](#) Trend highlights how sensory experiences can provide brands and products with deeper meaning, and throughout the pandemic we've seen consumers develop a deeper desire to feel connected to multi-sensory experiences.

Ice cream is already a joyful experience, and an edible perfume allows consumers to enhance a simple pleasure. While going out for ice cream is already a common summer ritual, this provides a playful experience for those who choose to eat ice cream at home.

54%

of US consumers agree that enjoying indulgent treats can benefit your overall wellbeing (eg happiness, mood)

Base: 2,000 internet users aged 18+

Source: [Kantar Profiles/Mintel, December 2021](#)



Read on [mintel.com](https://www.mintel.com)

What you need to know

Ice cream is well known for being an indulgence and a mood-booster, but brands are finding new ways to reinforce its treat appeal.

Indulgence, flavor innovation and exciting snacking formats are dominating the global ice cream landscape. Ice cream are also tapping into nostalgia through flavor and through category-blurring inclusions and formats.



Be an unguilty pleasure for consumers

Offer comfort through the familiar

As inflation hits record highs, ice cream is well positioned to offer comfort food at an affordable price. Try nostalgic flavors, familiar inclusions and convenient formats.

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Offer consumers affordable joy. Play with sensory attributes to deliver safe excitement. Flavor, color, texture and even aroma are all at play.

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Address the issues consumers are worried about. This could be proving value to address money troubles, using sustainable ingredients to address environmental worries, or by offering better-for-you options to address health concerns.

Prove value to tackle guilt

Alleviate the guilt, especially by communicate taste and quality to prove value.

Meet the Expert



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