



3 Cheese Flavor Trends to Watch in 2021

It's hard to imagine a world without cheese.

Cheese is a foundational flavor and essential ingredient in countless cuisines, recipes and products around the world. That popularity is projected to increase in the coming years. The U.S. cheese market size was valued at \$34.3 billion in 2019 and is projected to grow to \$45.5 billion by 2027, according to [Allied Market Research](#). That's a compound annual growth rate of more than 5 percent.

With so many diverse flavors and applications, projections for specific cheese market segments vary. In a product category as broad as cheese, there are bound to be winners and losers as consumer preferences shift. What's more, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is driving significant changes in purchasing and eating habits.

Over the last several months, consumers have changed how they shop and eat, creating uncertainty – and opportunity -- across markets and product categories.

Dairy and cheese are no exception. Yet as the pandemic continues, market analysts and food manufacturers have started to figure out how COVID-19 and other factors are converging to impact major flavor categories. With that context in mind, here are three cheese trends to watch for in 2021.

1. New Demands for New Cheese Snacks

Snacking was a growing trend before COVID-19. Now, with many more Americans working just a few feet from the kitchen, snacking is more popular than ever. Cookie and cracker sales, for example, are up by as much as [30 percent](#) at some large food manufacturers. With the decline in takeout at the office, restaurant dining and school lunches, people are stocking their pantries with comforting snacks and grazing more throughout the day. Not surprisingly, cheese is a central ingredient in many of those snacks.

But the snacking trend goes beyond cheat foods and addicting cheesy flavors.

Many consumers are seeking out healthier snacks. They're focused on portion control rather than giving in to one more handful of chips. In fact, nearly four in 10 consumers surveyed by the International Food Information Council said they occasionally replace meals (usually lunch) with snacks. In many snack products, cheese plays a critical nutritional role as a filling source of protein and vitamins and minerals. There's also been a major innovation push to concept and develop healthier, ready-to-eat cheese products, including cheese-flavored popcorns, puffs and crisps.

2. Bolder Flavors with More Specific Cheese Ingredients

With the drive to innovate new cheese snack products comes a demand for more exciting flavors. Consumers today crave more adventurous flavors and more descriptive, branded products. According to [Mintel data](#), cheese combined with flavors like chive & onion, truffle, dill & garlic, garlic & herb and chili all saw significant increases over the last several years. That's translating into a demand for these cheese flavors in snacks and other applications.

At the same time, the cheeses being used in specific products are becoming more tailored and descriptive. Food manufacturers are looking to more specific cheeses to offer tailored tastes beyond the standard cheddar or mozzarella flavors.

Cheeses like gouda, provolone, Asiago, gruyere and feta are becoming more and more common on ingredient lists and as part of mouth-watering product names and descriptions.

Cheese is a major force in this trend thanks to its high profile with consumers – most people agree that cheese makes things taste better, so brands are quick to play up the ingredient in describing their products. According to Datassential research, [60 percent of operators](#) believe adding cheese helps an item sell better. What's more, cheese represents a diverse range of flavors and combines well with sweet and savory dishes and products at all times of the day – from breakfast to dessert.





3. Plant-based Cheese is Ready for the Spotlight

A third area where cheese is poised to serve as a prime ingredient in a major food industry trend is in the meteoric rise of plant-based alternatives. The vegan cheese market is poised to grow faster than dairy cheese over the next several years, with a CAGR of over [8 percent](#) through 2024. Consumers are hungry for plant-based options as well as the clean labels and more sustainable supply chains that come with them.

That broad array of applications all have one thing in common -- starting with good cheese.

Plus, cheese is just as delicious on a plant-based burger as it is on a beef or turkey burger. As is the case with other trends, incorporating cheese into products and recipes for other plant-based proteins and ingredients can serve as a major selling point. On this front, cheeses of the dairy and nondairy varieties are well positioned to impact the unprecedented market potential of plant-based products.

"We've seen an interesting shift in the cheese powder space over the last several months. Amidst a pandemic and a growing interest on clean-label and sustainable products, consumers are looking for exciting new flavors and snacks that offer some satisfying comfort without being too unhealthy or indulgent."

- David Cantrell, Vice President Sales & R&D Bluegrass Ingredients

Cheese Powder Delivers Innovative Formula for Cheese Trends

Since creating its first cheese powder decades ago, Bluegrass Ingredients has stayed focused on the intersection of cheese trends and innovative solutions that streamline the manufacturing process and satisfy customer demands. Looking toward 2021, Bluegrass anticipated many emerging cheese powder trends and dedicated powers and products to address them. With more than [two dozen cheese powder flavors and formulations](#),

Bluegrass offers a wide variety of applications that can be included in classic combinations or in bold, adventurous new products to meet exact specifications for flavor, texture and color.

Bluegrass also offers a range of [plant-based cheese powders](#).

Just as critically, Bluegrass' Agile Ingredient Innovation process creates opportunity for collaboration and bold new ideas at every step in the food manufacturing process. As food manufacturers navigate trends around cheese products due to coronavirus and evolving consumer preferences, Bluegrass can serve as a research and development partner in concepting, developing and ultimately delivering the innovative cheese flavors and products that customers want.



To learn more about Bluegrass Ingredients' cheese powders and other market driven flavor solutions, [Contact Us.](#)