

Top Food & Drink Trends for 2023 & Beyond

Climate-hero ingredients, microbial fermentation and uni flavour will all resonate in 2023, among key trends picked by our experts

WGSN Food & Drink Team
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Uni flavour

Uni, the rich, creamy orange lobe (and only edible part) of sea urchins, will move beyond fine dining menus to more packaged goods in 2023.

Innovators are harnessing its briny, umami flavour for fusion dishes, including creamy uni risotto at Japanese-Italian restaurant Terra in Singapore, and uni and bechamel-topped croque madame at California's Jeune & Jolie. Renowned Danish chef René Redzepi is opening a pop-up restaurant in Japan's Kyoto in 2023, and has highlighted how uni will be a key part of the menu. More affordable products are now being created, including uni-flavoured tofu, butter, pastes and sauces for elevating home-cooked meals, as well as uni-flavoured snacks such as frozen uni cream croquettes. Organisations are also highlighting the damage sea urchins can inflict on coastal ecosystems, and are pushing uni as a foodstuff with the potential to help restore these areas.

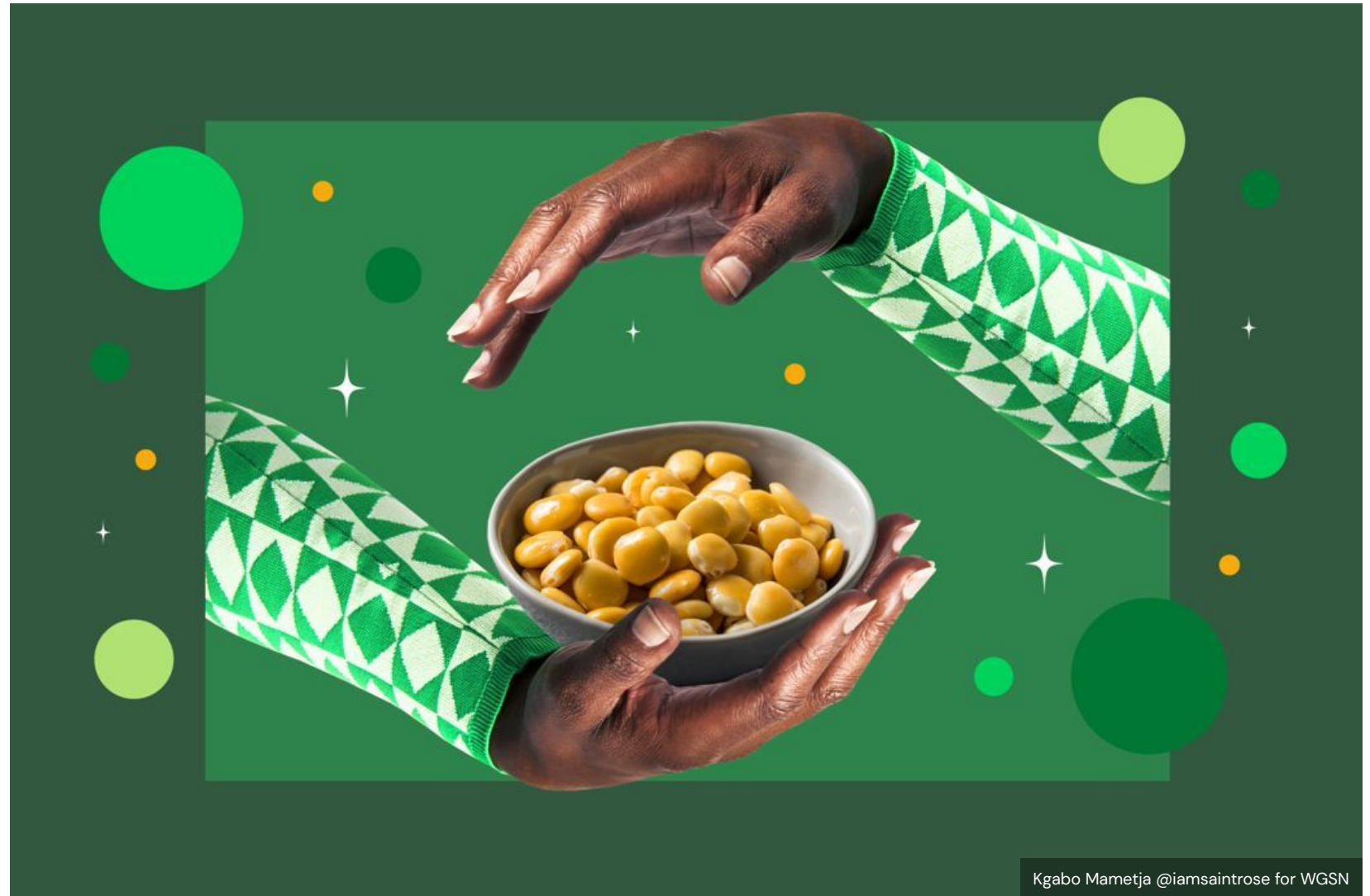


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Climate-hero ingredients

In 2023, there will be a deeper understanding of the need to diversify our eating habits in order to preserve the environment, and climate-hero ingredients will rise to prominence.

While there are estimated to be between 20,000 to 50,000 discovered edible plant species, we currently depend on around just 30 of these crops, and more than 40% of our daily calories come from three staples: rice, wheat and maize. Climate-hero ingredients like fava beans, teff, lupin beans, algae, fonio, moringa and bambara nuts will make their way into more packaged goods around the world, as issues associated with monoculture crops and biodiversity loss become more widely known. These underutilised ingredients are either drought-resistant or can grow abundantly, restoring environments and boosting biodiversity. They are also all nutritious – often more so than their conventional counterparts. Innovators are showcasing the new flavours that these ingredients bring, as well as the environmental gains they offer.



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Microbial fermentation

Microbial fermentation refers to the process of using microbes to produce proteins and functional ingredients that can be used in vegan meat, dairy and fat alternatives.

It's scaling fast, and poised to make a significant impact in 2023. Known as the 'third pillar' of alternative protein, alongside plant-based and cultured meats, microbial fermentation is enabling a new wave of animal-free proteins that have the potential to improve on the nutrition, flavour, texture, sustainability and production efficiency of today's alternatives. Working within three types of fermentation: traditional, biomass, and precision, global innovators are working fast to bring products to market. In the US, Nature's Fynd offers meat-free breakfast sausages and dairy-free cream cheese; Meati Foods has launched mycelium-based steak-like cutlets, and Aqua Cultured Foods presents microbe-based seafood alternatives. Australian startup Eden Brew and Israel's Remilk offer lab-brewed dairy from real milk proteins. And Germany's Formo is scaling its range of animal-free mature and ripened cheese alternatives.



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Sotol

Led by rising consumer interest in lesser-known Mexican spirits, and poised to follow the popularity of agave-based tequila and mezcal, sotol will gain global prominence in 2023.

Made in Mexico for centuries, the sip is derived from the sotol plant, a climate-resilient shrub and relative of agave that is native to the Chihuahuan Desert. Its flavour profile reflects the land where it is grown, and can evoke desert minerality, mountain pine or herbaceous grasslands, as well as sweetness and a touch of smoke from the roasting process. Innovators around the world are now introducing the sip to new audiences. In Osaka, Japan, bar PTN boasts an imported collection of heritage Mexican sotol brands, while Desert Door Distillery is making Texan sotol, offering distillery tours, a tasting room and cocktails such as the comanchero, made with jalapeños, coriander, sotol nectar and lime.



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Ube

With its eye-catching colour and versatile sweet and mild flavour, this purple Filipino yam, pronounced 'oo-beh', is poised to become an influential flavour across food and drink categories worldwide in 2023.

Ube has long been used in the Philippines, particularly in desserts and baked goods. Now, as Filipino cuisine gains attention globally and the ingredient trends on social media, it's lending its nutty, warm vanilla flavour to sweet and savoury products across different regions. Chefs are putting ube in cocktails, coffees, canned drinks, sweets, spreads and sauces. Innovators are even employing its starchiness and versatile flavour in rice, noodles, sandwiches and burger buns. In Australia, dessert chain Gelatissimo offers an ube cheesecake gelato, while Canadian gastropub Studio East's pan-Asian Barney Burger features a grilled beef patty, Korean-inspired bo ssäm pulled pork, kimchi aioli, crispy onions and house slaw, sandwiched between two bright purple ube steamed bao buns.



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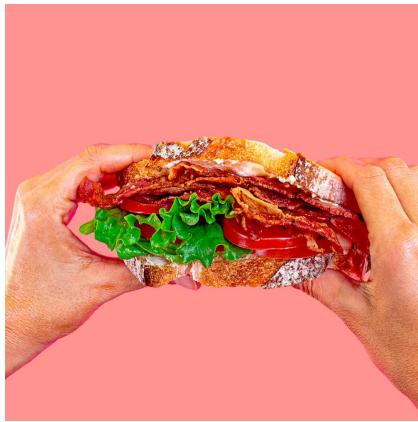
Top Trends for 2023 and Beyond



Key Trend 2024: Climate Hero Ingredients



Autumn Flavours Forecast 2023: Food



Intelligence: Microbial Fermentation



Trend Alert: Uni Flavour