



SALES AND MARKETING ROUNDTABLE #268

Head, Heart & Body: A Closer Look at quench's 2025 Food & Beverage Trend Report with Sonya Cooper

Thank you to everyone who attended our latest Sales and Marketing Roundtable!

NOTE: To provide anonymity during the Roundtable discussion, participants and their communities will not be identified.

ABOUT OUR GUEST

This week on Varsity's Roundtable, we hosted Sonya Cooper, Senior Brand Strategist with Pavone Group's food and beverage marketing agency, quench.

Sonya served up insights from quench's 2025 Food & Beverage Trends report, highlighting the latest in food trends and how emerging trends can enhance dining experiences in senior living communities.

VARSITY ROUNDTABLE PROJECT
DISCUSS. SHARE. LEARN. GROW.

HEAD, HEART, & BODY: A CLOSER LOOK AT QUENCH'S 2025 FOOD & BEVERAGE TREND REPORT

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025

FEATURING
SONYA COOPER
Senior Account Strategist, quench

Visit the [Trends page](#) of the quench website to request a personalized presentation of the 2025 Food & Beverage Trends report for your community's team.



FRESH PERSPECTIVES

- **ADAPTIVE DINING IN SENIOR LIVING ENHANCES RESIDENT WELLNESS** – Monitoring and responding to dining trends in senior living is crucial for enhancing resident satisfaction and well-being. By integrating trends like personalized nutrition and functional foods into meal programs, senior living facilities can cater to evolving dietary preferences and health needs, fostering a vibrant and health-focused dining experience.
- **CONSUMER TRENDS FOCUS ON TRANSPARENCY AND PERSONALIZATION** – Modern consumers demand transparency about food sourcing and ethics, driving innovations in packaging and clear labeling. There's a growing preference for clean labels and convenient, sustainable options like refilleries. Personalized nutrition, fueled by genetic testing and customizable meal kits, empowers consumers to tailor diets to their lifestyles. Additionally, the "Second Chance Foods" trend highlights sustainability by repurposing food waste, underscoring a commitment to environmental responsibility.
- **EMOTIONAL FOOD TRENDS** – Today's consumers are drawn to the emotional experiences food offers, inspired by social media's global flavor exposure. "Snackification" leads eating habits with flexible snacking options, while "Culinary Passports" introduce diverse international flavors. The "Mini Revolution" offers convenient, portion-controlled mini items, and "Branded Fusion" boosts engagement through creative brand partnerships. "Experiential Dining" transforms meals into immersive experiences, with boomers particularly eager for adventure in dining.
- **PHYSICAL WELLNESS FOOD TRENDS** – The "Body" category trends focus on the physical benefits of nutrition, adopting a holistic view of health beyond weight loss. "Gut Health" emphasizes the microbiome's role, with Americans seeking gut-friendly foods across various categories. The "Appetite Adjustment" trend sees changes in eating habits due to GLP-1 drugs, pushing demand for nutrient-dense, low-calorie options. "Dream State" centers on enhancing sleep, with foods playing a role. Lastly, "Smart Sips" highlights the growth of functional beverages offering energy, immunity, and mental clarity.

LINKS & CONTACT INFO

Sonya Cooper ([Linkedin](#)) - scooper@quenchagency.com
quench food trends ([website](#))

Blue Zones ([official site](#))

“Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones” ([Netflix documentary](#))

Blue Zones National Geographic article ([here](#) - subscription required)

COMING UP ON VARSITY’S ROUNDTABLE!

Please join our next Roundtable gathering on Thursday, August 7 at noon ET, 11 a.m. CT and 9 a.m. PT. We'll be joined by Onawa Gigliotti and Samantha Adler from the New York Peace Institute. They'll discuss conflict resolution techniques that can help to improve team dynamics and the sales process.

NEW ON VARSITY’S PODCAST, ROUNDTABLE TALK

The most recent episode of Varsity’s podcast, Roundtable Talk, features a conversation with Bob Kramer, a nationally renowned authority on aging and senior living. As the co-founder of the National Investment Center for Seniors Housing and Care (NIC) and founder of Nexus Insights, Bob has been called a “disruptive force” in the field — always challenging us to think differently about aging, housing and care.

In the episode, Bob challenges the prevailing negative perceptions of aging, describing ageism as a prejudice against our future selves. He also highlights the significant, yet overlooked, potential of older adults in the workforce and addresses the epidemic of loneliness. Check it out on the [Roundtable Talk page](#) of the Varsity website!



Trends vs. Fads

Fads are fueled by hype, viral moments, or short-term consumer obsessions. Fads are shallow, easy to replicate, and leave no real impact on consumer behavior or brand growth.

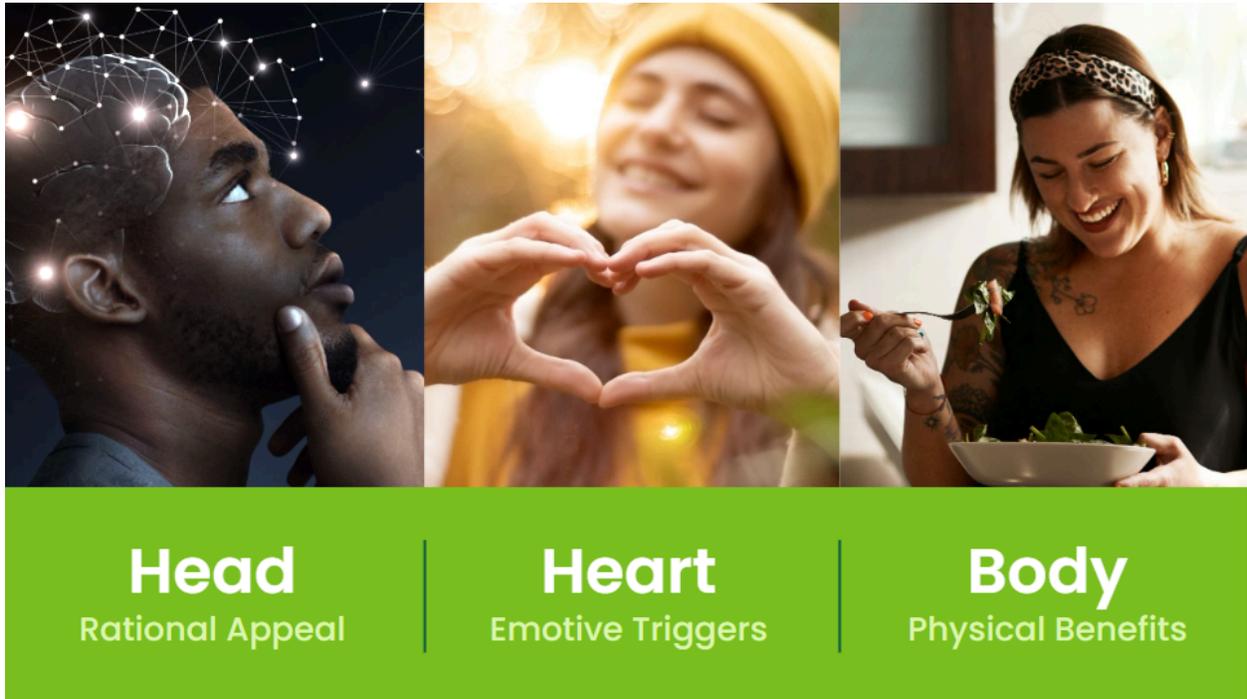
Trends, however, are rooted in research and anchored in shifting consumer attitudes. They endure, evolve, and build momentum.

In modern marketing, trends are a secret weapon, providing a foundation for campaigns that resonate deeply and support long-term brand growth. By identifying true trends, we help marketers craft strategies that connect with audiences today and keep them engaged tomorrow.

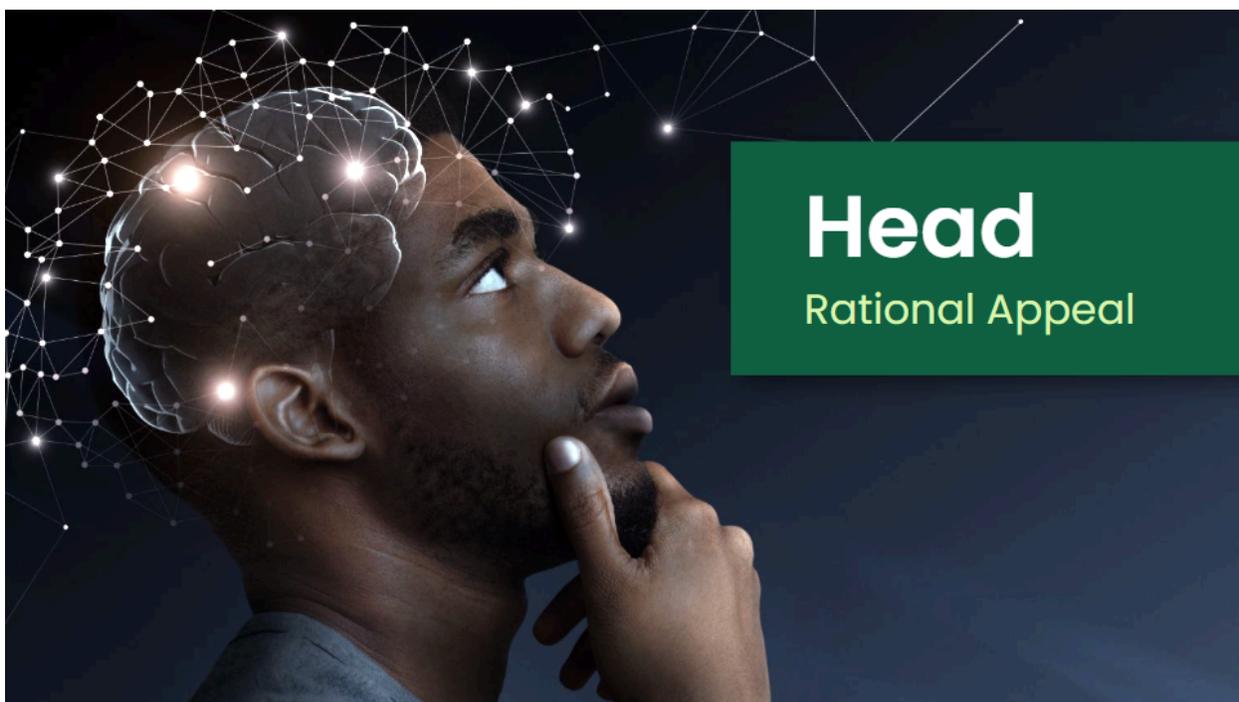
In this presentation, we've identified fourteen trends that fall roughly into three broad categories.

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The focus is on distinguishing between trends and fads. Trends are enduring and develop over time, while fads, like transient popular food on TikTok, come and go. The discussion today will cover 12 significant trends that show lasting impact.



The trends are organized into three categories: head, heart, and body. "Head" refers to rational, thought-driven aspects, like food transparency and understanding origins. "Heart" focuses on the emotional connection people have with food. Lastly, "body" covers the physical health benefits and defining health in today's context. The discussion will start with the rational elements of our food choices.



Today's consumers are quite savvy, seeking to understand the journey of their food and its lifestyle purposes. They're focused on value-based and experiential aspects, not just nutrition. This overarching trend is termed as transparency, convenience, and value.

Transparency

Consumers want to see and understand a brand's environmental impact, sourcing and processing.

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Consumers today are eager to know the origin and production story of their food, valuing transparency, convenience, and sustainability. They expect brands to be transparent about manufacturing processes, sourcing practices, and ethical treatments. Packaging plays a crucial role in conveying these messages. It's considered prime real estate for communicating transparency and environmental impact, as consumers spend time researching product details.

With a shift towards clean label ingredients, grocers now offer ready-to-eat meals that were once only available in quick-service restaurants. This reflects consumers' demand for convenient, yet clean options. Sustainability is growing in importance, prompting innovations in packaging like biodegradable and edible materials, which reduce environmental impact.

Refilleries represent an intriguing emerging trend, offering a waste-reducing solution by allowing consumers to fill reusable containers with dried food staples and other products. This trend aligns with the desire to minimize packaging waste, presenting an opportunity for brands and retailers to engage environmentally-conscious consumers.

The Personalized Plate

Smart tools, meal kits, and tracking apps empower consumers to design meals that meet their unique wellness needs.

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The trend of "The Personalized Plate" highlights the growing consumer desire for customized nutrition. People want to tailor their eating habits not only for taste but also for dietary and lifestyle needs. This has led to a surge of services and digital apps offering personalized nutrition, including genetic testing for optimal dietary recommendations.

Meal kits have become increasingly popular, providing hundreds of options that cater to specific dietary preferences like keto, vegan, paleo, and gluten-free. Furthermore, DNA-based testing and microbiome-focused meal plans, offered by companies like DNA Fit and Viome, are gaining traction, enabling personalization based on genetic makeup.

Tracking apps for activity and meal planning are also prevalent, and fast-casual restaurants have embraced this trend by allowing customers to build their meals. This emphasis on customization reflects a shift towards consumers wanting control over their dietary choices, rather than simply opting for standard menu items.

Second Chance Foods

**New brands are born from
upcycling food waste.**

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"Second Chance Foods" is an intriguing trend focusing on sustainability and responsibility by upcycling food waste. This market has expanded by 400% recently. Initially, the focus was on the "ugly produce movement," where imperfect fruits and vegetables that don't meet aesthetic standards were sold, despite being perfectly good to eat.

Now, the trend has evolved into creating new products from food waste. For example, Toast Brewing makes beer using surplus bread, and Rebel upcycles barley from the beer-making process. Green Bowl produces ready-to-eat meals using byproducts like carrot and spinach pulp, while Barana transforms overripe bananas into snacks like chips and scoops. This trend creatively extends the life of food and underscores a commitment to sustainability.



We're transitioning into the emotional aspects of food, which often evoke strong feelings and memories. Food is not just about sustenance; it's an emotional experience. Today's consumers are eager for adventure and global flavors, often inspired by social media and the exposure it provides to diverse culinary experiences. Instagram-worthy moments highlight how food can be a gateway to explore the world, transforming meals into memorable experiences.

Snackification

From new flavors to mindful eating practices, snacking is being redefined.

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"Snackification" highlights a shift in eating habits, where snacking becomes the primary way people consume food rather than just a secondary option. This trend, accelerated by pandemic behaviors like all-day home grazing, persists as brands adapt their offerings.

Snacking caters to various consumer needs: it allows for adventurous eating with new flavors and brands, encourages mindful eating through small, intentional bites, supports portion control, and provides energy boosts throughout the day. It also aligns with busy lifestyles, fitting food into daily routines rather than adhering to structured meal times.

This trend impacts dining expectations, moving away from traditional mealtime setups to more flexible, all-day dining options, like bistros and grab-and-go services.

Culinary Passports

Consumers seek bold global flavors inspired by travel and culture.

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The "Culinary Passports" trend allows consumers to explore global flavors, offering a taste of world travel through their food choices. This trend influences dining decisions with diverse international options.

Middle Eastern and North African flavors bring street foods like falafel, while Southeast Asian and Indian cuisines introduce spice mixes. Latin American and Caribbean influences appear in tacos and tropical drinks, and West African flavors feature peanut stews and spicy snacks.

Japanese and Korean dishes, like plant-based barbecue and fermented drinks, grow in popularity. Mediterranean and tropical fruit flavors emerge in olive oil-based dips and exotic fruit bowls, while fermented items like kimchi offer added health benefits.

The Mini Revolution

Beloved products go bite-sized, blending convenience, adaptability, and indulgence for today's busy mindful consumers.

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The "Mini Revolution" trend highlights the popularity of mini versions of favorite items, driven by convenience and portion control. This approach aligns with snacking trends and appeals to younger consumers.

The mini size offers convenience and encourages trying new flavors without committing to larger quantities. It also provides brands more shelf visibility, fitting more options in limited space. Examples include mini candies, cereals, sodas, and other beverages, catering to the growing demand for smaller portions.

Branded Fusions

Brands are blending flavors, products, and partnerships to create buzzworthy collaborations.

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The "Branded Fusion" trend involves creative brand mashups, combining elements that don't typically go together for added buzz and visibility. These collaborations are strategic, garnering social media attention, appealing to younger audiences, and leveraging exclusivity with limited-time offers.

Examples include Cinnamon Toast Crunch bacon-themed products, IHOP-flavored chips, and Oreo's collaboration with Coca-Cola. These partnerships create a cultural buzz and showcase brand creativity. Brands extend beyond food, partnering with beauty products, like cookie-scented bath lines and collaborations such as Crumble and Dove.

This approach also broadens brand presence across multiple retail spaces, moving from grocery to health and beauty aisles, enhancing brand visibility and engagement.

Experiential Dining

Food isn't just for eating any more.
It's for memory-making,
experience-forming, and fun.

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"Experiential Dining" focuses on creating memorable and immersive food experiences that engage the senses beyond just nutrition. This trend includes activities like themed dinners in secret locations, dining in darkness, and interactive cooking classes, turning meals into unique events.

Interestingly, 44% of boomers are particularly open to trying new dining experiences, showcasing an adventurous spirit among this group. Developing themed dining nights and other engaging concepts can enhance the dining experience, making it more adventurous and memorable.



In the "Body" category of trends, the focus is on the physical benefits of eating. Unlike in the past, where eating wasn't primarily about nutrition, there's now an evolving understanding of health. The concept of "healthy" varies widely and is no longer solely about weight loss. It's a more holistic approach that encompasses diverse individual definitions of health and well-being.

Gut Health

The new core of wellness, connecting digestion to energy, immunity, and even mental clarity.

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The "Gut Health" trend highlights the growing interest in the microbiome's role in overall well-being. It's about more than symptom treatment; it's proactive health management, focusing on immunity, energy, mental clarity, and more.

With 84% of Americans interested in gut-supporting foods, and 75% of baby boomers prioritizing health, this trend is significant. What started with probiotics in yogurt has expanded to various food categories like fruit snacks, coffee, and even ice cream, offering functional benefits while enjoying favorite foods. This approach aligns well with multi-dimensional wellness programs, integrating nutrition into broader health initiatives.

Appetite Adjustment

GLP-1 users are transforming consumption.

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The "Appetite Adjustment" trend revolves around the impact of GLP-1 drugs on eating habits, leading to changes in consumption patterns. This trend is expected to influence snacking and the sales of less healthy foods, with a predicted 3% decline.

As 24 million people may use GLP-1 drugs in the next decade, brands are responding by offering low sugar, no sugar, protein shakes, and meal replacements to cater to mindful eaters. Consumers are cutting 20-30% of calories, so they seek nutrient-dense options. Protein remains a major focus, even appearing in unexpected products like ice cream and chips, making packaging crucial for highlighting these features.

Dream State

Sleep takes the spotlight, with consumers exploring diets, habits, and even travel to achieve more restorative rest.

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The "Dream State" trend highlights the increasing focus on improving sleep quality, emphasizing its crucial role in overall health. Various strategies like "sleep diet," "sleep divorce," and "sleep travel" reflect this attention. A healthy gut is known to contribute to better sleep, showing the interrelation between diet and rest.

Remarkably, 52% of boomers are actively seeking ways to enhance their sleep quality. This interest extends beyond traditional sleep aids and relaxation techniques to include foods and products with functional benefits. Options like sleep-enhancing cookies and teas offer an appealing way to integrate sleep support into daily routines, leveraging existing dietary habits to improve overall well-being.

Smart Sips

**From stress relief to brain power,
drinks now provide holistic health
perks beyond hydration.**

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The "Smart Sips" trend highlights the demand for beverages that offer more than just taste, focusing on functional benefits like energy, immunity support, and mental clarity. Consumers increasingly seek drinks that provide these added benefits while avoiding empty calories.

Notably, 62% of shoppers are interested in low sugar or functional beverages, and this category has expanded significantly, boasting 53,000 different options and a 54% growth over the past four years. Examples include energy and sports drinks enriched with electrolytes, protein drinks, meal replacements, and new options like maple water and yogurt beverages. These drinks often focus on probiotics, gut health, and fortified nutrients.

While interest in plant-based and carbonated beverages remains strong, products like probiotic sodas are gaining traction, offering an indulgent yet functional experience. This trend emphasizes the drive to make beverages contribute positively to health and wellness.