

WAITROSE
& PARTNERS

Food & Drink Report

2026-2027



‘Our commitment to ethical sourcing and sustainability remains absolute, even when it demands tough choices’

Tom Denyard
Managing director, Waitrose

The home of food lo





From day one as managing director at Waitrose, I have seen the deep passion our Partners, suppliers and customers share for exceptional quality as the best route to taste. That passion is vital as we navigate incredible challenges for the industry: shifting retail pressures, unpredictable weather, global instability affecting supply chains, and the ongoing squeeze on household budgets. Each new challenge only underscores why good food, and its reliable availability, matter so much.

It should come as no surprise that our commitment to ethical sourcing and sustainability remains absolute, even when it demands tough choices. This year, we became the first UK supermarket to suspend mackerel sourcing, taking a decisive stand against overfishing to safeguard the long-term health of our oceans. Choosing environmental stewardship over commercial gain proved that doing the right thing for our planet will always come before profit.

That principle runs right through our supply chain. This year, banana farms joined the Waitrose Foundation, the only supermarket-run reinvestment programme led by its growers. Beyond earning the Fairtrade Premium, every banana sold at Waitrose now generates additional Foundation investment to directly improve the livelihoods of farming communities across Africa and South America.

At home, our farmers have faced one of the most challenging years to date, which is why we've doubled down on supporting our growers. We pushed ahead with our ambitious intent to farm for nature, working together with hundreds of farms on the transition to regenerative approaches.

This includes the Waitrose Dairy Farming Group, who do an outstanding job every day of supplying all of our own brand milk, on which you will now see our new 'championing regenerative farming' logo. This journey has been brought to life through an inspiring collaboration with National Geographic, showcasing regenerative agriculture in action at our very own farm, the Leckford Estate. Being both a grocer and a farm couldn't be more valuable.

We have pioneered across flavour and innovation, too. Through our partnership with the Disney+ show *Rivals*, we embraced joyful nostalgia with a limited-edition range inspired by the retro tastes of the 1980s. Alongside this, we've continued to elevate home dining through chef collaborations with Angela Hartnett and Rick Stein, as well as our curated chef menus with restaurant meal-kit experts Dishpatch.

As we look to the future, we're re-committing daily to building the definitive home of food lovers. You can expect significant investments in store refurbishments and new openings nationwide, continued value initiatives like our popular Dinner for Tonight options and New Lower Prices, and much more besides. Plus, we'll continue bringing you all the food excitement, discovery and innovation you've come to know us for.

Enjoy reading this year's *Waitrose Food & Drink Report 2026-2027*, and a huge thank you to the brilliant team who have brought it all together, along with every Partner who makes Waitrose the home of food lovers.

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• We surveyed a panel of 4,074 customers (John Lewis Partnership Perspectives Panel) in August 2026 for the insights in this year's *Waitrose Food & Drink Report*
• All Waitrose sales and search data gathered in Sep/ Oct 2026

Longevity living



The report survey found that almost nine in 10 view eating for longevity as vital. Shoppers are shifting from pursuing 'healthy eating' to 'eating for health', looking to what foods they can add in (rather than cut out) to help boost long-term wellbeing



‘Sales of Waitrose Scottish Oats have more than doubled this year’



‘Oatzempic’ eating

Dr Joanne Lunn, head of health and nutrition at Waitrose, says: “There’s no doubt GLP-1 is reshaping food and drink trends. As appetite patterns change, customers’ baskets are shifting towards smaller portions, nutrient density and high satiety (feeling full). The rise of ‘nature’s Ozempic’ – fuelled by trends like ‘oatzempic’ and overnight oat recipes – has turbocharged demand for high-protein, high-fibre foods that offer sustained energy and support long-term wellness.”

Recent research highlights the growing influence of GLP-1 users on shopping behaviours. *The Grocer* (2026) notes that nearly eight in 10 GLP-1 users serve as the main grocery shopper for their household, and uptake of the weight-loss medication is expected to accelerate, with consultancy PwC (2026) finding 83% of prospective users are more likely to consider GLP-1 medications if offered in a pill format.

The report survey revealed that 64% of us are now actively choosing to eat foods like oats that keep us feeling fuller for longer. Sales of Waitrose Scottish Oats have more than doubled this year, up 124%, while searches for overnight oats on waitrose.com increased by 160%.

Carly Stage, cereal buyer at Waitrose, adds: “Customers are clearly turning to budget-friendly staples that deliver long-lasting fullness and great value per bowl. Wholesome essentials like porridge oats are moving from a traditional breakfast to a modern meal choice, praised for being easy to store and effortless to prepare.”

Dr Joanne Lunn says: “We’re seeing a growing shift towards savoury porridge. Swapping sweet toppings for chilli oil, bone broth and roasted veg is the ultimate hack for a low-sugar, high-satiety boost.” Driven by East Asian food influences, miso ginger porridge generated a 120% month-on-month spike in recipe searches on waitrose.com.

Savoury pick ’n’ mix

It’s not just about a balanced plate any more – fibre maths has entered our cooking curriculum. We’re stocking up on seedy salad toppers and cereal stir-ins to sprinkle on extra nutrients. Joanne says: “Our mindset has flipped from ‘what should I cut out?’ to ‘what can I add in?’. This nutritional ‘pick ’n’ mix’ approach has moved from eateries like Atis, Farmer J and The Salad Project into our home kitchens.”

Sales of Waitrose Savoury Seed & Nut Topper shot up 236% this year, while Good4U’s Salad Topper range has expanded into Super Seeds and Super Sprouts. In fact, one of waitrose.com’s top breakfast recipes of the year, with searches up 300%, was a smoothie bowl layered with oats, spelt and barley flakes, almonds, sunflower seeds, puffed amaranth, roasted hazelnuts, chia seeds and berries. It’s a far cry from toast with jam.

Alice Goudie, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: “Psyllium husk is emerging as a standout wellness staple, with a 68% increase in searches on waitrose.com over the last year. Widely celebrated for its role in digestive health, it expands in the digestive system, which can help to support fullness. It’s an effortless addition to daily routines, stirring seamlessly into oats, smoothies and baked goods.” In August this year, Waitrose introduced Dr Vegan Fibre Complex capsules, which include psyllium husk powder.

+236%

explosion in sales of Waitrose Savoury Seed & Nut Topper this year

The new GLP-1 trolley

How are GLP-1 users updating their eating habits? Only 12% haven't actively changed their diet; the other 88% are shopping differently



*These stats for grocery shopping changes in GLP-1 users are taken from report survey respondents who said they use the medication

52%
eat more protein*

20%
take more supplements

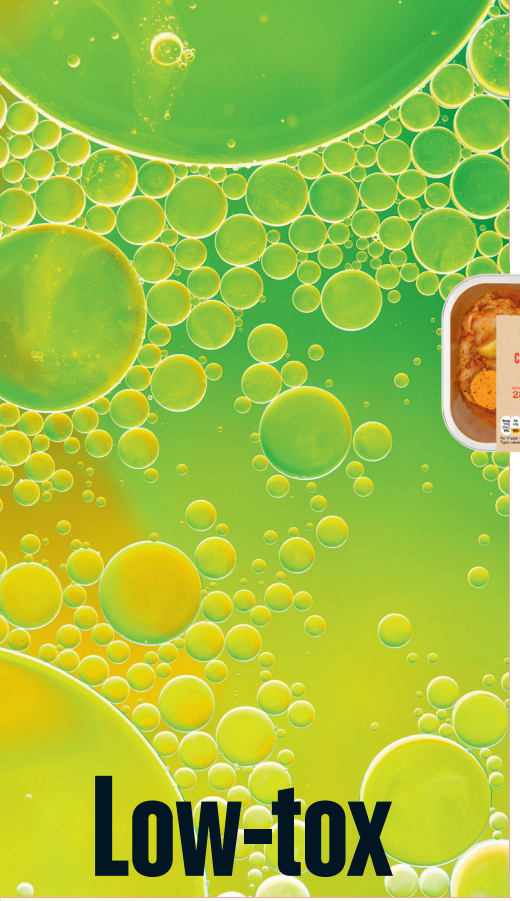
38%
increase vegetable intake

8%
eat more fermented foods

19%
eat more fish or seafood

25%
eat more healthy snacks

33%
drink less alcohol





Low-tox living

In a bid to stay healthy for longer, shoppers are turning the pack over. In the report survey, three-quarters reported reading the ingredients on packaging to spot additives or stabilisers – with 45% saying they always or often check the back of the pack when buying groceries. Driven by social media, the 'low-tox' lifestyle movement – which avoids ultra-processed foods made with substances such as preservatives and emulsifiers – has amassed more than 490k posts on Instagram, proving it's far more than a passing fad.

This year, Waitrose developed its Ready to Cook offering in line with this interest. "Across our Ready to Cook range, we've reduced total additives by 41% and increased protein portions in key products, including chicken and pork," says Emily Bundy, product developer at Waitrose. "For instance, our Cajun Chicken Breasts pack now features 12% more chicken by weight, reflecting the growing customer demand for higher-protein meals."

Emer Lowry, nutritionist at Waitrose, adds: "As of this October, we have improved 110 own-label product recipes by removing 220 additives. Examples include removing monoglycerides and diglycerides of fatty acids from several cereals, alongside the removal of potassium nitrate across several meat products. We have also banned the use of 146 specific additives, as well as all artificial colours and flavourings, in all own-label products."

Amid soaring demand for cleaner options with more recognisable ingredients, sales of the Waitrose Made Without Nitrites range are up 34% in the last year, with its British Roast and Honey Roast Hams up 70% since their launch in May. Waitrose has also become the first supermarket to launch a Free Range British Unsmoked Gammon Joint and British Smoked Bacon Lardons produced without nitrites.

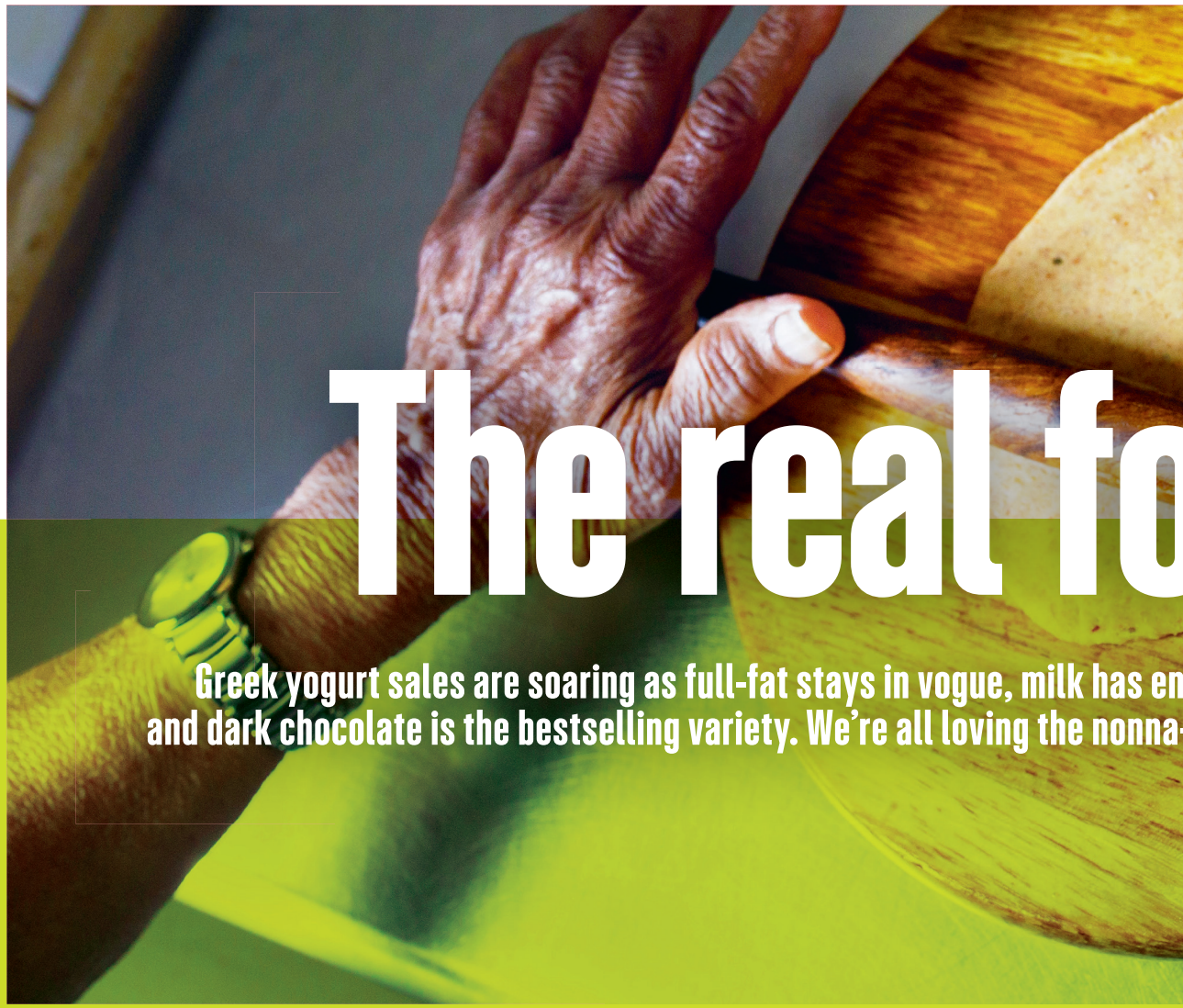
220

additives removed from Waitrose own-label products over the past 20 months



STORAGE SWAPS

As awareness around microplastics hits a high, shoppers are increasingly switching to glass and stainless steel storage options. Sales of the John Lewis 400ml Glass Container on waitrose.com have jumped 11% this year, while brands like Black + Blum continue to sell well on johnlewis.com, with their glass and stainless steel options up 113% in the last year.



The real fo

Greek yogurt sales are soaring as full-fat stays in vogue, milk has en and dark chocolate is the bestselling variety. We're all loving the nonna-



ood revival

tered its craft era, bone broth has landed in the soup and baby aisle,
-maxxing trend and ‘eat your skincare’ has officially hit the mainstream



‘We’re ditching hyper-processed products in favour of authentic Greek yogurt’

Greek yogurt is top of the pots

In 2026, big Greek yogurt pot sales soared 33%, and customers bought 25% more Greek strained yogurt compared to last year. Launched this past March, Waitrose’s Coconut Kefir Frozen Yogurt has been a massive hit – flying off the shelves and beating forecasted sales by 75%.

In the report survey, 72% said they seek out anti-inflammatory, gut health or high fibre claims on packaging – yet only 29% of customers now look for ‘low-fat’ foods.

“Shoppers are ditching hyper-processed products in favour of authentic Greek yogurt – looking towards natural nutrients, clean fuel and feeling full,” says Nicki Hobbs, yogurt buyer at Waitrose. “It’s also become a creative canvas – driven by viral trends like frozen yogurt bark, sales of our Duchy Organic Berry Mix are also up 40% in the last year as the ultimate topping for a protein-packed snack.”

‘Shoppers are





The milk

matching the milk they buy to how they use it'

We've moved on from picking out milk by its blue, green or red cap: dairy has entered its craft era – where it's no longer something to simply splash into tea.

"We're seeing a real shift towards 'milk appreciation', with customers interested in processing methods, protein density, flavour and cream integrity," says Adrian Gash, dairy buyer at Waitrose. "Milk is no longer treated as just an everyday commodity tucked away in the fridge; it's become a talking point in the trolley. Driven by a growing interest in minimal processing and trends such as regenerative farming, shoppers are actively matching the milk they buy to how they use it. Whether it's rich, unhomogenised milk for weekend baking, protein-dense options for everyday wellness or barista-style milk for the perfect morning coffee, customers want transparent quality and exceptional taste."

Alternative milks are also part of the conversation, and coffee obsessives are leading the charge with micro-foaming barista-edition options. Nicki Hobbs, alternative dairy buyer at Waitrose, says: "How your milk stretches, foams and pairs with your single-origin roast now matters just as much as the coffee itself. We've become a nation of milk sommeliers."

Once a simple childhood treat, the milkshake has also undergone a makeover. Protein milkshakes are soaring in popularity this year, led by brands like UFIT, whose Strawberry Flavour High-Protein shake saw a 203% sales surge. This year, Waitrose also launched a range of No.1 Flavoured Milks, including Belgian Chocolate, Madagascan Vanilla, Strawberry Matcha, Colombian Coffee and seasonal special Gingerbread – offering a flavour for every mood.





MILKING IT

- **Full fat in vogue: sales of Duchy Organic Whole Milk +58% this year**
- **Trad milk on trend: searches for 'unhomogenised milk' +474% on waitrose.com**
- **Coffee shop comes home: sales of barista milks soaring, with Oato Fresh Barista Oat Drink +44% and Alpro Barista Coconut Milk +51%**
- **Good-for-us dairy: sales of Waitrose Gut Health Mango Kefir Drink +15% this year**

CHAMPIONING REGENERATIVE FARMING





Bone broth (...as soup)

Demand for bone broth continues to soar, with sales up 55% this year. Alice Goudie, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "Bone broth is taking over as the ultimate functional sip. Driven by growing interest in gut health, protein and natural collagen, it's no longer just a cooking base. It's a full-blown daily wellness habit we're enjoying from the cup – which is why we've just launched Freja's Bone Broth Soups."

Also this year, Waitrose launched Piccolo to bring customers the first bone broth made just for little ones aged 3+. Existing bone broths on the market are too high in salt for young children. Piccolo's recipe has been created specifically with children in mind, containing low salt and made using organic, natural ingredients.

And it's not just bone broth we're sipping on for added benefits: demand for turmeric and ginger has propelled searches for 'juice shots' up 200% on waitrose.com. Sales of Waitrose Gut Health Shot alone have increased 29% in the last year.

Alice Goudie, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "Within overall gut health, from bone broth to gut health shots, we're moving past a one-size-fits-all approach and stepping into tailored gut care. We're seeing people tuning in to what their unique microbiome actually needs to thrive."

‘Beauty from within is no longer a wellness buzzword; it’s a weekly shop habit’









TOP 3 BESTSELLING GUT HEALTH PRODUCTS AT WAITROSE

- Waitrose Mixed Berry, Mango & Passionfruit Kefir Yogurts (4x125g)
- Waitrose Mango & Passionfruit Kefir Yogurt (130g)
- Waitrose Peach & Raspberry Kefir Yogurt (130g)

Edible skincare

Skincare’s newest home? The fridge. From carrot juice to sardines, the ‘inside-out beauty’ movement means shoppers are treating antioxidants, omega-3s and collagen as daily essentials, rather than spa-day extras. The ‘eat your skincare’ social media trend has raked in more than 150 million views, while influencer Aisha Potter – whose ‘glass skin’ TikTok videos of sipping on carrot juice have been viewed more than three million times – collaborated with global chain Joe & The Juice on a Drink Your Skincare special with carrots, celery, pineapple, lemon and ginger.

At home, we’re doing the same. Sales of beta carotene-packed carrot juice rose 39% at Waitrose this year, boosted by new launches including Benefit Juice Carrot, Mango & Ginger + Fibre. “Beauty from within is no longer a wellness buzzword; it’s a weekly shop habit,” says Dr Joanne Lunn, head of health and nutrition at Waitrose.

“Customers are looking for their vitamin A from carrot juice, magnesium from seeds or omega-3 from sardines to boost nutrient intake and support a healthy complexion.”

And while tinned sardines might be less aesthetic than a sleek juice, they’re in demand: Waitrose sold 22% more in the last year. “Tinned sardines are an affordable, nutrient-dense powerhouse, packed with omega-3 fatty acids for heart and brain health, high-quality protein, and vitamin D and calcium,” adds Dr Joanne Lunn.

+22%

uptick in tinned sardine sales






ITALIAN-INSPIRED RECIPE
WITH RED WINE FOR FLAVOUR
ANGELA'S SUGGESTION
LASAGNA AL FORNO
Free range egg pasta layered with a rich ragù made with beef and pancetta, silky bechamel, sprinkled with Parmigiano Reggiano and nutmeg
Serves 2
ANGELA HARTNETT
with WAITROSE
HIGHER WELFARE

Social media's latest source of lifestyle advice? Italian grandmothers. The #NonnaCore trend has swept social feeds, with 89-year-old Nonna Pia racking up more than 56 million likes on TikTok for her recipes, including chicken rollatini and slow-cooked tomato sauce.

Lizzie Haywood, trend innovation manager at Waitrose, says: "Nonna-maxxing is Gen Z's embrace of slow and considered living. Inspired by the back-to-basics approach of Italian grandmothers, customers are craving trust, clear labelling and ways to adopt the Mediterranean way of life, such as gathering around the table and eating seasonal food."

In the last year, waitrose.com has seen strong recipe search spikes for traditional comfort food, including lamb ragù, up 111%, while Italian baking recipes have leapt 180%.

Bringing regional Italian heritage to our kitchen tables, chef Angela Hartnett launched her fresh Italian range with Waitrose this year, with bestsellers including a traditional Lasagna al Forno. Exciting new Italian-inspired launches also include No.1 Fennel Sausage & 'Nduja Ragù Orecchiette with Cavolo Nero and Roasted Garlic.

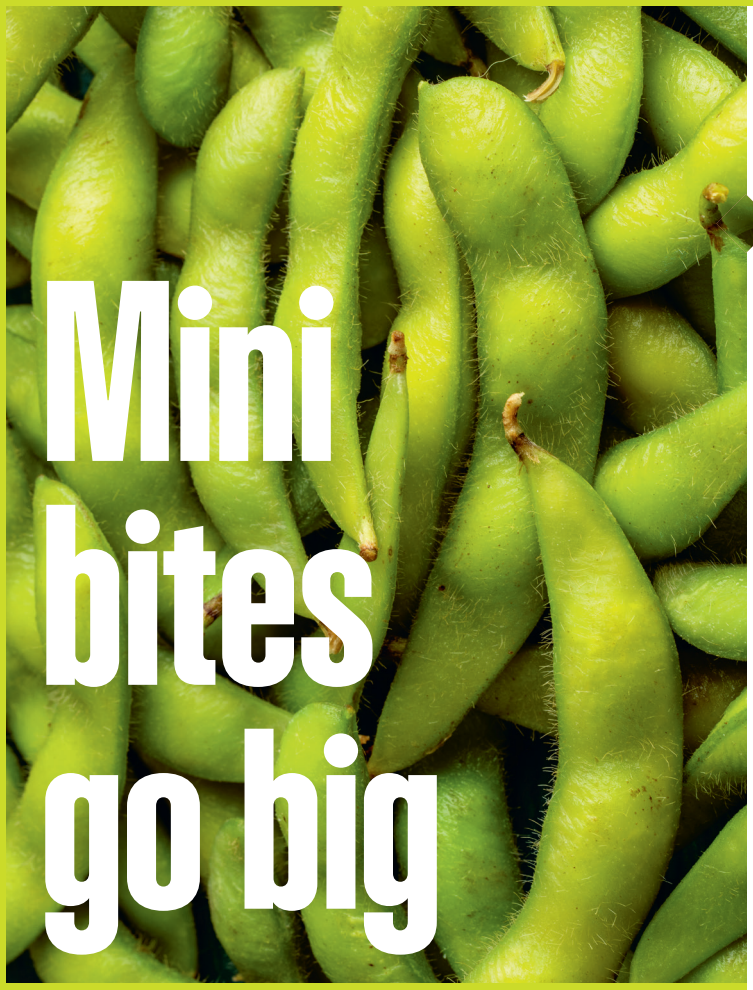
And dressing like a nonna is in fashion, too – John Lewis reports a 40% rise in womenswear sales of triangle scarves, with new colourways introduced this year due to high demand.

'Customers are craving ways to adopt the Mediterranean way of life'

nna maxxing







Mini bites go big

Move over custard creams: at break time, we're now opting for energy-packed savoury snacks

The top on-the-go picks for shoppers? Globally-inspired foods such as samosas and sushi alongside nostalgic classics including king prawns with cocktail sauce.

Jack Hammersley, food-to-go buyer at Waitrose, says: "People are looking for quick, nutritionally dense snacks that bridge the gap between traditional mealtimes, prioritising high protein, vibrant global flavours and familiar British classics. The 23% surge in demand for chilled snacks in the last year directly reflects the 'snackification' trend. Whether driven by busier, on-the-go lifestyles or the rise of GLP-1 use, customers are increasingly turning to smaller, more nutrient-dense mini meals."

+23%

surge in demand for chilled snacks in the last year

Which savoury snacks are shoppers reaching for the most?





1. Waitrose Vegetable Samosa
2. Waitrose King Prawns with Cocktail Sauce
3. Taiko Mini Nigiri
4. Waitrose Egg & Spinach Protein Pot
5. Taiko Chicken Katsu Bites
6. Taiko Lightly Salted Edamame
7. Waitrose High Protein Vanilla Yogurt with Granola
8. Taiko Vegetable Sushi



Even our sweet treats now have a health focus: dark chocolate is the bestselling variety at Waitrose, accounting for 73% of own-label chocolate bar sales. That's a surge of 218% since 2023 – with sales of No.1 Ecuador 90% Dark Chocolate up 420%

Dark chocolate rocks

Emer Lowry, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "In 2026, we're seeing more customers opting for higher quality chocolate with less added sugar and additives. This is driven by customers' growing interest in gut health and a desire to consume fewer ultra-processed foods. A few squares of at least 70% dark chocolate make a nutritious sweet treat. Cocoa provides beneficial nutrients including fibre, iron, magnesium and polyphenols."

But don't just keep it for a sweet pick-me-up. "Dark chocolate is a secret weapon in savoury cooking. Adding a square of high-cocoa chocolate to a chilli con carne or rich beef stew tames acidity, balances spice and imparts a glossy, velvety richness – without adding sweetness," says Will Torrent, senior development chef at Waitrose.

Cocoa is also a source of magnesium – a mineral that's finding a wider fanbase. Emer Lowry, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "Long celebrated in wellness circles, magnesium has gone mainstream, with high demand for foods rich in the mineral, like cashews, almonds, spinach, sunflower and pumpkin seeds. It's essential to help with tiredness and fatigue, while supporting the nervous system and psychological function." This year, shoppers bought a fifth more pumpkin seeds and cashew nuts compared to 2025.

Spill the be




WAITROSE
Duchy Organic
White Beans
Smooth and creamy
GOOD HEALTH
HIGH IN FIBRE
HIGH IN PROTEIN



ans (and pop the corn)

Beans are outselling rice. Creamy white bean varieties are surging across home menus. Aquafaba has officially broken out of the jar. And we've gone crazy for corn

In the last year, sales of jarred beans increased by

+53%

Beanmania

At Waitrose, we sell more beans than rice. This includes all canned and dried beans versus all rice, from microwaveable to uncooked grains. According to the report survey, more than 40% of Waitrose customers eat beans, lentils and chickpeas at least twice a week, and in the last year, sales of jarred beans have soared 53%.

Emma Penman, grocery buyer at Waitrose, says: "This has been a growing trend across the last few years, and we're seeing a significant shift in how shoppers stock their pantries and build their everyday meals. This year, we've sold 32% more beans than rice at Waitrose, compared to 28% more in 2025. This shift is largely driven by home cooks gaining confidence with simple techniques, like simmering canned beans with aromatics or crisping them in a pan. We've also noticed bean-forward swaps on classic recipes gaining traction. Dishes like bean fried rice and bean biryani prove how easily beans can act as rice while adding texture and flavour to the plate. Their sheer versatility makes them a quiet powerhouse in the kitchen."

‘Creamy white beans have evolved from humble pantry staples into menu superstars’

White bean boom

Creamy white bean varieties are rapidly surging in popularity across menus and home kitchens alike, with sales up 37% in the last year. In particular, Bold Bean Co Queen Butter Beans sales grew 271%, with the brand’s White Beans up 230%. This year, Waitrose also launched Duchy Organic White Beans.

Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose, says: “Creamy white beans have evolved from humble pantry staples into menu superstars. They do it all: acting as a great dairy-free shortcut for velvety sauces while holding their own in pasta dishes or tossed in fresh salads.”

The trend extends to new cookbooks, too. Butter beans with Urfa chilli butter take centre stage in Ottolenghi’s *Simple Too*, while Irish chef Ali Honour’s *Beans* offers a whole collection dedicated to legumes – ranging from confit butter beans to black-bean baked Alaska, and even ‘pea podka’ (pea pod-infused vodka). Social media is fuelling a pulse revival among younger generations, too: 50% of 18-34 year olds in the report survey now use pulses to build texture and bulk up everyday dishes, compared to just 22% of shoppers over 75.



5 most popular bean recipes on waitrose.com

1. Chicken and butter bean stew
2. Tuscan sausage and white bean stew
3. Hot smoked salmon with soft-boiled egg, soured cream and broad beans
4. Butter bean and leek gratin
5. Chicken with cannellini beans and cavolo nero



Magic bean juice

Our obsession with pulses has spilled over from the beans themselves to the ‘stock’ they come in. “Once dismissed as liquid packing material, aquafaba – the starchy water from canned legumes – has transformed from a niche vegan hack into a frontline pantry star,” says Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose. “Driven by the zero-waste movement, this ‘liquid gold’ delivers the luxurious emulsion of egg whites or heavy cream. It has transformed the potential of plant-based pastry and makes great sauces.”

Over the past year, searches for aquafaba on waitrose.com have soared by 70%. Meanwhile, demand for versatile bean-water creations – from the plant-based vegan vegetable pie recipe on waitrose.com to whippable dessert toppings and vegan meringue – has driven aquafaba recipe searches up 20% year on year.





Corn to be wild

We've gone corn crazy. Charmaine Katz, cook and recipe developer at Waitrose, says: "Sweetcorn has for so long been underutilised as simply a barbecue side and a supporting act for tuna mayo. But this will stand no longer! It's finally been promoted to its rightful place as a 'swavoury' star. Driven by a massive wave of global food influences – from vibrant Mexican street foods like elotes and esquites, to sweetcorn mochi cakes and cornbread – food lovers are embracing corn's incredible versatility. It hits the sweet spot (quite literally) for home cooks: naturally high in fibre, affordable, and capable of bringing flavour, texture and comfort to everyday meals."

East Asian bakeries and dessert chefs have long celebrated sweetcorn's golden potential in wobbly jellies, soft-serve ice creams and fluffy cakes – and now more palates are catching on. In London's Marylebone, artisan bakery Cantoast has made its corn crème salt bread – a buttery roll filled with velvety corn custard – a cult sell-out to diners who also slurp its signature corn-milk matcha. Chin Chin Ice Cream in Covent Garden's Seven Dials Market has also launched a pumpkin candy-corn ice cream with brûléed sweetcorn.

At home, ambitious bakers are pairing corn's nutty, buttery umami with white chocolate, brown butter and miso. Waitrose.com now hosts over 110 corn-led recipe creations, including blueberry corn scones, with searches for savoury hits like corn ribs soaring 200%, sweetcorn tacos 77%, cornbread muffins 40% and sweetcorn mash 33% in the last year.

Corn's big year

109% increase in sales of Waitrose Duchy Organic Sweetcorn (canned)

112% uptick in sales of Waitrose Duchy Organic Sweetcorn (cobs)

Searches are up 144% for organic sweetcorn, 219% for tinned sweetcorn, and 200% for polenta (ground cornmeal) on waitrose.com

89% uplift in searches for corn snacks on waitrose.com

Sensory Overl





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Wave goodbye to basic beige – the modern palate wants high-voltage drama. We're officially in the era of multi-sensory indulgence, fuelled by texture-maxxing crunch and intense flavour hits

‘Two million people watched the hyper-realistic No.1 Alphonso Mango Dessert being cracked open’





Volume up on food noise

This year, the sound of food went mainstream. Will Torrent, senior development chef at Waitrose, says: “Driven by social media’s obsession with audible, multi-sensory cooking, we’re creating high-contrast meals that combine shatter-crisp crunch with pillowy chew. The emphasis in social media content has flipped from narrative voiceovers to ASMR-inspired audio, where the evocative sounds of food are just as important as the visuals. This has been significant in fine-dining for years, but as restaurant quality trends become more prominent, it’s coming to home cooks.”

This year, shoppers filled their trolleys with the viral No.1 Alphonso Mango Dessert, where cracking through the crisp shell reveals a smooth mango mousse and passion fruit curd on a crunchy white chocolate base. It’s such a showstopper that more than two million people watched it being demolished on Waitrose’s TikTok and Instagram accounts – with a whopping 6,173 hours and 36 minutes of play time on TikTok alone. That’s the equivalent of watching *Titanic* back-to-back over 1,800 times!

Texture-maxxing

Away from the sweet aisle, it's all about maximum crunch and contrast, too. This year, crunchy peanut butter outsold smooth, while jarred chilli crunches and crispy rayu oils, such as itsu Crispy Chilli Oil, saw sales increase 13-fold.

Lizzie Haywood, trend innovation manager at Waitrose, says: "We've moved past basic crisp into a phase of hyper-texture. Peanuts in chilli oil and the likes of Mexican salsa macha deliver that intense, craveable umami heat while bringing a crunch that transforms a standard condiment into a full sensory experience."

Building on this trend, Waitrose has exclusively launched Ottolenghi x White Mausu Olive Oil Chilli Crisp, which includes crispy fried garlic, Aleppo and Korean chilli flakes, plus warm cumin and coriander seed to bring that distinctive crunch.

Shoppers are also obsessing over crispy fried chicken: sales of Waitrose Frozen Southern Fried Chicken Mini Fillets increased 37% this year, while new launches such as the Waitrose Bake & Shake range lean into the demand for crispy texture.

And on socials, toast became our ultimate crunchy culinary canvas. 'All things toast' went viral on TikTok, anchored by content creator Ben Rebuck's Toast World Cup. The series pitted 32 nation-inspired creations against each other – ranging from spicy mustard with pork schnitzel to marshmallow-biscuit s'mores – elevating the humble slice of bread to full gourmet status.

The year of the dumpling

"We've seen an explosion in demand as shoppers treat dumplings not just as a quick weeknight bite, but as a total sensory experience," says Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose. "Driven by the rise of texture-maxxing, people want that ultimate contrast: delicate skins, juicy fillings and crispy skirts, topped with fiery chilli crunch. With innovation ranging from fusion fillings to rich dipping broths, dumplings have taken a delicious centre stage in 2026."

Viral spot Mr Dumpling in Shepherd's Bush has queues for its dumplings – but enjoying these moreish little parcels at home is on the up, as sales of chicken gyoza dumplings leapt 116% this year. Crispy rice paper dumplings have also taken socials by storm, with dumpling lasagne up 211% in social conversations. Not to be outdone, chewy udon noodles have also soared in popularity, with searches on waitrose.com for gochujang and peanut butter udon noodles jumping 60%, again tapping into our textural cravings.







'We've moved past basic crisp into a phase of hyper-texture'

+116%

jump in sales of chicken gyoza dumplings this year



‘Trifle is the ultimate nostalgic crowd-pleaser, offering an incredible interplay of textures’

Trifle returns, tiramisu evolves

The multi-sensory obsession continues with the resurgence of the classic trifle, the ultimate benchmark in texture layering. Strawberry trifle sales increased 160%, while we bought almost twice as many chocolate trifles this year compared to 2025.

“British retro classics are back in a big way,” says Charmaine Katz, cook and recipe developer at Waitrose. “Customers are embracing trifle all year round as the ultimate nostalgic crowd-pleaser because it offers an incredible interplay of textures. Trifle hits that sweet spot between childhood comfort and showstopping celebration.”

Elsewhere, tiramisu has taken over social media, becoming the foundation for endless viral fusion treats – from matcha-banana variations to tiramisu-stuffed treats. Searches for waitrose.com’s tiramisu recipe page have soared 155% from this time last year. And plant-based versions are proving increasingly popular, too: content creator Giuseppe Federici’s vegan tiramisu counter opened in Shoreditch this summer, selling out daily, while sales of Waitrose Plant Living Vegan Tiramisu are up 24% this year.

More texture-layering desserts are set to take dining tables by storm this Christmas, with new launches in the No.1 range such as Clementine & Honey Meringue Dessert. Other maximal treats we’re scoffing include loaded cookies and the new Waitrose Gingerbread & White Chocolate Cookie Mallow – indulgently chewy and gooey.

+160%

uptick in strawberry trifle sales





Sweet meets bitter: hello, ‘SWITTER’

Talking of fusion treats, we’re all embracing ‘switter’: sweet and bitter flavours married together. Will Torrent, Waitrose senior development chef, says: “British palates are ditching direct sugar hits for switter – the high-contrast swirl of sweet and bitter notes. We’re taking cues from Spain, where bitter Seville oranges, sharp vinegars and burnt Basque cheesecakes have always set the standard. A touch of bitterness doesn’t spoil the sweetness; it tames the richness, creating the sophisticated, lower-sugar profile people are craving right now.” Reflecting this trend, Waitrose No.1 Basque Cheesecake enjoyed a 26% sales leap this year.



‘Pickle fever continues to grip the nation’



All things pickle

Brine is having a full-blown main character moment and pickles have inspired a movement known as ‘picklecore’. “Pickle fever continues to grip the nation,” says Lizzie Haywood, trend innovation manager at Waitrose. “No longer confined just to sandwiches, the versatile appeal of pickles is dominating everything from snacks and side dishes to social media cocktails and even wider trends: pickle lip balm exists. The ultimate sign of the times? The Pickle House Pickle Juice is cementing brine as the new must-have liquid asset for next-gen cocktails and wellness smoothies.” London even held a Big Brine Festival this autumn, where 30 chefs and traders demoed and sold thousands of pickles, fermented foods and brines. Now that’s hardcore picklecore.

THIS YEAR’S PICKLE PICKS

The Pickle House Pickle Juice launched onto Waitrose shelves

43%
increase in sales of Waitrose Pickled Cornichons



36%
uptick in sales of Waitrose Pickled Onions in Balsamic Vinegar



Dirty martini escapes the glass

Garner's Jar Bar, the pickled-onion brand's London cocktail pop-up, has boosted interest in brine-heavy dirty martinis. This November, Waitrose exclusively launched Olivia Attwood's Savano Dirty Martini, and new recipes on waitrose.com include a charred sprout martini. Yes, really. And it's not just drinks getting the dirty treatment. Move over vodka pasta – dirty martini pasta became a viral sensation this summer, with reels garnering 2.6 million views on social media.

So, what's driving us to make familiar foods different in this way? "People are craving ways to get out of the everyday meal doldrums," explains Alex Szrok, Waitrose cook and recipe developer. "A great way to do that is by injecting new flavours, textures, techniques and a sense of fun into familiar favourites. Referencing cocktails like the dirty martini flavour profile in recipes or garnishing drinks with things like Monster Munch is playful."

This craving for high-contrast, intense flavours is reshaping our larder, from slow-cooked glazes that pair maple sweetness against fermented umami, to bitter winter greens balanced with cured meats. Alex Szrok adds: "Lots of people are no longer satisfied with single-note flavours; they want every bite to deliver a complex, multi-layered punch."





Hash browns: the high-low hero

High-end luxury teamed up with everyday fast-food comfort in 2026 as we paired, then posted, combos like fried chicken with ice-cold Champagne. From Mayfair institutions such as Langan's Brasserie to Tartuffe in Manchester, chefs replaced classic blinis with golden, shatteringly crisp rostis, topped with briny caviar.

The ultimate vessel to use at home for this cosy-luxe mash-up? The humble hash brown. Sales of Waitrose Essential Hash Browns have soared 167% in the last year, and in response to demand, Waitrose has launched new Hash Brown Fries – a delicious change from chips.

Alex Szrok, Waitrose cook and recipe developer, says: "We're seeing a huge shift towards high-low dining, where people are taking beloved, nostalgic comfort foods and giving them a luxury upgrade – and the hash brown sits right at the centre of that movement. Why? Because it's a brilliant flavour vehicle, and structurally very sound! Its crunch holds up under heavy, complex toppings. It bridges childhood fry-ups with modern flavour combos and discovery, proving that a humble staple can easily carry fine-dining energy."

+167%

jump in sales of hash browns this year (ready to top with caviar)







Crisps and nuts: from snack to ingredient

Crisps are moving from side dish to star player. Think decadent 'crisp-cuterie' boards, pile-it-high loaded crisps, and sweet-and-salty chocolate crisp creations. Digital food network thefeedfeed.com's chocolate potato-chip cookies have been going viral on social media – and Waitrose customers have been shopping the trend, enjoying newly launched FATSO Home Run bars that combine chocolate with salted pretzels, crunchy almonds and honeycomb.

Sales of premium sharing crisps have soared 354% this year, with big hitters including Torres Iberian Ham Crisps, whose sales leapt 155%, as well as the Waitrose x Disney+ Rivals range, which includes Steak Diane and Bloody Mary Prawn Cocktail.

And it's not just crisps enjoying their time in the spotlight. "Nuts are also being treated as flavour catalysts," says Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose. "Beyond homemade 'beer nut' variations (classic sweet-and-salty glazed peanuts), we're seeing them served alongside steak tartare or tossed into mussels at dinner parties." Waitrose No.1 Nuts are leading the way with sweet and savoury innovation, launching festive gems like No.1 Cinnamon Cranberry & Orange Fruit & Nut Mix, and Caramelised Onion & Oak Smoked Nut Mix.

Drizzle dust and douse









Gourmet flavour is taking over the modern pantry: coffee is the new seasoning, polyphenol oil is the next big thing, and vinegars and dressings are getting the fine wine treatment

‘Food lovers are embracing a breadth of vinegars to lift their everyday cooking’



Vinegars and dressings get the fine wine treatment

Julie Banyard, product developer at Waitrose, says: “Vinegar is having its olive oil moment. Moving beyond a basic kitchen staple, it’s fast becoming a curated flavour booster. From red wine and apple cider to the Asian rice wine variety, food lovers are embracing a breadth of vinegars to lift their everyday cooking. It’s no longer just an afterthought for chips – a splash in a marinade, a quick pickle, or a dash of balsamic in a bolognese can instantly transform a dish.”

Three-Michelin-starred chef Clare Smyth has introduced a ‘vinegar flight’ at her bistro Corenucopia, while Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant A Wong works with Vinegar Shed, the specialist London vinegar shop, and has no fewer than six different vinegars on its lunch menu.

At Waitrose, sales of speciality and fine vinegars, including the No.1 Aceto Balsamico di Modena IGP, with its thick, syrupy texture and rich, sweet flavour, have soared 48% in the last year. New launches also include Belazu Balsamic Glaze.

As our vinegar horizons broaden, the range of other ingredients we’re using in our dressings is expanding too. Julie Banyard, product developer at Waitrose, says: “Traditional salad dressing is starting to see innovative twists, world cuisine influences and new chef collaborations. The likes of miso and tahini add depth and umami to dressings, quality cold-pressed oils add provenance and authenticity, while new squeezy bottle formats add a sense of theatre and creativity.”

The new and exclusive Ottolenghi range is a great example, where traditional salad dressing ingredients are replaced with complex blends, such as orange marmalade with Aleppo chilli or honey mustard laced with preserved lemon. As Julie explains: “Driven by home-cooking experimentation and an obsession with global condiments, the humble dressing is taking inspiration from new ingredients and cuisines.”

And the yearning for interesting, sharp flavours is not just reserved for a drizzle or pour at the table. Quick lunch options are benefitting from these flavour enhancers, too: Hot Smoked Salmon with Zesty Miso Dressing is the top-performing salad in the Waitrose Food to Go range, with a 23% increase in sales over the last year.

48%

surge in sales of speciality and fine vinegars

Coffee: the new seasoning

Coffee is officially breaking out of the mug and into the spice rack, becoming the ultimate secret seasoning weapon for recipes with heft. As we buckle down for the colder months, waitrose.com shoppers are embracing bold savoury flavours: searches in the last month for coffee-rubbed sticky chicken wings with mango amba glaze are up 175%, with coffee-marinated steak rising 49%.

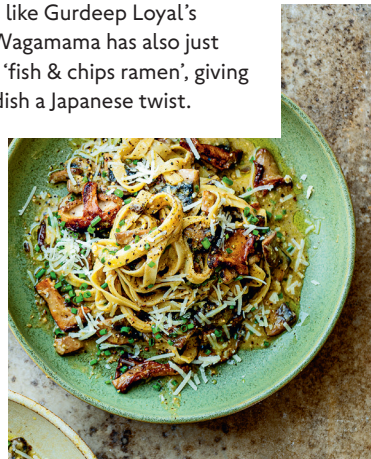
Paul Gamble, senior development chef at Waitrose, says: “We’re starting to treat coffee in the kitchen much like salt or black pepper – it’s no longer just for mug filling, but a powerful ingredient in its own right. A pinch of robust ground roast brings out an earthy, bittersweet complexity that cuts through rich fats and elevates roasted meats to a whole new level of flavour.”



Condiments go global

Britain's kitchen pantry has undergone a total transformation. Sam Angell, head of product innovation at Waitrose, says: "Once a tool of wartime rationing, filled with reliable staples, today's pantry has evolved into a global playground, fuelled by our appetite for new flavours. Condiments are no longer just sidekicks to a meal, they are the flavour engines transforming our everyday cooking."

These global ingredients are being used in novel ways, too. "We're seeing the rise of cross-cultural cooking and hybrid fusions – where cooks rooted in multiple heritage backgrounds blend traditions to create something entirely new and unburdened by rules." It's an approach championed by Yotam Ottolenghi, whose miso pesto is an umami-rich hybrid of Japanese, Italian and Middle Eastern flavours, and a trend fuelled by hit cookbooks like Gurdeep Loyal's *Flavour Heroes*. Wagamama has also just launched its new 'fish & chips ramen', giving an iconic British dish a Japanese twist.



Pantry evolution



1940s

An advert for Frank Cooper's Oxford Marmalade appeared in a 1940s Waitrose catalogue – and the breakfast classic has been on shelves ever since. Heinz Cream of Chicken Soup also featured in the same pages.

1960s

The humble tin evolved from a wartime necessity into a modern convenience. Waitrose introduced Cirio Italian Plum Tomatoes (still stocked today) in 1968 to feed a new appetite for Mediterranean cooking, while tinned pineapple topped gammon and upside-down cake.



1980s

Following its 1983 organic produce launch, Waitrose added staples like organic flour and oats, paving the way for its future Duchy Organic partnership. In 1987, Waitrose was the first UK supermarket to launch chilled houmous, propelling chickpeas from niche ingredient to pantry essential.

2000s

The TV chef boom sparked a passion for 'gourmet' home cooking, and Waitrose answered with its new Cooks' Ingredients range, including herbs and spices such as smoked paprika.



2020s

Innovations like Waitrose Cooks' Ingredients Hot Honey Gochujang and Ottolenghi Miso Pesto demonstrate how bold, global ingredients are now modern midweek essentials.

2030s

Nutritious, climate-tough staples like millet, ancient grains and pulse flours will be go-tos, while the trend towards premium tinned seafood, beans and vegetables will continue.

British pantry patronage

In true British fashion, this love affair with global flavours hasn't ousted our original pantry pioneers – it's sitting side-by-side with them. Classic British condiments are enjoying a resurgence of their own, with Worcestershire sauce sales up 22% and Waitrose Essential Mint Sauce up 21% over the last year.

Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose, adds: "British food is absolutely anything but bland, and our condiment craze is proof. People are taking classics in bold new directions, using Worcestershire sauce for a deep umami hit, or folding traditional mint sauce into labneh with toasted seeds for a flatbread dip. Food lovers want instant, punchy flavours."

+22%

bump in Worcestershire sauce sales



+30%

increase in sales of premium olive oils



The next trends in conspicu-oil consumption

"The olive oil renaissance is taking off as everyday cooks turn into oil connoisseurs," says Julie Banyard, product developer at Waitrose. "While a good quality extra virgin olive oil in a glass bottle is a staple for many, we're now seeing surging demand for regional extra virgin olive oils with greater provenance, plus flavour infusions or oils offered in innovative squeezy bottles and convenient spray formats."

Sales of premium bottles, including No.1 Valli Trapanesi PDO Extra Virgin Olive Oil, have enjoyed a 30% increase, while polyphenol-focused oil is soaring, with sales of Odysea Polyphenol Greek Extra Virgin Olive Oil up 118% this year.

Emer Lowry, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "Extra virgin olive oil contains a rich variety of polyphenols – plant compounds known for their potential anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Research also suggests these polyphenols may nourish our gut microbiome by feeding beneficial bacteria."

In January 2027, Waitrose is launching a No.1 Early Harvest Picual Extra Virgin Olive Oil, containing a minimum of 250mg polyphenols per kilo of olive oil. Popularised by influencers, including biohacker Bryan Johnson, drinking a daily shot of extra virgin olive oil has become one of the year's biggest viral wellness trends.

Julie Banyard, product developer at Waitrose, adds: "There is a lot of natural science within an oil. Customers now understand that different oils can be suited for different purposes, and they're choosing specific types to get the most out of them."

This year, Waitrose launched a range of artisan oils, including an Ottolenghi x Citizens of Soil collaboration, alongside £22 bottles of Gordon Ramsay's Krude Finishing Oil, reflecting the emerging trend for premium oils created specifically for drizzling rather than cooking. Waitrose also launched a range of high-quality oil sprays, including Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Air Fryer Oil Spray.

WELL OILED

The convenience oil upgrade
+112% year-on-year increase in waitrose.com searches for olive oil spray

The air fryer innovation
New Waitrose Air Fryer Oil Spray brings high-end quality to high-speed cooking

The gourmet flavour saviour
Cooks' Ingredients flavoured oil range – including the bestselling Garlic Infused Olive Oil – upgraded its base oil from a standard blend to 100% Extra Virgin Olive Oil



The new shopping



Shopping habits have shifted. Amid cost of living pressures, ‘little luxuries’ and micro-treats are soaring; the top-up shop is on the rise as people grab quick meal solutions; and ‘soil-first’ shopping (you heard it here first) hits the mainstream

(Al)sle



‘Today’s consumers no longer rely on a single weekly trip to the supermarket’

The top-up shop

The report survey showed 62% of us now rely on several smaller shops each week, with half saying they opt for ‘fresh top-up’ shops to help prevent food waste.

These changing customer habits are shaping how Waitrose is investing in its shops. This year, the new ‘neighbourhood’ Waitrose shops strategy was announced, bridging the gap between a Little Waitrose convenience store and a full-line Waitrose supermarket. Designed for busy suburban neighbourhoods where Waitrose is already popular, these stores offer a fast, easy shopping experience with an intuitive layout. Stocking more than 6,500 products (around double the number in a Little Waitrose), they fulfil a variety of customer needs – from a fresh top-up shop to tonight’s dinner and discovering something new – helping establish a trip to Waitrose as part of the weekly routine.

Tina Mitchell, Waitrose retail director, says: “As the ‘Home of Food Lovers’, our growth is shaped by adapting to how our customers live and shop. Today’s consumers no longer rely on a single weekly trip to the supermarket; grocery shopping is an omnichannel experience. Backed by our multi-year £1 billion investment plan, our ambition is to be wherever our customers want us.”

Fine dine in

“We’re seeing a surge in ‘luxe for less’ as shoppers swap expensive nights out for high-end ‘fakeaways’ at home,” says Maddy Wilson, director of own brand at Waitrose. “People want their budgets to go further, but they refuse to compromise on quality or the small moments of joy that great food brings. The traditional takeaway is no longer the casual option it once was. Today’s customers are taking the experience into their own hands – re-creating restaurant-style occasions at home without the premium price tag. They want quality ingredients, authentic flavour profiles and effortless prep that feels like a genuine treat after a long week.”

This year, Waitrose launched the Dinner for Tonight mission with an £18 Food Lovers’ Takeaway for 4. The most popular mains have included No.1 Butter Chicken Masala and No.1 Crispy Chilli Chicken, with sides of No.1 Jewelled Pilau Rice and No.1 Bombay Potatoes. Sales of ready meals are 23% higher on Fridays and Saturdays than the rest of the week.

To bring the high-end, restaurant-quality experience home, Waitrose also expanded its foodie collaborations, introducing ranges with renowned chefs Angela Hartnett and Rick Stein, alongside hugely popular launches with Yotam Ottolenghi and high-end Indian restaurant Gymkhana.





+23%

jump in ready meal sales on Fridays and Saturdays





Emergency strawberries: The on-demand delivery boom

Rapid delivery, via services such as Deliveroo, Uber Eats and Just Eat, has turned us into a nation of tactical last-minute cooks. When we need dinner in 20 minutes, we order in the ingredients. This year, Waitrose on-demand grocery delivery sales went up by 17%.

The most-ordered emergency item of 2026 at Waitrose? Not a pint of milk or loaf of bread – it was a punnet of strawberries. And data shows that Wednesday has overtaken the weekend as the peak day for on-demand delivery, while Saturday has tumbled to the least popular slot for this kind of shop.

Tom Andrews, Waitrose online trading manager, says: "Shoppers are prioritising speed and leaning into the top-up shop trend – buying precisely what they need, right when they need it. And top of that list? Strawberries. Whether it's dodging a toddler meltdown with a quick berry fix or realising a bowl of double cream is missing its co-star right before guests arrive, on-demand delivery is saving the day. Instead of panic-buying traditional staples like bread and milk, customers are calling in emergency punnets of strawberries, avocados and last-minute steaks to solve tea-time and hosting crises."

‘AI is reshaping the relationship between the fridge, the shopper and the checkout’



From prompt to pan: The AI sous chef

Millions of us have a new assistant on our phone or laptop coordinating our food shop and meal planning. According to Waitrose’s latest AI survey (capturing insights from around 1,000 customers in the internal research panel), 72% of shoppers report actively using AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude and Google Gemini to assist them across research, productivity and creative tasks.

The survey found that almost half of AI users log in to generate meal plans, while 52% use the technology to find inspiration on using leftovers or ingredients lingering in the fridge. To meet this shift, Waitrose is currently trialling a cutting-edge AI feature with 38,000 customers and Partners; shoppers can upload a photo of a handwritten shopping list and have it rapidly converted into a list of personalised products – which can be added to an online basket in a single click.

72%

of shoppers report actively using AI tools

“We’re just at the start, but AI is fundamentally reshaping the relationship between the fridge, the shopper and the checkout,” says Stuart Clarke, head of insight at Waitrose. “It’s already evolving from a novelty into a sous chef: instead of staring at a half-empty fridge wondering what to cook, or spending a commute manually dropping items into a digital basket, AI is bridging the gap between inspiration and convenience. Looking ahead, we can see a future with predictive, adaptive shopping and meal planning that aligns with family health goals, dietary preferences and zero-waste ambitions. Say goodbye to forgetting bagged salads in the veg drawer or discovering you’ve run out of milk when the kids are hangry for breakfast.”

The larder flex

Household budgets remain carefully managed and we’re saving on everyday essentials, but we’re also leaving our cupboard doors ajar for the latest kitchen trend: the larder flex. Maddy Wilson, director of own brand at Waitrose, says: “When times are tough, small, delicious



luxuries are our favourite pick-me-up. Rather than spending big on restaurant tabs, we’re all investing in little larder luxuries that make everyday home cooking feel special, like premium tinned tomatoes, luxury oils, conserves and artisanal jarred fish.”

Waitrose sold 38% more luxury fig conserve and 56% more £15 bottles of Citizens of Soil Greek Single Estate Olive Oil this year. And sales of glass jars of tuna, including Waitrose No.1 Albacore Tuna, are up 38%, while sales of Mutti tomatoes – with their stylish tins just waiting to be repotted with basil – are up 19%.



‘Rather than spending big on restaurant tabs, we’re investing in little larder luxuries’

+83%

rise in sales of Punchy Salt & Pepper Seasoning



High end sprinkle

Sales of Waitrose Cooks' Ingredients are booming – particularly when it comes to seasonings. Sales of Italian and Baharat seasonings increased by 19%, Smoky BBQ rose 15% and Fish Seasoning jumped 31% – but taking the crown is Chinese-inspired Punchy Salt & Pepper Seasoning, with a massive 83% surge over the past year.

"Customers now treat salt and seasonings like a finishing oil or a fine spice," says Paul Gamble, senior development chef at Waitrose. "It's all about that tactile, crunchy texture on the palate – whether it's sea salt over dark chocolate mousse or Chinese salt and pepper tossed over crispy chips. It's an instant way to elevate everyday cooking to restaurant quality."

Micro treats and social eats

Fun, low-cost viral food hacks are sweeping social media feeds. Lizzie Haywood, trend innovation manager at Waitrose, says: "From homemade chocolate Pringles, peanut butter-filled dates and Japanese cheesecake to frozen bark and croissant-wrapped ice creams, playful desserts are emerging as the ultimate low-cost endorphin boost for 2026. Driven by viral social trends and the 'little treat' culture, these bite-sized indulgences offer quick, affordable moments of joy."

Waitrose's social channels saw viral success with creator-led 'dot cake' recipes, inspired by the single-serve pots from The Dot Cakes bakery in New York State; videos by @sofiabakes and @gnochgnoch pulled in 55,000 and 66,000 views respectively.

Gen Z go 'Soil-first' shopping

In the past year, searches on waitrose.com for 'regenerative' jumped 150%, as shoppers back climate-resilient food production that respects soil health. Andrew Hoad, director of Leckford and Farming for Nature at Waitrose, says: "We've reached a tipping point where customers aren't just looking at what goes into their food, but what goes back into the soil. Regenerative farming is moving from a niche environmental conversation, straight into the mainstream weekly shop." Waitrose's Farming for Nature programme is helping 2,000 British farmers adopt regenerative practices by 2030, with 67% of shoppers in the report survey saying





‘Regenerative farming is moving from a niche environmental conversation, straight into the mainstream weekly shop’



supporting British growers and farmers is the key sustainability claim that would make them put a product in their basket.

The Waitrose Farm, the Leckford Estate, has been farmed regeneratively since 2020, and sales across key products are in high demand with sales of Waitrose Leckford Estate Rapeseed Oil up 57% in the last year. This year, new products have included the Leckford Multigrain Baguette, Leckford Estate Vintage Apple Cider, and Leckford Gin and Vodka. Waitrose also became the first UK supermarket to introduce a dedicated ‘Championing Regenerative Farming’ on-pack logo across its own-brand fresh cow’s milk – which will roll out across more categories, supporting British farmers.

Younger generations are leading the conversation on regenerative agriculture, with research by consultancy ADM in 2026 showing 62% of Gen Z and 66% of millennials are ready to champion products farmed in this way. One in five said they would pay more for products made using regenerative practices – and millennials are four times more likely than boomers to do so. On socials, farming TikToks are helping to drive Gen Z’s interest in agriculture, championed by young farmers like Harriet Cowan from TV show Clarkson’s Farm.

The trend is also accelerating on shelves via independent artisan brands, with rising stars like Northern Pasta launching in-store this year to meet a growing appetite for regeneratively grown grains.

+150%

boost in searches on waitrose.com for ‘regenerative’

The se wave





Fish burger, anyone? Seafood is staging a takeover – replacing meat classics, driving 'afternoon sea' trends, sparking a prawn renaissance and posing the question: is trout the new salmon?

afood



44%

of shoppers are using fish as a direct replacement for meat

Fish replacing meat classics

Fish is rapidly unseating traditional meat as Britain's go-to midweek meal, with shoppers increasingly swapping classic beef and chicken dishes for the likes of swordfish steaks, cod bites and fish tacos. In fact, according to the report survey, 72% of us are eating more fish for its nutritional value, while 44% are using it as a direct replacement for meat.

Paul Gamble, senior development chef at Waitrose, says: "Seafood is taking over the weekly shop as customers move beyond basic fillets and seafood sticks. Driven by health, flexitarian swaps and a craving for affordable luxury, and fuelled by social media tutorials from creators including Ben Lippett, younger consumers are more confident than ever. They're learning that fish cooked on the bone delivers superior flavour and moisture, and they're eager to put those skills to work."

Waitrose has seen a dramatic shift towards seafood alternatives, highlighted by a 167% surge in searches for fish burger recipes on waitrose.com – led by a popular spicy tuna burger recipe that saw demand jump 200%. The trend also redefined summer grilling, where barbecue favourites including the No.1 BBQ King Prawn Skewers proved that meat kebabs are no longer the undisputed stars of the grill.

Fancy fish fingers

The fish finger is getting a gourmet glow up. Restaurants are serving grown-up versions, including The Wolseley in Piccadilly with its 'goujons of haddock', delicately crumbed fish served with house-made tartare sauce.

Sales of Waitrose Chunky Cod Fish Fingers have spiked 20% in the past year and, building on this momentum, Waitrose is expanding its range to include other fish species with its new Pollock Fish Fingers.

Beth Jacobs, prepacked fish product developer at Waitrose, says: "Fish fingers have officially grown up. Customers aren't looking for blended whitefish hidden under a thick, soggy coating anymore. They want thick-cut cod or tender haddock, where you can actually see and taste the quality of the fish. Paired with a lightly seasoned golden panko or artisanal breadcrumb, it's turned what used to be a quick midweek tea for the kids into a premium comfort food that adults are actively seeking out."

Afternoon 'sea' anyone?

A heatwave summer put Sunday roasts in the shade, as showstopping shellfish platters – or afternoon 'sea' – and 'seacuterie' boards took over from traditional charcuterie. Inspired by viral social media trends, home cooks and party hosts are trading meat and cheese for visually stunning seafood spreads – pairing the likes of tinned anchovies and tuna with gourmet crackers, artisanal pickles and hot sauces.

+87%

leap in sales of retro Waitrose King Prawns with Cocktail Sauce

Seafood platters are in high demand, and scallops are leading the charge. This year, sales of Waitrose No.1 Canadian Raw Scallops are up 18%, alongside No.1 6 Seafood Shells on Waitrose Entertaining, which saw a sales rise of 39%.

Beth Jacobs, fish and seafood product developer at Waitrose, says: "In the 1980s, seafood buyers were proposing winkles and shrimp garnishes to add a touch of sophistication. Today, that luxurious seafood flair is making a major comeback, championed by premium new launches like our No.1 Vodka-Battered Scallops with Bloody Mary Sauce, and No.1 Lobster & Prawn Vol Au Vents for Christmas."

Fishy snacks

Fish has swum its way through into snacking habits, too. Jay Ledwich, crisp buyer at Waitrose, adds: "We're seeing a huge resurgence in retro food culture, driven by a wave of nostalgia and a desire for playful, elevated comfort food – and prawns are at the centre of it. Prawn snacks are surging in particular as shoppers look for retro flavours with a modern, high-end twist. Waitrose Bloody Mary Prawn Cocktail crisps, inspired by the recent 1980s-set TV show *Rivals*, have proved immensely popular (*of course they did, darling!*). It's the perfect storm of pop-culture nostalgia, bold flavour profiles and effortless indulgence."

Snacks made with seafood are thriving too. In the last year, sales of ready-to-eat Waitrose King Prawns with Cocktail Sauce are up 32%, Garlic & Chilli King Prawns are up 68% and Frozen Tempura King Prawns are up 15%. Lizzie Haywood, trend innovation manager at Waitrose, adds:









‘Trout is now the first choice for anyone who wants a lighter, more sophisticated take on oily fish’

“The rise of fish snacks also ties in to the broader boom in East and Southeast Asian food trends. We’re becoming more accustomed to seafood-forward flavours through gateway snacks like shrimp chips, crab crisps, anchovy bites and roasted seaweed. As the craving for authentic umami profiles and novel textures grows, iconic Asian street-food staples are transitioning from niche international aisles to mainstream supermarket shelves.”

Is trout the new salmon?

This year, Waitrose became the first UK supermarket to suspend mackerel sourcing due to overfishing – and shoppers branched out in their tastes in record numbers. In the four weeks following the suspension, sales of alternative staples surged: salmon soared 200%, seabass and sea bream rose 200% and cod loin climbed 179%.

But it is trout that has officially leapt out of salmon’s shadow to become the breakout fish star. In the last year, sales of Waitrose English Trout Fillets jumped 16%, with Mild Smoked Trout up 11%. New launches this year include Rick Stein’s Scottish Loch Trout En Papillote and Waitrose Hot Smoked Trout with Lemon and Dill.

Paul Gamble, senior development chef at Waitrose, says: “For a long time, trout was the underdog of the fish counter, but we’re seeing a massive shift in the kitchen and in restaurants. It’s no longer just an alternative – it’s the first choice for anyone who wants a lighter, more sophisticated take on oily fish. It offers versatility and a delicacy of flavour, with buttery sweetness and a finer flake. The options available have grown too: from pre-packed smoked, poached and flaked, to fresh fillets and whole fish on our Waitrose fish counters. Whether it’s a quick pan-sear or a gentle cold-smoke, trout is the perfect canvas for modern flavours.”

Liquid luxury







As the cost of eating out keeps kitchens busy at home, drinking habits are undergoing a distinctly high-end evolution. Rather than cutting back, shoppers are taking the savings from skipped bar tabs and reinvesting them into the at-home drinking experience. In 2026 we're pouring exceptional tipples without leaving the living room

‘People are looking to beer as an affordable treat’

Beer goes high end

According to charity DrinkAware, drinking at home is now the most common way adults in the UK consume alcohol. Its research, published this year, shows that 73% of alcohol is bought for home consumption, and adults are twice as likely to drink weekly at home as they are in pubs, bars or restaurants.

Shoppers at Waitrose are buying more super-premium and world lagers, up 12% in the last year, led by spectacular sales of beers including Damm, up 226%, and Sapporo, up 59%.

How are we drinking beer? “Selectively,” says Waitrose beer buyer Jourdan Gabbini. “Authentic, independent and premium beers are the main drivers of beer growth. People are looking to beer like a bit of an affordable treat – they love opting for beers from independent breweries and discovering the spectrum of flavours that craft brewers are putting out there.”

Pairing wine? Try a beer instead

Beer has emerged as a strong challenger to wine at the dinner table, as sommeliers across the globe deem beer to be the perfect pairing for a variety of complex flavours. At Michelin-starred South Indian restaurant Quilon in Westminster, a dedicated beer-pairing menu serves paneer polichattu alongside Warsteiner pilsener, lentil-crusted scallops with Pietra IPA, chicken pepper masala with Duvel, and kumquat served with milk chocolate ginger mousse alongside Liefmans Fruitesse. At home, we're following suit.

"Certain beers, such as hop and sour-beer styles, can cut through rich fats, whereas malt-focused beer styles can cut through delicate spices better than some wines," says Waitrose beer buyer Jourdan Gabbini.

According to market research company NielsenIQ, across the country's supermarkets we bought the equivalent of 314 million pints of lager in the four-week period ending 11 July 2026 – 13% more compared to the same period in the previous year – as the World Cup gave us reason to cheer. And football fans were flocking to Waitrose, which has grown beer sales by 14% this year, twice as much as the wider market.

The new wine map

When times are tough, it's small luxuries we turn to – a phenomenon known as the lipstick effect. It's driving fine wine sales at home, where drinkers are growing more adventurous – looking beyond traditional French and Italian options towards niche regions, indigenous grape varieties and story-led bottles. Rather than sticking to

500%

explosion in searches for 'beergarita' on waitrose.com



The rise of the 'beergarita'

Beer has even muscled its way onto the cocktail menu with the breakout drink of the season: the beergarita. This crisp, citrus-heavy spritz sees ice-cold lager or IPA topped with tequila blanco, Cointreau, agave syrup and fresh lime. The mix took over summer entertaining thanks to the ultimate party hack: a round of cocktails built inside a six-pack of bottles. Pour a quarter from each bottle, replace with a margarita mix (or the ingredients above), dust the rim with Tajín (Mexican spice mix), and serve in an ice bucket.

Waitrose's recipe saw searches rocket 500% in the week it went live, while bars and restaurants rushed to list their own twists on the beergarita (or lagerita). At The Taco Social Club in London, it's Olmeca Altos Plata tequila with Iseo triple sec, agave syrup, lime juice and lager, while burger chain Meat Liquor's version is a frozen El Rayo tequila margarita with a Harbour Helles lager hat. "Don't overthink it," the menu warns.

safe territory, we're filling our racks with underrated global gems. In the last year, Georgian wine sales have surged by a whopping 335%, led by Gorgeous Georgia Red. Greek wines climbed 14% (most popular being Waitrose Blueprint Greek White Wine), while Lebanese red Château Musar Aana enjoyed a 12% increase in demand. Portuguese wine is also soaring in popularity, with sales up 24% this year, driven by Waitrose Blueprint Vinho Verde, plus the Waitrose Loved and Found range, a unique wine collection of lesser-known varieties.

At the same time, homegrown winemakers toasted a landmark year. After the hot, dry summer of 2025, expanded vineyards across the UK delivered the second-largest harvest on record, producing over 16.5 million bottles, according to data from the Food Standards Agency.

"Locality has become a major driving force for our shoppers, with people increasingly looking to buy English wines," says Waitrose sparkling wine buyer Alexandra Mawson. "We see a real sweet spot where sales spike within a 25-mile radius of the vineyard. A brilliant example is Camel Valley Cornwall Brut; our Truro store is just 25 miles away from the vines, and it sells 2.4 times more than our second-bestselling branch. Our customers are passionate about supporting home-grown businesses, and because English fizz can offer fantastic quality and value for money compared to other traditional-method sparkling wines, it's a win-win."

Spirits with provenance

Drinkers are also seeking out the human story behind what's in their glass. Enter



'Locality has become a major driving force.

Sales spike within a 25-mile radius of the vineyard'

Penrhos Spirits, whose farm-to-bottle gin became an instant hit following its Waitrose launch. Distilled on a family fruit farm in Herefordshire, just a few miles from the Hereford branch of Waitrose, Penrhos London Dry is made using what it calls 'imperfectly perfect' surplus blueberries that would otherwise go to waste.

Not to be outdone, in October this year, Waitrose launched their Single Estate Vodka and London Dry Gin. Both are masterfully distilled from regeneratively grown wheat cultivated directly at the Waitrose Farm on the Leckford Estate, reinforcing the commitment to farming with nature.



Prime year for English sparkling

"England's most premium sparkling wines are having their moment," says Alexandra Mawson, sparkling buyer at Waitrose. "Southern England summers now echo the climate of Champagne back in the 1980s, and our slightly cooler British weather means the grapes stay on the vine longer and ripen slowly, which lets them develop these deep, complex fruit flavours while keeping that vibrant, crisp acidity that's needed for great quality fizz."

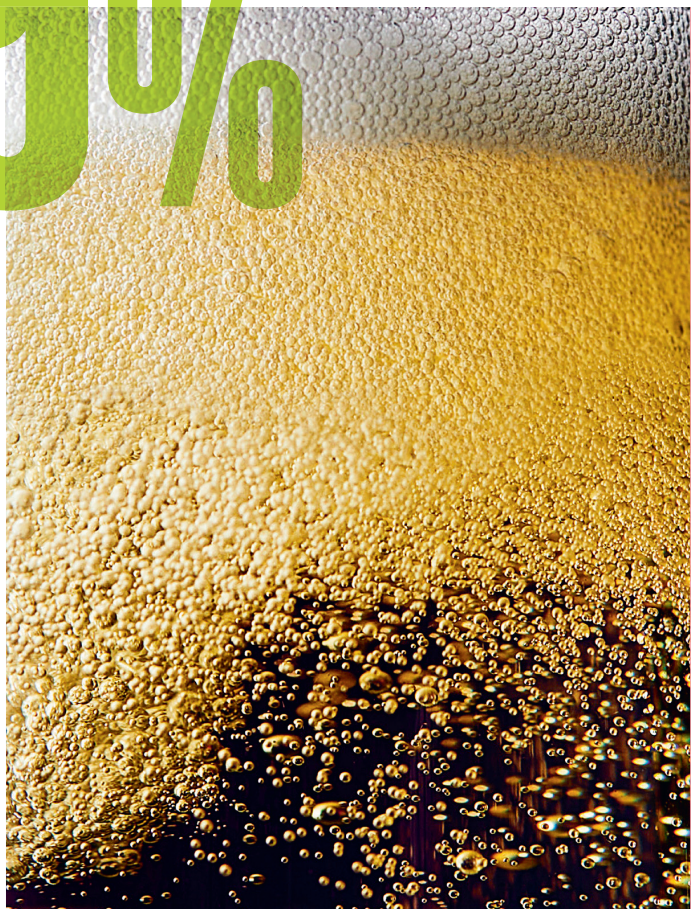
At Waitrose's Leckford Estate in Hampshire, this year's sweltering weather called for harvesting three weeks earlier than usual, including the Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes that'll go into the award-winning Leckford Estate Brut. Colin Pratt, vineyard manager at the Leckford Estate, says: "It's one of those dream years for winemakers. It's not a large crop, but the quality is outstanding. A long, dry summer almost stresses the plants, so they end up working harder, and the sugar levels are really good. It'll make some fantastic wine, and I can't wait to try it." He'll have to wait just a bit – Leckford Estate Brut 2026 will be ready in three years.

Fizz from across the country is more popular than ever at Waitrose, too, says wine buyer Alexandra Mawson. "We've sold 19% more than last year, as our customers continue to buy into English sparkling that offers increasingly excellent quality."

+19%

uptick in English sparkling wine sales





Crémant's regional renaissance

Crémant's popularity is also soaring, with sales up 24% this year at Waitrose amid an expanding selection of options, including Crémants from Limoux (white and rosé), Burgundy, Alsace and Bordeaux. "Crémant's appeal lies in offering incredible value," says Alexandra Mawson, sparkling wine buyer at Waitrose. "Because it's crafted using the same traditional method as Champagne, you get that same sophisticated quality at a much more accessible price point. Compared to Prosecco, it's drier and crisper on the palate, too. Plus, with different regions exploring their own signature grapes, shoppers are loving the diversity and fun of discovering new styles."

Can-do attitude

"The quality of pre-mixed drinks is driving demand for ready-to-drink cans right now," says Emily Lyth, ready-to-drink buyer at Waitrose. "Having a bar-quality drink ready to go, whether for a chilled weeknight sip or for when people fancy different drinks, has us piling them high in our trolleys. Canned aperitifs in particular give that cocktail-bar vibe at home, saving the hassle of stocking different syrups, fancy bitters and fresh juices. Plus, you get perfect portion control, all without having to open a whole bottle." Classic tequila- and vodka-based cocktails are popular choices, while mini bottles of rosé and sparkling wine are transforming how we enjoy wine on the go.



'Palates are moving away from sweetness towards a craving for heat, smoke and salt'

SINGLE SERVE STARS

Increase in sales year-on-year for these pocket-sized drinks:

+43% ready-to-drink aperitifs

+40% ready-to-drink tequila mixes

+26% mini bottles of rosé

+23% mini bottles of sparkling

+16% ready-to-drink vodka cocktails

Cocktails go savoury

Building on the pickle trend, spicy and salty flavours are all the rage. Katie Bishop, food editor at Waitrose, says: "Dua Lipa was on to something with the quirky pickle juice and Diet Coke combination she shared back in 2024. Now we're seeing a surge in everything from the classic old fashioned and dirty martini to marmalade martinis and spicy, even sriracha-spiked margaritas. Palates are moving away from sweetness towards a craving for heat, smoke and salt."

Month on month, recipe searches on waitrose.com for marmalade martini have grown 160%, dirty cucumber martini by 133%, and bloody mary with Japanese flavours by over 100%. Savoury cocktails are being served in restaurants too, such as Fallow London's oyster shell martini.

In the last year, Absolut launched its Tabasco-flavoured vodka, all bold chilli peppers, while new releases at Waitrose include the No.1 Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky – intensely peaty on the nose with a hint of sea breeze, and deeply smoky on the palate with a subtle sweetness.

Hybrid hydra







From Gen Z-driven iced tea obsessions to dessert-inspired drinks, hydration is developing in a hundred different directions

ation



‘Matcha is entering its second wave.



Cold truths

Tea and coffee are breaking out of their traditional hot mugs. While 41% of British adults drink tea and 40% drink coffee at home or at work at least twice a day, according to YouGov research, younger drinkers are far more likely to be sipping anything but a builders’ brew. A third of Gen Z daily tea drinkers opt for green tea, compared to a fifth of all adults; 27% drink fruit tea, 22% iced tea – and almost 10% go for matcha, compared with just 2% of baby boomers.

At Waitrose, sales of iced and cold brews have soared 130% in the last year. Polly Astbury, tea and coffee buyer at Waitrose, says: “Summer weather was certainly a catalyst, but the real momentum comes from a rise in ‘little treat’ culture and a desire for that café-quality experience at home. Rather than basic iced teas, our customers are seeking out bold, culinary-led pairings – think sharp citrus notes or vibrant tropical profiles – as an affordable daily luxury to elevate their afternoon break.”



Matcha+

A much looser definition of what constitutes a ‘tea drinker’ flows from Waitrose figures too, which show a 187% increase in demand for oat and matcha-blended drinks, with sales of Perfect Ted’s Matcha Green Tea Powder up 176% in the last year.

Nicki Hobbs, alternative dairy buyer at Waitrose, says: “Matcha is officially entering its second wave. Welcome to the era of ‘Matcha+’ – with increasing flavour innovation. From vibrant fruit infusions like strawberry and tropical mango to indulgent pairings like salted pistachio and vanilla, flavoured matcha acts as an accessible entry point for new drinkers while offering established fans an exciting way to elevate their daily ritual.” Look out for the new Waitrose No.1 Flavoured Milk in Strawberry Matcha.

The matcha boom isn’t limited to drinks. Take the new Lindt Tokyo Style Chocolate Matcha Strawberry Bar, for example. It has white chocolate with matcha green tea powder and an almond strawberry matcha filling with genmai roasted rice. What’s not to love?! Recipe queries for matcha have also soared, with searches for matcha cheesecake on waitrose.com up 167% in the last year.

+130%

surge in sales of iced and cold brews



Welcome to the era of Matcha+'

+39%

uptick in sales of functional drinks





Functional drinks perform

The era of passive hydration is over: 2026 was the year our drinks had to work for a living. Sales of functional drinks, which deliver a health or wellbeing benefit beyond mere hydration, have risen 39% this year, driven by kombucha (also up 39%). Bubbling demand in this area saw a bevy of new launches, including Counter Culture's Kombucha in Mango & Ginger, InTune CBD Pomegranate & Ginger and Aqua Glow Berry Crush Collagen Drinks.

And it wasn't just the fridge that housed our insatiable thirst for health drinking: the tea aisle got a functional reboot, with Waitrose launching five new teas designed to tackle specific health needs and wellness goals, including Bedtime, Radiance, Digest and Focus Green Tea with Ginger, Apple & Lion's Mane.

Glow up your water glass

Even the simplest drink, water, has undergone the fine-dining treatment – the essential you pour from the tap has become an intentional, health-maxxing, taste-packed *experience*. Restaurants such as Cheshire's Michelin-starred La Popote are even offering water menus.

Meanwhile, influencer and food scientist Jeffrey Ma this year introduced 'stacked water' – collagen, vitamins, fibre, protein, creatine and electrolyte supplements added to water – with his recipes generating over five million views. Britons are stocking up accordingly: on waitrose.com searches for collagen have risen 170%, creatine 160% and electrolytes 150% over the past year.

We're slurping up ready-made water-based drinks, too. Punchy Hydration Mexican Lime Cans, containing six electrolytes and minerals, have seen sales rise 174% while DASH Water Sparkling Lime has shot up by 50% this year.

Coconut water – nature's electrolyte

Demand for coconut water – the original electrolyte drink – has surged with sales up 48% this year at Waitrose. Alice Goudie, nutritionist at Waitrose, says: "Coconut water has shifted from niche fitness staple to essential everyday refreshment. Customers are increasingly opting for natural, simple drinks that don't compromise on flavour. Rich in natural electrolytes, coconut water offers a boost whether you're heading home from the gym, looking for an afternoon drink or blending it into a morning smoothie. It's light and fits into wellness-led routines."

Coming up and going down

What are we loving, and what are we leaving behind? Changing tastes are driving new products to the top of our shopping lists

Coming up:
Mushroom-maxxing
Going down:
Tenderstem broccoli

Feeling Tenderstem tedium? Ready for veg with intense natural umami? Behold the fungi revolution. Searches for mushroom recipes on waitrose.com have soared 42% in the last year, triggering demand on the site for fusion recipes from gochujang mushroom bao buns to mushroom tacos.

We're loving fungi so much, this year Waitrose launched the exclusive No.1 British Maitake Mushrooms. Renowned for their meaty texture, they're perfect to roast or pan-fry so the edges turn crisp. The obsession has even spilled out of the frying pan and into the mug: functional fungi feature in our morning routines, highlighted by the launch of the new Waitrose Focus Tea, which includes lion's mane mushroom.

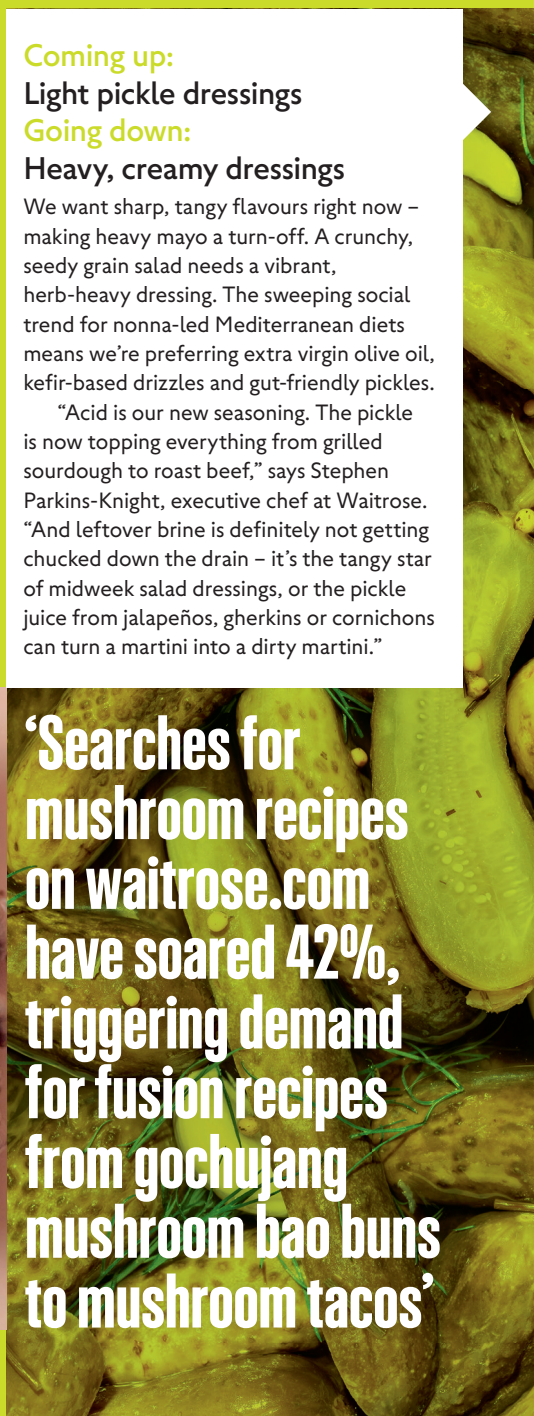




Coming up:
Light pickle dressings
Going down:
Heavy, creamy dressings

We want sharp, tangy flavours right now – making heavy mayo a turn-off. A crunchy, seedy grain salad needs a vibrant, herb-heavy dressing. The sweeping social trend for nonna-led Mediterranean diets means we're preferring extra virgin olive oil, kefir-based drizzles and gut-friendly pickles.

"Acid is our new seasoning. The pickle is now topping everything from grilled sourdough to roast beef," says Stephen Parkins-Knight, executive chef at Waitrose. "And leftover brine is definitely not getting chucked down the drain – it's the tangy star of midweek salad dressings, or the pickle juice from jalapeños, gherkins or cornichons can turn a martini into a dirty martini."



'Searches for mushroom recipes on waitrose.com have soared 42%, triggering demand for fusion recipes from gochujang mushroom bao buns to mushroom tacos'



Coming up:
Dark roasted flavours
Going down:
Hyper-sweet jams

Dark and deep-roasted flavour profiles are having a major moment, as customers increasingly look for richer, more complex taste experiences. Brands are extending roast times and leaning into deeper harvests – highlighted by products like dark roasted peanut butter, which delivers intensely savoury, charred-nut undertones, and dark grade maple syrup, prized for its robust, molasses-like depth. In the last year, sales of Waitrose No.1 Canadian Dark Maple Syrup have risen 21% and ManiLife Deep Roasted Salted Peanut Butter is up a massive 122%. Will Torrent, senior development chef at Waitrose, says: "This shift turns everyday pantry staples into sophisticated treats that feel both indulgent and refined. It's largely driven by a growing preference for balanced, 'grown-up' flavour profiles where subtle bitterness and toastiness cut through."

Coming up:
Pouched grains and portioned pastes
Going down:
Instant noodles

The 'stocked kitchen' is all about quick, smart shortcuts that don't sacrifice quality. Savvy home cooks are reaching for pouched grains, such as Waitrose Sun-Dried Tomato & Black Olive Mixed Grains. Whether it's a pre-cooked blend of spelt, quinoa or lentils, these pouches serve as the instant, nutrient-dense base for midweek meals.

Say goodbye to those half-used jars at the back of the fridge too. This year, Waitrose began stocking Ice Kitchen, perfectly portioned frozen pastes, in varieties including Indian tikka masala and Thai massaman curry, so you can create flavour-packed dishes in no time.

Coming up:
Ube
Going down:
Artificially flavoured syrup shots

Ube, the vibrant purple yam, looks to be muscling matcha as the next taste and colour trend. With its bright colour and mild flavour, the viral sensation has cropped up on Starbucks menus and stars in an array of sweet treats at London's Mamasons Dirty Ice Cream, including white chocolate and ube brownies. While the Philippines, the vegetable's homeland, is pausing exports of fresh ube due to a lack of planting material, powdered ube looks to be going international as the bright and beautiful hue taps into the sensory-maxxing trend.







Trend tracker

Authentic Texan cooking

Country star Ella Langley's Choosin' Texas has shattered streaming records, Western fashion is everywhere – and now Texan culture is heading for our kitchens. Forget sugary 'American-style' brown sauces – this is authentic Lone Star State simplicity: heavy oak-smoke, coarse black pepper rubs, slow-rendered beef brisket and fiery Tex-Mex borderland influences. We'll be embracing dry rubs and jalapeño-cheddar sausages, while classic Texan sides like smoky pinto beans and skillet jalapeño cornbread will take centre stage. Ready to whisk your taste buds stateside are Waitrose No.1 Slow Cooked Hot Smoked Beef Brisket with Texan Style Barbecue Sauce and Cape Herb & Spice Texan Smokehouse BBQ Seasoning Rub – with Tito's Handmade Vodka from Austin on the side, naturally.

Persian and Turkish go big

These cuisines are moving beyond traditional neighbourhood grills to dominate high-concept dining with live-fire cooking, beloved regional dishes and bold Middle Eastern spices. The trend is landing on the plate and the page: Soho welcomed the restaurant Kid in September, serving Turkish dishes including içli köfte – while Sabrina Ghayour's new book, *Persiana One*, brings vibrant Persian and Middle Eastern flavours home with fuss free one-tray recipes.





'Forget sugary "American-style" brown sauces – this is authentic Lone Star State simplicity'



Sweet ‘noshtalgia’

Nostalgia shows no signs of slowing down, with food remaining our ultimate sensory time machine – and nostalgic sweet treats are set to take over in 2027. Will Torrent, Waitrose senior development chef, says: “‘Noshtalgia’ is becoming a mainstream trend where food lovers are revisiting the cheerful dishes of their youth. When the world feels fast and unpredictable, food isn’t just about sustenance any more – it’s emotional comfort.”

Black Forest gateau, devilishly rich and elegantly boozy, is set to have a big moment, with recipe searches on waitrose.com increasing 43% month on month. Ubiquitous in the 1970s, its name is thought to be inspired by Schwarzwälder Kirschwasser, a cherry spirit made in Germany’s Black Forest.

Smoky sugar

You’ve heard about switter (sweet-bitter) and fricy (spicy fruit). The flavour mash-up of 2027 is set to be ‘smugar’: sugar with a burnt makeover. The charred complexity of high-temperature caramelisation gives honey, maple syrup and cane sugars a smoky, pleasantly bitter edge that cuts through rich fats.

A great base is Waitrose No.1 Dark Grade Canadian Maple Syrup – its intense maple profile makes it ideal for smoky glazes on meats. Farm shops stock smugar in items like Cold Smoked Honey by The Slow Farming Company, while home cooks are making burnt-sugar rubs with recipes on waitrose.com such as spiced-rubbed chicken with lime slaw. Expect to see this smoky-sweet depth in bakeries, in barbecue ranges and as bitter-caramel finishes on desserts.

Open... sesame

Google searches for ‘black sesame’ rose 60% this year, while searches on waitrose.com surged by 228%. The earthy seed is gaining traction across our kitchens, cafés and social feeds. Gail’s Bakery blends nutritious sesame paste into its iced matcha latte for a striking green-to-black ombré, while Ottolenghi mixes black and white seeds in his moreish Caramelised Sesame Cashews at Waitrose. At home, cooks are stirring Cooks’ Ingredients Black Sesame Seeds into dishes, with recipes on waitrose.com for baked carrot sesame fries and miso caramel chocolate mousse with a crunchy sesame seed garnish. On that note: texture-maxxing will continue to boom. Keep an eye out next year for more desserts with crunch, chocolates with a toasted snap – and pastries that pack a serious crackle.







Churning up the temperature

The Harris Poll in 2025 found that 63% of people changed their buying habits because of the prolonged heat, and as hotter summers look to become the norm, the ice cream and frozen treat aisle is heating up with innovation. Expect to see rich textures and nostalgic flavours (like clotted cream), real fruit churned in, and classic desserts taking over the freezer, with meringata (layered Italian meringue desserts), roulades, tarts and brownies transformed into frozen delights.



Kokumi is the new umami

The next frontier in flavour science is kokumi. Like umami it comes from Japanese, translating as 'rich taste' or 'delicious mouthfulness'. Kokumi isn't a standalone flavour, but the sensation of depth and long-lasting heartiness that turns a good dish into an unforgettable one.

The compounds behind kokumi are naturally found in garlic and onions, and they're also created through slow ageing, deep fermentation and long simmering. As we shift away from ultra-processed shortcuts in our cooking, and especially for weightloss jab users, kokumi is a vital element in creating indulgent, full-bodied, satisfying meals.

You'll find kokumi on Waitrose shelves in the Cooks' Ingredients Black Garlic Paste and White Miso Paste. It's also spilling over into the bakery and dairy aisles via cultured butter and ultra-rich, dark chocolate drinks. In 2027, 'mouthfulness' will be the ultimate culinary flex.

Spice up your life

Originating in Dublin's Chinese takeaway scene, the cult-favourite spice bag (spice-tossed fried chicken and chips served in a paper bag) features a vibrant blend of Sichuan peppercorns, five-spice, garlic and sugar. This moreish mix taps into the growing appetite for shakeable seasonings and has rapidly evolved from late-night takeaway ritual to a retail staple. It's finding its way onto supermarket meat counters and being sprinkled on everything from chicken tenders to Peking duck.

Tropical transformation and hyper-realistic desserts

Pineapple has been reinvented – open flames, spicy ferments and high-acid glazes are turning this tropical cliché into a savoury salvo. It's already being used in everything from Waitrose Pineapple, Habanero & Lime Sauce to pineapple cottage cheese.

Once just a staple of tropical fruit salads, mango is also being heroed for its versatile flavour profile. It's becoming a playground for experimentation, from Soul Fruit Crunchy Mango Crisps and MOTH Mango Margarita to the hyper-realistic Waitrose No.1 Alphonso Mango Dessert, which looks just like an actual mango. Expect to see other hyper-realistic fruit desserts in 2027.

Bananas have also emerged as a breakout star, driven by social media trends like banana bread blondies and banana bread churros bites. On waitrose.com, searches for 'banana recipes' have surged by 70% over the past year, led by popular new recipe additions such as crumble-topped brown butter banana bread.





‘Food lovers are interested in micro-regional culinary traditions and heritage recipes’

Hyper-regional cuisine

Food lovers are interested in precise geographical accuracy, with micro-regional culinary traditions, indigenous cooking techniques and heritage recipes that tell an authentic story. Within Mexican cuisine, attention is shifting towards Yucatec Mayan traditions, where open-fire cooking and slow-roasted cochinita pibil – a pork dish pit-cooked with the bright orange spice achiote and sour orange – take centre stage.

In Thai dining, the dominance of coconut-heavy curries from its central region is giving way to Northern Thailand’s Lanna cuisine, characterised by herby, broth-based dishes, fresh turmeric and aromatic, smoky chilli pastes. Meanwhile, the Italian focus is expanding beyond coastal seafood and classic Neapolitan pizza to explore the rustic interior of Campania, bringing slow-braised wild meats, mountain herbs and regional cheeses such as Waitrose No.1 Mozzarella Di Bufala Campana into supermarkets and onto restaurant menus.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