

5 Food and Beverage Trends that will Rule 2021

Putting 2020 behind us and focusing on all that 2021 has in store

By Sonal Holland

We're already over a month into 2021 and people are beginning to slowly shift focus from the year that was, to the new year. Infused with a more hopeful outlook, we seem keen to embrace what the year holds as we strive to put 2020 behind us. In that vein, here are my 5 predictions for the food and beverage sector that I believe will shape the year ahead:

Experiential, Intimate Dining at Home

Post lockdown, the latter part of 2020 was heavily focused on consumption of food and drinks at home in small numbers and I see these kinds of closed-group social interactions continuing in the new year. Drinking at home has never been easier, thanks to the preponderance of specialist wine stores, online portals and mobile apps offering a wide variety of domestic and imported tipples making ordering as easy as a few clicks away.

The lockdown saw an exponential surge in the consumption of wine, flavoured gin, and premium craft beers as the favoured drink of choice for at-home gatherings. While people have become used to entertaining and dining at home, they will seek better and more luxurious at-home dining experiences, therefore relying on local restaurants and caterers to further up the ante on their delivery platforms. Do-it-yourself table décor kits and florals, build-your-own meal kits packed with exotic ingredients, and even bringing in (COVID-compliant) chefs to whip up meals for celebratory dinners at home - these will all be trends in 2021.

2020 brought imports and international travel to a screeching halt, thus making us rely on locally available options, especially for food. Everything from homegrown asparagus and avocado through to indigenously handcrafted cheese and liqueur-infused

chocolates, India is now home to world-class food brands making us appreciate our home turf more than ever before. If there was ever a time to go local, it is now. Imports of food items has been steadily declining over the past few years and it is now believed that our reliance on internationally produced fruits and vegetables is likely to be an indulgence reserved for the elite whilst the masses of population will seek out the highest quality local produce their money can buy.

A Greater Emphasis on Health

For the most part, the global pandemic has reminded us to be more mindful of our health and well-being. Emotional, mental and physical health has been a priority for many through 2020, and this is also seen through the dietary choices that people have been making. In addition to time-tested regional food ingredients that are flag-bearers of good health, this trend is also good news for the world of wine – reams have been written about the health benefits of wine (when consumed in moderation, of course) – and we accordingly saw wine sales gain a significant boost through the year. I believe the pandemic led us to re-examine our beverage choices, with many whisky-guzzling loyalists opting for the health benefits of wine, and this seems to be a trend that will continue well into 2021.

Grazing and Experimenting

For many, the way we eat has also significantly changed thanks to the pandemic. Goodbye buffets and hello, individual, plated portions. Sharing food has become risky business through the pandemic, and the switch to individual servings therefore has brought about more of a focus on what we put on our plates, and a greater intimacy to the dining process. Because we're more focused on what's being served, there is naturally more of a focus now on what we are pairing to drink with our meals. Smaller, individual portions mean that diners get to graze more and try different options, versus focusing on larger quantities of one specific dish. This will allow scope for consumers to pair multiple dishes with multiple wines – and experiment with more wine styles than they may have been doing in the past. Use of smart pouring accessories like Coravin that enable enjoyment of wine, one glass at a time, are all the range among die-hard wine enthusiasts.

Wine for Occasion Gifting

If there is going to be more hosting and entertaining done indoors and more wines are going to be uncorked at home, it is only fair that everybody brings a bottle of their favourite wine, right? Spurred by BYOB culture, wine will increasingly become the preferred choice of gift for the host, making flowers, candles and chocolates even more obsolete an idea. It has never been more appropriate to take a bottle of wine with you when invited to a gathering at home – wine has become a staple gift in our country and I see wine sales growing through 2021, with well-known imported brands and premium Indian wine labels being the go-to preference for gifting.

The author is India's first Master of Wine. She is also an educator and a consultant and the Founder Director at Vine2Wine Retail.



<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/71186/5-food-and-beverage-trends-that-will-take-shape-in-2021>