



The 2020

**NOURISH**

network  
trend report

# Our 2020 Vision is Focused on the Year Ahead

Welcome to our fourth annual Trend Report. And by trends, we mean cultural forces and shifts, not fads. Fads are like a one-time volcanic eruption; they're briefly hot before they cool like celery juice and then disappear. Trends are the tectonic plates that shift beneath the ground we walk on and reshape the landscape. New product development takes time, so we need to make sure we're looking at a longer-term horizon. You can't afford to be last to the party.

Looking back at our three previous Trend Reports, we're happy to see that all still are actively reshaping the food industry and providing opportunities for producers, manufacturers, retailers, and foodservice providers in the coming year.

## 2017 Trends

- Food with a Function, Naturally Occurring
- From Protein to Protein + Fibre
- Simply Made, Real Ingredients
- Take Me Halfway There
- Portability
- Made for Me
- Narrowing the Farm Gate to Dinner Plate
- Mindful Consumption
- Food is Food, Across Borders

## 2018 Trends

- Disruption in the Way We Source and Purchase Food
- Disruption in the Way We Prepare Food
- Disruption with Radical Transparency and Food with a Story
- Disruption with Plant-based Products Mainstreaming
- Disruption by the Intersection of Technology and Food
- Disruption from Nose to Tail, and Leaf to Root
- Disruption in Health & Wellness
- Disruption in When and How We Eat

## 2019 Trends

- Shift From Mindful to Virtuous Consumption
- Shift From the Rise of Plant-based Products to the Rise of the Conscious Carnivore and Ethical Protein
- Shift From Diets to Selective Eating
- Food & Mood - Shift from Physical to Emotional Well-being
- Shift From Heart Health to Gut Health
- Shift to Blended Meals and Blended Shopping
- Shift from Millennials to Generation Z
- Shift from Truth to Trust
- Shifts in Canada's International Agri-food Industry
- Shift to Precision Agriculture
- Shift in Public Trust of Canadian Agriculture



We've included trends on farming again for 2020, as we work to narrow the gap between food and agriculture, and consumers and farmers. The 2019 Canadian Centre for Food Integrity Public Trust Research report shows that 91% of Canadians know little or nothing about modern farming practices — but, 60% of Canadians are interested in knowing more. This spells opportunity for everyone on the field-to-table continuum.

We aren't passing judgement or making value statements. We're just reporting what we see on the horizon. With clients on all sides of these trends, we have the privilege of working across the entire food ecosystem and multiple categories, so we're in a unique place to connect the dots to create meaning.

## This year, it's all about Me.

2020 will be your year. And hers. And his. It will be a year of individuals taking small steps to make the world a better place. And they are defining that world as increasingly local. At the same time, they will more than ever expect companies to 'know them' and provide customization. Gone are the days of mass production as we move to an era of mass personalization.

Here are the trends you need to watch and adjust for in 2020:

**Unpackage Me: Solutions Beyond Recycling**

**Sober Me: Rethinking Alcohol for a New Generation of Drinkers**

**Know Me: AI and Hyperpersonalizing Foodservice**

**Save Me: Environmental Impact-Based Eating**

**Science Me: Redefining "Real" Food in the High-Tech Era**

**Entertain Me: Evolving Grocery Shopping from Chore to Experience**

**Keto Me: The Evolution of Lifestyle Eating From No-Carb to Slow-Carb**

**Nourish Me: Serving Local Food in Public Institutions**

**Near Me: Farming Gets Closer to the Consumer**

**Teach Me: Consumers Want to Know More About Modern Farming Practices**

Will farmers, producers, and modern agriculture take steps to connect with consumers? And, will Big Food be nimble enough to meet the challenges ahead, or will we continue to see new upstarts drive future innovation? Hang on to your hats – it's about to get personal.

# Unpackage Me: Solutions Beyond Recycling

Single-use plastics (SUPs), a term that wasn't part of the consumer lexicon two years ago, are the number one issue facing the food industry right now. Some players are responding and working together towards more sustainable packaging. But, we expect this to get a more radical push from consumers as they pursue more reduction strategies rather than recycle strategies.

A study conducted by the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University found that 94% of Canadians surveyed said they are “personally motivated to reduce single-use plastic food packaging because of its environmental impacts.” The same study found that 71% of Canadians support a ban on all SUPs used for food packaging, and 56% of Canadians are already actively shopping for food with non-plastic packaging.

There is mass confusion over what can and can't be recycled, even between municipalities. How can the consumer possibly get this right? Instead, we are

starting to see reduction strategies - circular loop systems, bring your own packaging, and so on.

(Source: Dalhousie University - The single-use plastics dilemma: Perceptions and possible solutions. 2019)

## Will edible packaging take hold?

While The Glenlivet's recent whisky pods made from seaweed that consumers can eat created some excitement, it feels like more of a fad than a trend, akin to the rise and sudden fall of insect protein.



There seems to be a need for a 'guilt offset' as online shopping creates more waste. Shoppers are starting to bring their own containers to bulk bins and Unboxed-type markets with refilling stations. Metro Quebec is allowing shoppers to bring their own containers to shop in some categories. Loblaws

will test TerraCycle's Loop program in 2020 for some of its President's Choice products, as well as select national brands. Products are packaged in a more durable packaging form that is later collected, cleaned, refilled and reused, creating a packaging 'loop'. Will this circular packaging solution lock in brand loyalty?



**YOUR DISHES GO  
A LONG WAY AT METRO**



**Bonus  
50  
m DIS\***

On all containers  
or resealable bags  
brought in store  
(Limit of one 50 bonus m points offer  
per member, per day)

Bring your containers and resealable bags to counters  
in the charcuterie, ready-to-eat meals, meat, fish, and  
pastry departments.\*\*

**metro&moi rewards your good actions.**

FastCompany innovation winner CupClub uses a systems approach treating packaging as a service with its industry-standard coffee cup that can be reused 132 times.

The same Dalhousie study found that 38% of Canadians said they were willing to pay a premium for biodegradable packaging, and that intention goes up the younger the person is. Grocery stores and takeout generate a lot of packaging waste. What biodegradable or compostable solutions are out there?

Innovative Canadian company Nature Knows sells its ready-to-eat branded produce in corn-based bags that are 100% compostable while also extending product shelf life by 50%.

Shoppers have talked a good game for a while now, saying they would be willing to pay more for sustainability. But, their grocery choices haven't matched those intentions. That may start to change, but consumers will still expect the Food Industry to do most of the work.



### Things to consider:

#### If you're a Manufacturer:

If consumers start bringing their own containers, what impact will this have on branding efforts? With the produce trend to “food in the nude”, how will you tell the origin story? How will producers and manufacturers be able to communicate their point of difference and story? What biodegradable/compostable packaging solutions should you invest in today to future-proof your product and start locking in future brand loyalty?

#### If you're a Retailer:

How can you show you're committed to supporting this change and still ensure product safety?

#### If you're in Food Service:

How do you satisfy the consumer's desire for increased portability with less plastic?



# Sober Me: Rethinking Alcohol for a New Generation of Drinkers

Generation Z and millennials are distancing themselves from their boozy parents. They're drinking less and embracing the new FOMA (fear of missing alcohol) outlined in Ruby Warrington's best-selling book on alcohol reduction as the next stage in the wellness revolution. Sobriety is becoming hip, especially in a time of legal cannabis. This doesn't mean the end of alcohol is nigh. But, it is translating into expensive artisanal cocktails at popular bars rather than total abstinence and AA meetings.

The term "mindful drinking", coming from a book by Rosamund Dean, means drink less and think about it more. Both books have created online movements to support and celebrate this new sobriety and way of drinking.

Also contributing to growth in this space is the legalization of cannabis, which is viewed by consumers as being healthier and lower calorie than alcohol.

Beverages traditionally in this space have been about "less" rather than "more"; less adult and less flavour, with alcohol stripped out rather

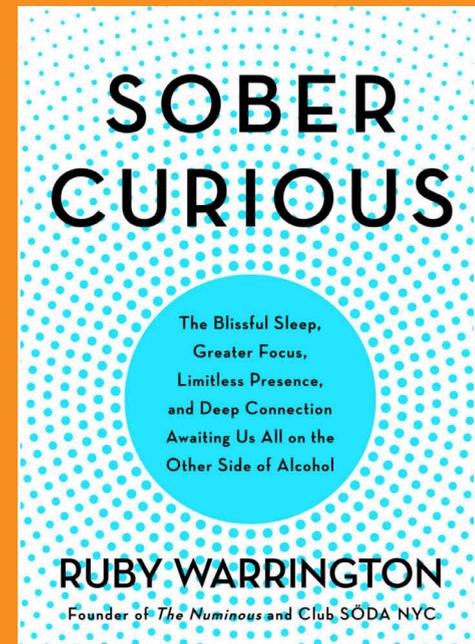
than a drink recreated from the ground up. Non-alcoholic beers are now marketed in the same way as mainstream beers. Even sodas are becoming more sophisticated and premium.

Based on the 2019 Restaurants Canada Chef Survey, there appears to be a bit of a disconnect between what consumers want and what Industry thinks they want. Industry thinks it means kombucha while consumers are actually looking for fancy lemonades, sparkling waters, and iced teas.

We're also seeing the consumer's desire for authentic international cuisine starting to extend to beverages. If your restaurant offers an international menu, what globally-inspired hot or cold drinks can you offer to expand the experience?

Some of the big players in beverage are reacting, blurring the lines between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, and setting themselves up for future cannabis-infused products.

Diageo, one of the world's largest alcohol distillers, recently purchased alcohol-free spirits company Seedlip. Coca-Cola has launched a line of cocktail-inspired beverages called "Bar None." Pepsi launched a limited edition non-alc sparkling rosé cola. And, Molson Coors Brewing Company recently announced it is dropping "Brewing" from its name as it adapts to these new opportunities, purchasing non-alcoholic beverage incubator L.A. Libations.



### Things to consider:

#### **If you're a Manufacturer:**

There are still unmet needs with this emerging no- or low-alcohol movement, including new, more adult flavours, more premium ingredients, packaging, and experiences. What products can you develop to allow these consumers to drink “better”?

#### **If you're a Retailer:**

The newer generations grew up with private label products and view them as high quality. They want to support smaller brands with a story. Can you add a story to your private label products?

#### **If you're in Food Service:**

How can you capitalize on your guests' desires for more adult non-alcoholic beverages on-premise? Is there now an opportunity to sell these beverages off-premise as well to capture lost revenue from on-premise alcohol sales?



# Know Me: AI and Hyperpersonalizing Foodservice

We're starting to see personal AI wellness consultants that analyze your DNA, your lifestyle, and your microbiome to develop a customized way of eating. That cell phone we all carry is increasingly becoming a portable lab with increasing functionality to measure our wellbeing. Sounds a lot like Dr. McCoy's tricorder, doesn't it?

Businesses can now develop products and content customized for consumers based on their needs and preferences. You can personalize recipe content or promotional offers online and develop customized meal-kits and protein bars.

Walmart purchased AI company Aspectiva in 2019, allowing it to offer personalized product recommendations based on shopper browsing behaviour. McDonald's purchased two AI companies in 2019 – Dynamic Yield and Apprento. It's now testing menu boards that can change based on weather patterns, as well as recognize licence plates, enabling

purchase suggestions based on the customer's past orders.

IBM's Watson is working with manufacturers to spot trends earlier, so lead times for innovative new food and beverage products are reduced by up to seven months. According to Nielsen data, 85% of new product launches fail within 18 to 24 months; AI should be a welcome addition to increase those poor odds of success. The Watson Trendspotter tool captures data from various sources like Google, Instagram, QSR menus and other social forums and applies a proprietary algorithm to spot trends ahead of the trend.

But, efforts to "Know Me" don't need to be high-tech. Some companies are successfully tapping into consumer nostalgia with limited-time releases, like the revival of New Coke to coincide with Netflix's 80s-based series, Stranger Things. Apparently, enough time had passed since one of the most epic marketing failures of all time for Coca-Cola to feel comfortable enough to bring it back.

## Things to consider:

### If you're a Manufacturer:

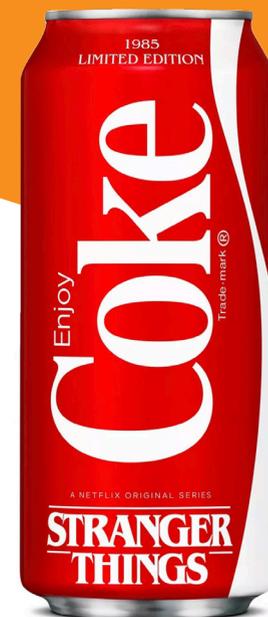
What limited-time offering could you bring back to tap into consumers' desire for their past?

### If you're a Retailer:

For consumers to share their personal data, they need to trust your privacy practices and feel there is a worthwhile exchange of value for doing so. How can you make shopper's lives better?

### If you're in Food Service:

How can you be transparent in the AI you're using, and how you're applying it to make your customer's lives better, so they don't feel creeped out by it?

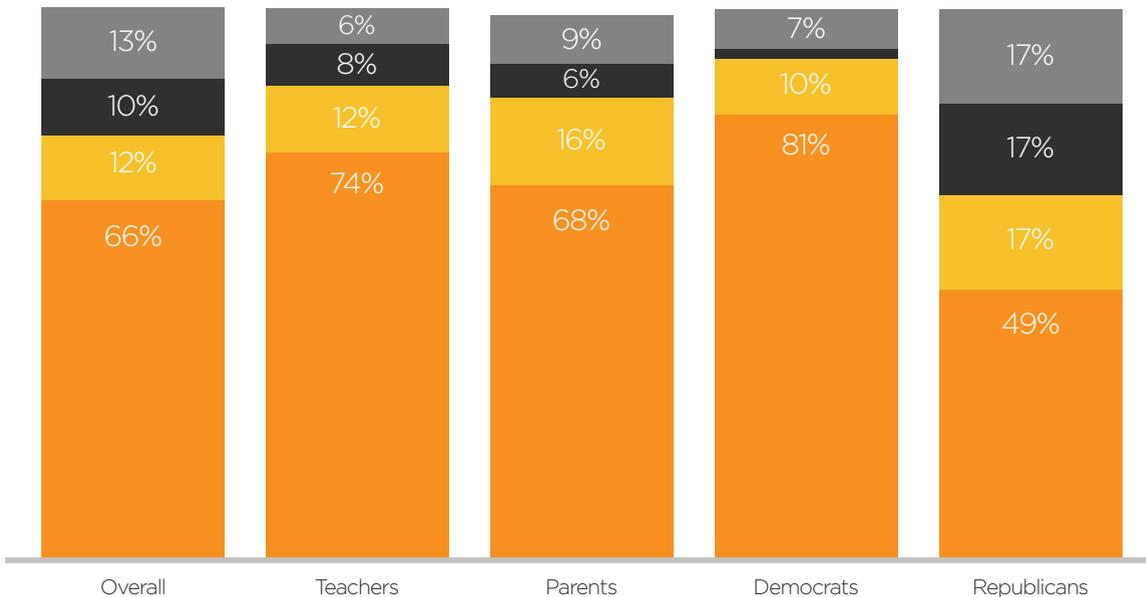
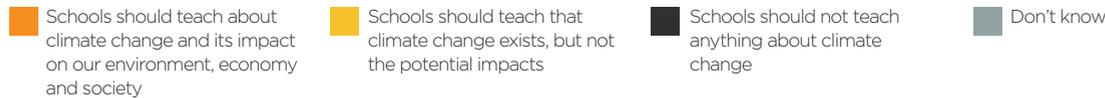


# Save Me: Environmental Impact-Based Eating

Climate change emerged as a top issue in the recent Canadian federal election. Will consumers start eating based on environmental or climate impact?

Italy has recently mandated schools to incorporate 33 hours of climate change-related curriculum annually. Students globally are marching against climate change during Fridays for Future protests. And, according to an NPR/Ipsos poll, more than 80% of U.S. parents support teaching climate change in school.

## Should Climate Change Be Taught In School?



**Source:** NPR/Ipsos polls of 1,007 U.S. adults conducted March 21-22 and 505 teachers conducted March 21-29. The credibility interval for the overall sample is 3.5 percentage points; parents, 7.3 percentage points, and teachers, 5.0 percentage points. Totals may not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

**Credit:** Alyson Hurt/NPR



Will this result in a “climatarian” diet where consumers start making food choices not based on food preferences or values but instead based on carbon footprint and lower environmental impact?



Blended protein is an old concept from which recent economic prosperity has taken us away. During WWII, there were Victory posters in Canada about protein rationing and boomers’ mothers mixed hamburger with oats to make the grocery money extend further.

In a case of “what’s old is new again”, blended or hybrid products (such as mixed plant and dairy, or plant and meat) are emerging as an easier way for consumers to moderate their carbon footprint without

giving up their preferred taste for animal products. Rather than doing flexitarian as an “either/or”, it can be done as an “and.”

In the U.S., Tyson Foods recently launched “Raised & Rooted” shortly after selling its share in Beyond Meat, a totally plant-based processed meat substitute. Perdue, a major chicken processing company, offers a Chicken Plus line of products combining chicken and vegetables.

### The environmental impact of food choices

	FOOD	IMPACT (GHG emissions per gram of protein)	COST (retail price per gram of protein)
LOW	Wheat	[Lightest bar]	\$
	Corn	[Light bar]	\$
	Beans, chickpeas, lentils	[Light bar]	\$
	Rice	[Light bar]	\$
	Fish	[Medium-light bar]	\$\$\$
	Soy	[Medium bar]	\$
	Nuts	[Medium-dark bar]	\$\$\$
	Eggs	[Dark bar]	\$\$
MEDIUM	Poultry	[Dark bar]	\$\$
	Pork	[Darkest bar]	\$\$
	Dairy (milk, cheese)	[Darkest bar]	\$\$
HIGH	Beef	[Darkest bar]	\$\$\$
	Lamb & Goat	[Darkest bar]	\$\$\$

Lighter shade shows emissions from agriculture production, darker shade shows emissions from land-use change.

Source: World Resources Institute (2018)

In Canada, Maple Leaf Foods, one of the largest meat processors in the country, has shifted its vision to focus on becoming “the most sustainable protein company on Earth.” (Note the exclusion of the word ‘meat’.) It has positioned itself for the future by creating a separate plant-based division and building a \$300 million facility in Indiana to support growth. And in November 2019, Maple Leaf announced that it is now a carbon-neutral company, using a combination of operational efficiencies and investments in green environmental project offsets.

### **Things to consider:**

#### **If you’re a Manufacturer:**

If you are a producer of a lower-impact product, how can you leverage and communicate this with consumers? If you don’t have one, should you offer a blended version or a carbon footprint offset to make consumers feel better about their choice?

#### **If you’re a Retailer:**

Rather than slot alternative products by category, could you offer lower-impact product alternatives beside traditional products rather than in a separate section?

#### **If you’re in Food Service:**

Can you offer “lower your footprint” options that combine the best of both worlds while being kinder to your profit margins?

## Science Me: Redefining “Real” Food in the High-Tech Era

We've all seen the dramatic growth in plant-based meat and dairy alternatives. This category is moving beyond niche and becoming part of the mainstream. While plant-based eating is here to stay, we expect more dialogue around what constitutes 'real food'. It seems 'plant-based' has become a very broad term, incorporating everything from vegetables to pulses to grains to seaweed and a Beyond Meat burger. Some are picked straight from the field, and others come out of a lab.

Processed foods have been on the decline as consumers moved to 'real' food. Many consumers moved to

veganism for health reasons but are now ending up eating a more processed diet. What tradeoffs are consumers willing to make for taste versus health? And what is the role of science in our food going forward? Will consumers who have traditionally rejected GMOs embrace lab-grown meat? Will they, in turn, embrace other technological advancements in our food system?

As agricultural products like bananas and coffee face supply challenges with climate change, new lab-grown alternatives are being introduced. For example, java brand Atomo has reverse-engineered the coffee bean to develop your morning cup of molecular joe without the beans.

Positivity towards food science also appears to differ based on generation, with Gen Z being the most accepting. 71% of Gen Z respondents were comfortable with

tech-assisted food, compared with 56% of Gen X and 58% of Boomers.

(Source: U.S. Ketchum 2019 Food Tech Consumer Perception Study)

There is also growing research on the adverse effects of Ultra-Processed Foods (UPF). A UPF is created when ingredients are pulled apart and reconstituted. Two studies recently published in the British Journal of Medicine link UPFs with higher cardiovascular disease and death. A new theory of obesity claims that eating UPFs changes the brain's circuitry, making us crave more and more calories.

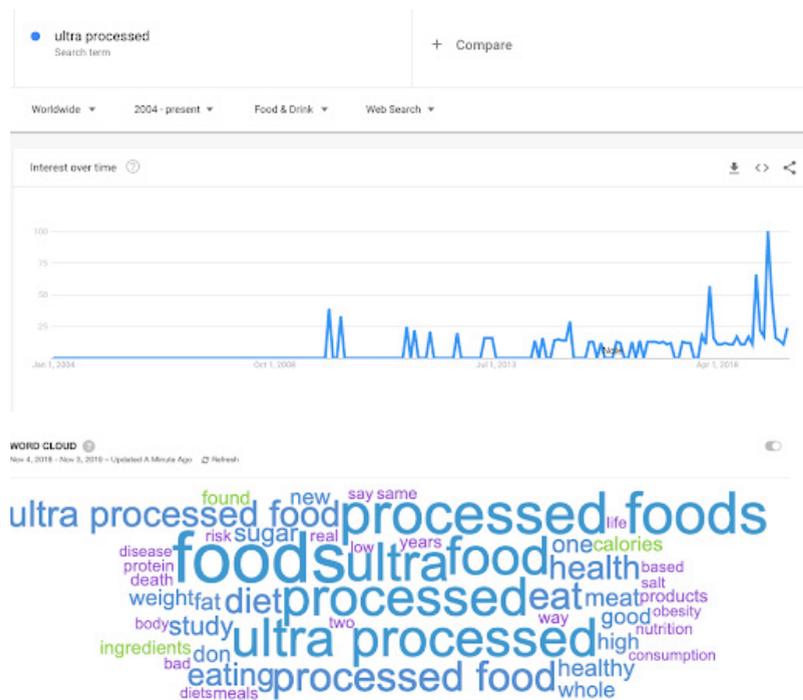
(Source: Scientific America; Kevin Hall National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Regulators in France (the High Council of Public Health) have recommended consumers reduce consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods and are also looking at potential classification of labelling of UPFs.

Articles questioning the presumed “Better for You” qualities of engineered proteins are starting to surface in local media.



While some QSRs have embraced these plant-based meat alternatives, others, like Chipotle, have rejected them in favour of organic tofu to support their brand purpose of “real food made with real ingredients.”



### Things to consider:

#### If you're a Manufacturer:

Will consumers switching to Beyond Meat-type products for health still feel good about their choice with the UPF discussion increasing? Is there a growing role for whole foods? Blended products?

#### If you're a Retailer:

Can your HMR section offer ready meals featuring whole foods?

#### If you're in Food Service:

Chipotle's CEO Brian Niccol claims, “Plant-based foods that look and taste like meat” will not be a long-term solution and will not be offered in his restaurants. Mexican food restaurants already have whole food protein options like black beans as part of their cuisine. What types of whole food fit your menu?



## Entertain Me: Evolving Grocery Shopping from Chore to Experience

While meal ordering has moved online, grocery has been slower to go digital. Grocery stores will still exist in the future, but they will be increasingly reconfigured for entertainment rather than necessity. Shoppers will go to physical stores for inspiration rather than to replenish basic household staples. Ontario grocery chain Farm Boy operates smaller-format stores that don't carry consumer staples, like paper towels, recognizing that these types of categories are the ones to migrate to online purchasing. They position themselves as your second grocery store.

Watch for even more square footage given over to sampling and food demonstrations. Want to see this trend taken to the max? Visit the newly opened Eataly in downtown Toronto. Or the newest Longos, in Toronto's trendy Liberty Village, where you can shop while having an alcoholic beverage as the entire 23,000 sq ft store is licenced, a first for a Canadian grocery store. It also features a dine-in Community Zone, acting as a meeting place for local space-challenged condo dwellers - think trendy sports bar with lots of local craft products. As buying food increasingly moves online, there will be a drive to enhance the experience in stores and restaurants beyond just the food and groceries purchased.

Largely because of rampant urbanization, and perhaps our increasingly digital economy, consumers are becoming further disconnected from their food sources. The most recent CCFI 2019

Public Trust Research found that 91% of consumers know little or nothing about modern farming practices. There's still a glimmer of hope, however, the bridge may be gapped: 60% of Canadians are interested in knowing more about how their food is grown.

Farmers and producers are more trusted as information sources by the public than grocery stores, restaurants, or food processors/manufacturers. There is an opportunity here to capitalize on supposedly divisive digital technology to make a connection. Could augmented reality play a role in bringing the farmer/producer to life at the point of purchase? Can a shopper connect to a VR environment that takes them to the provenance of the food they're considering? Imagine being transported to a lush coffee plantation in Costa Rica, to eat and drink with your eyes in advance of purchasing.



### Things to consider:

#### If you're a Manufacturer:

As retailers pull back on in-store product assortment to provide more shopper experiences, how do manufacturers keep their place? How can your product and story contribute to the shopper experience?

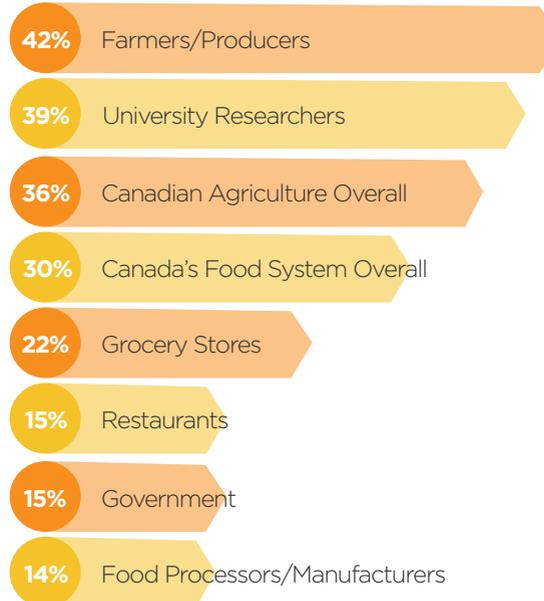
#### If you're a Retailer:

How can you increase your share of stomach and your basket size by making grocery shopping more entertaining and educational? How can you engage all of the shopper's senses?

#### If you're in Food Service:

How will restaurants offset at-home dining and get guests to come back to their physical location? How can they extend the experience beyond just the physical act of eating on-premise? Think from the time a reservation is made and after the meal to when they hopefully relive the experience positively in the digital world. How can you make it more memorable and hence, more 'sticky'? Can you help them relive the experience by sending them a digital photo rather than a poor selfie? How can you surprise and delight diners and turn them into fans?

### Who Canadians trust in Canada's food system:

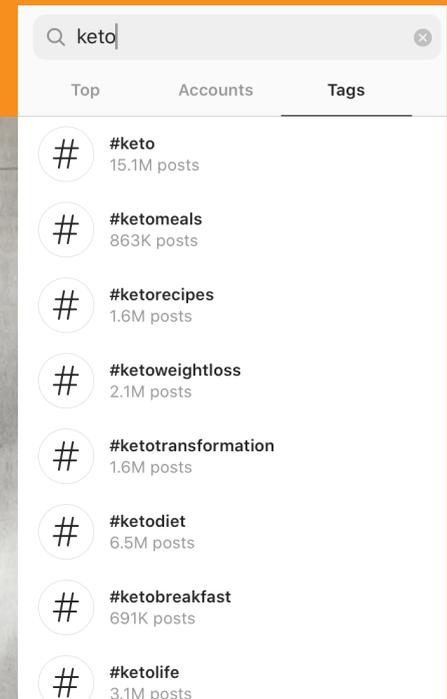


\*Food processors/manufacturers include agribusiness suppliers

Source: Canadian Centre For Food Integrity 2019 Public Trust Research

# Keto Me: The Evolution of Lifestyle Eating From No-Carb to Slow-Carb

In last year's Trend Report, we talked about the Shift to Selective Eating as a way of optimizing both physical and mental performance. The 'no-carb' keto diet has led the way with more and more new products entering the market. Interest in this way of eating hasn't lessened; six of the top fifteen cookbooks on the Canadian best-seller list are about the keto diet. Instagram has 20,000,000+ posts tagged 'keto' and related terms. And Google Trends data shows continued strength, with the expected spike at the start of the New Year's resolution season.



Google Trends Research - "Keto" in Canada over the last 5 years





Keto is starting to mainstream and could potentially move into being a lifestyle rather than a diet. Canadian online health food store Natura Market allows you to “shop your lifestyle”, featuring keto-friendly products, as well as other diets like Paleo, gluten-free, and Whole30.

Another recent Dalhousie University poll found that 26% of Canadians had either adopted, tried, or considered trying keto in the past 18 months. That’s a sizable group of consumers. However, it is a very difficult regime to follow and stick with long-term in light of the food exclusions and intermittent fasting. Dietitians are not big fans, as a few healthy food groups are excluded in favour of high fat and protein. However, the diet does seem to get quick weight-loss results.

While keto is potentially here to stay, could “no-carb” keto be replaced with friendlier “SLOW-carb” products? Will consumers dip in and out of this way of eating by incorporating “keto-friendly” products into their weekly shop? At the recent CHFA Show in Toronto, there were new products that were calling out their GI (glycemic index) numbers on the front of the packaging.

For those that don’t know, the glycemic index is a scale ranging from 0 to 100, with 100 being pure glucose, to represent the relative rise in blood glucose level two hours after consuming a particular food. Slow-carb products could offer a more consumer-friendly way to incorporate some of the benefits of a strict keto diet.

### Things to consider:

#### **If you’re a Manufacturer:**

Do you already have a product that is considered keto or slow carb-friendly that you should be calling out for consumers? What other products could you be developing as part of your innovation pipeline to leverage this trend?

#### **If you’re a Retailer:**

Could keto be the next gluten-free? Should you have a dedicated area for keto-friendly products?

#### **If you’re in Food Service:**

Can you offer diners a keto-friendly version of your most popular dishes?



## Nourish Me: Serving Local Food in Public Institutions

As consumers continue to fill their shopping baskets with more locally-sourced foods, the expectation for eating local is growing in restaurants, on university campuses, and now in hospitals and long-term care homes.

Nine long-term care facilities in the Durham and Halton Regions and the City of Hamilton challenged themselves to increase local food procurement, by spending their food dollars closer to home and sourcing fresher products. Led by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) – an organization of regional municipalities

and agri-food organizations in Ontario – the long-term care homes set a goal to increase local food procurement by 5% over two-and-a-half years. Today, nearly a quarter of the food served is locally sourced, at no additional cost. The benefits are clear: surveys reveal featuring local food on the menu improved the perception of food quality for both residents of long-term care facilities and for their families.

The project, dubbed Serving Up Local, began by evaluating each facility's food purchases to identify where food items could easily shift to a local source, like fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables or pork. Tours and workshops were organized for staff to learn about where local food

is sourced, how to prepare it in their own long-term care facilities, and discuss how local food can meet the nutritional needs of residents. New local food items were added to the meals and highlighted on menus. Serving staff were also trained to highlight the new food options and engage residents in mealtime conversations about the food they enjoyed.

By the numbers, participating institutions reported a 602% increase in Ontario pork servings, a 124% increase in fresh seasonal produce, and provincially-sourced meal entrees saw a 494% increase. Food directors and staff were particularly happy that sourcing local food did not impact their food budgets negatively.



Dieticians of Canada LTC Action Group reports that vegetables, fresh fruit, and high-quality protein tend to be the first things cut from menus when long-term care facility budgets are squeezed. This reality makes it all the more important for the facilities to work closely with foodservice providers in the transition to source local.

Ontario's Broader Public Sector Institutions spend an estimated \$745 million annually on food and beverage. Imagine what the economic and social impact could be if those hospitals, schools and long-term care facilities spent that budget on locally-sourced food, grown and raised by Ontario farmers. The Serving Up Local project proved that offering local fare in long-term care facilities extends the benefits of local food even further.

### **Things to consider:**

#### **If you're a Producer/Farmer:**

How can you connect with food distributors serving broader public sector facilities like long-term care homes?

#### **If you're a Retailer or Distributor:**

Are you adding local food items to your shelves or sell sheet? How can you replace current food items with local options to meet the needs of your customers?

#### **If you're in Food Service:**

Are you sourcing local food and showcasing the value in your public institution locations?

## Near Me: Farming Gets Closer to the Consumer

There's a growing trend to find innovative ways to bring local food down to a very local level and right to where the consuming public is. We know consumers are increasingly removed from their rural roots, and some innovative entrepreneurs are looking for new ways to be involved in producing food, without a traditional rural farm.

Urban "farms" are popping up across the country. It's not what our ancestors could have envisioned, but it's another way

to keep farming connected to the customer. And the models for how these urban farms function are as diverse as the produce they grow.

In suburban Vancouver, two young agrarians are farming front and back yards of private homes to grow local food. City Beet Farm is a thriving example of new community-supported agriculture (CSA). Co-owners Maddy Clerk and Elana Evans are first-generation farmers without land. But, that didn't stop the two from producing a diverse range of about 30 different vegetables plus fresh cut flowers for urban customers, through a unique lending arrangement.

Their "farmland" is scattered across 15 urban properties in Vancouver neighbourhoods – totalling about a half-acre of land – where they trade the use of yards for a share of the local goodness grown there. The rest of their harvest is sold through a veggie box subscription (82 CSA members in 2019) and local pop-up markets. "We see ourselves as stewards of the land," says Maddy. "Our practices prioritize the health of the soil and the community – the land does the work of growing the food, and we try to ensure it has the ideal conditions to do so." For these two farmers, the CSA is their priority for marketing their products, but they are also finding a growing demand for pop-up style markets.



In downtown Toronto, it can be tough to source local food direct from farmers. But that's changing one market at a time with Fresh City Farms – delivering farm-fresh, local produce and ready-to-eat meals. Much of their organic produce is grown on a six-acre farm located within the city limits, and the addition of kitchen and food processing equipment expanded their packing and production facility. Fresh City Farms feeds local consumers with local food that's boosting the local economy and the agriculture sector. Their model is part of a bigger trend to home delivery of local, seasonal produce and meal kits.

On a simpler, smaller scale, a new startup in Guelph has one urban farmer feeding customers in her neighbourhood with fresh, local

produce. Sara Bullard of Lady Sara's Bounty uses a combination of backyard space and community gardens to fuel her growing urban farm business. "I can't afford to buy land so I am focused on producing as much food as I can on as little land as possible," says Sara. She's passionate about helping people eat healthier and minimizing packaging needed in the delivery of her urban farm-fresh vegetables.

Sara's customers are currently all within a 10-block radius in her neighbourhood, so she delivers right to the customer's door. And she has big plans for expansion, hoping to triple her land-base for 2020 with more community garden space. She's also hoping to extend her season by offering healthy, local ready-made meals.

### **Things to consider:**

#### **If you're a Retailer:**

Can you find ways to connect with local farmers – who just might be operating in the city – to source seasonal, local produce?

#### **If you're in Food Service:**

Are there unexplored options available to you for local produce in addition to farmers' markets? Could you better meet your customers' expectations or expand your market by highlighting ingredients sourced from your neighbourhood?



## Teach Me: Consumers Want to Know More About Modern Farming Practices

Farmers are progressive, huge technology users, and avid supporters of research that in turn supports modern farming practices. But, consumers are overwhelmingly out of touch with farmers' use of such practices, creating a huge knowledge gap that refuses to budge.

Back in 2012, more than 90% of respondents to a consumer survey said they knew little, very little, or nothing about Canadian farming practices. A similar survey in 2016 by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI), showed the same thing. In 2019, the Centre repeated the survey but changed the wording slightly to ask how much respondents know about farmers' use of modern technology. Again, more than

90% of respondents said they knew little, very little or nothing.

Modern agriculture is registering with very few people. And it's pretty hard for farmers to build trust with a public that doesn't understand what it does, or worse, fears what it doesn't know. CCFI says consumers trust farmers now because they believe farmers share their values. But, if they don't know how farmers farm, their understanding can easily be influenced by those who do not support technology.

However, there's a silver lining to this cloud: as we discussed earlier, a majority of survey respondents said they wanted to learn more about modern agriculture.

They aren't repelled by it; rather, they just don't understand it.

Intrinsically, consumers feel good about the food system: the 2019 CCFI research shows that the percentage of Canadians who feel the food system is on the right track outnumbers those who feel it's headed in the wrong direction. It's not as big of a number as it should be – just 35%. But comparable studies in the U.S. showed only 26% of consumers there feel the food system is headed in the right direction. Trust is higher in Canada, and that's something farmers can leverage.

New challenges to trust are emerging all the time. For example, thanks to advances in research, more cases of food fraud are being reported. That's good for our health but leads to increased consumer anxiety, especially when these stories hit the media. The CCFI says more than 90% of Canadian consumers have moderate to strong concerns relating to food fraud, the practice of mislabelling, adulterating, or counterfeiting food products. Consumers are starting to look more closely at food labels and ask questions about what certain food labels mean.

The knowledge gap between farms and consumers is well documented. It's a trend that will not fix itself. Now's the time to take action while consumers say they are still open-minded and willing to learn about modern farming practices. If they turn away, it will be hard to win them back.

### Things to consider:

#### **If you're a Producer/Farmer:**

Can you build on the inherent trust Canadians have in you and your industry? Are you effectively using the communication tools at your disposal, like your commodity organizations or social media, to help consumers learn about you and what you do?

#### **If you're a Retailer or Distributor:**

Are you working the middle ground between modern farmers and consumers – not just with pictures of smiling farmers, but rather with helpful information about how they safely and efficiently grow crops and raise animals?



The Nourish Network is North America's only field to fork marketing agency. We work with clients across the entire food ecosystem. Our expertise starts on the farmer's field, extends through production/manufacturing, includes processing and retail, and then finally ends with the consumer.

The Nourish Network has offices across North America.

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