Instacart Releases First “New Year, New Cart” 2021 Grocery Trends Report Forecasting The Food Trends & Grocery Shopping Habits For The Year Ahead

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Findings reflect five key shifts in consumer shopping behavior and food attitudes.

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 10, 2020 /PRNewswire/ — December 10, 2020 — Instacart, the leading online grocery platform in North America, today released its first “New Year, New Cart” 2021 Grocery Trends Report forecasting the at-home food trends and grocery shopping habits for the year ahead. Combining an in-depth look at Instacart purchase data with a new Instacart survey of 2,050 U.S. adults conducted by The Harris Poll, Instacart’s “New Year, New Cart” 2021 report reflects five key shifts in shopping behavior, buying preferences, and food attitudes after nearly a year of COVID-19 pandemic living and cultural shifts.

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“The events of 2020 have forever changed how Americans shop for groceries and household goods,” said Laurentia Romaniuk, Instacart’s Trends Expert and Senior Product Manager. “After months of binge baking, drinking more and indulging in quarantine comfort foods, our findings show that the pendulum is swinging the other way as online consumers set their sights on a new year full of bolder flavors, lower-alcohol cocktails and resolution-friendly Keto snacks. We’re also witnessing an increase in brand mindfulness, as the cultural shifts of 2020 make their way into consumer purchasing decisions in the grocery aisles.”

According to Instacart’s new Harris Poll survey, nearly half of all Americans (47%) say they still like to cook most, if not all of their meals, from home. As the pandemic continues into 2021, Instacart expects at-home cooking to continue reigning supreme, with five key shifts in shopping behavior:

SPICING UP THE PANTRY

When asked about kitchen routines, more than a third of Americans (34%) say they rarely plan meals and try to make the most of their meals from what is in the fridge or pantry, rather than relying on elaborate meal prepping and planning.

Early data reveals that in 2021, consumers might be spicing up their standard pantry meals. More than one in five Americans (21%) say they have been more adventurous with home cooking by introducing exotic spices and flavors into their cooking this year, which is also supported by Instacart sales data.

These flavorful spices and condiments have seen big gains in year-over-year sales:

- Piri Piri Sauce – up 725%
- Lao Gan Ma (chili crisp) – up 227%
- Za’atar – up 39%
- Turmeric – up 18%
- Gojuchang – up 17%.

“2021 is shaping up to be a flavorful year. Consumers are looking for quick and easy ways to spice up the meals they’ve been making at home, and we’re seeing a lot of interest in handcrafted shelf-stable sauces and spice blends on the Instacart marketplace,” said Romaniuk.

Additionally, Instacart data reveals that Americans are reaching for two cult favorite pantry items to boost the taste and texture of their meals: anchovies and fancy, foodie-approved mayo:

- Anchovies sales are up 85% year-over-year.
- Kewpie brand mayo, the extra-creamy mayonnaise, saw a 153% increase in year-over-year sales.
- New York and San Francisco bought the most anchovies this year, while Seattle and Los Angeles purchased the most Kewpie mayo.

THE UNITED STATES OF KETOSIS

The high-fat and low-carb Keto diet continues to be top of mind for many consumers. According to Instacart’s survey, Keto appears to be one of America’s favorite diets — with 28% of those who have tried a diet this year saying they opted for Keto. Instacart sales trends show a growing interest in the diet.

- Within the Instacart marketplace, Instacart saw a 72% increase in year-over-year sales of products with “Keto” in their name.
- Consumers in the Western U.S. ordered the most Keto products this year, with Californians and Texans stacking the list: *1) Austin, 2) San Francisco, 3) San Diego, 4) Sacramento, 5) Houston 6) Los Angeles, 7) San Antonio, 8) Denver, 9) Chicago, and 10) Tampa.*

According to the survey, 82% of Americans who tried a new diet this year claimed they’re sticking to it — or at least trying to stick to it. Marketplace sales suggest that Keto devotees are eagerly snapping up sweet Keto treats. Here are the most popular Keto products available on Instacart that are expected to fly off the shelves in 2021:

1. KetoPint Salt and Caramel Keto Bar
2. Think! Keto Protein Bar – Chocolate Peanut Butter Pie flavored
3. Birch Benders Keto Pancake and Waffle Mix
4. Sundae Shoppe Keto Peanut Butter Fudge Ice Cream
5. Sundae Shoppe Keto Cookie Dough Ice Cream
6. Lenny and Larry's Keto Gluten Free Chocolate Chip Cookie
7. Sundae Shoppe Keto Mint Chip Ice Cream
8. Epic Chicken Sriracha Protein Bar
9. Ratio Keto Friendly Strawberry Dairy Snack
10. Ratio Keto Friendly Vanilla Dairy Snack

(LESS) GUILTY COCKTAILS

Consumers are reaching for more alcohol-free spirits, low-calorie alcoholic beverages, and boozy versions of popular healthy beverages ahead of 2021:

- Hard kombucha is up 320% in searches across the Instacart marketplace.
- Instacart marketplace data reveals that hard kombucha is largely a West Coast drink. The top five cities buying the most hard kombucha include Seattle, San Diego, Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

White Claw Hard Seltzer has historically topped Instacart's search charts and quickly became one of the most commonly searched brands. However, searches in the hard seltzer category have been strong across the board:

- Searches for brands across the hard seltzer category were up 519% from last year.
- Sales for hard seltzers are strong in the Midwest and in the Eastern U.S., spiking in Orlando, Chicago, St. Louis, Tampa, and Washington, D.C.

With the wide range of alcohol-free spirits coming to market, Instacart expects to see more guiltless mixers added to 2021 online orders.

"Homemade craft cocktails have been popular this year with the work-from-home crowd. We've seen sales for trendy alcohol-free spirits boom, increasing by 195% year-over-year. Perhaps consumers are looking to turn over a new leaf in 2021 with tasty, guilt-free libations," said Romaniuk.

SHOPPING WITH A PURPOSE

Being selective about the stores and brands customers engage with seemed to be top-of-mind for many this year:

- In 2020 alone, Instacart welcomed more than 125 new small and medium-sized grocers to the marketplace. These range from local and regional grocers like Vallarta Supermarkets (Los Angeles, CA), Northgate Market (Southern California), and Earth Fare (Asheville, NC); specialty grocers like Bristol Farms (Southern CA), Caputo's Fresh Markets (Chicago), and 99 Ranch Market (West Coast, East Coast, Texas); and revered cult favorites like Mustard Seed Market (Akron, OH).
- According to Instacart's survey, nearly a quarter of Americans (23%) have researched brands that are locally run or owned this year.
- Interest in women- and BIPOC-owned brands is evident with more than one in ten Americans (14%) reporting they've researched brands run or owned by women and the same amount (14%) indicating that they've researched BIPOC-run or owned brands in 2020.

While there is still a lot more room to grow, Instacart search data suggests that this trend is steadily increasing. Instacart took a look at high-performing brands on the marketplace that have experienced large upswings in search this year to compile this list of women- and BIPOC-owned brands to watch for in 2021:

- Partake Foods – Allergen-free cookies
- Pipcorn – Heirloom corn snacks
- Pitmaster LTs – Kansas City-style BBQ products
- Glory Foods – Seasoned vegetables
- Uncle Nearest – Premium whiskey

Partake Foods — the delectable vegan, gluten-free and top 8 allergen-free cookie brand — was one of the top-performing women- and BIPOC-owned brands on the platform, experiencing a 1,028% year-over-year increase in searches.

"Partake creates super delicious snacks that are also gluten-free, vegan and allergy-friendly, so families and friends can share with confidence," said Partake CEO Denise Woodard. "What started as selling cookies from my car has blossomed over the last three years, and we're only getting started. Families across the United States can now find Partake's school-safe cookies on Instacart, and we're excited to feed even more families in 2021."

WEEKDAY WARRIORS – SHOPPING ON THE CLOCK IS ON THE RISE

With more people than ever working on flexible schedules, Instacart order data hints that the "Sunday Shop" may soon turn into the "Monday Mission" or the "Tuesday Trip." This year, Instacart observed a noticeable shift in consumer shopping schedules:

- Almost a quarter (22%) of Americans say they have shifted from weekend to weekday shopping runs this year.
- Instacart data reveals that while weekends still remain the most popular days for the online ‘grocery run,’ orders in 2020 are more evenly distributed throughout the week. All in all, the share of orders placed on weekdays grew by 8% platform-wide this year.
- Instacart orders placed during working hours (9 am to 5 pm) have increased this year by 32% — a change likely related to social distancing guidelines and large-scale shifts towards working from home.

Methodology

Instacart analyzed anonymized, aggregated search and purchase activity across our marketplace to understand what products and categories are trending. For year-over-year measurements, Instacart compared searches and sales from January 1, 2019 – November 1, 2019 to activity from January 1, 2020 – November 1, 2020. All year-over-year data is normalized to account for user growth.

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Instacart from November 5-9, 2020 among 2,050 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact press@instacart.com.

About Instacart

Instacart is the leading online grocery platform in North America. Instacart shoppers offer same-day delivery and pickup services to bring fresh groceries and everyday essentials to busy people and families across the U.S. and Canada. Instacart has partnered with more than 500 beloved national, regional and local retailers, including unique brand names, to deliver from nearly 40,000 stores across more than 5,500 cities in North America. Instacart’s delivery service is available to 85% of U.S. households and 70% of Canadian households. The company’s cutting-edge enterprise technology also powers the ecommerce platforms of some of the world’s biggest retail players, supporting their white-label websites, applications and delivery solutions. Instacart offers an Instacart Express membership for unlimited free delivery on orders over $35. For more information, visit www.instacart.com. For anyone interested in becoming an Instacart shopper, visit https://shoppers.instacart.com/.

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