

Flavors to Watch

FONA's Flavor Radar tracks flavor trends from novel to mainstream

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In the flavor industry, assertions about trends can sometimes seem heavy on the intangibles and light on data. To fill the gap between theory and fact, FONA International developed the Flavor Radar, a flavor mapping methodology that trends flavors from a novel idea to an everyday pantry staple. FONA's Flavor Radar mixes current data points from industry-renowned databases and in-depth analysis on how a flavor trend is affecting the food industry. Combining a comprehensive set of indicators—including restaurant menus, new product introductions and print media data—with analysis, enables the reduction of speculation from the study of flavor trends. The Flavor Radar encompasses four categories: novel, up-and-coming, mainstream and everyday. These different categories are driven by a combination of factors, including a flavor's appearance on restaurant menus from fine dining to quick service, new product introductions from stage one (premium product) to stage three (national brand), and print media publications that appeal to a range of consumers from the gastronomic consummate to the casual gourmand. Presented in this article is just a sampling of some of the flavors that have been mapped on the Flavor Radar.

Satsuma

The most popular variety of the mandarin orange in Japan, the satsuma (unshu mikan), was first introduced to the United States in 1878. Grown commercially in southern Louisiana and southern Texas as well as Florida, the satsuma fruit

turns bright orange as it ripens in late fall. With an intoxicating aromatic peel, the satsuma is almost seedless, and its flavor is juicy, very sweet and low in acid. Satsuma has recently appeared on fine dining menus mainly in dessert form. Recent features include:

- Warm chocolate crepes with pistachio brittle and candied satsuma sherbet; Bayona Restaurant, Q4 2007, Louisiana



The Body Shop's new Satsuma Scented Candle

- Frozen honey mousse with satsuma mandarin and Jurançon granite; Farallon, Q4 2007, San Francisco

While commonplace in Japanese drinks and confections, satsuma is much more obscure in the US new product landscape. Though not featured in a food or beverage, satsuma was recently spotted at The Body Shop in a scented candle. Satsuma is mapped as novel on the Flavor Radar.

Feijoa

Native to extreme southern Brazil, northern Argentina, western Paraguay and Uruguay, feijoa is now commercially grown in California and New Zealand. The feijoa is nicknamed "pineapple guava" because its taste so closely resembles that fruit combination, often with overtones of wintergreen or spearmint. The fruit emits a strong long-lasting perfume, even before it is fully ripe. The flesh and pulp (with seeds) are eaten cooked in puddings, pastry fillings, fruit sponge cakes, pies or tarts and raw as dessert or in salads.

A recent US introduction that features a natural feijoa flavor on the ingredient statement, but makes no mention of it in the product's flavor name, was Stash Premium Açai Berry Herbal Loose Tea. It is a fruity tea blend that combines tart hibiscus with natural açai berry flavor. Australia, New Zealand and Russia had the most feijoa product introductions in the past couple of years, featured in everything from yogurt to cereal to energy drinks. Feijoa is mapped as novel on the Flavor Radar.



The feijoa is nicknamed "pineapple guava" because its taste so closely resembles that fruit combination.

Yangmei (Chinese Bayberry, Yumberry)

Move over pomegranate, there's a new superfruit in town! The yangmei, known for its high antioxidant content, is mainly cultivated in the subtropical region of southeast China. Due to its delicate nature and short season (June to July), the yangmei is mainly found in juice form in the United States. It has a sweet yet tart taste that is quite refreshing. While yangmei is not yet appearing on any

restaurant menus, it has been making a fast appearance in new product introductions under the name yumberry in the past six months. Recent introductions include:

- Bear Naked Native Yumberry Goji Currant all-natural, whole grain granola, April 2008
- Frützzo Yumberry & Cherry Juice, April 2008
- Bombilla & Gourd Super Fruits drink in four varieties: Yumberry Lime, Pomegranate Lemonade, Açai Blueberry, Orange Mango



Frützzo's Yumberry & Cherry Juice



Bear Naked's Native Yumberry Goji Currant all-natural whole grain granola

Yumberry is mapped as novel on the Flavor Radar but based on the buzz surrounding this little fruit, expect it to reach up-and-coming by the year's end.

Mangosteen

Widely cultivated in Southeast Asia, mangosteens are well-known for their sweet and tangy taste, which is uniquely crisp, clean and refreshing. The fruit is used in traditional medicine to treat skin infections and wounds. It contains xanthenes, which possess antioxidant properties thought to aid in maintaining intestinal health and strengthening the immune system. It's no surprise that Smoothie King features mangosteen on its menu given its associated health benefits, exotic name and great taste. Mangosteen has also seen increased activity in new product introductions in beverage form. Recent introductions include:

- Old Orchard Fruit Sense Cardio flavored functional water in Pomegranate BlueberryMangosteen with co-enzyme Q10 for heart health
- Bossa Nova Superfruit Juices: Mangosteen with Passion Fruit; Mangosteen with Dragon Fruit
- Naked Juice Bare Breeze in Peach Mangosteen Bliss, which is made with juicy peaches, exotic mangosteen, apples, lemon and white grapes

Mangosteen is mapped as up-and-coming on the Flavor Radar.

Prickly Pear

The prickly pear cactus is found in all the deserts of the American Southwest and in Mexico. The pulp of the prickly pear fruit ranges in color from brilliant red to, occasionally, a yellowish green and tastes like a watered-down watermelon. Prickly pear has appeared on fine, casual and family dining menus typically in a beverage, dessert or entrée. Recent menu features include:

- Prickly pear tuna margarita; Aldaco's Mexican Cuisine, Q1 2008
- Tohono O'Odham roasted squash soup with ginger, cinnamon, caramelized pineapple and prickly pear crema; Janos Restaurant, Q4 2007



Naked Juice Bare Breeze in Peach Mangosteen Bliss

- Prickly pear lemonade; Chaya, Q4 2007

In addition to restaurant menu activity, prickly pear has also been appearing in new product introductions, such as:

- Syzmo Organic Energy Drink in prickly pear, Nov. 2007 (relaunch)
- Fillmore Street Brewery, The Purple Label Pimp Juice Energy Drink in prickly pear and pomegranate flavor, Sept. 2007

Prickly pear is mapped as mainstream on the Flavor Radar.



Prickly pear fruit has a watered-down watermelon taste.

Lychee is mapped as mainstream on the Flavor Radar. The Flavor Radar provides a complete look at flavor trends by balancing the non-tangible with the tangible in combination with analysis. From satsuma to lychee, the Flavor Radar provides insight into flavor solutions that span everything from novel to everyday.

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Resources

1. New Product Source: Mintel's GNPD, www.gnpd.com
2. Menu Data Source: Mintel's MenuInsights, www.menuinsights.com

To purchase a copy of this article or others, visit www.PerfumerFlavorist.com/articles. 

Lychee

A cherished fruit of China, lychee's juicy and sweet flavor has hints of rose and is delicately aromatic. A rough and bright red shell reveals a juicy white flesh that surrounds a single seed. The lychee is native to



Rachel's Refresh Yogurt in pink grapefruit lychee flavor

Southeast Asia, but is now grown in the subtropical regions of California, Hawaii and Florida. Lychee is a popular flavor for many cocktails featured at fine dining restaurants. Recent features include:

- Lychee slush; Lollicup Coffee and Tea, Q1 2008
- Lychee spritz; Shiok, Q1 2008
- Pear Martini with Absolut pear vodka, fresh lemon-lime juice and lychee juice; Chaya, Q4 2007

In addition to restaurant menu activity, lychee has also been appearing in new product introductions, such as:

- Alize Rose French Vodka, a blend of natural passion fruit, French vodka, lychee, strawberries and rose essence, Oct. 2007
- Rachel's Refresh Yogurt in pink grapefruit lychee flavor, Feb. 2008
- Hansen's Natural Lychee Black Tea, April 2007