FOOD PAIRINGS: AN ORCHESTRA OF TASTE

CAROLINE WITHERS
Food pairing isn’t a new trend...

We’ve been pairing specific foods and drinks to be tasted together for years! With some combinations standing the test of time (and trends) better than others.
Match the ‘weight’
Complementary flavour intensities and textures will enhance the flavours they have in common.

Cleansing the palate
Apply the rules of palate cleansers to food pairings. Acid, tannins and carbonation can all cut through fatty mouthfeel, cleansing the mouth and palate in the process.

Opposites attract
Contrasting flavours and textures can provide a wider range of notes & sensations to a product/meal. Heat can be balanced with cool, sweetness paired with salt, sour and even bitter to give complexity and session-ability.

Sweet with heat
Sweetness can be a good match to spicy dishes and ingredients as the sugar helps ‘cool’ the spice and creates a balance.

Sensory and flavour science have helped refine the food pairing process, with perceptual rules helping to increase pairing success.
Floral, herbal, spices & tea - many pairings established in the East (green cardamom, saffron, jasmine, oolong, green tea, goji berries, rose) this trend is moving westward.

In China, food pairing is Yin (heavy, fried or hot foods) versus Yang (light, cool or low calorie) and the need exists to balance this in every eating experience.

Charred & burnt flavours move across from savoury, as with hot and salty flavours finding a natural marriage with sweet.

Use of vegetables in a variety of contexts ‘matching the weight’ of traditional ingredients.

South America retain an aversion to floral, herbs and teas despite the trend growing in the rest of the West.

In the West, trends follow the concept of balancing flavours - top (acidity), middle (sweet and salty) and bottom notes (umami, bitter, earthy).
What are we pairing now?

As we become more adventurous with increasing international influences, the potential combinations are stretching far beyond wine and cheese and high-end restaurants.
Product developers and retailers are also learning the strength of food pairing with innovative product flavours and retailer promotions highlighting the experiential value of food pairings.
What’s next?

The best is yet to come

Increasing international influences, consumers demanding more sensory driven experiences; food pairings still can go further with more complexity involved than ever before.
It’s time to play!
With sensory and flavour rules in hand, it’s time for product developers and retailers to be adventurous and stretch consumers expectations.
Food pairings are just the start

As consumers strive for more complexity and innovative product combinations, pairings is just the first stage. Developing consumer driven food trios, quartets and even full orchestras can help future proof product development.