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# Using natural ingredients to create *authentic, fresh flavors*

Some consumers demand processed items with the attributes of those freshly made

The word natural remains a powerful force in food and beverage product development. While the term, when used on front-of-pack labels, has created legal complications for some manufacturers, creating the perception that the ingredients in a formulation are natural remains a goal.

Earlier this summer, Mintel, Chicago, released its 2018 summer food and drink trends report. One trend focused on flavored sparkling water and how some consumers are shifting beverage consumption to products containing less sugar and fewer “artificial” ingredients.

Beverage manufacturers are offering flavored sparkling waters, “bringing naturalness and flavor to the soft drink market and presenting alternatives to sugar and artificial ingredients,” Mintel said. Consumers seem to be receptive to the swap, as 37% of Americans ages 25 to 34 have had flavored sparkling water in the last three months, according to Mintel data.

A prominent example is LaCroix,

which makes flavored sparkling water using natural essential oils from fruit. The Coca-Cola Co.’s Dasani brand, PepsiCo, Inc.’s Aquafina brand and Zevia also have recently entered the flavored sparkling water market.

“The desire for unsweetened

beverage options, along with consumer demand for more exotic flavors and unusual ingredients, is driving a trend toward more and more creative sparkling waters,” said Jenny Zegler, associate director of food and drink for Mintel, when the report was released in June. “Recently, innovation in this space has reached new heights. This summer expect to see less lemonade and more truly original mineral waters with natural flavors far beyond lemon or cucumber.”

The flavored water category has been bubbling for some time. Value-added water was the second fastest growing beverage category in terms of volume in 2017, according to the Beverage Marketing Corp., New York. Volume sales rose 11.7% in 2017 compared to 2016. The only beverage category to outpace value-added water in terms of volume growth during the period was ready-to-drink coffee.

Bottled water surpassed carbonated soft drinks to become the No. 1 beverage by volume in 2016 and solidified its

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PEPSICO, INC., EVERFRESH BEVERAGES, INC., AND COCA-COLA CO.

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leadership in 2017 with “notably vigorous growth,” according to the B.M.C.

“The category’s defining qualities — healthful, natural, calorie-free and convenient — increasingly appeal to U.S. consumers,” the B.M.C. said. “The introduction of flavored waters is one way manufacturers are adding value and expanding their position in the market.”

Consumer desire for naturally flavored products is an emerging trend and one that may have staying power, said Paul Manning, chairman, chief executive officer and president of Sensient

color. We can quantify these off notes and work with the customer to eliminate those impacts. We have developed deodorization techniques, taste blocking and masking, and other extraction methods that provide pretty sophisticated outcomes for many of these natural products.”

Dave Sackett, executive director of sales and marketing for Mizkan America’s Food Ingredients division, said, “The demand for natural and organic ingredients continues to grow, and our peppers and organic vinegar offerings help meet that need. Vinegars awaken the palate



*A consumer’s perception of authenticity may include products featuring imported ingredients, bold flavors or both.*

Technologies, Milwaukee.

“Today, 75% to 80% of new products contain natural colors, but only about a third of the market is natural colors,” he said. “We’re seeing brands that have been around for many, many years using more natural ingredients.

“To some extent we are seeing the trend play out with flavors and natural flavors, too. I would suggest the next wave will be from natural flavors to extracts, because more and more ‘natural extract’ is becoming the most impactful label to provide customers. In many applications it is more compelling than using ‘natural.’”

But making the transition is not without challenges, Mr. Manning said.

“Natural products and natural ingredients in general tend to be more complex to utilize in applications,” he said.

“Nature does not standardize products by region or crop year, and therefore it is critical that we standardize the outcome for the customer. We can do this quickly.

“Also driving the complexity of natural products are the various off notes that can be imparted by an extract or a natural

and are key ingredients in many distinctive sauces, dressings, glazes, marinades and condiments.”

During IFT18, the Institute of Food Technologists’ annual meeting and food expo, held in July in Chicago, Mizkan sampled such culinary creations as Korean BBQ-inspired Ssamjang ribs, Hatch green chili grilled cheese, fresh Georgia peach and organ peel shrub, and a charred grapefruit and spicy jalapeño Paloma shrub to demonstrate the flavor range of its natural ingredients.

Attributes consumers associate with products featuring ingredients perceived as natural include freshness and authenticity. A report recently released by Technomic, Inc., Chicago, found authenticity is particularly important in ethnic products and flavors.

The firm’s 2018 Ethnic Food & Beverage Consumer Trend Report found that consumers want to be informed about ethnic options to ensure their expectations of authenticity, a term Technomic said varies by individual, are met. Indicators of authenticity may vary widely, from having native chefs on staff



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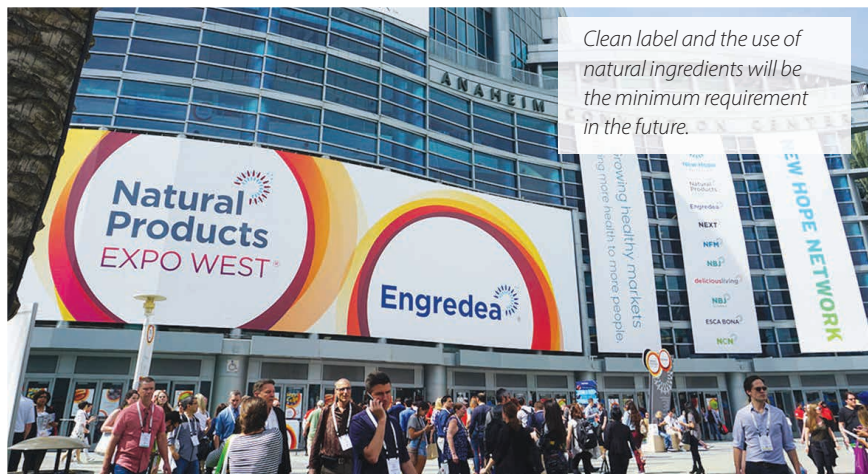
to imported ingredients and bold flavors.

"Everyone's definition of authentic is different, so when it comes to ethnic fare, it's vital to clarify the flavor profile and ingredients upfront so consumers aren't surprised or disappointed in their order," said Kelly Weikel, director of consumer insights at Technomic. "Additionally, ethnic options must feel accessible rather than intimidating, and this can be achieved through providing flavor and sourcing

snacks, meals, meats and meat analogs.

Stuart McCarroll, chief executive officer of Döhler North America, Chicago, a business unit of the ingredient company Döhler, Darmstadt, Germany, a producer and marketer of natural ingredients and ingredient systems, said delivering freshness in a product is "multi-sensory" experience.

"What we are noticing from our sensory work is the consumer is better at



Clean label and the use of natural ingredients will be the minimum requirement in the future.

information about each ethnic dish."

Kristie Hung, marketing specialist at Sensient Natural Ingredients, Turlock, Calif., a business unit of Sensient Technologies, said shelf-stable items could target consumers' interest for authentic flavors as consumers consider real and natural to be associated with quality, value and trust.

"(The) percentage of authentic call-outs for savory products continue to rise, and we have seen the trend to move in a positive direction, with artisan and artisanal call-outs claiming the top spot," she said. "Shelf-stable food could add identifiable pieces of real ingredients like parsley, chili peppers, and onions to communicate all-natural freshness and add texture.

"In addition, gourmet flavors like roasted and smoked highlight the 'fresh from the stove' experience. However, as consumers are demanding clean label products, many producers are replacing liquid smoke and artificial flavoring with natural alternatives like Sensient Natural Ingredient's organic roasted chili peppers and naturally smoked vegetables to elevate flavors of clean label products."

Smoked flavors are trending, according to Mintel. Usage has grown 18% in the last two years, and they are moving beyond restaurant menus and appearing in more market segments like

recognizing notes of freshness," he said. "If there is slightly off flavor or burnt note, the consumer can tell. It takes technology and effort to not overheat, over process or add preservatives."

Mr. McCarroll described Döhler as a natural, plant-based business focused primarily on beverages, but working in food as well.

"We were doing clean label before we knew what clean label was," he said.

The company is preparing to introduce a new processing capability for tea and coffee that allows Döhler to "keep the flavor, volatiles and sense of freshness" in products, Mr. McCarroll said.

"It's shipped in a way that is ambient and holds up through the supply chain over a longer period of time," he said. "That is something we have coming into play right now and gives us a competitive advantage."

Using the growth of the Natural Products Expo West trade show, which is held every March in Anaheim, Calif., as an example, Mr. McCarroll said clean label and the use of natural ingredients will be the minimum requirement in the future.

"It could be 10, 15 years, but it is in the not-so-distant future," he said. **FBN**

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