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Trends 2024:Â Asia Pacificâ??s F&B industry anticipates a slew of new trends

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With every new year that unfolds, Asia Pacificâ??s F&B industry anticipates a slew of new trends. Among them, is the predicted rise of the adventurous consumer. According to Mintel, â??amid ongoing uncertainty and anxiety, consumers will seek experiential food and drink that is enjoyable, fuels productivity and transports them to new realms.â?

How do you foresee the potential plant-based alternative protein industry holds for the future?

A global study found that 7 in 10 consumers have a desire to experience interesting textures, and to be surprised in some way. 2 Specifically, countries in the Asia Pacific region such as the Philippines have almost 8 in 10 consumers saying that eating and drinking is the main way they connect with family and friends. 3 This connection can be further fuelled by novel, adventurous food choices that bring variety to the table, and increase connectivity amongst different generations due to a shared experience of new taste sensations.

But while the adventurous consumer is eager to set forth on their culinary journey, they have also underscored the need for a balance between taste, price, health, and sustainability. These individuals are seeking food products that not only transport them to new dimensions, but also meet their nutritional, economic and social criteria.

In light of this emerging trend, food manufacturers are looking towards sectors such as the plant- based industry to captivate the adventurous consumer. The industry holds enormous growth potential, and plant-based products are well positioned to meet this proliferating consumer demand. However, in an environment where the appeal for plant-based burger patties has

dwindled, food developers must look towards creating new offerings that keep consumers wanting more.

What are the novel strategies at alternative meat industry adopted to elevate palates and textures of Plant-Based Products?

To pave the way for a new plant-based future, manufacturers must prioritise taste, texture, and indulgence. Taste stands out as a critical component of plant-based success, and advancements such as BeneoPro W-Tex, a textured wheat protein, allows manufacturers to craft a diverse range of flavours. This flexible meat substitute can also be infused with a variety of tastes, herbs, and spices. Moreover, consumers are seeking plant-based alternatives that mimic the textures of popular, everyday foods. For instance, BeneoPro W-Tex can be utilised in a wide range of applications, especially products with meat analogues such as sausages and chicken nuggets. With a protein content of at least 65% (on dry matter) and a unique alveolar structure, it facilitates the development of a juicy-like texture.

Elevating Palates and Textures of Plant-Based Products

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Increasing the Feel-Good Factor

Indulgence will also be key in satisfying the adventurous consumer this year. A recent study found that product packaging should steer clear of mentioning the words â??alternative and substituteâ?? as they may evoke feelings of sacrifice. 4 Instead, careful wording that underscores the indulgent and gratifying nature of plant-based products enhances their appeal to the adventurous consumer.

How can the food industry broaden the Plant-Based alternative protein ingredient horizon?

Ingredients such as rice, a popular Asian staple, can play a crucial role in creating guilt-free sweet treats. For instance, BENEOâ??s functional native rice starches generate high stability for foods with demanding processing conditions, such as low pH values or high shear forces. In addition, rice starch is mild in taste and neutral in colour, and is especially attractive to consumers who are lactose intolerant and experience other digestive health issues. Its instant variant is also particularly suitable for products that are processed cold, such as desserts or bakery cream. It also enables the development of plant-based cocoa bars, providing a nice flavour, good snap, smooth mouthfeel, and excellent melting behaviour. Rice ingredients are also a viable solution to the demand for clean-label products. In fact, rice starch and rice flour score highly in this context as consumers perceive them as a natural and familiar cupboard ingredient, with 61 and 71 % of consumers worldwide regarding rice starch and rice flour as natural respectively.

Beyond prioritising taste, texture, and indulgence, food manufacturers can broaden their horizons by exploring new product categories that resonate with the adventurous consumer. One such category is Asian-inspired recipes, an increasingly popular and attractive group of foods among consumers globally. By harnessing innovative ingredients such as BENEOâ??s textured wheat protein or rice starches, manufacturers can craft plant-based versions of traditional Asian dishes such as xiao long bao, Thai basil pork, siew mai, and steamed buns.

In 2024, placing a heightened emphasis on taste, texture, and indulgence will be pivotal, especially as food manufacturers expand their product categories in the plant-based sector. This provides an opportune time to harness plant-based ingredients and transform them into exciting, unique products that live up to the demands of the adventurous consumer.