



Voice of the Expert

First in Flavor™: Predicting Cravings Before They Happen

In today's rapidly evolving CPG landscape, timing is everything. Launching products with the flavors consumers crave—exactly when they first begin to crave them—can be the difference between breakthrough success and missed opportunity. The real challenge isn't just spotting trends—it's knowing how to interpret them, measure their acceleration, and translate them into relevant flavors with confidence.

Read on to learn about our First in Flavor™ framework from Talia D'Adamo, Senior Innovation & Scale Manager. She shares how the tool works, how it tracks flavor momentum, and how it empowers teams to distinguish fleeting buzz from true, scalable opportunity.



What is First in Flavor™?

First in Flavor™ is a data-led, repeatable approach to identifying and activating emerging flavors right before they become mainstream. The process is designed to spot flavors in the early adoption stage, which is when consumers are first becoming interested, but market saturation has not yet occurred. For example, identifying a flavor like pickle just before it crossed into widespread, multi-category adoption.

Not only does identifying on-trend flavors early support faster commercialization, it can help our customers launch products that are more likely to resonate with consumers.



How are flavors identified?

Our proprietary process blends quantitative data and qualitative expertise. We monitor signals across channels to uncover what consumers are seeing and seeking in real time. This includes reviewing restaurant menus, retail product launches, digital search data, social listening and more.

To validate which flavors are gaining genuine traction we tap into our culinary and product development experts. Data can reveal patterns, but chefs determine whether a flavor truly can deliver an exceptional taste and has product potential. Our culinary team brings that critical, hands-on perspective—connecting the flavors to broader trends, relevant recipes, and the overall sensory experience.

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Equally important is engaging our product development experts early to ensure a flavor concept can be translated into a viable, scalable ingredient solution. No matter how craveable a flavor may be, it must be reliably sourced, manufactured, and formulated to meet our customer's application, quality, regulatory, and cost requirements. Validating real-world applicability—across product formats—is essential to turning inspiration into commercially executable innovation.

How are the findings used?

The result is a curated pipeline of flavors that can be rapidly translated into flavor solutions, product ideas and innovation opportunities.

Originally developed for our consumer products business to internally prioritize pipeline, the approach has since also evolved into a powerful tool for inspiring growth with our Flavor Solutions customers. By equipping them with forward-looking flavor insights, we help drive their success—because when our customers win, we win alongside them.

When partnering with customers on their innovation, we take a tailored, collaborative approach, aligning opportunities to their target consumers and strategy. This tool is not a one-size-fits-all solution; rather, it provides a flexible framework that allows us to meet each brand at its preferred stage of adoption. By grounding ideation in real time signals, we co-create smarter, more targeted flavor pipelines that balance creativity with market readiness.



Social Listening

Culinary & PD Expertise

Consumer Insights

Menu Trends

Real-time signals of consumer interest



"I'm using real **actionable data** to find these flavors. And then we layer in our **culinary and product development expertise** which is how we validate the momentum," *Talia D'Adamo*



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How does it differ from the McCormick® Flavor Forecast®?

First in Flavor™ and the Flavor Forecast® are our complementary, proprietary trend-spotting tools—each serving a distinct purpose.

Flavor Forecast® looks to the future, identifying broad, global trends shaping the next wave of flavor. Highlighting flavors in their early stages of emergence, it offers a long-term view of where taste is heading. First in Flavor™, by contrast, focuses on what is viable now within specific markets to build pipelines. Importantly, many flavors first identified in the Flavor Forecast® progress into First in Flavor™ as they move from early signal to market-ready opportunity.

Can you share an example of a successful flavor identified through First in Flavor™?

In 2023, yuzu was identified through the First in Flavor™ process. The year prior, it appeared in our Flavor Forecast® as part of the “Beyond Heat” trend, which spotlighted yuzu kosho—a vibrant Japanese citrus chili paste—meeting consumer interest for complex, culinary inspired heat experiences.

Since then, demand for the Japanese citrus has spiked, driven by consumers' appetite for global exploration and sour taste profiles. Across menus and CPG—particularly in beverages and sweet applications—yuzu is appearing with increasing frequency, often complementing or replacing more familiar citrus and fruit profiles.



Yuzu Kosho



Yuzu



38
Yuzu flavored
launches, 2026
thru June*

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How do you recommend identifying high-potential flavors to support innovation pipelines?

Even without formal research tools, industry immersion can provide powerful early signals. Pay attention to independent, chef-driven restaurants and food trucks—these outlets often serve as indicators of flavors in their inception phase. Also, social platforms have become credible accelerators of discovery, with consumers and influencers rapidly introducing emerging ingredients, formats, and global flavor concepts to broader audiences.

When you spot a flavor gaining traction, apply a strategic lens. Engage your marketing partners to assess brand fit and target relevance. Does the profile align with your consumers' taste preferences and your brand's positioning? If so, collaborate with your flavor partner to translate into product-relevant innovation.

To lower barriers to trial, consider pairing an emerging flavor with a familiar anchor. For example, blending yuzu with a ubiquitous flavor like pineapple can deliver novelty while maintaining approachability.



Want to learn more about how to track and validate trend acceleration, reduce innovation risk, and turn cultural momentum into smarter commercialization decisions? Check out the [Flavor University® Podcast: First in Flavor | A Data Led Approach to Flavor Tracking.](#)

Interested in the latest First in Flavor™ insights? Connect with us to explore how they can power your next innovation.