

Super fruit flavors have been popular in confectionery and beverage products. Datamonitor includes super fruits in its top ten consumer packaged goods trends. The company identified açai, pomegranate, noni, mangosteen, blueberries, black currants, guarana and goji berries as reaching super fruit status. The Center for Culinary Development, a food trend tracker, includes guava, lychee, pomelo, yuzu and tamarind in its super fruit list.



Much of the interest in super fruits stems from consumers' desire for food products with exotic flavor profiles and added health benefits. Then there's America's changing ethnic fabric. The increasing population of Hispanics and Asians has introduced new flavor concepts and demand for imported foods.

"We're not a nation of white people anymore," says "Supermarket Guru" Phil Lempert. "We need to develop products that are suitable for people with different needs both nutritionally and taste wise."

Trend trackers have been quick to pass on the information to product developers. For example, Clif Bar launched a Nectar Cherry Pomegranate bar as well as Luna Berry Pomegranate Tea Cakes.

For the more adventuresome, goji berries from the Himalayas are "in," their popularity enhanced by medicinal attributes that include high antioxidant content, carotene, vitamins, 18 amino acids and a more complete source of protein than wheat. New goji-flavored confections include Luna Bar's new Luna Tea Cakes and Sunfood Nutrition's Goji Manna Cacao Superfood Blend line. Gooseberry or Inca Berries are up and coming super fruits.

Borojoa fruit made its debut this year as the main ingredient in Phytobase Nutritionals' new Chocollissima chocolate bar. Cultivated in the Amazon, the fruit reportedly is a natural female aphrodisiac and energy enhancer. "You enjoy wonderful feelings of well-being and total chocolate satisfaction; the first uninhibited chocolate," says company ceo Sam Gur.

Polynesians have long recognized the health benefits of noni. The fermented and dried fruit can be used topically or ingested to maintain healthy cardiovascular and immune systems, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, joint health and skin tone. This year noni is being sold as dried fruit leather by Hawaiian Health Ohana and Sunfood Nutrition.

Maca has become one of the more popular super herbs. Cultivated in the Peruvian highlands since the days of the Inca Empire, maca is considered the "Superfood of the Andes".

"It alleviates symptoms of menopause, chronic fatigue, depression, stress and infertility," says Zach Adelman, president of Navitas Naturals, a leading supplier. For these reasons, it is becoming a popular ingredient in chocolate, nutrition and energy bars.

"Maca is a sleeping giant," believes David Legge, a sales broker with Potent Foods, a new company that manufactures maca-based food bars. The first maca-flavored organic confection was Dagoba's Xocolatl Bar released two years ago. This year new products were introduced by Sunfood Nutrition (Raw Chocolate Love Bar), Ancient Sun (WildBar), Gopal's Health Foods (Happy Herb Maca Bar), and Potent Foods (Organic

Maca Bar). Rumor has it that Clif Bar is experimenting with maca.

Super green snack/food bars can be made with sprouts (flax or quinoa), algae (spirulina, chlorella and blue-green), and sometimes green vegetables (such as broccoli, spinach and wheat & barley grass juice powders).

"Green products reportedly boost energy levels, are high in anti-oxidants, minerals and organic vitamins, improve mental acuity and support the immune system," explains Dr. Jack Singh, ceo at Organic Food Bar, a leading green food bar manufacturer.

And let's not forget algae. So what health benefits can algae impart to food bars? "They are nature's pharmacy," explains Clive Adam, ceo of Ancient Sun. Having evolved over 2.5 billion years, algae are nutrient-dense and contain by weight more protein than beef (65% to 71% versus 22% for beef), plus essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals. Algae have sometimes been called the "food of the future" because of their highly efficient ability to convert photosynthesis to energy (at the rate of 8 to 10% versus 3% for soybeans).

Ancient Sun Nutritionals launched the WildBar containing blue-green algae harvested wild from Klamath Lake in Oregon. Marketed as a "meal in a bar," these raw and organic bars contain blue-green algae, raw cacao, hemp and maca that reportedly contain 50% more antioxidants than dark chocolate.

Dried fruit snacks and gluten-free

Dried fruit leathers and slices have enjoyed a surge in popularity as healthy snacking alternatives. Leatherhead International, a UK-based market research firm, forecasts sales to increase 30% by 2010. "Rising aware-

