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## The buzz in 2010

### These nutrition trends will be fodder in new year

By Janet Helm, Special to Tribune Newspapers

January 6, 2010

Out with the old, in with the new.

Now that we've officially started the new year, what new nutrition trends will replace the old? What food issues will dominate, and which ones will fade away?

Here are our predictions for 2010 — a nutritional forecast of what's hot, what's not:

#### **Fresh is the new functional.**

Pumped-up foods fortified with various health-enhancing ingredients may be falling out of favor. The majority of shoppers (88 percent) believe it's more important to eat foods naturally rich in nutrients instead of fortified or enriched, according to Barbara Katz, president of HealthFocus International. The trend is being dubbed "inherently nutritious" or "functionally natural." The new ideal is fresh, less processed, real and authentic. Anything artificial will continue to be challenged.

#### **Simplicity is the new sophistication.**

The year will be defined by the concept of less is more. We'll see this in multiple ways, including less packaging, shorter ingredient lists and more understandable ingredients, said Lynn Dornblaser, a new products analyst at Mintel, a market research firm. She predicts companies will continue to pare down the ingredients in packaged food — a trend that started in 2009 with 42 percent of food and drink categories reducing the number of ingredients per product. A shorter ingredient list was the top 2010 trend identified by readers of <http://supermarketguru.com>.

#### **Low carbon is the new low carb.**

This year will bring the mainstreaming of sustainability, predicts Kay Logsdon, editor of The Food Channel, a Web site devoted to food. Before 2009, many people didn't even know what the word "sustainable" meant; now it has become a priority — or at least shoppers are making small steps, she said. Expect to see more green restaurants and eco-labeling on foods, including carbon footprint, water

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footprint, food miles, biodegradable packaging and fair trade. Eating "local" will still be in vogue, but the definition will be expanded to make it more practical and realistic.

### **Food is the new insurance.**

With concerns about health care likely to remain, people will intensify their efforts to stay well. Increasingly this will mean looking to food as a solution. Research conducted by HealthFocus International indicates that shoppers have a growing desire to control their own health and "live long and live strong." The single greatest concern of shoppers is retaining mental sharpness as they age, according to the research. That means we can expect to see even more foods and beverages touting brain-related benefits. Other big claims will focus on immunity, heart disease, arthritis, eye health and the ability to "detox."

### **Meat-free is the new meat.**

Move over meat — you're no longer the center-of-the-plate star. Now there's a new approach, with meat viewed as a condiment or left out entirely at mealtime. While we may not become a country full of committed vegetarians, expect to see more people choose to eat meat less often, predicts Dawn Jackson Blatner, a dietitian and author of "The Flexitarian Diet." Meat will be increasingly viewed as optional as more people opt for plant-based plates dominated by whole grains, beans, nuts and vegetables. The triple concerns over our health, the environment and the economy will help drive this trend, Blatner said.

### **Dining in is the new going out.**

We will continue to reduce our reliance on restaurants in 2010 and eat more meals at home. But food preparation has changed with "warming and heating" now the method of choice, said Harry Balzer, chief industry analyst for The NPD Group, a research company that regularly tracks America's eating habits. He predicts a resurgence of the microwave oven and more products specifically designed for microwave cooking. That may mean more respect for frozen foods, including steam-in-the bag meals and claims related to freshness locked in.

### **Sodium is the new trans fat.**

Now that packaged foods and restaurant deep fryers have taken out trans fats, expect all eyes to turn to sodium. Sodium reduction is poised to be the next major health movement, according to Mintel's Lynn Dornblaser. Yet this movement is being driven by the government and food industry, rather than the consumer, she said. Other trends typically start with the consumer, and then the industry delivers. Expect to see more companies announce sodium reductions, although the cuts will likely be gradual so consumer taste buds can adjust. Taste still rules, and shoppers are not willing to sacrifice.

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