

Consumer Trends: Blackberry Named 2014 Flavor of the Year

PRINCETON, N.J. (PRNewswire) — Firmenich has announced that blackberry, the subtly sophisticated, bite-sized beauty, is the Flavor of the Year for 2014.

Blackberry: 2014 Flavor of the Year

Blackberry has been gaining popularity as health and nutrition have become a top priority for consumers. In the family of "Super foods", the blackberry itself is rich in antioxidants and other powerful nutrients. Its flavor profile is just as powerful and its complexity is what drives its appeal.

Berry flavors have always been popular, yet recently consumers are even more attracted to the interesting profile of Blackberry. Firmenich says this reflects a more general consumer desire to explore and to push the boundaries within the safety of familiar concepts. Similar to last year's flavor of the year – the refreshing lime – this year's tastebud-bursting blackberry stands out within its fruity family with its unique, intriguing profile, something that consumers continue to relate to in a world where being unique is something to celebrate.

"Consumers are becoming highly discerning in their preferences, opting for more and more complexity in flavor profiles. This has caused a natural evolution towards profiles such as blackberry," says Hidemi Tashiro, a Master Flavorist at Firmenich.

David Lyon, Director of Firmenich's Global Sensory team, a group responsible for analyzing the profiles of thousands of flavors each year, explains the appeal further: "According to AromaSphere[®], our proprietary tool to categorize the consumer language of flavor, the words that describe the profile of blackberry indicate the complexity of the flavor profile: ripe, sweet, acidic, juicy, seedy, jammy, spicy, and even floral at low levels," he explains. "These are the elements that interact with and complement each other, creating a complex profile with wide-reaching appeal," adds Tashiro.

Adventurous Yet Versatile

Firmenich believes that the Millennials are helping to drive this trend towards blackberry. They are a group of consumers who despite knowing exactly what they want, are also drawn to adventure. Blackberry, with its delicate nuances, has the ability to surprise the palate with every bite.

Beyond the traditional berry applications such as dairy, Firmenich is seeing blackberry trends in other categories as well, noting Kashi's Blackberry Graham cereal bars; beverage brand IZZE's Sparkling Blackberry drink; and McDonald's new Blackberry Raspberry Fruit Tea Fusion as just a few examples.

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Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

Yet this trend goes beyond the world of retail and into restaurants as well. Firmenich cites menu items such as roasted rack of wild boar with a blackberry, sage and balsamic reduction; sweet potato quinoa cakes with blackberry salsa; and blackberry and fennel pizza as menu items recently spotted by their trend watchers around the world.

Because Blackberry is so versatile, the company is seeing it married with other spices and fruits. "Blackberry is such a fun flavor to work with," says Master Flavorist Robin Trumm. "It pairs well with many other flavors including black pepper, apricot, champagne, citrus, plums, Port, and ginger, just to name a few."

The company predicts blackberry products will continue to increase and is currently developing Beverage concepts such as blackberry ginger tea. In Sweet Goods, blackberry will now be included in the company's Haute Couture line of cereal flavors, which combines ancient grains and berries. Giving a nod to those indulgent cravings consumers have, there is also a blackberry flavor-filled donut cereal bar in the works. Within the Savory segment, applications such as honey blackberry salad dressing and ginger blackberry mustard glaze are in development, and will soon be ready to take to customers worldwide.

Firmenich is the world's largest privately owned company (No.2 worldwide) in the fragrance and flavor business. Founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1895, it has created many of the world's best-known perfumes and flavors that we enjoy each day. Its passion for smell and taste is at the heart of its success. It is renowned for its creativity and innovation, as well as its exceptional understanding of consumer trends. Each year, it invests around 10% of its turnover in R&D, reflecting its continuous desire to understand, share and sublimate the best of nature's offering. Firmenich had an annual turnover of 2.89 billion Swiss Francs at end June 2013.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/25/2015 - 6:19am):

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