

Food

‘Souping,’ birch water and gochujang: 9 trends from the 2017 Fancy Foods Show

By [Maura Judkis](#) June 30, 2017

The Fancy Foods Show might sound precious. But it’s actually pretty intense: Every summer, makers of specialty foods from across the globe convene in New York for a massive trade show of their wares, all vying for the attention of buyers from grocery stores and markets. [A purchase from Whole Foods](#), for example, can make or break a brand.

Representatives from major grocery stores stalk the aisles of the Javits Center, sampling salmon jerky and switchel and “goji berry superfood ice treat,” looking for the next big thing. And when you see that many stalls shilling speculoos, for example, it’s easy to see what’s going to be trending in grocery stores next year. If you don’t see these products in your local grocery store, you can always buy them online.

Gochujang and all things Korean

Maybe it’s because we’ve grown weary of Sriracha. But gochujang, a spicy Korean sauce, is going to become a household name, if the Fancy Foods Show is any indication. There were several companies selling it — some from Korean entrepreneurs devoted only to Korean sauces, and others from established companies bandwagoning off of the trend. There was more gochujang in the halls of the Javits Center than could be counted, from brands such as [We Rub You](#), [Food Trk](#), [One Culture Foods](#), [Seriously Korean](#), [Divine](#), and [K-Mama Sauce](#) (they just call it Korean hot sauce — and it’s also available gluten-free). [Serious Foodie](#) has a gochujang-infused “Korean Lemon Garlic Grill Sauce and Marinade,” which is gluten-free and non-GMO. [Hak’s](#) brand of tear-and-pour cooking sauces offers a Korean barbecue packet, and [Spice Hunter](#) has a Korean barbecue rub. [Mother in Law’s](#), a kimchi brand that launched its gochujang in 2014, now offers “liquid kimchi” (it’s the liquid from the kimchi fermentation process), a “fermented and probiotic spicy elixir” that they recommend for use in salad dressings. Korean food is also gaining ground in the frozen aisle, where [Saffron Road](#) has a “Korean-style sweet chili chicken” bowl, and Korean fusion is on shelves too, in the form of [Urban Accents’](#) Korean barbecue taco sauce.

Chickpeas are the new nuts

Last year’s [chocolate hummus trend](#) has manifested itself in a more palatable form: Chocolate-covered chickpeas. Some of them are crunchy, some of them are chewy, and all of them could sub for your favorite chocolate covered almonds or trail mix when you get in a snack rut. [Biana](#) makes crunchy dark chocolate, milk chocolate and salted caramel chickpeas. [Lebby](#), which boasts that it is “totes non GMO,” has a savory hot chile flavor, and sweet dark chocolate, sesame honey and cinnamon crunch chickpea snacks. [Watussee’s](#) “Chickpeatos” take inspiration from another childhood snack — Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

Fancy, expensive waters

I drank a few sips of a \$25 bottle of “herbal table water” that was packaged to look vaguely like perfume. “This one is uplifting,” the kind woman at the [SD Watersboten](#) booth told me, handing me a small cup of what tasted mostly like sugar water. Remember hearing about the water sommeliers of fancy restaurants, who enraged the proletariat and inflamed the Internet trolls? Well, they’ve made their way into packaged goods. Watersboten offers three varieties that all sound like celebrity baby names: Angelica, Blue Vervain and Rhodiola Rosea, described in their marketing materials as “non-habit forming” and “gently mood-enhancing.” Instructions: “Enjoy cold as a cordial, in a long stemmed water glass, over ice in a rocks glass.” But that’s not the only expensive, soul-crushing water offering at Fancy Foods: A few tables down was [Tanzamaji](#) “prehistoric water,” which is advertised as being 10 million years old. Bottled in Mwanza, Tanzania, the water comes from the depths of a lake there, which is so deep that it has “not gone through the evaporation/rain cycle in 10 million years,” the company says. It costs \$15 a bottle and tastes like water. Before you get out your pitchforks, know that the company [provides jobs and clean drinking water for Tanzanians near the lake.](#)

African flavors

African food has finally been getting more popular in the restaurant scene, so it’s only natural that those flavors would make their way to packaged goods. Serious Foodie has a “West African Paradise” rub, made with grains of paradise, a spice that is also referred to as alligator pepper and has a lemon-pepper flavor. Woodland Foods’ [Manitou Trading Company](#) is making a North African Chermoula seasoning, [another trendy flavor](#) — traditionally, chermoula is a Moroccan herb sauce that plays well with seafood. They also have berbere spice from Ethiopia, dukkah from Egypt, Libyan pilpelchuma, and North African ras el hanout. [Spice Hunter](#), another brand, has an African spicy garlic blend. [Iya Foods](#), based in Illinois, sells African spice mixes and jarred sauces for dishes like jollof rice and pepper soup.

Drinkable veggies/”souping”

Because juicing isn’t just for fruit. What makes these drinkable fruit juices different from V8? Branding. Drinking vegetables is no longer juicing, it’s “souping.” Vegetable soups are being packaged as ready-to-drink portable beverages. [Tio Gazpacho](#) comes in six flavors: classic, “Del Sol” (yellow tomato, carrot, and pepper), green (kale, spinach, avocado, mint), “Rosado” (watermelon, cilantro, cayenne), corn and “fresa” (strawberry, basil and romaine). [Züpa Noma](#) (slogan: “Souping is the new juicing”) has a Whole 30-approved range of soups, from carrot coconut lime to yellow pepper turmeric. Beautifully packaged [Fawen](#) soups use organic vegetables and come in beet and cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower, and sweet potato and red lentil. And [Bonafide Provisions](#) mixes vegetables with another trend of yesteryear: bone broth. Their “Drinkable veggies” soups combine chicken bone broth with herbs and spices in five flavors: spring pea, roasted butternut squash, beets, roasted red pepper, and carrots. As much as you might roll your eyes at the idea of “souping,” these cool, drinkable veggies would be pretty refreshing alongside a salad for a summer lunch break.

Highbrow ramen

Ramen at a restaurant is often a gourmet experience, but ramen at home hasn’t yet shaken its styrofoam-coated Top Ramen college student associations. That’s about to change: There were several companies at Fancy Foods shilling higher-quality ramen. [Mike’s Mighty Good](#) sells “craft” ramen cups filled with organic noodles in four flavors: chicken, pork tonkotsu, spicy beef and vegetarian. Wiki Wiki noodles — it means “fast” in Hawaiian — come with a miso or tonkotsu base, and take only 3 minutes to make. The same company that makes them, [Sun Noodles](#) — which supplies noodles to [Momofuku](#) — also has a “craft ramen” line, which you can buy noodles-only, or accompanied by a miso or shoyu base. It’s free of preservatives and artificial MSG, and the packaging is slightly rustic, as if it were cornbread or wild rice. [One Culture Foods](#) offers microwaveable ramen bowls with a variety of influences: In addition to a spicy Japanese bowl, there’s Taiwanese beef, Vietnamese pho and Chinese chicken noodle. The bowls are made with a bone broth reduction, and promise lower sodium than typical ramen bowls.

Birch water

What, you haven't heard of birch water? Because coconut water, aloe water, maple water and cactus water are so passe, there were several companies at Fancy Foods hawking water made from the sap of birch trees. Companies like [Absolutely Wild](#) claim that the water is rich in antioxidants and electrolytes, has "detoxifying and restorative properties" and "strengthens your body's immunity." It's lower in sugar than coconut water, and tastes less sweet, too: Earthy, grassy flavors are more predominant. Some companies try to enhance it by adding flavors. Absolutely Wild has a matcha birch water, while [Treo](#) offers four flavors: peach mango, blueberry, coconut pineapple and strawberry. [Säpp](#) birch water also comes in rosehip and nettle. That's not to be confused with Vermont company [Sap!](#), which makes birch water, maple soda and maple seltzer. Expect to see birch water in the hands of Lululemon-wearing SoulCyclers.

Beyond cold brew

Cold brew, last summer's drink of choice, is too mainstream now. So 2016, #basic. But we still need an under-the-radar coffee drink that makes us look smarter than all the regular iced coffee drinkers, so there are some new innovations in the canned coffee field. Enter [Keepers](#), a brand of flash-brewed sparkling coffee with a hint of citrus — it's nicely effervescent. There's also [Sunup](#), a brand that makes canned green coffee — meaning, unroasted — that, true to its motto, "Tastes like a tea, energizes like a coffee." (It's not the same as [cascara](#), another super-trendy drink made from the husks of coffee beans). Both drinks would be very refreshing over ice, sitting on a patio. And the method has shifted over to tea, too: [Evy Tea](#) makes flavored, attractively packaged cold brew tea.

Watermelon!

Hey, watermelon is back in! Why it was ever out is a mystery to me. It's not like watermelon just started being delicious now, but in recent years, it took a back seat to less ordinary flavors like mango, goji berry and acai. For some reason, the flavor is having a little bit of a revival; there were so many watermelon-flavored drinks and snacks at the show. [Dry](#) sparkling soda just introduced a watermelon soda. The adorably named [Watermelon Road Snack Co.](#) makes a watermelon-lemonade dried fruit snack, and if I took a bag of those to the pool, they'd be gone in less than 10 minutes. I'd also knock back a [Suja](#) organic probiotic watermelon juice, or a [CideRoad](#) watermelon and mint spritzel (a "switchel with a spritz"), or an [Owl's Brew](#) watermelon radler, or a [Daily Greens](#) watermelon-hibiscus "Green-Ade," maybe while eating a [GoodPop](#) watermelon agave ice pop. There's even [DrinkMelon's](#) organic watermelon water — a beverage that contains "natural electrolytes," made from squeezing the juice out of a bunch of melons. Basically, they've bottled the stuff that dribbles down your chin when you eat a big slice of melon. You can buy it in three flavors: original, cherry and lime.

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