

Trends from the 2018 Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE®)



More than 13,000 nutrition professionals and food industry executives recently gathered in Washington D.C. for the annual [Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo \(FNCE®\)](#) hosted by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Ketchum's team of registered dietitians were on site, attending educational sessions, learning about new research and scouring the exhibit hall for new products and resources.

Here are the team's top trends from FNCE®:

PROTEIN EVERYTHING.

We've seen protein content continue to be touted on front of pack, and now it has become part of the identity of new foods and beverages. With Cold Brew Protein, it appears we have hit "peak protein."

SIGHTS ON SEEDS.

Vegetables, nuts, legumes and soy products are the typical plant-protein source, but a number of products on the Expo floor featured protein from seeds, with extruded sunflower seeds touted as having a texture similar to beef.

CLAIM CLUTTER.

Organic and natural continued to be the most common claims on food and beverage packages, but were often joined by diet/lifestyle qualifiers like Keto-, Whole 30-, FODMAP- and Paleo-friendly.

POWERED BY PLANTS.

Sometimes highlighting protein content, like plant-based pasta (made of legumes like lentils and chickpeas), and sometimes positioned as a meat alternative (to burgers, sausage, etc.) or a dairy alternative (including nut-based coffee creamers), plants were plentiful at FNCE®.

THE NAME GAME.

Over the past few years, we've seen non-dairy beverage alternatives labeled as milk and cauliflower prepared as "rice" and "steak." New challengers to the traditional identity are chick'n, referring to a plant-based, meat alternative, and a sweet potato "toast" product that can serve as an alternative for spreads like peanut butter and other typical bread toppers.

CANNABIS CONVERSATIONS.

Nutrition professionals are getting serious about becoming cannabis competent, with sessions on how to approach evidence-based conversations with patients and the health care team on the appropriate use of medical cannabis. This includes administration methods, proper timing and dosing, access and the medical conditions implicated in use.

FOLLOWING FODMAPS.

Two FNCE®'s ago, there were only two brands on the Expo floor promoting products low in FODMAPs (an acronym for Fermentable Oligo-, Di-, Mono-saccharides and Polyols, short-chain carbohydrates that can cause GI distress in some people). This year, there were dozens of options – snack bars, sauces, dressing, seasonings, salsa, bars, olive oil and more – with GI health indicators on pack and resources for identifying and tracking FODMAPs.

FIRST FOODS.

Multiple educational sessions centered around baby feeding approaches, such as baby-led weaning, and a number of exhibitors offered tools, resources and options for the introduction of first foods, including allergens.

DIETITIAN DEBATE.

The tension that has been brewing on social media between weight management-focused professionals and those who advocate for an intuitive eating approach played out live throughout the conference, with the latter wearing Health At Every Size (HAES) buttons.

DIVERSIFYING DIETETICS.

Efforts are being made to diversify the profession and practice, from practitioner-driven discussions about how the experts who steer others towards optimal health should better reflect the communities they serve, to patient populations being researched (e.g., transgender individuals).

EMERGING INGREDIENTS, EMERGING SCIENCE.

Dozens of products – from beverages, to cereals to desserts – highlighted the benefits of ingredient additions before their efficacy in the diet have been established, including collagen for skin and hair health and prebiotics and probiotics for gut microbiome health.

Borderless Nutrition describes Ketchum's approach to providing globally-minded, forward-thinking counsel to our food clients around the world. We don't just look at what's happening in food within our own region. In today's hyper-connected world, global walls are coming down and they are crumbling especially fast in food. We are borderless in how we think about the opportunities and challenges that can impact business.

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