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TRADE JOURNAL

DECEMBER 2019

www.teaandcoffee.net

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Butterfly pea flower tea is an emerging ingredient that is brewed as tea.

New Botanical and Fruit Flavours Step into the Spotlight

The North America Tea Market is expected to register a CAGR of 1-3 percent, during the forecast period (2019 - 2024) due to the increase in popularity of ready-to-drink (RTD) tea and iced tea in United States, according to the Tea Association of the USA.

Why is tea so popular? Tea is a rich source of flavonoids, making it a significantly beneficial delivery system of antioxidants. Given the focus on health and wellness, consumers are looking for flavourful beverages that are all-natural and better for you. Brewed black and green teas provide 150-200 mg of flavonoid antioxidants per serving, which greatly improves one's ability to protect against oxidative damage to DNA and lipids, per the Tea Association of the USA.

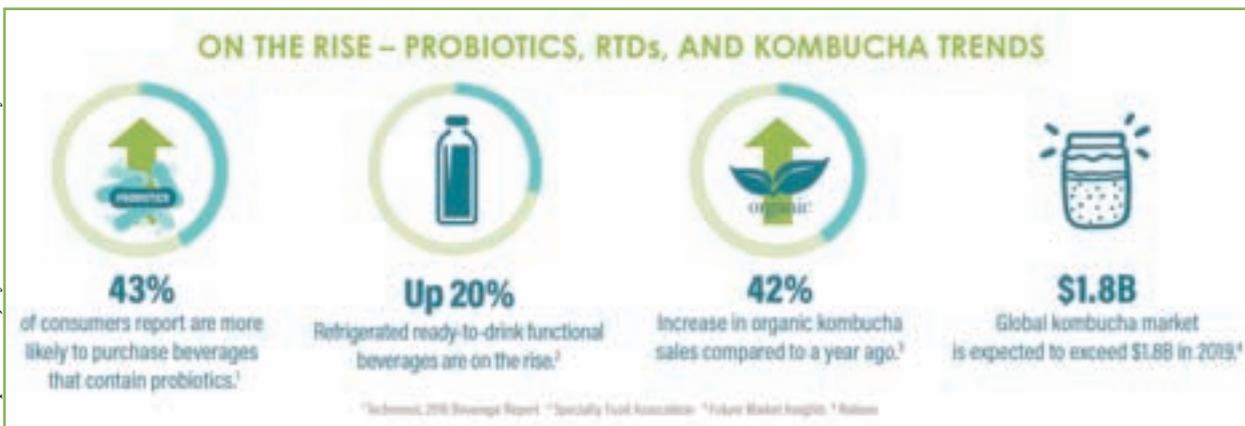
Although these benefits are desired by consumers, tea must deliver a natural yet

Flavourful, healthy and beautiful tea trends are in full bloom as new botanical and fruit flavours such as mixed berry elderflower and lemon lavender are becoming popular tea infusions and ingredients.

By Janie Page

tantalising taste. One of the top-growing flavours, according to global data, is ginger, which is seen combined with different fruit flavours such as pear, cranberry, raspberry, and peach. According to Julia Pollard, flavourist with Beck Flavors, "Combinations of fruit and botanicals have taken the spotlight in the tea category, for example, Blood Orange Hibiscus, Mixed Berry Elderflower

Graph courtesy of the Tea Association of the USA



and Lemon Lavender. The hard part is finding flavours that complement each other and balancing it with a specific tea blend.”

From Green Tea to Kombucha

Pollard has seen a decade of change from the green tea craze to what is now considered commonplace, with tea used as an ingredient in bakery, ice cream and even including the popular kombucha. In fact, market researcher Global Newswire, in its report, *Global Fermented*, revealed that the refrigerated kombucha and the fermented beverage category has grown 31.4 percent year over year.

Fermentation, the natural alternative to artificially carbonated soft drinks, features a unique, slightly acidic taste. It is now also recognized for supporting digestive health by turning food and drinks into powerhouses of beneficial probiotics and friendly bacteria. Kombucha, the current star among fermented soft drinks, is a fermented probiotic tea drink that is becoming increasingly popular where it is marketed as a healthy alternative to carbonated soft drinks. Pollard has spent a lot of time working on kombucha formulations and sees opportunity to really expand kombucha flavours from sweet

fruity into more comforting, warm flavours like maple and vanilla.

Deep Blue Tea

Another innovative ingredient that Pollard and her team have been working with is butterfly pea flower tea. This emerging ingredient is brewed as a tea and has a lot of anthocyanins that give it a natural deep blue colour. When an acid like lemon juice is added, it can turn pink or purple. It is classified as an herbal tea, is naturally caffeine free and has a mild refreshing flavour. In the United States, this fun and experimental component is becoming a visually stimulating trend for bartenders and generating buzz on social media. Unfortunately, this ingredient is not GRAS (Generally Recognised as Safe) approved and cannot be sold as a flavour yet but it is available for use in Australia. ■

Janie Page is the senior director of marketing for Beck Flavors Inc., a custom flavour house that delivers flavour solutions for the food and beverage industry. Janie has over 18 years of experience in the foodservice, retail and consumer packaged goods industries. With her certification as a Q-Grader by the Coffee Quality Institute, she brings together insights, innovation and technical expertise.

Graph courtesy of the Tea Association of the USA

