

## Future Food Items Might Be a Challenge for Copywriters

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Not That Consumers Will Have an Easier Go of It

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What is healthful food?

It seems like a simple question, but as one futurist I was talking to pointed out, it could be a slice of white bread made from wheat genetically modified to slow the absorption of calories. Or it could be an organic carrot (possibly purple -- the color they were in the old days) yanked from a local farm by a local yokel who biked that carrot to the local market and made sure you rode it home in a Prius.

Such are the extremes of the food trends we are seeing -- extremes that will bring us delightful new tastes in clever new packaging, along with confusing, contradictory claims as to why we should eat them and not all the other stuff coming soon.

**Wrinkle-reducing jam.** Goodbye, pate; hello, "Norelift," a new French jelly jammed with anti-wrinkle compounds. That may sound about as appealing as slathering a crusty baguette with cold cream, but since the French are usually ahead of us in *la beaute*, it could be the next big thing. Anyhow, it beats "Bust Up" -- the breast-firming gum that's all the rage in Japan, according to "Future Files" author Richard Watson. (God help you if you stick it behind your ear.) Point is: Food is expected to multitask now, just like the rest of us -- which explains the explosion of ...

**Brain food.** The number of products mentioning the word "brain" has tripled in the past year, according to a company called Datamonitor. And perhaps the most up-and-coming brain-boosting ingredient is DHA. DHA -- which stands for something really long -- is found in breast milk, fish and algae. It's the latter that the strangely named company Life'sDHA harvests from, and now its DHA is found in about 100 food and beverages, from orange juice to soy milk to almost all the infant formula available in the U.S. "Calcium is to bones as DHA is to brain cells," says Life'sDHA spokeswoman Cassie France-Kelly. And while the market has been concentrating on kiddie foods so far, the National Institute on Aging is studying whether DHA can slow the progression of Alzheimer's. Great! Sign me ... uh ... what was I saying?

**Calorie control.** This isn't new, obviously. But Hank Cardello, author of "Stuffed: An Insider's Look at Who's (Really) Making America Fat," predicts we'll be seeing more 100-calorie packs, in part because a University of Colorado study recently found that people who eat them -- even if they eat more than one -- eat 120 fewer calories a day than people who snack straight from the old-fashioned box. Another caloric corrective Cardello sees coming: beverage machines at fast-food restaurants that serve the number of calories you have paid for. If you pay for an 80-calorie Coke, it'll mix Diet and regular. If you pay a little less for a zero-calorie Coke, it will dispense Diet only. Pay for a full-calorie Coke, and you get the real thing.

**The Oprah-ization of foods.** We want our food to come with compelling stories, says the Guru of New, aka Sarah Browne. A perfect example, she says, is Dole organic bananas, each one branded with a number you can enter on the company's website and be transported, via Google Earth, to where it was picked -- and discover by whom. The cooler your story (ancient herbs! Long-lost tribes! Rare harvest!), the better.

**Now without . . .** The other big trend: taking out everything you can think of -- fat, trans fat, allergens, whatever. The real shocker is the huge gluten-free boom. As manufacturers take out more sodium, expect bolder spicing. And as they take out sugar and sugar subs, expect the new star sweeteners to become Stevia and Agave, which sounds like a cheesy singing duo but, as you'll see, isn't.