# The rise of high-end protein shakes as symbols of wellness and status



Recently, Soho House opened a new wellness space at 180 Strand in London, where an array of vibrant Gen-Zers, clad in colourful Lycra, gathered to document their protein shakes rather than themselves. The cups featured bold "Soho" branding—evocative of a burgeoning trend of custom, high-end protein shakes at various wellness destinations, including high-profile locales like Erewhon, Barry’s, and Siro, among others.

Health has increasingly become synonymous with wealth, as evidenced by the status conferred by these branded protein smoothies. Erika Tamayo, co-founder of Barry’s and upmarket protein brand Hermosa, described this phenomenon, stating, “It’s a statement,” in comments made to the Financial Times. She continued, “It says, ‘I look after myself; I know what’s good for me. Shakes have become sexy; they’re the thing people want to carry.” This sentiment underscores the escalating desirability of these protein beverages, which have been rebranded as not just sustenance but as symbols of a luxurious lifestyle.

The wellness market is on a meteoric rise globally, reported to be valued at an astonishing $7 trillion by 2025, according to the Global Wellness Institute. This growth trajectory aligns with the protein supplements market, which has seen a staggering 27 per cent increase since 2022, totalling approximately $27 billion, as reported by Precedence Research. Premium brands, such as Hermosa and Momentous, have played a pivotal role in redefining protein powder as not merely functional but a trendy food staple. This shift has paved the way for exclusive protein shake bars offering colourful concoctions enhanced with popular health boosters like collagen and creatine.

Erewhon, a grocery chain based in Los Angeles, is credited with creating a viral trend surrounding these high-end smoothies as illustrated in the Financial Times’ article. Since 2021, its limited-edition drinks have become synonymous with modern affluence. They frequently feature eye-catching designs, and many have been endorsed by celebrities such as Sabrina Carpenter and Kourtney Kardashian. The prices have reflected this luxury branding, with items like Hailey Bieber’s strawberry smoothie fetching $20. The atmosphere around Erewhon has transformed it into a cultural hotspot, where consumers are willing to wait thirty minutes in queues, making shopping an engaging social experience.

As health-conscious millennials and Gen-Zers increasingly embrace sober lifestyles, they are opting for nutritious meet-ups that often revolve around smoothies rather than alcohol. Cyril Françoise, head of bars at Soho House, noted that the introduction of their new shake menu was directly influenced by members' adjustments in drinking habits. The shakes, priced at £9 each, align with the cost of the least expensive wine on their menu, indicating a deliberate effort to cater to health-focused clientele. The menu items are crafted with attention to Soho House’s style, with drinks like the "Farmhouse," which features a blend of mango, turmeric, and vanilla protein.

Siro, a fitness hotel in Dubai, has adopted a similar approach, designing its shakes around specific fitness needs. Each drink, priced at Dh45 (£9), is tailored to support various dietary goals, including a substantial 580-calorie shake packed with 35 grams of protein for heavier lifters. Proponents of these new-style shakes argue that they incorporate nutritious ingredients that add variety to one's diet.

The protein powder market itself has witnessed a noticeable shift concerning its primary audience. Traditionally, the branding appealed predominantly to male gym-goers, encapsulated by designs that exuded a "macho" aesthetic. “It was all very Arnold Schwarzenegger and known for puffing up guys,” said Erika Tamayo, highlighting the previous gender disparity. Brands like Free Soul have emerged with contemporary, feminine branding aimed at creating a more inclusive space for women within this market. Lucy Murray, the brand director, remarked that their packaging has helped “carve out a space for women to feel seen.”

In addition to the social implications of these shakes, protein bars are contributing significantly to the revenue streams of gyms. Roughly 60 per cent of those attending Barry’s, which charges £25 per class, also purchase a shake post-workout, indicating a strong consumer inclination towards integrating protein supplementation into their fitness routines.

The trend of high-end protein shakes reflects broad societal shifts towards health consciousness and status signalling, with younger generations actively engaging in wellness culture. The evolving landscape showcases both a change in consumer preferences and the ways in which this market is adapting to meet the demands of its clientele.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.sohohouse.com/houses/180-house> - Corroborates the opening of a wellness space at Soho House's 180 Strand location and highlights the focus on fitness and wellness, including protein shakes.
2. <https://www.sohohouse.com/houses/180-house/soho-health-club> - Supports the presence of a gym with a smoothie bar offering protein shakes and other wellness-focused amenities at 180 House.
3. <https://www.sohohouse.com/house-notes/issue-006/soho-health-club/soho-health-club-at-180-house-is-now-open> - Further supports the opening of Soho Health Club and its emphasis on holistic wellbeing and advanced training facilities.
4. <https://www.180studios.com/180-health-club> - Mentions a health club at The Strand, which is different from Soho House's but also emphasizes high-end wellness services, aligning with the trend of premium health offerings.
5. <https://www.globalwellnessinstitute.org/statistics-and-facts/> - Reports on the growth of the global wellness market, aligning with the increasing demand for high-end health products like protein shakes.
6. <https://www-precedenceresearch.com/press-release/protein-supplements-market> - Corroborates the substantial growth in the protein supplements market, reflecting increased consumer interest in health and wellness products.
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