# TikTok’s viral food trends spark supermarket scramble and supply chain strains



The growing influence of TikTok on consumer behaviour is reshaping the food landscape, compelling supermarkets to adapt rapidly to viral trends. This platform, known for its algorithmic prowess in determining what captivates its audience, has become a powerful player in the marketing of food products. Zoe Simons, a brand development chef at Waitrose, notes a significant shift: “The power has flipped,” she states, emphasising how retailers now rely on social media insights to inform stock decisions rather than traditional market data. Products that students and food enthusiasts have once enjoyed at restaurants or cafes now swiftly transition to supermarket shelves in direct response to online buzz.

A prime example of this phenomenon is the overwhelming popularity of matcha lattes and the viral sensation known as the "Dubai chocolate bar." This confectionery, created by Sarah Hamouda, a British-Egyptian entrepreneur in Dubai, features a decadent fusion of pistachio cream and knafeh, coated in milk chocolate. Following its debut on TikTok, where one video amassed over 120 million views, the chocolate bar rapidly found its way to major supermarkets across the UK. Greggs, Britain’s largest bakery chain, recently attributed improved sales to the viral success of a mac and cheese item highlighted in a similar fashion, demonstrating the platform's new role in driving food trends.

As the demand for trendy offerings surges, supermarkets have started employing artificial intelligence tools to keep pace, monitoring online recipes and social media discussions to identify emerging food trends swiftly. Consequently, products that once took months to develop can now arrive on the shelves within weeks. For instance, Lidl and Lindt have both launched their iterations of the Dubai chocolate bar, while Waitrose imposed buying limits when it introduced the bar, underscoring the urgency of meeting skyrocketing consumer demand.

However, this fervent growth creates unexpected challenges, particularly for agricultural producers tasked with supplying these trending products. The rising popularity of the Dubai chocolate bar has already triggered a stark increase in pistachio prices, with costs having escalated from €6.65 to €8.96 per pound within a year, reflecting a 35% hike. Despite the US’s dominance as the largest global producer, accounting for 43% of the world’s pistachios, such rapid price surges reveal the vulnerabilities within the supply chain.

A parallel story unfolds in the market for matcha, where increased consumer interest has led to similar supply strains. Japanese tea producers have had to enforce purchase limits as demand surged, even though production levels have expanded significantly, with Japan's output nearly tripling over the past decade. Yet, budding entrepreneurs in cities like London are forging ahead. Hanife Hursit opened her matcha and coffee shop, Frothee, amid this volatile market, crafting her menu around social media trends. Although she acknowledges the potential for high costs as she contemplates adding pistachio products, her business is thriving, pulling in customers eager to taste trending flavours.

Yet, there are broader ecological implications to consider. Mzingaye Ndubiwa, a market analyst at Tridge, highlights that the cultivation of pistachio is water-intensive, largely occurring in drought-prone regions like California and Iran. This intensifying demand may further strain local water resources already suffering from over-extraction, leading to calls for sustainable practices in food production.

Social media's role in shaping consumer habits is also evident in TikTok's influence over preferential shopping behaviours, which reportedly accounts for 3% of online food purchases in the UK. The rapid shift in food trends brought about by platforms like TikTok poses a double-edged sword, driving innovation and excitement in the culinary world while also pressuring producers and ecosystems to keep up with fleeting consumer whims. As supermarkets race to satisfy viral cravings, the environment and agricultural communities will need careful consideration to avoid unintended consequences stemming from these rapid shifts in consumer demand.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends> - This article discusses how TikTok has shifted the power dynamics in food trends, with supermarkets now responding to viral content from the platform. It highlights the rise of matcha lattes and the Dubai chocolate bar as examples of products that gained popularity through TikTok, leading supermarkets to quickly adapt their offerings to meet consumer demand.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1> - The Financial Times reports on the global impact of the Dubai chocolate bar, a luxurious blend of pistachio cream, shredded pastry, and milk chocolate. Its viral popularity on TikTok has led to a significant increase in pistachio prices and shortages, affecting both producers and consumers worldwide.
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html> - This article covers the arrival of the Dubai chocolate bar in Spain, sold by Mercadona at €1.95. The product, which combines pistachio cream, shredded pastry, and milk chocolate, became a sensation after its release by Lidl, selling out within hours.
5. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/ha-tardado-llegar-espana-primaprix-codiciado-producto-795-euros.html> - Primaprix has introduced the Dubai chocolate bar to Spain, priced at €7.95 for a 95-gram tablet. The product, known for its pistachio cream and shredded pastry filling, gained international popularity after going viral on TikTok.
6. <https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/04/19/una-barra-de-chocolate-viral-en-tiktok-provoca-escasez-global-de-pistachos-cadena-ser/> - A TikTok-viral chocolate bar from Dubai, combining milk chocolate, pistachio cream, and shredded pastry, has led to a global pistachio shortage. The surge in demand has caused prices to rise and affected the international pistachio market.
7. <https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/22/tiktok-la-nueva-forma-de-hacer-la-compra-sin-ir-al-supermercado-cadena-ser/> - This article discusses how TikTok is influencing shopping habits, with the platform accounting for 3% of online food purchases in the UK. It also highlights changes in consumer behavior, such as increased demand for healthy or local products and a preference for nearby stores.