# How TikTok trends are reshaping supermarket shelves and straining global food supplies



In recent years, TikTok has revolutionised the way food trends emerge and evolve, catapulting ordinary products to viral fame with unprecedented immediacy. Traditionally, supermarkets were once the pre-eminent trendsetters in the food industry, scanning menus in restaurants for inspiration. However, as Zoe Simons, a brand development chef at Waitrose, highlights, this dynamic has shifted dramatically. "The power has flipped," she explains. Now, the pulse of consumer interests is heavily dictated by social media platforms, leading to nimble responses from retailers.

The phenomenon is exemplified by the surging popularity of matcha lattes, a Japanese green tea variant that has captured the imagination of foodies and casual drinkers alike. It’s not uncommon to find these drinks on the menus of major chains like Pret a Manger and Starbucks. Adding to this trend, Greggs, the UK’s largest bakery chain, recently reported a 2.9% increase in like-for-like sales, attributing the boost to a TikTok campaign highlighting a mac and cheese product that garnered more than 3 million views. The rapid adaptation of supermarkets to these food trends now often hinges on real-time social media engagement, which allows for a swifter introduction of products that align with consumer appetites.

One notable case is the "Dubai chocolate" bar, a product developed by Sarah Hamouda, a British-Egyptian entrepreneur residing in Dubai. The chocolate bar, which features a delicious amalgamation of pistachio cream and kataifi pastry, went viral with a TikTok video garnering over 120 million views. Following its meteoric rise in popularity, several UK retailers, including Lidl and Lindt, quickly launched their own variations. In March, Waitrose even introduced the product but limited customers to purchasing just two bars, demonstrating how supermarkets are grappling with both consumer demand and supply chain constraints.

This surging demand for trending products is creating ripples throughout the global agricultural sector, particularly affecting pistachio farmers. Data from Tridge indicates that the price of pistachio kernels has skyrocketed from £5.59 to £8.96 per pound in the past year, with projections suggesting it could reach £10.80 by year’s end. This situation highlights a stark reality; even as US farmers significantly ramp up their production to capitalise on this increased demand, the rapid rise in popularity initiated by social media outpaces the agricultural capacity to meet it. Remarkably, American pistachio farms account for approximately 43% of global production, yet they are feeling the strain as demand surges.

Similarly, the matcha market is experiencing its own burgeoning crisis. Major suppliers from Japan, like Ippodo and Marukyu Koyamaen, have found it necessary to impose purchase restrictions due to surging demand that threatens to outstrip supply. Last year, Japan produced nearly three times more matcha than in 2010, reaching a total of 4,176 tonnes, yet consumers often find it difficult to access their favourite matcha products. This is causing palpable concern among emerging businesses like Frothee, a new café in King’s Cross, London, co-founded by Hanife Hursit. Amidst excitement over her launch, she faced unexpected obstacles as her suppliers warned of potential shortages right before her stock arrived.

Hursit’s café menu is meticulously crafted around flavours that resonate on social media, including a particularly popular Earl Grey matcha latte. “Whatever I put on the menu was crafted by my For You page,” she says, reflecting the inherent challenge of balancing popular appeal with the realities of fluctuating costs—particularly those associated with pistachio products. Rapidly spiralling wholesale prices are dampening her aspirations of expanding her offerings to include pistachio flavours, illustrating the broader economic pressures facing many restaurateurs.

Additional complexities emerge when considering the environmental impact of hastily scaled agricultural practices, often prompted by sudden trends. The pistachio crop is particularly water-intensive, cultivated mainly in drought-stricken regions such as California and Iran, significantly impacting local water systems. Market analyst Mzingaye Ndubiwa cautions against the oversimplification of success driven by social media—if these trends fade as quickly as they rise, the consequences could be dire for both the environment and sustainability efforts. "Trends steered by social media can fuel environmental decline if they disappear as quickly as they appeared," he warns, encapsulating the intricate web of factors that continues to shape today's food landscape.

In sum, as TikTok and other platforms evolve, they cultivate a unique interplay between consumer desires and agricultural sustainability, propelling certain food items to stratospheric levels of popularity while making it difficult for the supply chain to keep pace. As the trajectory of these food trends unfolds, both supermarkets and consumers must navigate a rapidly changing environment fraught with potential pitfalls and exciting opportunities alike.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3149458f-7b96-44ba-8a71-623becf756e2)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1), [[5]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html), [[6]](https://www.cnn.com/travel/dubai-viral-chocolate-bar-fix-hnk-spc/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3149458f-7b96-44ba-8a71-623becf756e2)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/3149458f-7b96-44ba-8a71-623becf756e2), [[5]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1), [[7]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/)

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## 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 influence from restaurants to supermarkets, with platforms like TikTok and Instagram enabling retailers to quickly adapt to food trends. It highlights the rise of matcha lattes and the viral 'Dubai chocolate' bar, emphasizing the rapid response of supermarkets to these trends. The piece also touches on the challenges faced by the agricultural sector due to sudden spikes in demand driven by social media, leading to shortages and price increases in products like pistachios and matcha.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3149458f-7b96-44ba-8a71-623becf756e2> - Greggs, the UK-based bakery chain, experienced a 2.9% increase in like-for-like sales over the first 20 weeks of 2025, attributed to a viral TikTok campaign promoting its new Mac and Cheese product. The campaign, which garnered over 3 million views, contributed to improved consumer sentiment and increased foot traffic, despite economic challenges like higher national insurance contributions and minimum wage increases.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1> - The article details how the viral popularity of the 'Dubai chocolate' bar, a blend of pistachio cream, shredded pastry, and milk chocolate, led to a global pistachio shortage. Prices rose from $7.65 to $10.30 per pound, with U.S. production affected by a weak harvest. Premium brands like Lindt and Morrison's introduced pistachio-themed products, further straining supplies. The piece also discusses the challenges faced by farmers and the chocolate industry in meeting the sudden surge in demand.
5. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html> - Mercadona, a Spanish supermarket chain, launched the 'Dubai chocolate' bar, priced at €1.95, following its success in Lidl, where it sold out in hours. The product combines pistachio cream, crushed kataifi pastry, and milk chocolate. Its popularity has led to a global pistachio shortage, increasing prices. TikTok users have shared their reviews, noting its acceptable taste and texture despite a subtle pistachio flavor.
6. <https://www.cnn.com/travel/dubai-viral-chocolate-bar-fix-hnk-spc/> - The article profiles Sarah Hamouda, the British-Egyptian entrepreneur behind Dubai's viral 'Can't Get Knafeh of It' chocolate bar. Inspired by her pregnancy cravings, Hamouda created a unique treat combining milk chocolate with pistachio cream and kataifi pastry. The product gained global attention after a TikTok video amassed over 56 million views, leading to a surge in orders and international interest.
7. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/> - This piece explores how supermarkets are leveraging TikTok to engage with Gen Z shoppers. It highlights Tesco's focus on customer interests like Clubcard Prices and Meal Deals, and Aldi's use of its Kevin the Carrot mascot in skits. The article emphasizes the importance of authenticity and relatability in content, noting that TikTok audiences respond better to genuine, entertaining posts rather than traditional product advertisements.