# TikTok trends trigger global demand spikes and environmental concerns in food supply



TikTok’s algorithm has emerged as a significant force shaping consumer preferences, subtly steering trends in everything from fashion to food. Supermarkets, which have traditionally set trends based on data from restaurant menus and consumer preferences, now find themselves adapting to the ever-changing desires of a generation influenced heavily by social media. According to Zoe Simons, a brand development chef at Waitrose, “The power has flipped.” With insights from platforms like TikTok and Instagram, supermarkets can quickly identify and respond to trending items, allowing them to bring popular products to market in record time.

Recent examples abound, particularly the explosive rise of matcha lattes and the phenomenon of the “Dubai chocolate” bar. This confectionery sensation, which features a filling of pistachio cream combined with knafeh—a traditional Arabic dessert—was popularised by a TikTok video that garnered over 120 million views. Such virality has had tangible effects, with major UK bakery chains, including Greggs, attributing improved sales to snacks that have gained traction online. Meanwhile, bars inspired by the original have been launched by various brands, including Lidl and Lindt, reflecting an industry keen to capitalise on these fast-moving trends.

However, the rapid shift towards TikTok-driven consumerism presents unique challenges, particularly for producers. Agricultural suppliers are grappling with surging demand, especially for ingredients like pistachios, which have witnessed a dramatic price increase from €6.65 to €8.96 per pound—nearly a 35% rise—due to this newfound popularity. While American pistachio farms in California dominate global production, the escalating demand has created a pressure system fraught with potential shortages.

The matcha industry is similarly affected; the green tea powder's popularity has led to implementation of purchase limits by producers like Ippodo and Marukyu Koyamaen, despite a tripling in Japan's output over the last decade. As demonstrated by Hanife Hursit, who opened her own matcha and coffee shop, Frothee, the heightened interest in these trending products does not always translate smoothly to retailers. Even as her store attracts long queues of eager customers, a sharp rise in wholesale prices has prompted her to reconsider the addition of certain products to her menu, notably any involving pistachios.

Analysts are increasingly highlighting the broader implications of these spikes in demand. Mzingaye Ndubiwa from Tridge notes that the water-intensive nature of pistachio cultivation, primarily in drought-stricken regions of California and Iran, poses a significant environmental risk. The soaring demand could lead to over-extraction of groundwater, resulting in long-term ecological repercussions. Furthermore, the rush to expand single-crop agriculture can inadvertently foster harmful practices such as monoculture farming, which threatens biodiversity and increases the reliance on pesticides.

As supermarkets strive to align their product offerings with the whims of social media trends, the complexities of sourcing and sustainability loom large. The relationship between TikTok trends and consumer behaviour highlights not only the rapid shifts in food culture but also the urgent need for a more conscientious approach to agriculture. If driven by fleeting online trends, we may inadvertently cultivate environmental decline alongside our favourite snacks. In an age where a simple video can spark global demand, the task ahead is to balance immediate consumer satisfaction with long-term ecological responsibility.

## 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/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[7]](https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/tiktok-pistachio-chocolate-trend-global-nut-prices-supply-chain-impact-125042300879_1.html), [[5]](https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/04/19/una-barra-de-chocolate-viral-en-tiktok-provoca-escasez-global-de-pistachos-cadena-ser/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/)
* 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)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](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 and the challenges faced in sourcing ingredients like pistachios due to increased 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. The bar's viral popularity on TikTok has led to a significant increase in pistachio prices and shortages, with major chocolate brands introducing similar products to meet demand.
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/virales/llega-mercadona-productos-mas-deseados-vale-1-95-saco-lidl-agoto-horas.html> - HuffPost España reports that Mercadona has launched the highly anticipated 'Dubai chocolate' bar, priced at €1.95. This product, which caused a sensation when Lidl released it and sold out within hours, combines pistachio cream, crushed kataifi pastry, and milk chocolate. Its international popularity has led to a global pistachio shortage, increasing prices.
5. <https://www.cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/04/19/una-barra-de-chocolate-viral-en-tiktok-provoca-escasez-global-de-pistachos-cadena-ser/> - Cadena SER reports on the 'Can't Get Knafeh of It' chocolate bar from Dubai, which went viral on TikTok in late 2023, amassing over 120 million views. The bar's popularity has led to a global pistachio shortage, with prices rising significantly. The situation is exacerbated by a poor harvest in the U.S., the world's largest pistachio exporter.
6. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/> - The Grocery Gazette discusses how supermarkets are leveraging TikTok to engage Gen Z shoppers. It highlights the success of viral food trends like cucumber salad and the 'Dubai chocolate' bar, noting that supermarkets such as M&S have seen significant attention on TikTok, with products like their 'Big Daddy' chocolate bar gaining popularity.
7. <https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/tiktok-pistachio-chocolate-trend-global-nut-prices-supply-chain-impact-125042300879_1.html> - Business Standard reports on the viral 'Dubai chocolate' trend, which has led to a surge in demand for pistachio-filled chocolate bars. This trend has disrupted global pistachio trade, causing prices to reach record highs and straining supply chains, with major chocolate brands scrambling to meet the increased demand.