# How TikTok trends are reshaping supermarket shelves and straining global supply chains



TikTok’s algorithm, shrouded in intrigue, has woven itself into the fabric of contemporary culture, influencing everything from music to dietary choices. Supermarkets, once the vanguards of culinary trends, now find themselves adapting to the rapid-fire preferences generated by this social media platform. Zoe Simons, a brand development chef at Waitrose, encapsulates this shift: “The power has flipped. Now, because of TikTok and Instagram, our accuracy has gotten so much better.”

The impact of these platforms is unmistakable. Matcha lattes, previously a niche item, have surged in popularity, unveiling themselves on prominent menus at chains like Pret a Manger and Starbucks. Recent news reported that Britain’s bakery sensation, Greggs, noted a sales spike attributed to a mac and cheese dish that embraced the spotlight after a viral TikTok campaign – a video that amassed over three million views. Furthermore, the “Dubai chocolate” bar—crafted by Sarah Hamouda in Dubai—has taken social media by storm, its prominent exposure leading one video to exceed 120 million views.

In an era where traditional route mapping for product development has morphed into an agile response framework, supermarkets are employing artificial intelligence to gauge online conversations and culinary trends in real-time. What once took months to materialise can now appear in store aisles within weeks. Lidl and Lindt have already capitalised on the Dubai chocolate trend, launching knockoff products, with Waitrose limiting initial purchases to two bars per customer—a reflection of its unexpected popularity.

However, this rapid growth comes with its complications. Producers in the agricultural landscape are grappling with the frenzied demand sparked by social media. The Dubai chocolate phenomenon has notably strained supplies of pistachio nuts, driving prices up significantly from €6.65 to €8.96 per pound—an alarming rise attributed to heightened demand amidst ongoing production challenges. The US, now the leading producer of pistachios—responsible for 43% of global supply—has faced its own hurdles, with yields intensifying pressure on pricing only as demand surges.

Matcha producers face a parallel crisis. Once a luxury, the green tea powder has seen sudden spikes in demand, compelling traditional tea houses like Ippodo and Marukyu Koyamaen to impose purchase limits last year. Despite major increases in production—Japan alone produced roughly 4,176 tonnes of matcha in 2023, almost triple the output from 2010—there are fears that the burgeoning market may not keep pace with social media-driven appetites.

Among those impacted is Hanife Hursit, a young entrepreneur who has recently opened a matcha and coffee shop in London’s King’s Cross. Drawing from the trends showcased on TikTok, she has crafted a menu that resonates with her audience, featuring flavour combinations like strawberry and brown sugar matcha lattes. However, the surging wholesale costs of ingredient staples like pistachios have forced her to reconsider expanding her offerings: “It’s just too expensive, even at wholesale prices,” she stated concerning the pistachio craze.

The environmental implications of such demand are also poignant. Market analyst Mzingaye Ndubiwa has warned that the pressures of high consumption on water-intensive crops like pistachios, predominantly cultivated in drought-stricken regions such as California and Iran, threaten to exacerbate existing challenges in water conservation. Additionally, the fast-tracked farming of single-crop products driven by fleeting social media trends could inadvertently lead to ecological degradation, including deforestation and increased chemical use, which can contaminate local ecosystems.

As the effects of social media continue to ripple through the food industry, the inevitable question looms: will this trend endure, or will it fade as rapidly as it materialised? The trajectory of this phenomenon not only shapes the culinary landscape but poses complex challenges for sustainability and supply chain stability. The immediate solutions sought by supermarkets to satisfy consumer thirst may ultimately require re-evaluation in light of their long-term environmental implications.

## 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), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[5]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2025/03/28/interview-tiktok-shop-fresh/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/24/from-matcha-lattes-to-dubai-chocolate-how-supermarkets-fight-to-cope-with-tiktok-trends), [[7]](https://www.specialtyfood.com/news-media/news-features/specialty-food-news/tiktok-trends%E2%80%99-ripple-effects)

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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 power dynamics in food trends, with supermarkets now responding to viral content. It highlights the rise of matcha lattes and the Dubai chocolate bar, both popularized on TikTok, and how supermarkets like Waitrose are using AI tools to track online recipes and social media discussions to quickly adapt to these trends. The piece also touches on the challenges faced by producers due to sudden spikes in demand caused by viral food trends.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/3149458f-7b96-44ba-8a71-623becf756e2> - Greggs, the UK-based bakery and fast-food chain, has experienced a sales uplift thanks to warm spring weather and a successful viral TikTok campaign promoting its new Mac and Cheese product. The company reported a 2.9% increase in like-for-like sales over the first 20 weeks of 2025, a notable improvement from the 1.7% growth seen in the initial nine weeks. This sales boost comes despite ongoing economic challenges such as increased national insurance contributions and a higher minimum wage. CEO Roisin Currie attributed the growth to improved consumer sentiment, more foot traffic in shopping areas, and the popularity of menu expansions like chicken burgers, fish finger sandwiches, and especially the viral Mac and Cheese. The company's shares surged 8.9% to their highest point since February. While the company remains optimistic, some analysts expressed caution, suggesting the growth might be weather-dependent and advising restraint in future capital expenditure.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/1844d9c9-e4a0-486d-b09c-53e780eff4e1> - The viral popularity of Dubai chocolate—a luxurious blend of pistachio cream, shredded pastry, and milk chocolate—has led to a global pistachio shortage, pushing prices from $7.65 to $10.30 per pound. Initially launched by boutique Emirati chocolatier FIX in 2021, the chocolate skyrocketed in demand after a December 2023 TikTok video garnered over 120 million views. This sudden surge in popularity has spawned numerous imitations and significantly strained pistachio supplies, already depleted by a weak U.S. harvest. Premium brands like Lindt and Morrison's have introduced pistachio-themed products, further fueling demand. The U.S., the leading pistachio exporter, produced fewer shell-free kernels due to higher quality crops, and Iran increased its pistachio exports to the UAE by 40%. Simultaneously, farmers in California are switching from almonds to pistachios, but new trees won't bear nuts until the next harvest. Compounding the issue, cocoa shortages have already strained the chocolate industry. FIX, which sells its original bars only within the UAE for limited hours, expressed concern over brand misuse as global demand surges. Other chocolatiers, like Switzerland’s Läderach and UK’s Prestat, struggle to keep up with consumer appetite, underscoring the industry's lack of preparedness.
5. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2024/10/08/supermarkets-tiktok-gen-z/> - This article explores how supermarkets are leveraging TikTok to engage with Gen Z shoppers. It discusses the importance of authenticity in content, with supermarkets like Tesco and Aldi embracing a relatable and fun tone to connect with younger audiences. The piece also highlights the success of TikTok campaigns, such as Aldi's viral cucumber salad recipe, which led to increased sales and engagement. Additionally, it notes that supermarkets are empowering staff to create content and using TikTok's shopping features to drive sales.
6. <https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2025/03/28/interview-tiktok-shop-fresh/> - This article discusses how TikTok Shop is changing the way Brits buy groceries. It highlights Lidl's successful launch on TikTok Shop, where protein products sold out within 18 minutes, and Dubai-style pistachio chocolate bars sold out within an hour and a half. The piece also touches on how TikTok is complementing traditional retail, with brands using it to enhance their physical presence and boost both footfall and online sales. It suggests that early adopters of TikTok Shop are likely to see the greatest benefits.
7. <https://www.specialtyfood.com/news-media/news-features/specialty-food-news/tiktok-trends%E2%80%99-ripple-effects> - This article examines the ripple effects of TikTok food trends on the specialty food industry. It discusses how supermarkets are incorporating TikTok-inspired products and recipes into their offerings, with some retailers creating dedicated sections for trending items. The piece also highlights the challenges and opportunities presented by these trends, noting that while they can drive sales, they also require quick adaptation and supply chain agility. Additionally, it mentions that some retailers are using TikTok to recruit new talent, showcasing the platform's influence beyond just marketing.