

# Say goodbye to kale: the superfood trends for 2017 - and five new ingredients to watch



## What will be on this year's menu? CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

- [Anna Magee](#)

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According to [Mintel's 2017 global food and drink report](#), plant-based diets are set to explode into the mainstream this year, which makes sense, given that veganism has grown a staggering 360 per cent in the last decade. But never mind growing your own, they're going to get extremely hi-tech. Chilean based start-up [Not Company](#) is already using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop plant-based alternatives to animal products including milk, cheese, mayonnaise and eggs. According to the company, its AI algorithm "understands molecular connections between food and the human perception of taste and texture", leading to products such as NotMilk, made with almonds, peas, rice, nuts, linseed, coconut and vanilla. But even if it tastes authentic, what of its nutritional effect?

[We're set to see the emergence of a new group of sweeteners with side-benefits](#)

"You might be able replicate the textures and forms of foods through AI, but you can't replicate the function of that food in the body," says [Tim Spector](#), professor of molecular genetics at King's College London and author of [The Diet Myth: The science behind what we eat](#). "For example, the lactose in milk will contain bacteria that feed your gut flora, that can't be replicated with AI."

[Blackcurrant supplements](#)

The last 12 months have seen a rise in interest in the muscle and fat-burning benefits of [beetroot](#), thanks to its nitric oxide content. Now, blackcurrants are set to take centre stage for similar reasons. Rich in antioxidants known as anthocyanins,

blackcurrants are being hailed for their effects on muscle recovery, performance and fat-burning. University studies have tested New Zealand blackcurrant extract, taken in supplement form for a concentrated dose, and shown it can increase fat loss by up to a third during exercise. It may also dilate the body's blood vessels, resulting in up to 20 per cent increased blood flow and nutrient and oxygen delivery to cells.

Curranz is a new blackcurrant supplement that is 35 per cent anthocyanin, so a concentrated form of blackcurrants. I have been taking it for muscle soreness after exercise for six weeks and experienced no muscle pain after weightlifting, something that may be down to the anti-inflammatory effects of the anthocyanin compounds.

### *Multi-tasking sweeteners*

Sweeteners get a bad rap - with good reason. Artificially created versions such as sucralose and saccharin are made with chemicals that can have such unwanted side-effects you'd be better off with old-fashioned sugar. But we're set to see the emergence of a new group of sweeteners with side-benefits, such as acting like prebiotics, feeding the good bacteria in the gut. Take inulin, found commonly in chick peas, chicory root, bananas, asparagus and lentils; its concentrated form is now being used as a mild yet nutritionally rich sweetener. "Inulin is only 0.1 on the sweetness index, compared to sugar, which is 1, so it only has one tenth the sweetness," says nutritional scientist Rick Hay. "But what is exciting about it is that it has also been shown in good scientific studies to help reduce stomach fat."

Inulin is rich in high-resistance starch, he explains, which is what gives it this effect on visceral fat. One randomised controlled study published in October 2015 on 44 subjects found that after 18 weeks, both groups had lost five per cent of their body weight by week nine, but those supplementing with inulin (which is available in powder form or added to protein powders) lost more weight between weeks nine and 18 as the others plateaued - and that weight was mostly from around their mid-sections.



Watermelon seeds are apparently going to be big news this year CREDIT: ALAMY

#### Five superfoods to watch this year

##### **1. Maqui berries**

Chilean berries rich in vitamin C and antioxidant anthocyanins, the purple pigment in certain foods that is associated with anti-ageing, they taste a little bitter but come with nutritional punch. You can buy them as concentrated powder - [Sevenhills Wholefoods](#) makes a pure one (£17.99 for 250g, Amazon) - or get them raw from Whole Foods.

##### **2. Watermelon seeds**

Move over, pumpkin and chia, watermelon seeds will be everywhere in 2017. Brands such as [Mello](#) are drying them and flavouring them naturally: mild chilli, roasted or lightly salted (£3.49, [Holland and Barrett](#)).

##### **3. Chaga mushrooms**



2017: the year of chaga mushrooms? CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

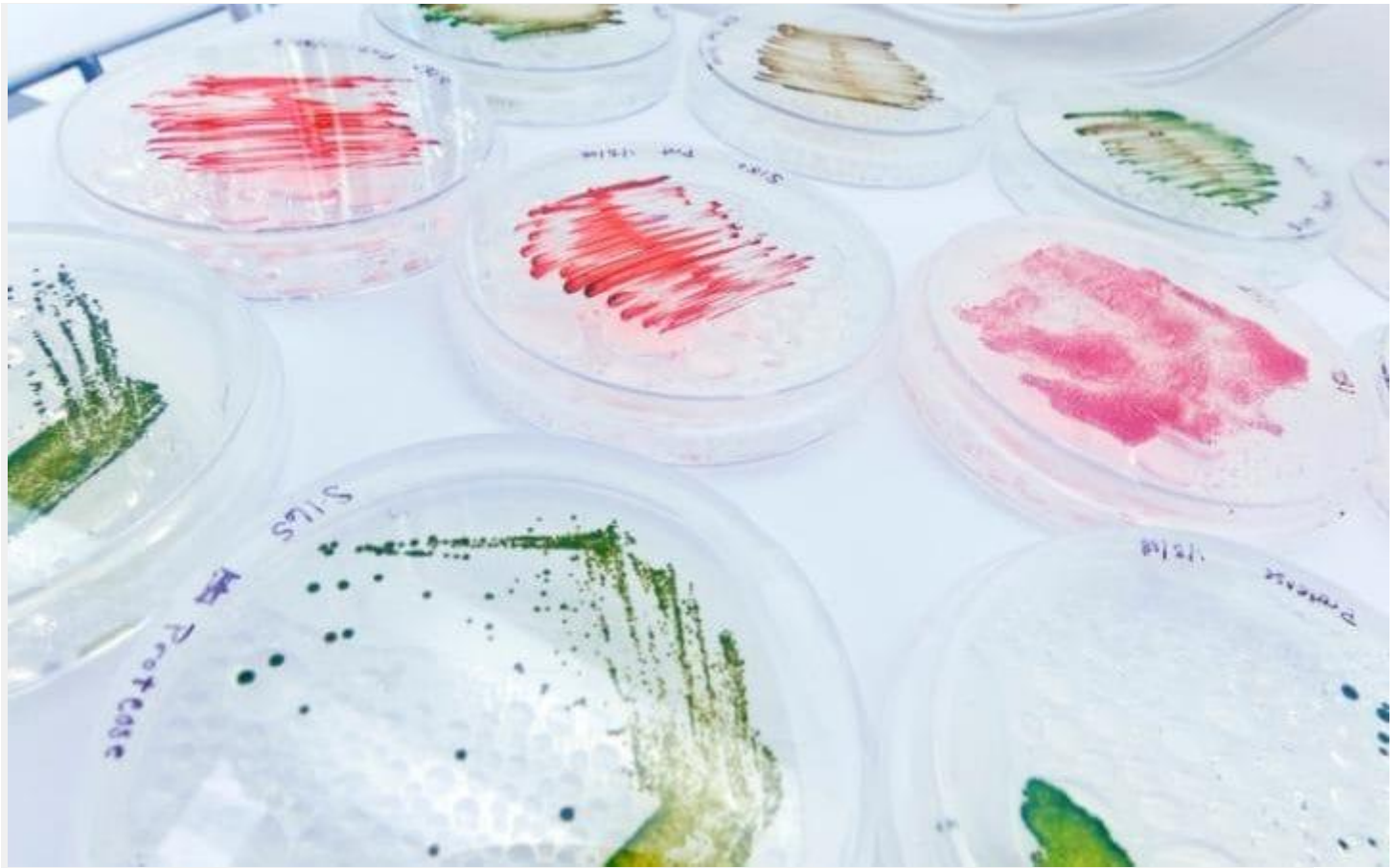
I first discovered chaga tea when the Hemsley sisters served it to me during an interview. Bitter and pungent, chaga is said to be the king of medicinal mushrooms, boosting the immune system with antimicrobial and antioxidant properties. The tea is stupidly expensive (Sigma Chaga Mushroom tea is £23.99 from Planet Organic for 20 teabags!) so having a concentrated powder form such as Indigo Herbs (£11.95, indigoherbs.co.uk) is more affordable.

#### **4. Nut oils**

Nut butters were a thing in 2016, but now a new breed of fancy cold-pressed nut oils are coming to town, from almond to cashew, walnut to hazelnut. They're pungent and strong tasting, so you only need a little and Rick Hay recommends using them sparingly, raw, as cooking could damage the fat. Look out, too, for avocado oil, which is best used the same way. Organic food company Clearspring is leading the way with the new cold-pressed novelty oils.

#### **5. Algae fats**

Until recently, vegetarians and vegans who wanted to supplement with essential omega-3 fats had few options more than flaxseeds. But these didn't provide omega-3 fats known as EPA and DHA, found only in oily fish and not made by the body, hence their name: essential fatty acids. Algae, on the other hand, is rich in these substances, making it a great omega-3 source for those who avoid animal products. It's found in Efamol Enviromega Fish Free Algal Oil (£10.97 from natureshealthbox.co.uk)



Move over, avocado - it's all about algae now CREDIT: SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY