



LOW & NO

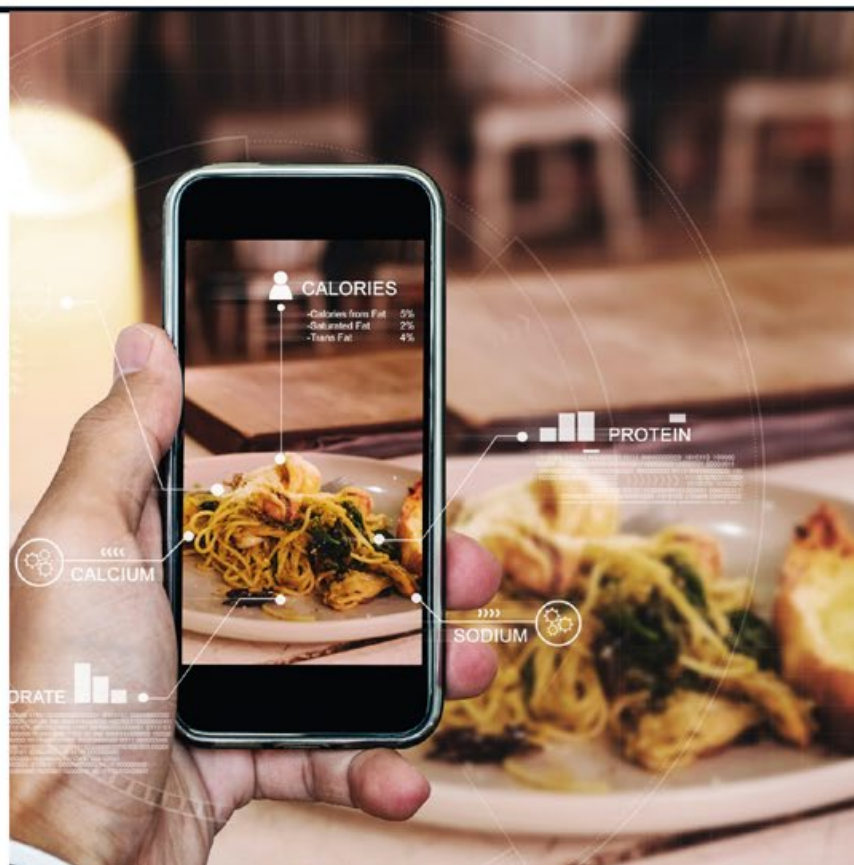
From booze-free craft beer to de-alcoholised fizz, and doppelgangers for gin from the likes of Tanqueray and Gordon's, our growing thirst for 'low and no' drinks shows no sign of being quenched. Over the past year, Waitrose sales of low-and-no options have grown by 29%, while overall UK sales are predicted to rise 48% by 2027. Whether you're avoiding alcohol for Dry January or cutting it out completely, Helen McGinn has options on page 82. For more inspiration, mixologist Matthias Giroud's new book, *Low & No Alcohol Cocktails*, includes 60 thoroughly grown-up recipes.

BANG ON

A SIDE DISH OF AI

Generative AI systems (machines that 'think' in a human-like way to create something new) are everywhere – hitting the headlines by turning out realistic images, music and even jokes. Food is the next big AI frontier, from recipe generators (just type in the contents of your fridge and AI will do the rest) to fighting food waste: US trials of two AI systems that help grocery stores match their ordering with customer demand saw food waste fall by an average of 14.8%. Waitrose has been using AI tools since 2021 to track trends and give insights into what consumers are looking for. "What it brings is better data: it can help us identify the right moment to introduce something to the marketplace," says Martyn Lee, Waitrose Partner and executive development chef.

There's no risk of a computer replacing your favourite chef any time soon, though. AI can "get you 80% of the way there in 20% of the time," says Martyn – in other words, while it can speed things up, there's still a lot of human input needed.



AUTHENTIC MEXICAN

We'll always have a soft spot for Tex-Mex, but a new generation of chefs and food writers are putting regional, seasonal Mexican cuisine in the spotlight. Mexican-born chef Santiago Lastra's fine-dining restaurant Kol in London recently broke into The World's 50 Best list, while newly released *Cocina Mexicana* by Adriana Cavita and Rosa Cienfuegos's *CDMX: The*

Food of Mexico City (right) take readers on a journey around the country's culinary landscape. Dining out? Bristol's Cargo Cantina (cargocantina.co.uk) pays homage to the cantinas of Mexico City, while El Pastor's London eateries (tacoselpastor.co.uk) make tortillas in-house daily. Alternatively, Ixchel (ixchellondon.com) focuses on the food of south-eastern Mexico.



TREND

Wonky veg, tinned fish and designer croissants? Say hello to the top 16 food and drink trends to know about in 2024

Words Emma Hughes & Laura Price
Photographs Frankie Turner
Food styling Iona Blackshaw



STATEMENT SAUCES

From chilli-spiked hot honey to truffle mayo, luxe condiments are the new affordable indulgence. Flavoured mayo and anything hot and spicy are two of the fastest-growing sectors, says Waitrose Partner and sauce buyer Adrian Gash. Try dunking the corners of your cheese toastie in **Sauce Shop Buffalo Hot Sauce** (£2.80/160ml), or dipping chips in **Heinz Seriously Good Truffle Mayonnaise** (£2.30/213g). »





BETTER COFFEE PODS

Coffee culture is finally heading away from being disposable: according to market researcher Mintel's *The Future of Coffee 2023* report, 'eco offerings' are moving front and centre. And with 29% of us now having a coffee pod machine at home, the range of sustainable capsules is growing. New compostable options that can go either on a compost heap or in your food-waste bin include **Waitrose Espresso Coffee Capsules** (£2.65/10), **Caravan Daily Blend Pods** (£5/10) and **Grind Compostable Organic House Blend Pods** (£10/20). It's also worth checking the packaging to see what the capsules themselves are made from: pods that are pure aluminium, like **Little's Rich Hazelnut Capsules** (£4/10), can go straight into your household recycling.

FERMENTED FOOD (& DRINK)

Thanks in part to ZOE (a personalised food and nutrition service focused on gut health co-created by Professor Tim Spector), the microbiome is this year's hottest health trend. Treating yourself to unpasteurised fermented food and drink, which contains natural probiotics, is an easy way to boost your gut microbiome. For a ready-to-go fix, try **Gut Health Mango Kefir Yogurt** (£2/450g) or open a **Fix 8 Kombucha Ginger Turmeric** (£5/4 x 250ml).



STOCK PHOTOGRAPH ALAMY

FINGER ON THE PULSES

Great-value and store-cupboard-friendly, pulses are finally taking their place in the culinary spotlight. Take British company **Bold Bean Co** – in just two years, this small start-up has won 63.7K followers on Instagram and 16.4K on TikTok, selling 650% more products last year than the year before. Beans are also making waves on fashionable restaurant menus. In London, the £230 tasting menu at **Da Terra** includes turbot with manteiguinha (Brazilian butter beans) while newly-sprouted restaurant **Akara** is named for West African black-bean fritters, which it serves up in various delicious ways.



OLD-SCHOOL OPULENCE

With the openings of **Raffles London** in the Old War Office in Whitehall, the plush **Midland Grand Dining Room** in the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel and **Claridge's Restaurant's**

glittering Art Deco-styled revival (above), dinners to seriously dress up for are back in the capital. Look out for tableside theatrics, frosty martinis and dessert trolleys galore.



DESIGNER CROISSANTS

Social media can't get enough of dressed-up croissants, whether they're flattened and pan-fried before being layered with fruit and cream to form a cheat's millefeuille, or stuffed with mozzarella and toasted to molten perfection. Find some of the fanciest at London's **Le Deli Robuchon** (robuchonlondon.co.uk) – cube-shaped, chocolate-dipped and custard-filled, they're worth queuing up for. »



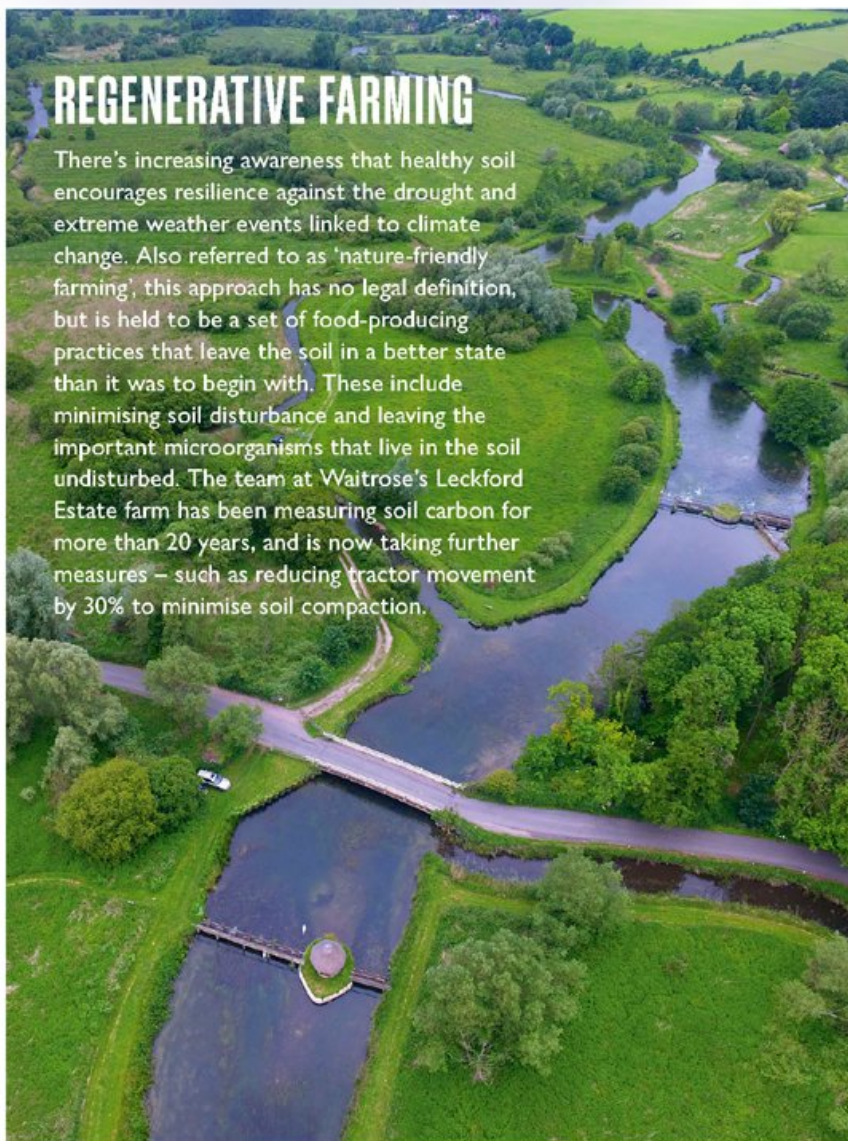
TINNED FISH GETS CHIC

The store-cupboard staple has had a makeover: walk into a cool small-plates restaurant (try Little Palais in St Ives or London's Saltie Girl) and you stand a good chance of spotting retro-chic tins of anchovies, sardines and mackerel on the menu, generally served with sourdough. As well as being great value, tinned oily fish is a nutritional powerhouse – it's packed with omega-3 and a good source of vitamin D. Make like a chef and drape **Cantabrian Anchovy Fillets in Extra Virgin Olive Oil** (£1.70/30g) over well-buttered slices of sourdough, or make **Ortiz White Tuna in Olive Oil** (£4/82g) the focus of a salad.

REGENERATIVE FARMING

There's increasing awareness that healthy soil encourages resilience against the drought and extreme weather events linked to climate change. Also referred to as 'nature-friendly farming', this approach has no legal definition, but is held to be a set of food-producing practices that leave the soil in a better state than it was to begin with. These include minimising soil disturbance and leaving the important microorganisms that live in the soil undisturbed. The team at Waitrose's Leckford Estate farm has been measuring soil carbon for more than 20 years, and is now taking further measures – such as reducing tractor movement by 30% to minimise soil compaction.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPH PAUL HEWITT



PASTA SALAD

Forget mayo-soggy buffet blights – pasta salad 2.0 is big, bold and ready to burst onto the culinary scene in 2024. Expect to see it on a table near you come summer, but in the meantime, Rome-based food writer Rachel Roddy likes hers room-temperature with tuna, cannellini beans, tomatoes and capers and top-quality olive oil, while Neil Campbell, head chef at Ottolenghi restaurant Rovi, recommends warm orzo tossed with roasted onions, squash, Caerphilly and kale pesto. “The pasta is really just a carbohydrate boat for carrying other delicious ingredients,” advises Neil. Want in? Chef Tom Jackson has a whole book, *Cool Pasta: Reinventing the Pasta Salad* (published 28 March); browse over a lunch of **Orzo & Fire Roasted Red Pepper Pesto** (£2.50/100g). »

CHEESE WITH BITS IN IT

Not a fan? These multi-award-winning rounds from Snowdonia Cheese Co might convert you. Choose from summer-truffle-studded **Truffle Trove** (£5.50/150g); **Green Thunder** (£5/200g), a mature Welsh Cheddar with roasted garlic and herbs; or ploughman's-ready **Pickle Power** (£5/200g).



WONKY VEG

Recent research suggests up to 25% of apples, 20% of onions and 13% of carrots are still being discarded long before they reach the shelves because of small cosmetic imperfections. Make a beeline for Waitrose's Wonderfully Wonky range of fruit and veg – they may be misshapen but are otherwise perfect.



GOING FOR GOCHUJANG

A key element of Korean cooking, gochujang is a red chilli paste made with glutinous rice and soya beans – similar to miso, but spicy. "Gochujang is one of my favourite ingredients as it's so versatile," says Woongchul Park (below), who includes it (among other things) in the beef tartare tartlet at his Korean-influenced restaurant, Sollip, in London. Add **Cooks' Ingredients Gochujang Chilli Paste** (£1.70/105g) to your stir fry or mix with mayo for a dip for crispy fried chicken. It can even be added to sweet treats – gochujang caramel cookies are all the rage across the pond.



PORTRAIT: REBECCA DICKSON



SINGLE-ORIGIN

Provenance has long been a buzz word with meat, fish and veg – but now we all want to know exactly where our vanilla, chillies, pepper and even salt come from. Look out for **Cooks' Ingredients Wayanad Peppercorns** (£1.60/42g), grown in the Indian state of Kerala, then pick between **Cooks' Ingredients Blush Himalayan** (£3/95g) and **Cornish Sea Salt** (£1.85/150g) to go with it for some single-origin seasoning.