



Oterra™

Flavor and appeal: Why *color* matters in sauces and dressings





Relish the moment: The importance of *color* in sauces and dressings

Unlocking color preferences: What do *consumers* really want?

Sauces and dressings are essential culinary staples, transforming meals with extra flavor, texture, and visual appeal.

Sauces, such as ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and hot sauce provide instant customization, allowing diners to tailor the taste of their food to personal preferences. Similarly, dressings, such as Ranch, vinaigrette, or Caesar, elevate salads and cold dishes by adding moisture, tanginess, and balance to their flavors. From fast food to fine dining, sauces and dressings are everywhere, bringing delight with every bite.

Sauces and dressings are powerful tools for branding, innovation, and customer satisfaction. They contribute to a dish's identity, bridging cultural tastes and offering both familiar and exotic flavor profiles. Whether catering to plant-based diets, reducing sugar or sodium, or incorporating global flavors, sauces and dressings continually evolve to reflect changing tastes.

But sauces and dressings are not just flavor, they enhance visual appeal too!

In this white paper we will explore the consumer's thoughts on colors in these products and how colors can be used to excite the customer and ultimately drive a purchase.

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web app

In 2024, Oterra commissioned a survey into the color preferences of consumers from around the globe.

The study surveyed 10,000 consumers across 10 countries in four regions, exploring their reactions to product colors in savory foods: Asia Pacific (China, India, Indonesia), Europe (France, Germany), Morocco, the United Kingdom, Latin America (Brazil, Mexico), and the United States. These respondents represented a range of ages, genders, and influence on purchasing decisions. The questions covered all aspects of the products from overall appeal, to associated flavor expectations, and even the emotions they triggered.

This yielded thousands of data points giving fascinating insights into consumers thoughts and expectations regarding colors of seasonings.

This data can be used to:

Optimize

Reformulate existing products to reinforce consumer loyalty and meet their expectations.

Inspire

Create new products to venture into new markets and reach new ones.

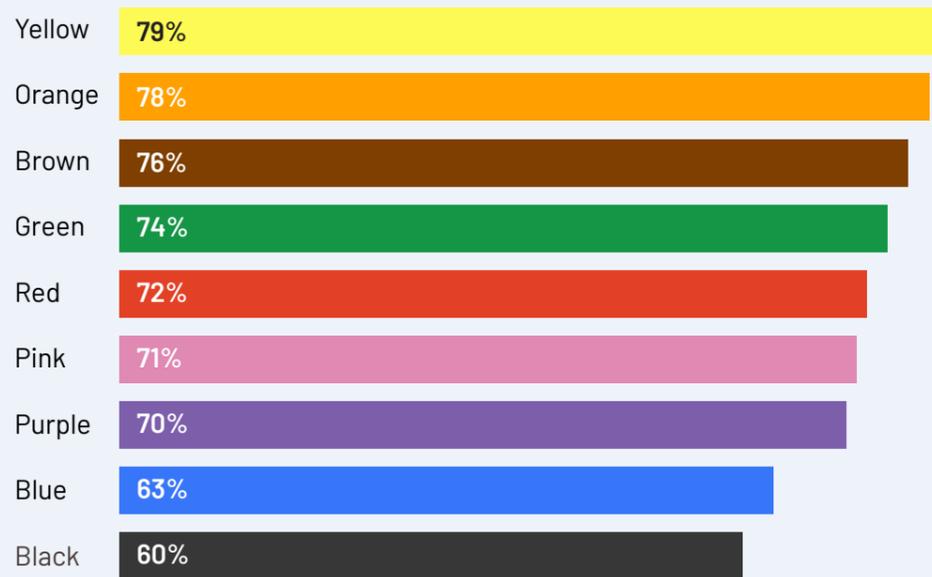




The saucy spectrum: *Color* rankings for your condiments!

It's a feeling: The *emotions* behind the bite

Global favorites: Top-Ranked colors for sauces and dressings



Key Findings

Yellow was found to be the most appealing color for sauces and dressings worldwide, followed closely by orange and brown.

Orange was the second most appealing color globally, but the most appealing in Indonesia, UK, Germany and North America

Sauces are the application where purple is considered most appealing (70%) compared to seasonings (51%) and traditionally uncolored applications (52%)

Color psychology in food examines how different colors influence our feelings, perception of taste, and overall dining experience. Understanding these associations helps developers and marketers create appealing products for the consumer. By leveraging the power of color, you can upgrade sauces and dressings from condiments on the side of a dish, to the center of attention!



Yellow		
#1	Energy	22%
#2	Warmth	20%
#3	Freshness	17%
#4	Joy	17%
#5	Happiness	15%
#6	Positivity	14%
#7	Pleasure	14%
#8	Fun	14%
#9	Refreshing	14%
#10	Naturality	12%



Green		
#1	Healthy	34%
#2	Naturality	32%
#3	Freshness	31%
#4	Organic	31%
#5	Refreshing	22%
#6	Energy	17%
#7	Clean	13%
#8	Positivity	11%
#9	Calm	11%
#10	Luck	10%



Purple		
#1	Mystery	20%
#2	Creativity	16%
#3	Curiosity	14%
#4	Femininity	13%
#5	Fantasy	12%
#6	Fun	12%
#7	Royalty	12%
#8	Elegance	11%
#9	Imagination	11%
#10	Energy	10%



The energizing appeal of yellow

Globally, consumers love yellow sauces. It is the most appealing color worldwide.

Consumers highlight it as:

- Looking delicious/tasty
- Being visually enticing/attractive

It is found most appealing in the Asia Pacific region, with China standing out as the region with highest acceptance.

When it comes to color intensity, bolder is better with a strong preference in consumers for a bright and vivid shade. This fits perfectly with the most common emotional connections which are 'Energy' and 'Warmth'.

Yellow appeals to all ages with the highest acceptance in those aged 25-45. There is no difference in appeal between the genders with both males and females equally charmed by it. As well as prioritizing health-consciousness, yellow sauce fans are more likely to assess the nutritional value of foods before eating them.

From a global perspective, the most commonly associated flavor with yellow is Mustard with particularly strong associations in Latin and North America. In France, by far the most common association is Mayonnaise with 20% of respondents making the link. This is a stark contrast against the rest of the surveyed countries, all of which were 10% or below. Cheese was the second most popular answer, ranking highly in all of the regions tested. In Europe there is also a strong link between yellow and curry flavors, the strongest of which is in Germany.



The natural appeal of green

Green sauces and dressings inspire the consumer with thoughts of naturality and health.

In fact, three of the top five reasons for green sauce's appeal are:

- Looking fresh
- Looking healthy
- Looking natural

This aligns perfectly with the top three emotional associations of:

- Health
- Naturality
- Freshness

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the 'green consumer' is very health conscious, prioritizing this over convenience. The 'green consumer' also consider themselves to be adventurous eaters, willing and eager to try new and unfamiliar foods. The appeal of green is equal between the genders with both preferring a stronger, brighter green sauce/ dressing over a paler shade.

The over-whelming flavor associations with green sauces and dressings are vegetables. Avocado stands out as being the most common association in Mexico and the US, which is not surprising due to the popularity of guacamole in these regions, but maybe more unexpectedly, it is the number one in Germany too. In Brazil, the most common flavor association is with parsley and in China, mustard.



The *mysterious* appeal of purple

79% of global consumers find purple appealing in savory foods overall with sauces and dressings being the application where they want to see it most.

The top emotions associated with purple are:

- Mystery
- Creativity
- Curiosity

It is therefore no surprise that the key driver for consumers wanting to try purple sauces and dressings is that they are curious about the taste. In fact, 92% of purple lovers are hungry for new culinary experiences describing themselves as adventurous when it comes to trying new foods. The appeal of purple is equal across the genders, but where purple really stands out is its appeal amongst Generation Z. Purple has the highest appeal of all colors to the 16-24 age range.

When it comes to flavors, this is where the consumer gets really confused. Even in savory applications, the primary expectation of purple sauces is that the product will taste sweet. Grape was identified particularly strongly in the US and Mexico. Purple is a color of extremes, with beetroot and onion ranking second and third globally, after sweet. With this confusion it is little wonder that 30% of consumers who like purple foods like to smell their food and appreciate the aroma before tasting it.



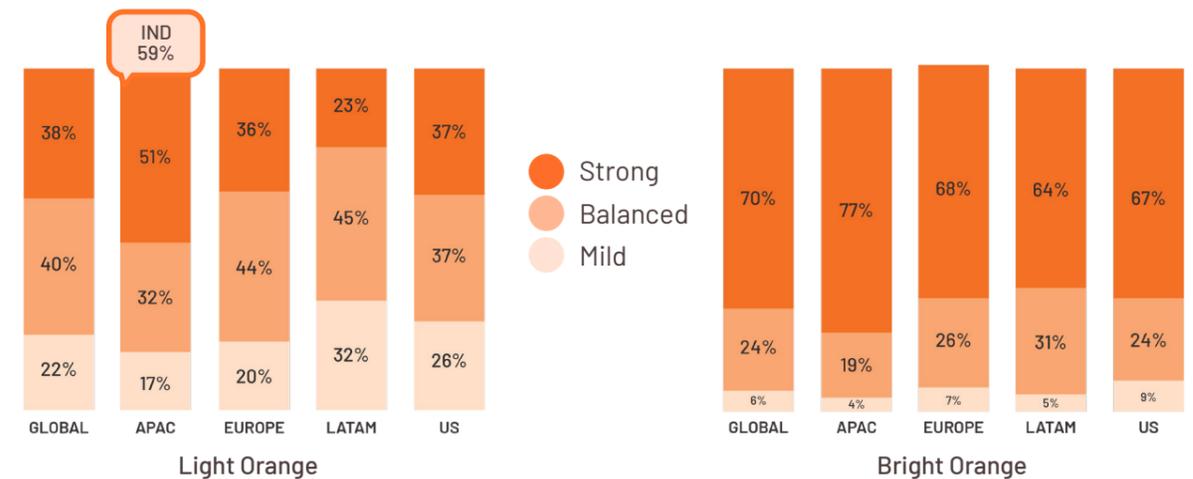
Taste the rainbow: How *color* speaks flavor

We eat with our eyes first, and bold colors reflect bold flavors. Use vivid, Intense shades to emphasize the strength of the flavor of your product. Conversely, pastel shades are a great reflection of softer, delicate, more subtle flavors. Give the consumer an idea of what they can expect with the intensity of the color.

Lighter orange sauces and dressings are perceived to have a milder, more balanced flavor while brighter oranges give the impression of stronger flavors, particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

Sauces: Flavor intensity impression – lighter vs. brighter

51% of APAC consumers associate a pastel orange with strong flavor perception and this is especially so for India.



Unlock colorful flavors—*contact* us to learn more

Create consumer excitement and a premium feel with bold colors!

Using clashing combinations of colors and flavors can bring excitement and intrigue to a product. Black, strawberry? Blue, apricot? A simple palette swap to a product can generate excitement in consumers. The perfect solution for seasonal limited editions or limited time offers (LTOs).

Across the world, strength, elegance and luxury dominate the emotions associated with black sauces and dressings.

Use the sophisticated associations of black in combination with premium flavors to elevate sauces into a true, luxury experience. Combining a rich black color with garlic flavors creates an opulent, rich, black garlic sauce, the perfect solution for adding grandeur to burgers and salads.



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