

Matt Eastland:

From the fields of regenerative agriculture to the labs of cellular biotech, from AI-driven nutrition to hyper-local food systems, 2025 promises to be a year of radical food reimagination. Welcome to the Food Fight podcast by EIT Food, a series exploring the greatest challenges facing the food system and the innovators committed to solving them. I'm your host Matt Eastland, and today we're delving into the food trends that will reshape our plates, our planet, and our understanding of nutrition in 2025 and beyond. And joining me are two extraordinary guests at the forefront of food innovation and trends. First, it's a pleasure to welcome back Ed Bergen, Food Nutrition Principal Analyst at FutureBridge. FutureBridge is a global strategic advisory firm helping businesses stay ahead in the evolving food and nutrition landscape. Ed drives marketing strategies, shares expert insights and equips companies to lead in this dynamic industry. Welcome back, Ed. Great to have you on the show. Thank you so much for having me, really looking forward to it. Me too, me too. And also returning to the show is Michelin-trained chef and founder of the Mycelium Gastronomy Network, Estefania Simon-Sasyk With extensive experience leading kitchens across Asia, South America and Europe, Estefania connects chefs, scientists, entrepreneurs and policymakers to reimagine food production and distribution. Her work at the Mycelium Gastronomy Network is reshaping our food ecosystem to be more sustainable and equitable. Great to have you back, Estefania, as well.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

Thank you. Thank you for having me. Really excited about this.

Matt Eastland:

Before we get into the trends, I'm fascinated to kind of get your feelings on where you feel like the food system's at in 2025. How are you feeling about this year in your jobs? Estefania, maybe I can start with you.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

The idea of trend reports right now, kind of like replicable idea that you can reap benefits of globally, or maybe that's my understanding of. It's kind of being challenged right now because of the specificities of the different geographies that businesses are placed in. World Economic Forum, big trend this year is you know, fragmentation, further fragmentation of markets. We're seeing also a lot of geopolitical shifts in the middle of, you know, what we know it's a climate crisis. So I feel like right now we have to have a laser focus on two or three issues that are not to be ideologized, just dealt with. So that's kind of my big take here and of course regeneration it's a huge part of it nutrition of course and food security so i think your topics are spot on although they do overlap of course of course are you feeling positive about this year you talk about fragmentation i know that's generally not a positive

thing but are you kind of excited for this year are you worried I mean, any kind of big change like that in terms of like global markets is going to have good and bad effects, in my opinion, right. So I don't think there's anything that it's net good or net bad. Of course, for global businesses, this is going to be a very challenging year. In my opinion, hardships in the global supply chain management, not only in terms of supply and climate risk management, but also navigating the changing political landscape and geopolitical landscape, right? On the other hand, I think it is a push to this kind of like blue sky idea we've been hearing for 10 or more years of localization of food systems, etc. But it's not going to be painless, in my opinion. I'm not sure what Ed thinks. We'd love to hear his take.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, I'd love to hear your take. So sort of fragmentation, politicization, Yeah, there's some concerns in there, I feel. What about yourself, Ed? You tend to be quite a buoyant kind of guy.

Ed Bergen:

Are you excited? I'm a very optimistic person. I am a mix. I'm going to just try the word apprehensive, but I'll try and put it like this. So if you look at history, let's talk about war, the fun topic that's going around at the moment. Generally, we rapidly innovate coming out of really tough periods. So I'm going to say I'm optimistic that hopefully we'll see some geopolitical calm on that front in 2025. Maybe I'm thinking too soon. But often, when you come out of these periods, you get some fantastic innovation, and you get it quickly. One of my colleagues just talked to me yesterday, and she said, humans are exceptionally great at solving crises, but not very good at solving problems. And I think we've been in a bit of a crisis. And therefore, I'm hoping that actually through this year, some of the technology advancements that we've been seeing will help us to innovate faster. I think we're way too slow and we moan too much and we worry too much when we innovate. So I think that we'll see some shifts and movements in policy and regulations, which will help innovation come to market. We already see it in artificial intelligence. Every day, something else is coming in that space. which will help us, Greg.

Matt Eastland:

Okay, so it feels to me like you're saying, there is a potential harmonisation coming. I do feel what you mean about when we're faced with crisis, humans tend to kind of come together rather than fall apart, I hope. So I'm with you on that one. And you speak about things going quicker. From my personal take on this, I feel that there is an acceleration of things coming. We've done these Trends episodes year after year and some of the things we're talking about are not necessarily new, but I think that the pace of change of those things is the remarkable thing. I mean, let's kind of talk about it, but thank you for giving us and our listeners your

feelings, your mood as you're going into 2025. Let's talk about the trends then. So EIT food, this is something we do every year. And the big five areas for us this year are regenerative agriculture, which is starting to enter political battlegrounds, food being viewed as medicine, biotech, which is increasing in popularity and strength. thing there. Stefania was talking about that mindset shift from global to kind of local. And finally, kind of a more unified, accountable, collaborative food system, perhaps, which, Ed, I think was what you were maybe leaning into. So from those, and I know that you both have your own kind of trends, views of the world as well, any which stand out for you from that list, which get you excited?

Ed Bergen:

Yeah, I'm going to talk about one. So we've been talking about sustainability for a few years, and we need to be more sustainable in our food production. But I think we've been terrible at convincing consumers what it is and making it easy for them. Terrible. The industry is so bad. We say that we're going to make you do it. So we pulled out a food tech trend for us, and we talked about waste valorization for a while and upcycling, but it's become an area where, because you can tell exceptionally positive stories, and talk about where those innovations come from, it feels like a very exciting space. And we've seen a lot of movement in terms of early stage innovation in this space. Before, there was a really cool stat. We always talk about the stat of how much food we waste. Yeah, we waste a lot of food. We know this. But this was really interesting. So Paul, the stat which looked at how much waste food is actually recycled into food that humans can then eat again, or they can then eat. And it was 1%. So it was from a WHO piece that I actually looked at. And really interesting just how little we end up recycling for us to eat. And so when we look at some of the innovations and some of the regulatory moves, because there's so much positive policies that are coming out in different countries, whether it be incentivizing companies or incentivizing consumers, just like the app Too Good To Go, I think in the UK, where they let people buy waste food on the cheap, which is fantastic. What we're also seeing is just loads more collaborations. companies flogging their waste to someone else that can then reuse it, companies using their own waste again and making cool things with their own waste, or selling it off to other parts of production as well. So we've seen examples of using animal manure to create new fertilizer. We've seen examples of And no, chocolate companies using the shells of their chocolate to explore packaging innovation. So there's been some very cool stories and collaborations seeing in the industry beyond, I don't know, the wheat beer to bakery, bakery to beer space. And I think that's going to get really exciting and great for storytelling.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, absolutely. So waste valorisation is getting even bigger. What do you think, Estefania? Is that something that really excites you? Is there something else in here that you're particularly keen on?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I love that you proposed the topic of regeneration. As you know, back in Paris Agreement days, there were different tracks on like what bad trajectories our ecosystems are going through. But for the moment, we've been really focusing on emissions, right? That's, of course, the main driver of climate change. But there is another trajectory happening, which is the biodiversity loss and degradation of our natural ecosystem. So the stat goes something like by 2050, 90% of our natural ecosystems will be degraded. And although I love food tech and food innovation, we need to get real and understand that people still eat from the soil. And we are not going to bypass anytime soon the soil and I don't think that's a desirable outcome to begin with. So I'm really excited about this big push towards regeneration because we literally desperately need it. So I think that has to be top on the agenda of anyone working in food and beyond. The emphasis on soil is really, really exciting to me, and how all these different fields that work in food together, from farmers to policymakers to chefs to innovators, industry leaders, coming together and acknowledging, as Ed was very well saying, and I totally agree, that sustainability is not a value proposition. It means nothing, same like quality or healthy, and actually starting to nail down what are the messages to actually enact an agenda that is not ideological or politicized, but just common sense, actual every person's in this planet problems. Building on that, I'm really excited about Minta's last report about sustainability and consumer behavior, because we started to see what they call sustainable behaviors. So actually, some tangible segmentation of how different consumers are valorizing and constructing sustainability when they go into their marketplace. to choose products and services. So we're looking at different really exciting behaviors, such as emphasis on packaging, for example. That's a big one in the EU, and hopefully a trend that will go globally. At least in Africa, we've seen for so many years the ban on single-use plastic bags. But then there are other interesting behaviors, some of them, for example, derived from the Ukraine-Russia war, such as cooking with less energy. So recipe books that call for boiling something and letting it steep for half an hour, you know, bypassing the energy-intensive cooking methods that we've been looking at. to cutting meat and dairy, of course, a big one, to many, many more secondhand marketplaces we're seeing booming. So I'm excited about this idea of getting more precise in our words on sustainability and shifting from sustaining from a baseline that has been just randomly chosen, so pre-industrial, to actually thinking on how can we proactively make land, the ecosystems, the soil better.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, I love that. And actually, this is one of the things that the podcast really has really shifted my own mindset, because, you know, like me, like everyone, I use the term sustainable, sustainability, and I've realized that it's not understood and actually regenerative and regenerative, you know, kind of putting more in that you take

out, I think is a lot more understandable, but also a lot more positive. So sustainability is like table stakes. It's like if everything stays the same, nothing actually gets better. Whereas regenerative is saying things actually get better. You specifically do things to make them better, which I really like. And just very quickly, Stefania, before I hand back over to Ed, do you see the conversation around regenerative agriculture specifically, do you see that becoming more positive and constructive in 2025? Or do you feel that it's become politicised or overly politicised?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

No, I think regeneration is opening a new window to conversation that is kind of like a different track of conversation from climate change, which regrettably has been politicized. Shouldn't, my opinion. So we're seeing big global corporations putting it at the top of their agenda, regenerative agriculture sourcing. We're seeing it in governments, of course, because they want to supply to big global companies, and we're seeing it from the farmers because, of course, regenerative agriculture builds on principles that are not resource intensive. So, of course, everyone wants to cheapen their business to make a better profit. I mean, that's just good business practices. I do see with concern the grant freeze from the U.S. because we are going to see how USAID particularly and many other agencies are financing many climate transitions and other that for now, no one was really entirely footing the bill. So a lot of these global supply chains that are working towards regeneration are financed by the international corporation. So if we do see a shift on these funds, I guess the big question will be who is footing this transition bill.

Matt Eastland:

Indeed. Yeah, I think that's the big elephant in the room on the horizon now, isn't it? Yeah, that's a concern. I mean, and Ed, I've watched you just nodding away while Estefania has been talking. I mean, what's your take on that sort of regenerative movement, I guess, but specifically around soil, but also more in that kind of sustainability space more generally? So you spoke in one of your trends report about valorizing unusable, which you've spoken about, but any other sort of trends in this space that you feel are important.

Ed Bergen:

So we try to look at always these different methods, so different methods of farming. One of the pieces we looked at was things like understanding seed varieties better. So we've seen lots of innovation around how to preserve seeds that can handle, what's the word, soil that maybe won't be as friendly, one of them. So a lot around regenerative crop work, we've been seeing quite a bit of innovation around. We've been seeing loads of innovation around using artificial intelligence and digital technology on farms. So whether it be yield technology and seeing drones or robots saying,

don't farm here right now, no harvesting in this section, go and harvest over there because they're understanding soil health and understanding where best to work or saying the weather's not been good enough, today's not the day. And again, yeah, you're right. Who's going to foot the bill of doing this globally? But those are some of the innovations that we find quite exciting where you'll find different techniques where the soil may be bad. So how do you either regenerate it or how do you use it better? How do we harvest better? Certain ingredients, certain foods will cost more at certain times of the year compared to others. And we're going to have to get used to that. So I think there's a lot of messaging to do. We've been spoiled for too long. And so there'll be a level of communication that will need to come as well.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, for sure. I'm wondering within all of this, if there is a challenge with who's fitting the bill, if this does need to be global. It feels that companies really need to step up to this space and own it. I'm interested to hear from both of you, which companies or groups of companies maybe are embracing, let's say regenerative practices really well, rather than just greenwashing, because I know that there is, you know, some, there is a bit of chat about greenwashing around regenerative, but there must be some great examples of companies who are really kind of champion in this. Estefania, I'm keen to get your view.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

To be honest, I see it in sustainability reports from everyone, from Nestle, Unilever, PepsiCo, McDonald's, Young Brands, just everyone and their brother are embracing the agenda. But this is really the thing that I have been a bit drilling on for the past, I don't know how long now. There is a messaging that needs to change in terms of sustainability towards consumer, but also towards shareholders and other interest groups in the corporate and private world. Because sustainability is not about charity or philanthropy, it's about risk management. So what these people are trying to do is create a first mover's advantage to a supply that is not going to be readily available whenever they run out of their other conventional commodity crops that are farmed in the same way. And so this is just hedging and creating long-term bets, which is totally a normal strategy for any big company in the world. So I don't know how much of it is greenwashing. I do believe the intention is to move towards that because of a risk management strategy.

Matt Eastland:

I love that. I think if more people in boardrooms spoke exactly like that, which is like, this is, you know, risk management, making sure we get first mover advantage, I think there would be a very different conversation. You know, yes, I think ultimately, the outcome is the one you're looking for, which is that things get regenerated, but ultimately you have to speak the language of the

people who you need to influence, right?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

The problem is the accounting systems and management systems we have in place, which is quarter to quarter, and it's very hard to prove wins in three months for soil regeneration. You can ask anyone. But this has been the challenge we've seen in food tech in general, right? We're seeing investors are not so excited about food tech, like the market's going down. But it was never the right approach towards food tech because any change in the food system takes 10 years or more. So you cannot just copy and paste the model of investment of tech companies into food companies. And so what we're seeing is just bad framing rather than bad strategies. It's not that vegetative agriculture doesn't have good outcomes. It's not going to have it in three months as if you fire 20,000 people. You'll see right away that in your P&L. I mean, it's pretty obvious, right?

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, well, when you put it like that, yeah, it is, you know, bad framing. I really like that. That's really, really good. Any sort of final words on this, Ed, before we move into another area of trends?

Ed Bergen:

I was going to spotlight two companies, because I know that was yours as well. Yes, yes. Because I had a couple. So we pulled out a few examples. One of them has been quite big, so it's probably not a new one, which was Indigo. So I constantly track Indigo, and they do a lot of work on carbon sequestration and That's a really interesting area. So focusing on soil health, so link to my comments from before. So they're one for people to look out for and have a bit of a read on what they're up to. Look, there's always companies like Patagonia that we've talked about for a while, but more around how they work and talk to farmers, right? And just how you collaborate with where our food comes from, I think for too long, it's still goes back to Horsescape, we didn't know enough about our processing and the value chain that we all work in. So companies that work very closely with their farmers work closely and reinvest into helping them to be more sustainable and I've always liked Patagonia for just how they communicate and how they talk about the networks of farmers that they work with. Lovely.

Matt Eastland:

Thank you.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I also wanted to highlight how different it is to find case studies from a global north perspective versus a global south perspective. Because in the north is about supply and messaging and a lot of things like that. Whereas in the south is more on the field really

close to the sources of supply. So the perspective is not, again, as an optional, nice to have. It's really, again, about risk management, right? From the perspective of being on the ground with the farmers, with the producers on the supply side. So, for example, the whole due diligence in Europe sounds great. And from a company perspective in Europe, it is about compliance. But from an on the ground perspective in South America or, you know, Asia or Africa, it is about transformation. Not about choice, right? So I do work closely with Fundación Futuro in Ecuador. They do have a very comprehensive plan of conservation, restoration and regeneration that includes sustainable livelihoods of, you know, the area that they are working on. It also include carbon credits for the trees that they are planting and preserving in the biosphere. And also, of course, management of that ecosystem because we live in the Anthropocene. So that is one. And another one that is a lot larger scale, a close friend of mine from Brazil, AgroSmart, they are working in this drone technology and so on, as Ed was saying, to be able to deliver this non-resource intensive crops, et cetera, management of the land in larger scales to large corporations globally from Brazil. Yes, so it is kind of a user-payer decoupled model, but there's a lot of interesting innovation. I did want to add, and I love that Ed was saying, how can we prepare for different products being available at different times? Price increases, how can culture adapt to it? And here I really believe a lot in the power of cooking and gastronomy. I do think that it is really hard to accept the change of something that is not so tasty. So I do believe that the role of, you know, the guardians of taste and cooking techniques, it's going to be really heightened. I think even as a strategic position in some countries such as Indonesia for rice, you know, how can we substitute rice was going to be the acceptance. We really need to be super clever about it. And I do believe the role of the chef becoming more strategic in that regard.

Matt Eastland:

Okay, well, there's a hot take. So if chefs didn't have enough to do now, they're having to kind of sort of be champions for taste globally to regenerate the food system.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

It's just a field that is expanding. So it doesn't mean you both run a restaurant and advise a government. It means that you can leverage that knowledge in various other fields. And I think that's super exciting.

Matt Eastland:

Yeah, I love that. Love that. OK, both. Thank you very much for that. That was amazing. So that's regenerative slightly nailed for 2025, let's say. Let's see how that goes. Let's move into the health phase and let's talk more specifically about food as medicine, again, a topic which we've been talking about a lot. And we really see that that's been accelerating, particularly around supporting



healthy aging and overall well-being. So how do you see the concept of food as medicine evolving in 2025? And I guess I'm interested in what do you feel are the drivers behind those changes? So why is food as medicine becoming even more prominent in consumers' minds particularly? Ed, what do you think?

Ed Bergen:

There's two. I've got two sides. I think understanding that food is good for us, understanding health, understanding that we are learning about not just our health today, but genetically our health, that messaging is getting to consumers. They're understanding it. It's out there. They're learning about new ingredients that are good for them. We're seeing mainstream retailers, just like Marks and Spencer's in the UK recently did a brain food range. But I actually saw today, there's been a big article put out saying 45%, I've got it here, 45% of disposable, what is it, poorest fifth of the UK would need to spend 45% of disposable income to afford a healthy diet. So great, they get it, but we're failing them. Right? Because if poorer people can't be healthier, then we're failing them. So I'm in two minds. I think the messaging is there. I think our understanding of ingredients is becoming fabulous. We really get into grips of what they can do for us and what we need for a healthy diet, but we're failing them because all of these lovely new innovations that we are, you know, putting through trials and regulating and saying they're good for you and saying they're good for your kids and making things complicated for parents to understand for their children and so on, they can't afford it.

Matt Eastland:

So we're driving great innovation, great messaging, but we're actually missing the vast majority of people in that whole process. That's interesting. Estefania, do you agree?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I think that's a very powerful point, Ed. And I don't know if you've seen this clip from Davos, this historian that goes, This is a firefighter convention, but no one is talking about water or hoses or something. And he goes and says, where's the tax policy, right? And the issue that we have right now is that we are so absorbed by platforms that are hoarding our attention that, honestly, I believe even my own critical thinking has decreased dramatically in the past years. So I think, really, again, it's about depoliticizing issues and just thinking, who is going to get us there? Who are we voting for? That is the list of our worries in terms of the actual problems that we are facing right now. So I definitely agree that, at least for the UK, it sounds very frustrating for a consumer to know what's good but not be able to make that choice. On the other hand, I do believe, going back to food as medicine, that the messaging is strengthened because of this regeneration narrative, because we are seeing more and more overwhelming data that ties soil health with

human and animal and ecosystems health. So basically the One Health concept, right? Beyond crisis management, as Ed was saying at the beginning, but rather working towards well-being. We're seeing that if the soil doesn't have certain micronutrients, we're not able to get those macronutrients, which in turn we are not able to get from our diet, from our body, we're not able to synthesize. So basically we do have a lot of knowledge, but we are not really that close to understanding what makes us healthy. We just have thousands of years experience on how to be healthy and how to thrive as communities. We haven't yet explained the why. And this is why we see this trend, or at least a lot of mentions of this idea of ancient knowledge, right? So yes, technology, scientific knowledge, et cetera, it's a pillar. But I also think we need to do this kind of like continue with the stuff that was working. And one of those was caring for the soil that makes our food nutritious. This is also another very well-known study of tomatoes being 10 times less nutritious. So it's not only the issue about affordability. So when you manage to get those produce, it ends up not being as good as it was for you 20 or 30 years ago.

Matt Eastland:

It's interesting, isn't it? You know, we're talking about like a trend of food as medicine. And actually, this is something which was just happening naturally, you know, in the past. And now it's becoming a trend because the soil is so degraded that now we're having to look towards food as medicine and, you know, NCDs and all the problems that people are having with with poor diet and choices. It's not really anything new. It's just we're trying to trying to get back to where we were almost. Is that right?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I guess once we manage to, you know, get some vaccines, hopefully they stick because that's being politicized as well. And, you know, manage to get over some like big existential threats. Yes, we need to go back to some of the systems that were sustaining overall nutrition and health. And I do believe that there is this idea that food is medicine from always. We're seeing in all cultures where, you know, this tea is actually good for this and that. And all this is, again, Asian wisdom on how they're actually intertwined and not two different things. We see it a lot with Chinese medicine slash gastronomy. And I'm curious whether these geopolitical shifts and leadership can also shift patterns of consumption into some other, you know, cultures such as Chinese culture and what we were discussing. Because if the American was the predominant model, economic model, et cetera, where people's on the go and business is king and all of that, it would make sense. And it is a very hot debate right now, the ultra processed foods. It does make sense that that would dominate the market. But what if those geopolitical changes and those leaderships could also drive different perspectives on food, right? I'm just wondering.

Matt Eastland:

Interesting. Well, let's see how this year goes then. I think there's a lot of political changes coming our way, I think. So let's see how the world reacts to all of that. Ed, just on food as medicine, but on the specifics around sort of mental well-being, because I know that in the Future Bridge Trends Report, you talk about eating my emotions. I'm interested, can you explain what you mean by that?

Ed Bergen:

Yeah, so we... I think one of the things that we did leading up to this particular Food Tread report we've just launched, we looked a lot at clinical trials. So we actually had a bit of a look at ingredients that are getting to those final stages of being approved as ingredients that are good for your mental well-being, your mood, your health, and understanding specifics around each of those ingredients about what they can do, coupled with a consumer behavior, regardless of whether you think that they are dramatic or not. Consumers are feeling anxious, they're feeling stressed, and that's because, compared to 40 years ago, generally consumers are less wealthy. In families, both parents work. They're struggling to make ends meet. Kids have this whole environment of an internet world where everything's a lot more complex, so life is less simple. So life is hard. So there is a huge consumer need to help them. And food has always been joy, right? That's what it's for. It makes us happy. It's very simple. It's why do we eat chocolate? And chocolate isn't bad for you. It really makes us happy. Of course, in moderation. So we looked at a whole host of the different ingredients that we're seeing. And obviously, some of the key words that you may have come up during the era, ingredients like, I don't know, nootropics, like psychoactives. Daptogens. Yeah. We're seeing all of them grow and develop. At the moment, though, in end product innovation, most of it's in tea. Because of the regulation, it's quite easy to launch products in tea, because you can say a lot of the time what you like, relaxed tea. But there is this fabulous opportunity to target different categories. And it's happening with more drinks. What I love, though, is how they're looking at different ingredients. And I'll talk about one or two of them that are delivering different support to a consumer. So we've got ingredients like, and I'm going to try and say the scientific term but I'm not the scientist, gamma amino butyric acid or GABA, which you may see on the back of packs, being linked to anxiety and stress relief. And you sometimes see GABA in some of the health drinks that we see coming out on the market. We've seen ingredients like taking cocoa and ingredients like polyphenols and linking them to helping especially older people with cognitive decline. So we know this awful, we have a huge industry understanding Alzheimer's and memory loss as consumers get older and actually other ingredients that can help consumers with that as well. Many of these different technologies, the first one is actually a company in Korea that we've been looking at, this one from a company called Ibima from Spain. And then looking at brand, just one other brand drop, which I love, is a brand called Trip. I'm not sponsored by Trip, I promise.

But Trip, they had like a massive year of sales. massive year. I think they were topping lists of new brands. And they're using ingredients like lion's mane and ashwagandha. And they're also targeting sort of mindful moments. Some of them are boosted with magnesium as well. They're talking about cognition and sleep and stress. And these products are, as we see more ingredients being ticked and regulatory approved, is how we're hopefully going to help consumers in the future. One caveat which I worry about is some of the more psychoactive ingredients is what might that mean for, you know, we all talk about cannabis for a few years, but there are psychoactive ingredients which are going to go through a bit of a, will consumers accept them? Like Lion's Mane are meant to have quite a quick reaction time to chill you out. Is that gonna be okay that you have that effect? Maybe it will, maybe it won't. We all drink caffeine. So there's a lot of work to do, but I love the fact that we're really targeting very specific mental wellbeing needs for consumers that they can recognize. And they can recognize it at the moment they're feeling it, which is amazing if our food systems can help with it. So there's my monologue. Apologies for the monologue.

Matt Eastland:

No, no, it's not a monologue. It's fascinating. I feel like I need to go out and get myself some more tea. I feel like I'm super boring. But I'll be looking out for that trip as well. I'll check it out. Thank you for that. And both just briefly before we talk about kind of future, future stuff. So we've had many conversations around how countries can plan better for food security, be prepared for climate driven food shocks, which we've spoken about as well. Plus, we're hearing more and more, particularly at the moment, around food sovereignty, where countries protect their own produce and supply chain. So I guess I'm interested in your kind of take on where food security and food supply chains are going. But very specifically, I'd like to ask each of you a question. So Estefan, as someone who's worked in the restaurant industry, where do you believe that's kind of heading with regards kind of supply chains, food security? Is there any kind of trends you're feeling or you're hearing about for 2025 and beyond?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I think as always, right, the restaurants have been a huge bastion of innovation in terms of where to get the produce, how to sell it, how to create a market for stuff that just doesn't have a market anywhere else. I live in a very food privileged town called San Sebastián in the north of Spain.

Matt Eastland:

My favorite place in the world. I love it.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

It's not the worst place to be.

Matt Eastland:

It's definitely not. Unless you hate food, in which case it's probably not the place to be.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

Yeah, that would be not great for you. But we're seeing how a lot of restaurant owners are shifting into plant-based offerings. This is both motivated by trying to get local supply chains or local supply, but it's also economic decisions. At least for us, the price of meat, fish, eggs, well, that's a super famous one from the U.S., has been going up and it's harder to justify your overhead to the end consumer. So we're seeing a lot of sharing plates that are very much plant-based, pasta-based, etc. And I do believe the biggest motivation behind it is economical. On the other hand, we see the mainstream kind of restaurant positioning strategies that are, you know, with countries behind it, say Thailand, Peru, Spain, right? The strategy has been focused not on the talent or maybe the recipe, but rather the product. So here, for example, you come here to eat this fish and this, you know, meat and steak that is huge and all of that. And the reality of it is that this place is positioned with those products, but they come from as far as the Chilean Patagonia or, you know, Poland and in the Eastern Europe. So there is a decoupling of gastronomic tradition and supply. So I think, again, it's a really interesting right place for innovation, and I do believe plant-based is going to be more and more dominant in our menus in restaurants all over. We're going to see hybrids pop up everywhere. That's my honest opinion, and I think it's affordability and economically motivated. I think we're going to see different crops popping up. So non-wheat based breads, for example, cassava probably is going to be huge in the global south. So basically diversifying the stereotypical global menu, the IKEA copy and paste menu that we've seen in our travels for the past 10 years. One, economically motivated. Second, supply motivated. And third, I think because consumers are kind of craving connection, authenticity, not more of the same stuff that they see on social media, right?

Matt Eastland:

That's fascinating. Yeah, I like that. And just on the social media side, I was going to ask you about that. I mean, we're kind of in that behavioral space now. I mean, how do you see social media influencing our interaction with food this year and beyond from your perspective? And then let's start to talk about some weird and wonderful stuff to close out the show.

Ed Bergen:

If we're looking at innovation over the past few years, so brand new food products and even on menus, I think we've seen a lot more fusions of something that was popular and something else that was popular and put together, and that's been going for a few years. But

there's been a lot of brand collabs as a result. We haven't seen a huge amount of brand new innovation. And it's very easy to talk about plant-based. I still think plant-based has a fabulous future. But the processed cider plant-based will fall for veg forward. And therefore, when we look at the social media aspects, I think that we're going to see celebrations of fruits and vegetables and their colours and their flavours and how they can be used flexibly across all sorts of different dishes. Oh, that's encouraging. I get meal kits twice a week, right? We love it. And I have two kids and we get a meal kit twice a week. Yeah, we pay a bit more, but that means that we are getting quite healthy foods that we can cook in half an hour and we're cooking. And what I love about them is, and we get the vegetarian ones, so I love about just the huge amounts of veg and color and the sprinkling of little bits and pieces here and there, whether it's nuts or little chili flakes or something that gets added on that you didn't really need, but it just gives it something extra. And I think those messages to help consumers, and we'll see more of that on social media, to help them spice up their meal, literally. We're going to see more of that and more exciting.

Matt Eastland:

I love that. I really hope that that is a trend which continues because that can only be a good thing. So thank you very much, Ed. We're right at the end of the show. Just before we close, I just want to get your final take. This is the kind of part I really like. So is there anything really bold, weird, wonderful, in terms of a trend you'd like to highlight, or even anything that the food industry isn't expecting. So Ed, we had a Trends podcast a couple years ago. I think it was off the back of COVID. And you were talking about actually weirdly, you know, no one had seen coming the fact that long life foods were going to be a thing. You know, it's like we've gone from everything being fresh to actually people want long life because people were worried about can they get the food in the shops next time. I think tin soup has grown by the way. Has it really?

Ed Bergen:

Tin soup is back everyone, here we go.

Matt Eastland:

It grew a little bit. So anything weird and wonderful that you've both seen or you would like to highlight? Estefania, I'll start with you please.

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

I'm really excited about the disruptions that can happen in channels. I think there is a lot of innovators, there's a lot of ideas, but channels are really the bottleneck of innovation getting to consumers. And you go to Carrefour, at least in my corner, and you can see a whole shelf, humongous shelf, with just Dorito bags.

So it's not the idea that there's not enough space, it's not that there's not enough innovators, it's just that it's really hard for innovation to reach consumers. One very small example, because of course this very consolidated market, the retail and channels market or industry, but I've seen growing some examples in Brooklyn, some examples in Southern France of cooperative retailers. So basically you get two cost ingredients or foods, exchanging it for membership plus, I think it's five hours a month of labor, so restocking or cleaning the floor or working the cashier or whatever, right? And for this, instead of paying whatever overprice or overhead you're paying in a regular retailer, you pay cost or, you know, a more moderate overhead. And I think this is totally revolutionary, especially when we're talking about affordability, right? So a resource that I feel is totally underutilized in the global food system and beyond is our own time. We're giving so much time to social media and huge tech giants. How about we redistribute that time more wisely for our own wellbeing? And so I'm really excited about that. And I just want to say, stop making apps and start to make the iPhone innovators out there. We need channels. We need innovations to reach consumers because there's so much creativity overflowing the industry worldwide.

**Matt Eastland:**

Amazing. Estefania, that was not an answer I was expecting. I love that. So more channels. Thank you very much. And Ed, over to you. I know you were sort of teasing me at the top of the show before we started about something weird and wonderful that you'd seen. So I'm really interested to know what that is.

**Ed Bergen:**

See, I'm worried that my innovation is going to compare to Farley's innovation about channels. But actually, this is just more scary, but it might have an impact in the future. So there's a brand that we were looking at, or a company we were looking at, a software company called Affectiva. So A-double-F-E-C-T-I-V-A. And they call themselves a smart eye company. and they've got five patents so far and essentially it is artificial intelligence, facial expression and body language software. They're expecting that consumers or even us with our webcams on right now will be able to tell me based on my body expressions, my facial expressions, what I need. So think about micro-expressions that a human may not even be able to spot, but they have various patterns that can analyse micro-expressions and therefore target that person with whatever products or services that they might need at that very moment. So you're feeling really tired right now, aren't you? And you may not have thought it out loud, but you are. Or you're feeling a bit cross and be able to start targeting you with brands and advertising and food products and services. So think about the applications. Of course, there is the social media application, which is scary. Would a consumer sign up for this? Some would if they were going to get some benefits for sharing that, not only their data but their expressions related to an advert or a food brand and how they watch an advert and it will

tell, the food brand will know the person's feelings, micro-feelings about it. But also think about in-store, and you're standing at a till, you're servicing a customer, and there is a camera on that customer, and you're behind a screen, and it tells you, be nice to this guy. They're having a tough day. Be super empathetic. Or they're really angry. How can you come into this with the right language to really service that person properly? They're actually really, really happy. They might be willing to spend a few more bucks if you really have a great conversation with them. This is the bit that I find scary, just how we have a trend about emotional AI. So we call it thinking for me, but how AI is going to become more emotionally understanding. Not just knowledge, really understand us better than we understand ourselves. So scary.

Matt Eastland:

It all sounds very minority report. If anyone's seen that film, it's where, you know, you're kind of walking and, you know, it's scanning people and then you hyper personalize the advertising to them. And do you think, I mean, scary as that sounds, I suppose it's a logical next step in terms of where we are. I mean, do you think that's going to have a positive effect on the food industry? Or is this going to be another opportunity just to kind of overly market to people?

Ed Bergen:

I'm very optimistic. I do think that there are great opportunities to really help people. So we've talked about the mood foods and the idea that we can learn what consumers need and why they need it. But at the same time, yeah, I think it's going to have a big impact on how we innovate, how we innovate faster, how we target consumers with the right ads or ads that we think that they might purchase on. So something that's coming, but then, you know, you can be the judge yourself on how whether it will be taken positively or negatively, but they're through those stages now and it's coming. So something really interesting.

Matt Eastland:

Okay, you heard it here first. Thank you, Ed. That is weird and wonderful, slightly scary, but very fascinating all the same. So amazing. Thank you, Ed. So where can our listeners go to find out more information about yourself and your FutureBridge Trends Report?

Ed Bergen:

So you can always find me on LinkedIn, generally I post videos, sitting with a coffee very regularly, talking about all these things. But you can find us on [www.futurebridge.com](http://www.futurebridge.com). It's all one word. And if you want to get our tech trends, and I think we've got a little summary out, stick a slash at the end of [futurebridge.com](http://futurebridge.com) and do a food, little dash, and dash nutrition, and it'll be right in front of you. So if you want to have a look at those few of the



trends that we were talking about today, you can do it there. So thanks.

Matt Eastland:

Amazing. So where can listeners go for more information about yourself and the Mycelium Gastronomy Network?

Estefania Simon-Sasyk:

My website or Mycelium's website is [myceliumgastronomy.com](http://myceliumgastronomy.com). We are on LinkedIn. We are pausing our presence on Instagram, both personal and corporate. But, you know, we're still hanging on to LinkedIn. Do reach out there. There is a contact form on the website, so we'll be sure to answer your messages. And thank you so much for the invitation, Matt. And what a pleasure to have this conversation, Ed.

Matt Eastland:

Thank you again. This has been fascinating. One of my favorite podcasts of the year. So thank you for bringing the energy and the positivity and all just the insights. It's all about the insights.

Ed Bergen:

I love it.

Matt Eastland:

I love it. So thank you. And remember everybody, our top five food trends to watch in 2025 EIT food blog post is out. So make sure to head over onto our website to give it a read. And thank you everybody for listening in. I'd just like to quickly summarise what the conversation we've just had on the show. Another fascinating episode and one of my favourites are the trends ones as always. So we spoke a lot on the podcast about sustainability and how we need to really be very clear and define the messaging around sustainability. And that moves us to talking about regenerative agriculture, but particularly around soil health. We keep coming back to soil health. you know, it was a very black and white conversation around, you know, we just need to do this. So, you know, regenerative is going to keep getting bigger and bigger. And it also underpinned the conversation around food as medicine as well. You know, like Estefania was saying, there's no point talking around food as medicine if, you know, we can't get the nutrients into the soil. So it's very interesting how both those two things came together. We spoke about the role of chefs and taste in being the leaders, championing different choices that consumers are going to have. And of course, no conversation on trends is complete without talking around AI. And obviously that's going to keep integrating itself into our lives. And with a slightly, slightly scary final point from Ed around, you know, AI becoming more emotionally involved with us as consumers, particularly in the food system space going forward. Yeah, a little bit of a tricky one, but

let's see how that one unfolds. But like I say, if you really want to get all the top information about trends, please do visit our Top 5 Food Trends to Watch in 2025 blog. And please also do make sure you check out all the great work that Ed and Estefania are doing as well. But also, you know, please reach out to us, you know, let us know what you think the top food trends in 2025 are going to be. We're absolutely fascinated to know what you think this is going to be and also what you think about the episode. So please do reach out to us on our LinkedIn channel at EIT Food and do make sure you hit that subscribe button so you never miss another episode.