

CHFA's Natural Health Trends Report of 2017



Voice of the Natural Health Industry
La voix de l'industrie de la santé naturelle

Introduction

As we embark on a new year, Canadians are curious to know what foods, supplements and products will be on everyone's radar in 2017.

With an eye on the year ahead, the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) shares the scoop from industry insiders to identify the top five natural health trends of 2017.

These trends pack a punch of holistic health benefits and, best of all, they're simple to integrate into your daily lifestyle for a happy and healthy year!

Trend 1: Mushrooms

Why mushrooms will be trending in 2017

For a food that grows in the shadows, mushrooms are about to enjoy some well-deserved time in the spotlight.

The incredible health benefits of mushrooms have stood the test of time. Mushroom extracts and whole bulbs have been a food source for ancient populations, and have served as medicinal products in the form of tinctures, powders and teas for centuries. There are tens of thousands of strains of mushrooms in the wild; some are nutritious, others are poisonous, and many contain medicinal properties that are gaining attention from the medical community and health trend-hunters alike.

What are the health benefits of mushrooms?

Common strains of edible mushrooms, including button and cremini mushrooms, are a rich source of B-vitamins and minerals, including selenium and copper. A growing list of medicinal mushrooms available at your local CHFA Member health food store are being recognized for other benefits as well.

For example, some mushroom extracts pack a series of health benefits related to improving mental and nerve cell health. Key strains being researched include reishi, chaga, shiitake, Lion's Mane and oyster mushrooms. Research has suggested that these medicinal mushrooms offer benefits such as improved memory and learning, and a decrease in anxiety and depressive symptoms. In fact, compounds in the Lion's Mane mushroom have been shown to improve the protective covering of nerve cells (called myelin) from damage, relating to reductions in cognitive decline.

When it comes to the immune system, the benefits of reishi and chaga mushroom extracts are well documented. Reishi mushrooms have been consumed for thousands of years in Asia, steeped in hot water to make a tea. This process of hot-water extraction can release beneficial carbohydrates and fibres that have potent immune system effects. For instance, these active compounds can increase the production of certain white blood cells to help identify and break down invading bugs.

An easy-to-find mushroom to try in 2017 for big health benefits is the shiitake mushroom, which contains a unique source of compounds called eritadenines. These rare compounds have been studied by researchers at the University of Japan and found to significantly reduce cholesterol levels in the blood. Research also shows that the compounds in shiitake mushrooms can also help to fight obesity, support cardiovascular health, as well as promote skin health due to their high levels of selenium, an important mineral for our antioxidant defenses.

How you can incorporate mushrooms into your 2017 healthy habits

Many people are already aware that incorporating more plant-based foods into their diet reaps many benefits. Mushrooms can be a simple and delicious way to boost meatless meals in a hurry. Whether you toss them into a salad or throw them on the barbecue, there's no denying their nutritional benefits.

Enjoy one of the many mushroom-based teas that are available at natural health stores, or make your own by steeping dried mushrooms. Rich and earthy, these teas combine various strains of mushrooms like reishi, Lion's Mane, shiitake, or chaga for all their delicious immune-boosting benefits.

If you don't have a taste for them, supplements offer a simple way to incorporate the benefits of mushrooms into your lifestyle. A great example is maitake mushroom supplements, which have been studied to be potent immune boosters due to the high concentration of beneficial fibre called beta-glucan. Visit your local CHFA Member health food store to explore the many options available.

Trend 2: Sprout for your health

Why sprouting will be a trend in 2017

Canadians are increasingly interested in three key things: local food, healthy food and DIY food!

Sprouting ticks all of these boxes, not to mention it's easy and affordable. This trend is also primed to last all year, as it's easy to sprout from the comfort of your own kitchen throughout winter. Keep an eye out for sprouting kits and tips on how to sprout at your local CHFA Member health food store.

Sprouting is a safe and nutritious way to add veggies to your diet. However, there are some important safety considerations to ensure your sprouts are free from harmful bacteria. Be sure to take precautionary measures including: buying certified "pathogen-free" seeds; using sterilized containers for sprouting; and storing your sprouts in a clean, refrigerated airtight container once they've sprouted. Children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems should speak with their

health care practitioner before consuming fresh sprouts. For other safety tips, refer to [this fact sheet](#) for safe sprouting.

What are the health benefits of eating sprouts?

Whether you buy sprouts or germinate your own at home, there are many to choose from that provide terrific health and culinary benefits.

Generally speaking, one of the big advantages of sprouts is that they are low in calories and fats, but high in digestible protein and essential vitamins and minerals. Almost any seed or grain can be sprouted with a little moisture, resulting in a crisp root tendril and colourful leaflet. The most common seeds used for sprouting are alfalfa, broccoli, lentils and the beautiful red-tinged sprout of radish seeds.

By allowing the seed or grain to sprout, or “germinate,” nutrients naturally present in the seed are liberated. Vitamins and minerals usually locked away in the dried seed are activated during sprouting, which then allows our body to access and absorb these nutrients. In addition, sprouted foods retain a high vitamin and mineral content that many foods lose through processing.

One of our favourite sprouts is the widely studied mung bean, a tiny green bean commonly grown in India and other Asian countries. Just one cup of mung bean sprouts can provide a substantial portion of the daily iron intake required by adults for healthy red blood cells and blood pressure.

How you can incorporate sprouting into your 2017 healthy habits

Because of the nutritional benefits and rise in popularity of sprouting, this technique is now being used in a wide variety of other products available at your local CHFA Member health food store. For example, sprouted flours can add a health boost to your baking, while a vegan sprouted protein powder can help you recover after an intense workout.

On their own, sprouts can be added to salads and sandwiches or used as a garnish on soup. You can even blend them into a smoothie for a hit of protein, vitamins and minerals.

Again, if you're going to sprout at home, make sure you do it safely. Remember to rinse the seeds, beans or grains regularly and follow these steps for an optimal sprouting experience.

The Sprouting Process

- **To soak**, place the seeds, beans or grains in a Mason jar with filtered water. For the top, use a sprouting lid, sprouting screen or a cheese cloth fitted snugly around the rim with an elastic band.
- **During the sprouting process** you will need to drain the water and rinse the seeds, beans or grains. This process needs to be done two to three times a day until they are fully sprouted.
- **Once sprouted**, rinse the sprouts thoroughly, drain the excess water and place the jar in direct sunlight for about an hour. The sunshine will help them “green up” and evaporate the remaining moisture.
- Once the sprouts have savoured their time in the sun, they will need to be **refrigerated and enjoyed within two to three days**.
- Sprouted beans with their softened texture are great in **soups and dips** like hummus, while sprouted seeds and grains are delicious in **wraps, salads and even smoothies**.

Trend 3: Digestive Enzyme Supplements: Going Beyond Probiotics

Why digestive enzymes will be trending in 2017

With the rise of probiotics, all eyes are on the next big thing in digestive health.

If you're looking to give your gut health an added boost in 2017, many experts are recommending that Canadians go beyond probiotics with digestive enzymes. Digestive enzymes give our body a head start on digestion by breaking down all the nutrients in the food we consume. They're like the keys that unlock the nutritional potential in our diet.

Our bodies naturally produce digestive enzymes; however, sometimes a boost from a natural health supplement can help our gut health.

For those with digestive disorders, such as ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome and Crohn's Disease, digestive enzymes may add an extra layer of relief. Be sure to speak with your health care practitioner about whether digestive enzymes are right for you.

What are the health benefits of digestive enzymes?

Digestive enzymes help ease the burden of your stomach having to digest heavy meals, and help reduce bloating and gas production associated with indigestion.

What makes digestive enzymes so special is that each one has a specific purpose that aids in proper and efficient digestion. Digestive enzymes break down specific parts of the food we eat, such as carbohydrates, protein and fats. This process of digestion and breaking down food into absorbable parts starts in the mouth, and ends in the large intestine and colon. Proper enzymatic digestion can reduce bloating and gas, and improve nutrient absorption.

While some digestive enzymes naturally occur in the foods we eat, cooking or processing can deactivate and destroy these enzymes. This is why supplements are a great option.

For Canadians suffering from heartburn, acid reflux, bloating or trouble with bowel movements, we've got a gut feeling that your digestive tract may benefit from this boost.

How you can incorporate digestive enzymes into your 2017 healthy habits

The best use of digestive enzyme supplements is before large meals to help break down the sugars, starches, proteins and fats, putting less stress on your digestive system throughout the day. They can help to reduce bloating, indigestion and the likelihood of ulcers from acid buildup in the stomach.

When choosing a digestive enzyme supplement, look for products that come in the form of a coated capsule and that contain enzymes like amylase, peptase, lipase, cellulase and lactase. These help to break down carbs, protein, fat, cellulose (from fibres) and lactose (from milk).

Enzymes that contain papain and/or bromelain also work well. Not only do these come in supplement form, but they're naturally found in foods like papaya and pineapples.

Speak with your health care practitioner before deciding if digestive enzymes are right for you.

Trend 4: Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives

Why plant-based dairy alternatives will be trending in 2017

2016 saw the rise in excitement around vegan and raw menu options. With this has come a boom in plant-based alternatives to common dairy products.

With more and more of the population suffering from lactose intolerance and allergy symptoms ranging from digestive issues to hives and life-threatening anaphylaxis, delicious dairy alternatives are becoming much more common and easier to find at your local CHFA Member health food store.

From nut beverages to coconut yogurt and soy-based ice cream, more dairy-free alternatives are becoming available in 2017, and deliver on both taste and nutrition.

What are the health benefits of dairy alternatives?

Many of these substitutions can be used in your favourite recipes as dairy substitutes, plus you get the added benefit of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and fibre, while staying low in calories and saturated fats.

How you can incorporate dairy alternatives into your 2017 healthy habits

Almond-, hemp-, soy- and coconut-based dairy alternatives have been around for years, but newcomers to the market include many other options, from flax seeds to hazelnuts and cashews. These are super creamy without lots of added calories. Many of these also serve as great sources of calcium and are naturally lactose-free, in addition to providing healthy doses of vitamin A, D and E, with virtually no saturated fat or cholesterol. These benefits make them great dairy alternatives for those with heart problems or at risk for cardiovascular disease.

Other than being straight-up delicious, coconut yogurt has a rich nutrient profile and an added incentive for those with digestive issues: being lactose-free can significantly help your digestive health if you suffer from intolerance. Coconut also contains other benefits, such as antibacterial properties that help to balance gut bacteria and rid the gut of toxins to improve both your digestive and immune health. As a potent source of MCTs (medium-chain triglycerides), coconut also provides short-chain fatty acids that aren't stored as fat, but used as energy to stimulate your metabolism.

For those who love the creamy experience of milk chocolate, but would prefer a non-dairy option, don't be dismayed. A number of new products are available at your local CHFA Member health food store that will satisfy your sweet tooth. For instance, chocolate makers now offer nut-free and dairy-free chocolate options. This is being driven by innovation in the industry, with new and exciting natural ingredients with health benefits being used to achieve the same delicious taste and texture of milk chocolate. Visit your local CHFA Member health food store to explore dairy-free chocolate options.

The final category receiving an overhaul in 2017 is cheese and spreads. A number of exciting new options are coming to store shelves. These are a great alternative to cheese that doesn't upset the gastrointestinal system, and still taste delicious. Sprinkle it shredded and it works perfectly on pizza, garlic bread, penne — you name it. You can even find rounds of cheese made from nuts that are dairy- and lactose-free but will have everyone at your dinner party coming back for more. Many of these products are not only dairy-free, but are also gluten-free, suitable for vegans, and have lower overall levels of fat, saturated fat and cholesterol.

Trend 5: Smart Carb Options

Why smart carb options will be trending in 2017

With the rise of diabetes, the boom of the gluten-free trend, and an increasing link between refined sugar and chronic disease, more and more Canadians are looking for alternative and “smarter” carb options.

However, carbohydrates aren't the “bad guys” of nutrition. These nutrients are important to fuel our bodies, healthy gut bugs and brains. In 2017, experts want to clear up the confusion about carbs and help Canadians enjoy all the health benefits associated with carbs.

What are the health benefits of smart carb options?

This year, expect to see carb options that promote more balanced energy levels, digestion and brain function a result of growing product innovations.

Our body's fuel of choice is glucose, which can be obtained from our diet or produced by our liver by converting stored fat and protein to glucose. The ultimate purpose is to provide energy to all of our body's cells, including our muscles, which are essential for everything from running to breathing to keeping our heart beating. Glucose is also essential for brain function. Keeping a balanced blood sugar level protects our body from damage to the interior of our blood vessels caused by too much sugar. Opting for smart carb options can help to normalize our energy levels and keep a level head.

Refined carbohydrates found in pastries, white breads and most starchy pasta noodles stress our body's systems, including overwhelming the digestive tract, spiking insulin levels and pressuring the pancreas. Choosing smart carb options that are rich in fibre allows your body time to break down and absorb them, which is good for all of our digestive organs. Fibre, one of the most powerful smart carbs, feeds the good gut bugs in our digestive tract that can help with everything from improving mood to weight maintenance.

Meals high in complex carbs not only stimulate fullness, but also increase neurotransmitters like 5-HTP and serotonin, our “feel-good” hormones, as well as boost our melatonin, which is associated with better sleep. Carbohydrates help to fuel the brain, so we need a healthy balance of sugar to keep our minds active and healthy.

How you can incorporate smart carbs into your 2017 healthy habits

Typical whole-food sources of smart or “complex” carbohydrates include legumes, buckwheat, amaranth, quinoa, fruits and vegetable, and whole grains. When looking for new and trendy sources in 2017, you'll start to see smart carbs working their way into many of your favourite foods.

Look out for bean pasta, which is a gluten-free, protein-packed alternative to traditional spaghetti noodles that also contain high amounts of fibre for better digestion and promotes healthy weight management.

Shirataki or “miracle” noodles are also an interesting alternative to traditional pasta noodles, made from konjac yam. They mimic the taste and texture of traditional spaghetti, but are low-carb, gluten-free and low-calorie!

If you have a hard time with the idea of letting go of the traditional pasta noodles you know and love, consider going the route of noodles with added legume flour. For example, studies reveal that adding split pea powder to whole wheat noodles significantly improved the body's ability to break down starches.

If you're on-the-go and still want the high-quality energy provided by smart carbs outside of pasta, consider adding powders like maltodextrin and waxy maize into your protein shake or smoothie in 2017, which are great carb sources for post-workout regimens that improve muscle glycogen recovery for energy and don't spike inflammatory responses. And for that late-night snack attack or movie-night carb fix, healthier options are hitting store shelves this year, including bean chips and other low-fat bean and pea snacks that satisfy your need for crunch without the spike and crash of conventional snacks.

It's never been easier to incorporate smart carbs into your daily routine than in 2017. Head to your local CHFA Member health food store for tons of fun options.

Conclusion

We encourage Canadians to make 2017 the year you maximize your health by exploring these health trends. Get creative and supplement your diet intelligently.

Whether you reach for mushroom tea or supplements, try sprouting, add a digestive enzyme to your game, explore a new dairy alternative, or opt for those smart carb options, 2017 is going to be an exciting year for your health!

Stay tuned for more trends and information on how to stay happy and healthy into the New Year and beyond from your friends at CHFA!

About CHFA

The [Canadian Health Food Association](#) (CHFA) is Canada's largest national trade association dedicated to the natural health and organic products industry. The Association represents manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, distributors and importers of natural health and organic products. With a membership of more than 1,000

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businesses across the country, CHFA represents an industry that contributes more than \$6 billion to the Canadian economy.