Mood food

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This August, Monarch Airlines introduced a mood-enhancing food menu to create a calmer in-flight experience for passengers. The “Mood Food” box features echinacea and liquorice ice-cream to boost immunity, green tea and lavender cakes for relaxation and herbal tea to reduce bloating. It follows Monarch’s research which found that 72% of British travellers find travelling stressful and 33% don’t start to relax until the third day of their holiday.

To create the menu, Monarch partnered with Professor Charles Spence, an experimental psychologist who previously collaborated with Heston Blumenthal at The Fat Duck, a UK-based Michelin-starred restaurant. “Travelling is a time when we’re under pressure and rushed, so eating well is often an afterthought,” says Spence. “I’ve loved working with Monarch to use food—which can be a powerful psychological and physiological tool—to create the first ever real ‘happy’ meal to get travellers in the holiday mood as quickly as possible.”
Beyond tackling the need to unwind from the stresses of work, Monarch is challenging the already stressful experience of travelling itself. According to the International Air Transport Association, the number of unruly passengers on planes increased 14% in 2015, showing a need for the airline industry to confront increasing frustration and “air rage.” Gatwick Airport explored this in 2015, where several restaurants across its North and South terminals trialled the use of mood-lifting ingredients in their food.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYvbH6xt2X8&feature=youtu.be

As explored in our Well Economy report, there is a growing acknowledgement that food has an impact on mood and wellbeing. As consumers become more invested in their own wellness, food and drink have evolved to be seen as a way to manage physical and mental health, not just to achieve a certain body type. Dr. Smood, a healthy fast-food chain, plays on this trend with anti-inflammatory foods that are 80% plant-based, with many of the products claiming to energize consumers. The company has grown from one location to five in two years and four more café openings are planned for this year. Larger restaurant franchises are also catching onto this trend. Pizza Hut launched a mood-enhancing pizza in time for Blue Monday this year. Consumers are also turning to apps to help them. Yolk! uses AI to detect sadness, anger and anxiety and suggests foods that may improve mood.

Scientific research is further supporting the notion that food and mental wellbeing are linked. A 2017 study found that an anti-inflammatory, Mediterranean-style diet high in vegetables, fish, olive oil, and nuts reduced symptoms of depression in 32% of its sample.

It is important to acknowledge the impact that food can have on health and wellness. Consumers are beginning to understand that what they eat influences how they feel. Brands should also start to take on this knowledge and apply it where possible in their customer journey.

For more on changing consumer attitudes towards food, download the Food + Drink: Trends and Futures 2017 trend report.

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