

WINTER CHRISTMAS

26



PREMIUM FOOD

- AT HOME -

MACRO INSIGHT: THE NEXT STAGE OF PREMIUMISATION

Over recent years, consumers have shifted from seeking value-for-money to value-for-experience. As inflation stabilises and discretionary spending begins to return, a new trend is emerging — Ultra Premiumisation. This isn't about "luxury for show", but luxury with depth — craftsmanship, provenance, and sensory reward.

- **Consumers are trading up** for products that deliver restaurant-quality experiences at home.
- **Provenance and storytelling** now carry equal weight to flavour — sourcing, breed, maturation, and preparation all matter.
- This aligns with wider macro movements like "**earned indulgence**" and "**quiet luxury**", where consumers reward themselves with fewer, but better, moments of satisfaction.

"THE RISE OF ULTRA-PREMIUM: INDULGENCE
REIMAGINED ACROSS SAUSAGES, SOUS VIDE & STEAKS"





SAUSAGES: BUTCHER'S CRAFT, ELEVATED

Sausages are moving beyond everyday staples into *special occasion indulgence*.

- **Inclusions of rare or heritage breeds** (e.g., Gloucester Old Spot, Iberico pork) signal authenticity and quality.
- **Regional Italian or truffle-infused recipes** are growing in popularity, supported by a desire for chef-inspired pairings.
- Textural refinement is key — coarser grinds and natural casings elevate the eating experience.
- Visual cues (like artisanal twist ties or small-batch branding) reinforce the premium tier.

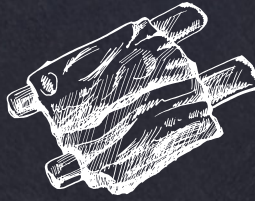
Foodmaker Winter Collection – Our gourmet sausages celebrating “Butcher Heritage,” with ultra-premium cues like slow-matured pork, seasonal herbs, and aged cheddar & garlic pairings.



**£1.27
PER KG
MORE**

Within the UK sausage category, **premium products are sold at an average of £1.27 per kg higher** than standard equivalents. Consumers are increasingly “prepared to pay more for their bangers”, signalling strong acceptance of elevated pricing in familiar formats.

(Source: AHDB Consumer Insight, 2024; Meat Management UK 2024)



SOUS VIDE: THE NEW STANDARD OF PRECISION LUXURY

Sous Vide is emerging as the *signature of ultra-premium convenience* — precision-cooked, texture-perfect, and consistently high quality.

- Consumers perceive Sous Vide as a restaurant-level process, offering reliability and tenderness.
- Premium cues include slow-cooked beef cheeks in red wine jus, heritage chicken with truffle butter, or 48-hour short ribs.
- Packaging transparency (window pouches, chef-style plating imagery) enhances perception of quality, with Tesco and Sainsbury's new Sous Vide ranges embracing this approach.
- **Foodmaker Winter Collection:** Chef-inspired winter dishes such as slow cooked Feather-blade in our best ever beef gravy, Fragrant Beef Rendang curry and our best-ever Chicken, Leek and Bacon Pie.



STEAKS: PROVENANCE, DRY-AGE, AND FLAVOUR DEPTH

In the steak sector, **ultra-premium** means *depth of flavour and story*.

- Dry-aging and marbling grading are consumer-recognisable quality markers.
- Premiumisation is linked to sustainability — grass-fed, regenerative farms, and traceable sourcing.
- **Flavour pairing innovations** (e.g., peppered bourbon glaze, smoked salt butter) offer a modern twist while maintaining authenticity.



**£942
MILLION
BY 2032**

The UK High-End Beef Market — which includes premium cuts such as **Wagyu, dry-aged sirloin, and Côte de Bœuf** — is projected to grow from **£579 million in 2023 to £942 million by 2032**, representing a **compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 6.3%**.

(Source: Credence Research, 2024)

WHY NOW

- **Consumers are seeking fewer, better moments** of indulgence post-economic recovery.
- **Retailers are re-tiering their premium lines**, leaving space for ultra-premium limited editions.
- **Restaurant inspiration continues to shape retail expectations**, blurring the line between home and hospitality.
- This aligns with a predicted **growth in high-value protein formats**, especially for festive and gifting occasions.

JUSTIFICATION FOR 2026: THE ECONOMIC REALITY OF INDULGENCE

- Hospitality pricing is expected to remain high as operators absorb increased wage and energy costs.
- Consumers are adjusting long-term, not temporarily — spending patterns are rebalancing, not reverting.
- Retail premium ranges (particularly chilled ready-to-cook) are forecast to grow +8–10% YOY through 2026 (Kantar projection).
- Retailers are prioritising restaurant inspiration as the defining attribute for their top-tier private labels, festive and gifting occasions.

“Ultra Premiumisation represents the new indulgence frontier — where craft, provenance, and pleasure intersect to create unforgettable eating experiences.”

Winter 2026 Christmas with a twist

“Traditional Christmas with a Twist: Reimagining Festive Classics for Modern Tastes.”

Macro Insight: The Comfort of Tradition Meets the Excitement of Discovery

After several years of uncertainty and shifting seasonal trends, consumers are craving the **nostalgia and comfort** of familiar Christmas flavours. But they’re also seeking **freshness, surprise, and personalisation**. The winning formula for Winter 2026 is to **honour heritage while delivering something new** — a playful twist, an unexpected flavour, or a premium reinterpretation of the classics.

- **“Modern nostalgia”** is driving purchasing decisions — consumers want the emotional warmth of tradition with updated relevance.
- **New generations** (Millennials and Gen Z) are redefining Christmas menus: smaller gatherings, bolder flavours, and curated indulgence over excess.
- **Global influence and premiumisation** are adding layers to festive classics — think miso-butter sprouts, mulled-spiced glaze, or bourbon cranberry sauce.

Flavour Forecast: The Twists Defining Christmas 2026

This season, the key to differentiation lies in **flavour play and texture elevation** — where the familiar base meets a bold new partner.

Foodmaker Winter Collection: “Twistmas Range” — a collection of modernised festive favourites blending the recognisable with the remarkable.

Traditional Base	Modern Twist	Trend Insight
Pigs in Blankets	Glazed with Hot Maple	Sweet heat continues to dominate festive menus
Roast Beef or Turkey	Rubbed with black garlic marinade or truffle herb salt	Elevates traditional roasts with umami depth
Stuffing	Buttermilk, leek & sage Ciabatta crumb stuffing	A modern, textural upgrade using artisanal bread bases
Christmas Sausage Rolls	Mature cheddar, leek and black pepper	Sophisticated twists for party season indulgence
Festive Steaks	Marinated in Middle Eastern inspired glaze	Fuses classic festive ingredients with Global grill formats

Texture, Theatre & Experience

The twist isn't just flavour — it's about **multi-sensory experience**.

- **Textures:** crisp cracklings, velvety sauces, and slow-cooked tenderness elevate indulgence.
- **Theatre:** premium glazes, flame finishes, or butter bastes add visual drama.
- **Formats:** bite-sized festive tapas, carving joints with ready-to-serve gravies, or Sous Vide sharing roasts combine ease with elegance.

Seasonal Storytelling: Emotional Connection

Christmas is emotional. The strongest brands evoke *nostalgia with novelty*:

- **Heritage cues:** evoke warmth with language like “family recipe,” “home-roasted,” or “classic festive spice.”
- **Modern cues:** balance tradition with buzzwords like “crafted,” “slow-aged,” or “infused.”
- **Visuals:** dark, warming palettes — crimson, forest green, and gold — paired with natural textures like parchment, woodgrain, or brushed metallics.



Festive Fusion: South East Asian Flavours

Light Up the Party Season

Macro Insight: Global Heat Meets British Indulgence

As global palates evolve, **South East Asian flavours** have become the heartbeat of modern British food culture — lively, layered, and full of contrast. For Christmas 2026, they’re breaking out of restaurant menus and taking over the festive party food scene. This is driven by three converging forces:

- **Culinary exploration:** Consumers are actively seeking bolder, brighter flavours — heat, zing, and aromatics — especially in social, shareable formats.
- **Street food influence:** Informal dining trends from Bangkok to Hanoi inspire bite-sized, hand-held, and flavour-packed formats perfect for festive entertaining.
- **Generational shifts:** Younger consumers see Christmas less as “traditional dinner” and more as celebratory grazing — flexible, flavour-forward, and globally inspired.

The result? **Party platters that punch with personality**, offering both familiar comfort and unexpected excitement.

Flavour Forecast: The South East Asian Palette

Distinctive, aromatic, and instantly recognisable — the region’s flavours bring freshness and fire to festive indulgence.

Foodmaker Winter Collection: A “Festive Fusion Party Range” that reimagines classic bites — think “**Thai-spiced pigs in blankets**”, “**Korean BBQ sausage rolls**”, or “**No Nut Satay Lemongrass chicken skewers**”.

Flavour Element	Modern Twist	Trend Insight
Sweet Heat	Hot honey sriracha chicken bites, chilli caramel pork skewers	Perfect blend of indulgence + excitement
Citrus & Zing	No Nut Satay Lemongrass turkey skewers, yuzu mayo sliders	Fresh acidity lifts rich festive flavours
Aromatic Depth	Asian Inspired Mongolian Glazed Lamb Pancakes	Balances festive richness with savoury nuance
Texture Play	Spice of the Orient pork ball with an Apple and Oatmeal crumb sprinkle	Adds theatre and indulgence to party platters



The Party Food Revolution

Party food is evolving from “frozen convenience” to culinary expression. Consumers want **variety, intensity, and quality** — everything that South East Asian flavour brings naturally.

Key Trends:

- **“Heat and Sweet” pairings** dominate festive snacks — a perfect bridge between traditional and adventurous.
- **Layered bites** — multiple textures and flavours in one mouthful — mirror the complexity of Asian street food.
- **Smaller portions, bolder flavours** — aligning with the “premium grazing” movement for 2026.



Festive Relevance: Why It Works at Christmas

Far from clashing with Christmas traditions, these flavours **enhance them**:

- **Balance to indulgence:** Fresh herbs, citrus, and chilli cut through the richness of traditional festive foods.
- **Colour and energy:** Bright, aromatic dishes visually pop on party tables.
- **Social eating fit:** Perfect for grazing, sharing, and informal celebrations.

Visual & Sensory Direction

For brochure presentation and pack storytelling:

- **Colour palette:** deep red, gold, and black with flashes of lime and chilli.
- **Imagery:** lively table spreads, glowing textures, shared moments.
- **Language cues:** “bold,” “vibrant,” “street-inspired,” “crafted heat.”

Justification for 2026: Why Now

- **Global flavours** are a top growth driver in UK retail (+7.5% YoY in premium chilled ready-to-eat formats, source: Kantar).
- **Younger demographics** see Asian fusion as familiar rather than foreign.
- **Winter menus** are shifting from heavy comfort toward balanced indulgence — spicy, citrusy, and lighter formats feel fresh in the festive mix.
- **Hospitality trends** show growth in “Asian tapas” and “street bar bites,” paving the way for mainstream retail adoption.

Christmas 2026 will be anything but traditional — South East Asian flavours are redefining party food with energy, heat, and festive flair.

2026 Macro Trends Winter 2026 Flavour Fit

Macro Trend 1 — Comfort, Quality & Meaningful Value

(Consumers want familiar, improved dishes that feel premium and comforting.)

Flavours that fit:

- Chicken Pie – Crafted with Classic Ingredients
- Beef Pie – Tradition & Innovation
- Cheesy Garlic Favourites
- British Classics with a Sweet Apple Twist

Why they fit:

These flavours deliver emotional comfort, familiarity, and “done better” classics — directly aligning with the UK movement toward premiumised comfort.

Macro Trend 2 — Global Flavour Exploration

(Bold spices, world cuisines, flavour adventure.)

Flavours that fit:

- Eastern Fire – Bold Asian (Spice of the Orient)
- Asian Chinese Inspired
- Indian Spice Influence
- Nut-Free Satay – The Next Big Bite
- A Taste of the Levant – Celebration Spice
- The Rise of Harissa – Spice, Smoke, Sweetness
- Spring Roll Sensations – A Global Taste Journey

Why they fit:

These flavours tap into the UK’s focus on “Flavours Less Travelled”, offering heat, depth and authenticity that consumers are actively seeking.

Macro Trend 3 — Sweet Heat, Indulgence & Seasonal Sophistication

(Sweet-savoury hybrids, seasonal sweetness, festive warmth.)

Flavours that fit:

- Clementine & Maple – Seasonal Celebration
- Maple Infusions – From Classic to Bold
- Hot Maple Flavoured – Sweet Heat Trend
- Sticky Cranberry – Berry Twist
- Fiery Ginger – Zesty Spice
- Rustic Spiced Apple

Why they fit:

These blends reflect the rise of:

- Sweet-heat pairings
- Festive sweet-savoury fusions
- Premium sensory flavour layers

Macro Trend 4 — Visual Impact, Loaded Formats & Experiential Eating

(Bold, vibrant, social media-friendly flavours & textures.)

Flavours that fit:

- Smokey Jalapeño – Spanish Flair
- Eastern Fire – Bold Asian
- Green Harissa
- Zesty Ginger Spice
- Nut-Free Satay
- Spring Roll Sensations

Why they fit:

These flavours bring colour, heat, bold glazes, and visual impact — ideal for loaded formats, sharing plates, and retail “wow factor”.



I have three favourite seasonings in our new Winter 26 range, in no particular order, as I think they are all great for different reasons. Firstly, it would have to be the Umbrian style sausage. It has a lovely spicy kick that marries amazingly with the pungent savoury note of garlic and the delicate sweet notes of the fennel. It's even better with additions of basil and Parmesan throughout the sausage; the nutty note of the Parmesan and the fresh basil pair amazingly with the warmth of the seasoning.

My other two favourite seasonings are kind of for the same reasons; they are both the beef and chicken pie seasonings. Now, this might mainly be due to the fact that I very much like pies and all things pastry. But the seasonings themselves are very balanced and have a great meaty flavour. The chicken seasoning has a great savoury flavour coming from the onion and garlic paired with the warming white pepper, which creates such a great base for a comforting chicken pie. The beef seasoning has this great depth and richness. The onion and mild tomato create this great umami base, which gives a perfect savoury balance for a beef pie. Both the chicken and beef seasonings are absolutely outstanding in application and a must-try.

Macro Trend 5 — Natural, Honest, Wholefood-Led Cooking
(Simple ingredient cues, nature-inspired warmth.)

- Flavours that fit:**
- Chestnut & Cinnamon – Christmas Comforts
 - Rustic Spiced Apple
 - Celebration Spice (Middle Eastern)
 - Clementine & Maple

Why they fit:
These flavours communicate **realness, warmth and simplicity**, and match the drive toward less processed, recognisable ingredients.

Below are the major 2026 micro-trends and exactly where your flavours fit.

- Macro Trend — Topped & Loaded**
(Textures, coatings, bold glazes, layered toppings.)
- Maple Flavoured & Mustard
 - Smokey Jalapeño
 - Spice of the Orient
 - Zesty Ginger Spice

- Macro Trend — Fast-Forward Flavours**
(Premium, exciting, high-impact flavour innovation.)
- Hot Maple Flavoured
 - Green Harissa
 - Nut-Free Satay & Lemongrass
 - Asian Chinese Inspired

- Macro Trend — Sweet Adventures**
(Fruity, festive, and global sweet-savoury fusions.)
- Sticky Cranberry
 - Clementine & Maple
 - Rustic Spiced Apple

Number of New Product Lines by Year
Here’s the comparative product trend analysis for **Hot Honey, Hot Maple and Maple** product launches (2022-2025) based on the Freda database.

Year	Hot Honey	Hot Maple	Maple	Notes
2022	1	0	0	Early emergence of Hot Honey (Aldi Ashfields Hot Lips)
2023	2	0	0	Continued low-level NPD; mostly poultry and veg
2024	8	0	18	Maple surged strongly across bacon, sausages and seasonal NPD
2025	15	1	14	Mapel diversified; Hot Honey continued to dominate festive and summer SKUs

Macro Trend — Flavours Less Travelled
(Global authenticity and bold new regions.)

- Celebration Spice (Levant)
- Indian Style Curry
- Asian Chinese Inspired
- Spice of the Orient
- Green Harissa

Macro Trend — Premium Comfort
(Nostalgia + upgraded flavour.)

- Chicken Pie Classic
- Beef Pie
- Cheesy Garlic
- Pork & Chestnut Indulgence

Macro Trend — Heat & Spice Exploration
(Chilli, ginger, layered spice complexity.)

- Smokey Jalapeño
- Zesty Ginger Spice
- Harissa
- Eastern Fire – Bold Asian
- Mustard & Horseradish

My Favourite Winter 2026 Seasoning is Sticky Cranberry, The Sticky Cranberry delivers a unique balance of tart, umami, and slightly spicy notes, which makes it an incredibly versatile seasoning for the winter season. The addition of cranberry not only elevates the flavour but also enhances the finished product’s texture and visual appeal. Its sticky, caramelised finish balances the spiciness and adds a rich depth that complements proteins, plant-based alternatives, and roasted vegetables. The Sticky Cranberry makes it perfect for everything from a quick nibble to a standout addition at your Christmas lunch.





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