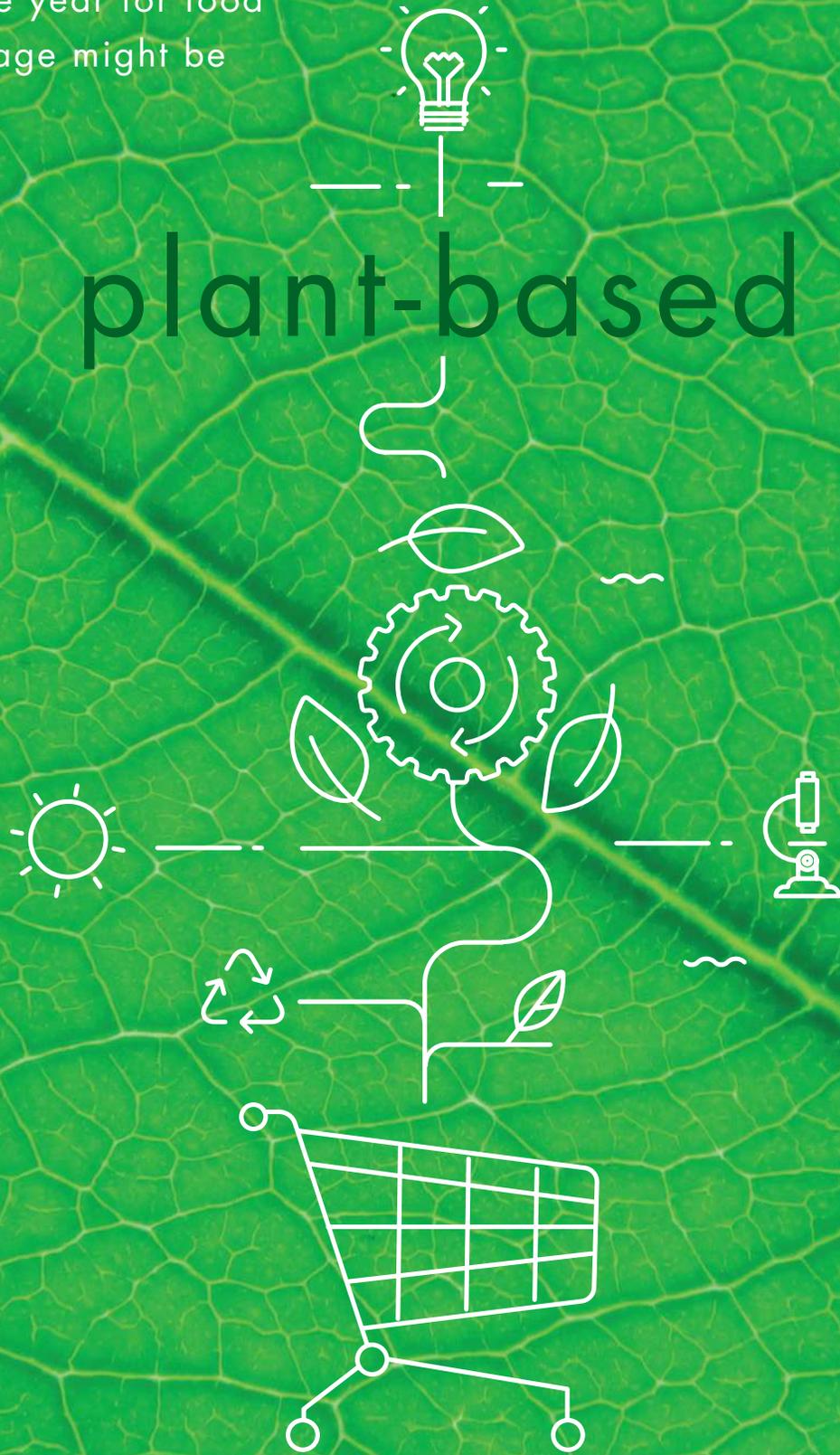


Trend watchers say the topic of the year for food and beverage might be



plant-based



The search for plant-based options is fueling innovation throughout the food and beverage industry, from the ingredients to the packaging.

Retailer thought leader Whole Foods identifies packaging as one of its [**top ten trends in 2019**](#) saying “packaging continues to be one of sustainability efforts biggest issues.”

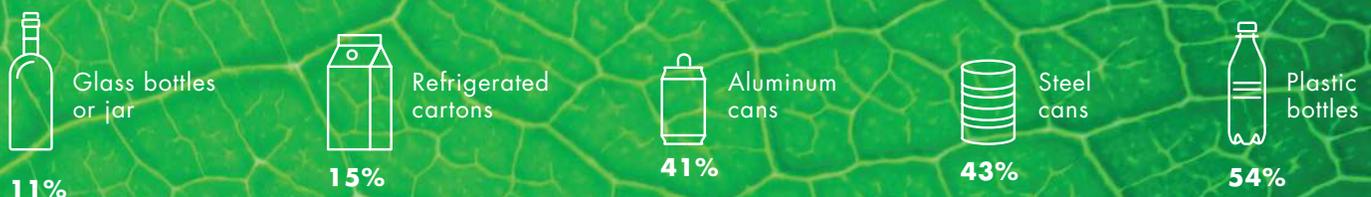
Meanwhile, the [**Mintel’s top trends for 2019 reports**](#) “Biobased packaging materials will be key components in the next generation of responsible packaging,” noting heightened consumer awareness of packaging.

The *2018 EcoFocus Trend Study* reinforces the projections of these organizations. According to the EcoFocus Study, **51%** of U.S. grocery shoppers in 2018 strongly agree or agree they “have changed what I buy because of the type or amount of packaging.” This is up five points since 2014. Three out of four (**76%**) grocery shoppers in 2018 say they have heard or read about plant-based food or beverage packaging, and **62%** want to learn more about it. Consumers are already shopping with plant-based packaging in mind: **46%** of grocery shoppers in 2018 strongly agree or agree they “try to buy packaging that is made with plant-based materials” and **47%** say plant-based packaging is extremely or very important for healthy beverages.

“Better personal health has driven the clean label movement in recent years and will drive plant-based trends in coming years,” observes Linda Gilbert, CEO of EcoFocus Worldwide. “When we turn the health lens to packaging, consumer perceptions are clearly and consistently in favor of glass and paper, both for personal health and environmental reasons.”

Shoppers are not only aware of packaging alternatives, they are making purchasing decisions and changing purchasing habits based on that awareness. The *EcoFocus Trend Study* finds that **64%** of grocery shoppers in 2018 strongly agree or agree “I have changed what I buy in order to reduce our exposure to chemicals from food or beverage packaging,” up nine points since 2014. Four in ten or more consumers believe plastic and metal packaging can leave undesirable or harmful chemicals in their foods and beverages. Glass bottles and refrigerated cartons are considered to be the least likely to do so.

Which packaging containers can leave undesirable chemicals in your beverages?



These beliefs are reflected in changing shopping practices. In 2018, **61%** of grocery shoppers strongly agree or agree they “try to buy beverages that use less plastic in their packaging, and **48%** strongly agree or agree they “try to buy packaging that is mostly made out of paper.”

Because paper packaging is derived from trees – plant based – it has the additional benefit of coming from a renewable resource, one that can be regenerated.

As shoppers are making changes due to packaging, grocery shoppers say company commitments to only using responsible packaging are extremely or very influential to their choice of brands:



“Only using packaging that is recyclable”

is extremely or very influential to their choice of brands for **72%** of grocery shoppers



“Only using packaging that is made with renewable materials”

is extremely or very influential to their choice of brands for **68%** of grocery shoppers



“Only using packaging that is plant-based”

is extremely or very influential to their choice of brands for **61%** of grocery shoppers

When asked what it means when a product claims its packaging is renewable, one in four (26%) grocery shoppers said that renewable packaging is plant-based. Other responses included:

- 47%** the packaging is made from materials that can be replenished
- 42%** the packaging can be recycled
- 38%** the packaging contains recycled content
- 20%** the packaging is made of paper
- 12%** don't know

The plant-based trends create a particularly high level of packaging innovation opportunities for natural and organic products. At a rate of **61%**, grocery shoppers in 2018 strongly agree or agree “Natural and organic products need to do a better job of packaging their products with recyclable materials,” up significantly from **54%** in 2014.

In conclusion, for brands already offering plant-based foods and beverages for consumers, plant-based packaging is a logical fit with the ingredients and consumer values. For others, plant-based packaging materials may be the way to leverage this important trend in a meaningful way.

*The EcoFocus Trend Study is an annual tracking study, conducted since 2010, examining wellness and sustainability trends impacting the food and beverage industry. The study is conducted online annually among 4,000 adults. The data is nationally projectable to the US adult population ages 18 to 65 years with a margin of error of +/- 1.39 points in 2018.

Evergreen Packaging makes and supplies paper and paperboard products globally, including gable top cartons. Fiber used in Evergreen Packaging products comes from forests in the US where responsible forestry practices are used and where overall growth exceeds harvest. Evergreen Packaging cartons contain protective layers of plastic (including cap and spout). The data presented here is not intended to suggest that Evergreen Packaging products have all attributes discussed in this piece. This publication presents data on consumer perceptions because consumer perceptions matter when shoppers choose which products to purchase.

