



CHEF'SSTORE INDUSTRY REPORT:

2026 Non-Alcoholic Beverage Trends: The Reign of Mocktails and Zero-Proof Drinks



The beverage industry is entering a new era of moderation. In 2026, younger consumers are redefining what it means to socialize, celebrate, and dine out. **Thirty-nine percent¹** of Gen Z consumers drink occasionally, and **24 percent²** now identify as non-drinkers.

CONSUMERS ARE DRINKING LESS

Across all demographics, “sober curious” lifestyles are becoming mainstream, pushing restaurants and bars to rethink beverage menus and profit strategies.



Fifty-four percent³ of U.S. adults report consuming alcohol, the lowest level recorded in decades.



One in five⁴ restaurant guests intentionally skip alcohol when dining out.



Non-alcoholic beer sales increased more than **22 percent year-over-year⁵** in 2025.

WHAT CONSUMERS WANT IN 2026

Almost half of all drinkers find alcohol less appealing now, compared to how they felt in the past. This is especially true among Gen Z and Millennials. Overall, **more than 40 percent**⁴ of drinkers don't consider alcohol a significant part of their lives. So what beverages do consumers find appealing? Low-alcohol cocktails, zero-proof drinks, and functional beverages rank high among today's diners.

1. Zero-Proof and Low-Alcohol Cocktails

Fifty-one percent⁴ of consumers have expressed interest in low-alcohol cocktails. Guests increasingly expect low and alcohol-free cocktails to feel elevated rather than secondary. Restaurants are building menus around handcrafted ingredients, fresh herbs, infused syrups, smoked garnishes, and sophisticated glassware.

Trending flavors include:

- Yuzu and citrus blends
- Rosemary, basil, and thyme infusions
- **Hibiscus and botanical teas**
- Ginger, jalapeño, and spice-forward profiles
- Adaptogenic ingredients like ashwagandha and reishi

Consumers are willing to pay cocktail-level pricing when mocktails deliver a comparable experience.



2. Functional Beverages

Wellness continues to influence beverage purchases. Guests are increasingly choosing drinks that support hydration, focus, relaxation, or immunity.

Fast-growing categories include:

- Probiotic sodas
- Energy-enhancing sparkling drinks
- Tea-based mocktails
- Electrolyte-infused refreshers

For many younger consumers, beverages are now viewed as part lifestyle statement and part wellness routine.



3. Craft Soda Trends

Craft sodas are a hot trend in the beverage industry. Reports suggest the market will reach **\$180.7 million by 2033⁶**. Today's sodas are evolving beyond traditional cola and root beer. Restaurants are using small-batch carbonated beverages to create unique pairings and customizable zero-proof cocktails.

Popular flavors include:

- **Blood orange**
- **Lavender** lemon
- **Cherry** vanilla
- Ginger lime
- **Blackberry** sage

House-made sodas also allow operators to increase margins while creating signature menu items.





RESTAURANT OPPORTUNITIES

Build a Dedicated Zero-Proof Menu

Operators seeing the strongest sales growth are treating non-alcoholic beverages as a standalone category instead of an afterthought. Dedicated mocktail sections improve visibility and encourage group ordering.

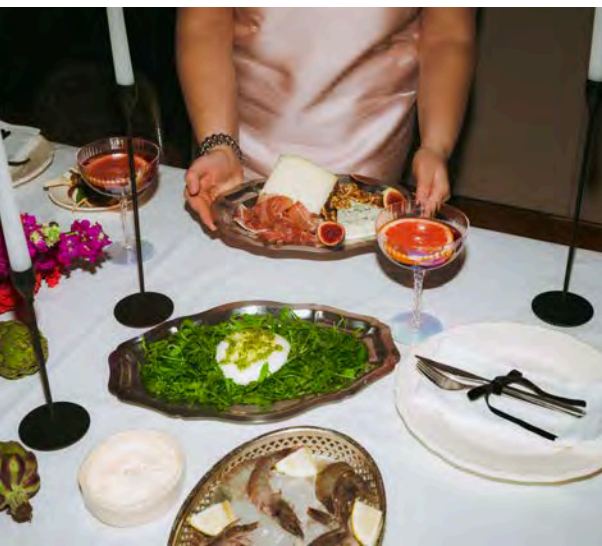


Highlight Premium Mixers

Restaurants can streamline preparation by using versatile mixers, **syrops**, and sparkling bases that work across a range of beverages. **CHEF'STORE** offers products that support scalable mocktail programs, including:

- **Sparkling waters** and flavored sodas
- Fruit purees and **cocktail mixers**
- **Ginger beer** and tonic options
- **Tea concentrates** and juice blends

Using cross-functional ingredients helps reduce waste while maintaining consistency.



Pair Mocktails With Food

Consumers increasingly want alcohol-free pairings that complement meals. Citrus-forward spritzes work well with seafood, botanical beverages pair naturally with salads and lighter dishes, while spice-forward mocktails complement grilled proteins and global flavors.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BEVERAGE CULTURE?

Beer, wine, and hard seltzers remain important categories, but the fastest momentum is happening in zero-proof innovation. Younger guests are prioritizing moderation, wellness, and experience-driven dining.

For restaurants, this is more than a passing trend. Non-alcoholic beverage programs are becoming a core revenue driver, appealing to health-conscious diners, designated drivers, and guests seeking premium experiences without alcohol.

In 2026, the most successful beverage menus won't separate drinkers from non-drinkers. They'll deliver memorable experiences for both.



Sources

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