

Holiday foods & beverages in 2021: 2020's successes & what to expect this year

Oct 2021




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WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS REPORT

- Food and beverage trends specifically associated with the holiday season
- The brands and product launches leading the pack in 2021
- The platforms where specific products tend to do well

Holiday trends in 2021

Covid-19 disrupted how fall and winter holidays were celebrated in 2020, but this year, food, drink, dessert, and snack makers are experimenting with new placements for product launches and how they can influence and create new traditions.

With so many people isolating and in lockdown last year, many food and beverage trends focused on individuals and isolated families. There was increased demand for recipes with single servings, clay artists trying their hand at baking cakes to support themselves, and online cooking classes with your remote-schooled kids abounded. When it came to the holidays, there were also differences in preferences and behavioral shifts around travel, celebration, and gift-giving.

As a general trend, Americans are becoming more prone to eating out or order catering from restaurants, even before the pandemic. But because of Covid-19, quick-serve and fast-food establishments have been grappling with staffing shortages and some resorted to limiting their menus to minimize supply issues and kitchen complexity.

In addition to the traditional gatherings around the holidays, working from home has also changed people's habits, especially around snacking. Curiosity about trying new foods and appetites for new flavors have continued to grow.

Snacks in particular have seen an elevated level of consumption this year. Adults have confessed to snacking more, and the lines have blurred between how snacks and meals are defined, as noted by the Packaging Corporation of America back in April.

We've also seen food topics gain broader media interest as outlets traditionally focused on other

categories have turned to food. Cosmopolitan started its first-ever best snack awards and its existence is not the only surprising thing. The list includes expected offerings from the snacking conglomerates but also adds humble private businesses, such as *Dot's Pretzels*.

This report looks at food and snack trends specifically associated with the fall and winter holiday season.

We'll look back at the top trends from last year in 2020, the brands and products leading the pack in 2021, and the platforms where specific products tend to do well. We'll begin with a comparison of 2020 vs 2021 so far.



Holiday content 2020 vs 2021

Media interest:

holiday foods & beverages in 2020 vs 2021

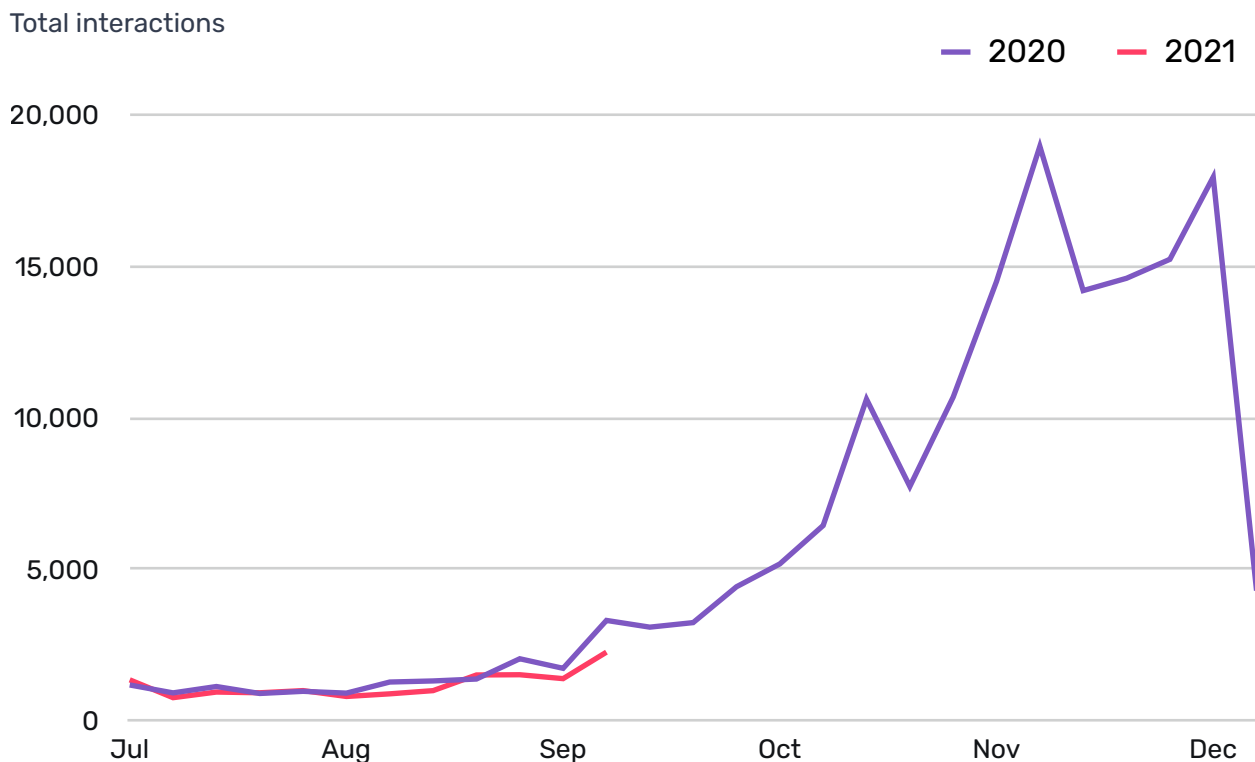
For the most part, the number of articles written about holiday food and beverages is on par with numbers seen in the second half of 2020.

We've started this analysis in July, due to the fact that this is when Halloween content has generated strong engagement in the past and media outlets begin to cover the holiday with stronger consistency.

If the publishing trends continue to follow what we noted last year, we can expect the number of articles around holiday activations published each week to cross the 5,000 article mark during the month of October.

Articles in 2020 reached their high points during the week of Thanksgiving and again near Christmas. During those time periods, there were more than 15,000 articles published each week around holiday foods or drinks.

Weekly numbers of holiday food & beverage articles since July



Public interest:

holiday foods & beverages 2020 vs 2021

Meanwhile, the total number of engagements* with holiday food and beverage content is trending lower than in 2020.

Although the number of articles written thus far remains consistent with the previous year, there is a drastic difference in engagement.

Readers of our [Facebook Publishing Q1 2021 report](#) may remember that we noted there has been a general decrease in the amount of Facebook engagement with internet articles this year. These drops in engagement represent an added challenge for the food and beverage brands looking to capture attention and break through the noise this year.

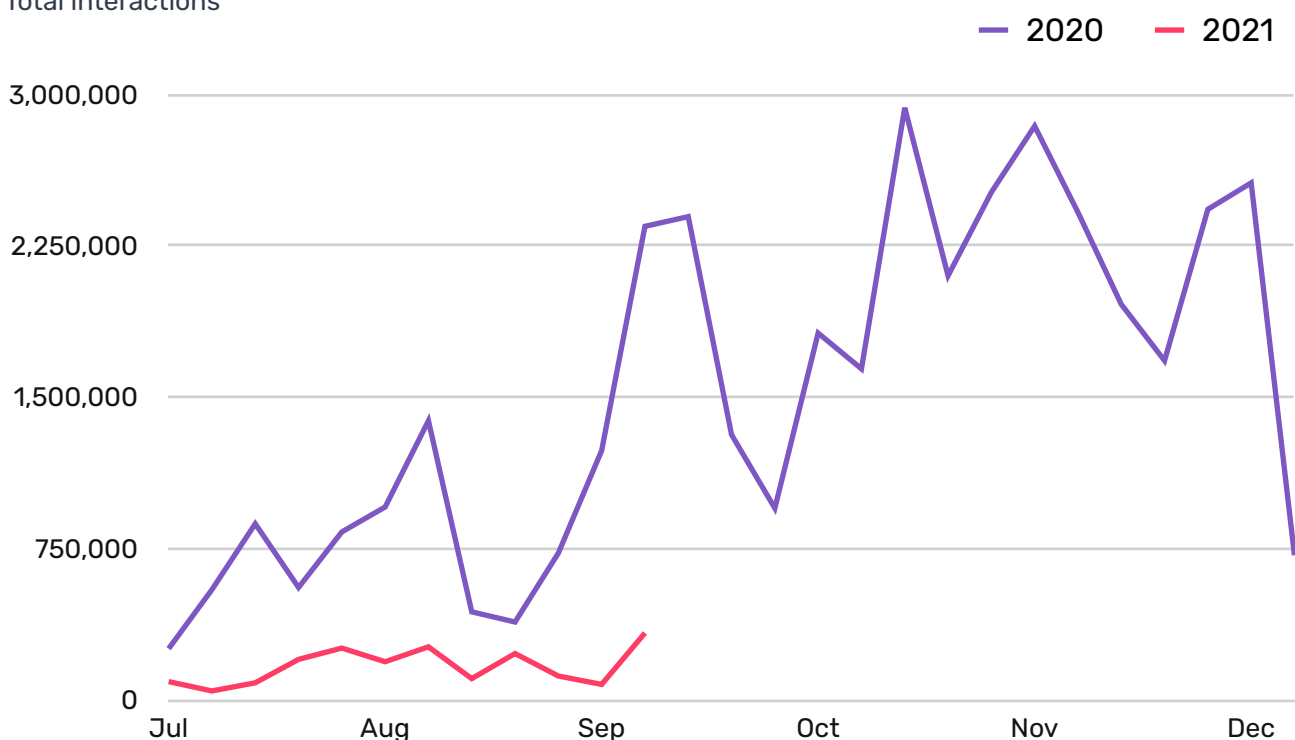
During the summer, in the throws of lockdowns, isolations, and quarantines, people were looking forward to any source of levity. Articles published in July 2020 regularly generated between 250k and 980k engagements.

During July 2021 any week's worth of articles generated a maximum of 260k engagements, which barely meets the minimum from the previous year.

**Unless noted otherwise, "engagements" refers to the combination of Facebook interactions (likes, shares, and comments), Twitter influencer shares, and Pins from Pinterest.*

Weekly engagements with holiday food & beverage content since July

Total interactions



Top publishers:

holiday foods & beverages in 2020

***Delish* was the top publisher writing about holiday foods and beverages in 2020.**

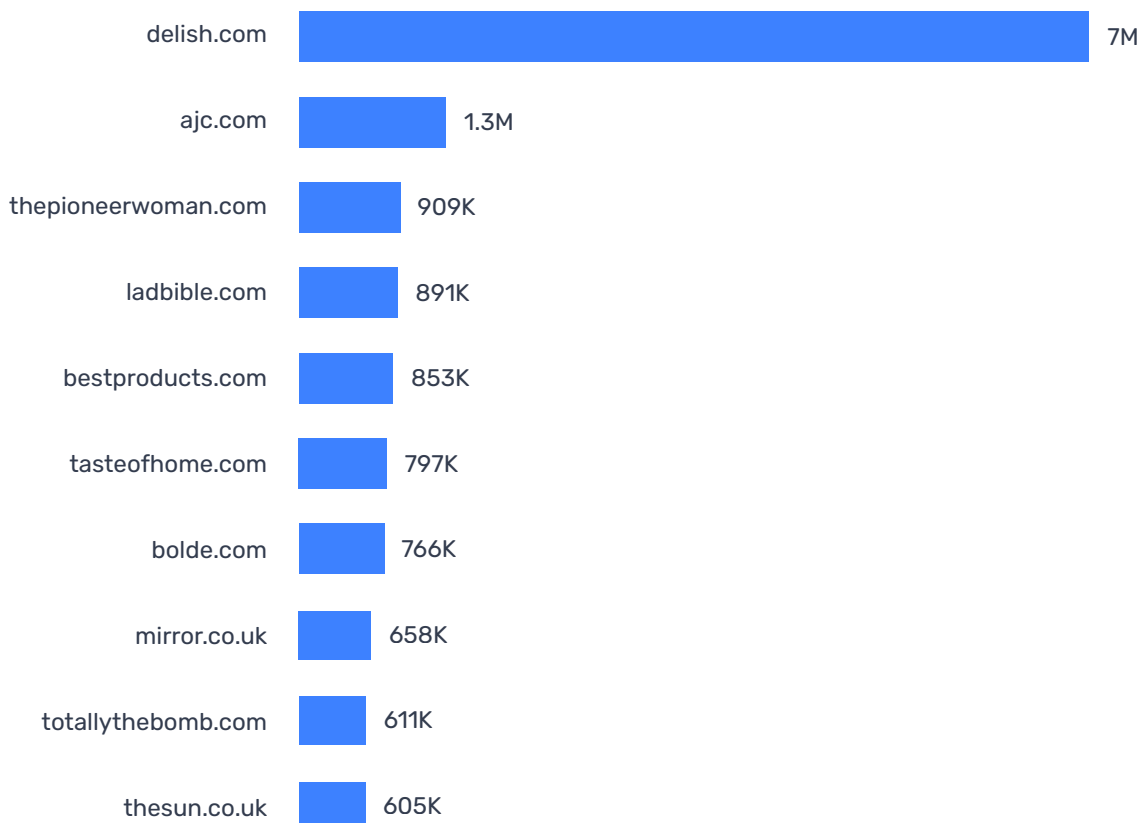
Not only was *Delish* the top publisher, but it was almost 6x more engaged than even the second top publisher.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution was the only other publisher to generate more than a million engagements during the holiday season thanks to its recipes for traditional southern food at holiday gatherings.

Six of the top English-language publishers on holiday food and beverages are based in America. The remaining four publications are primarily focused on the UK and Canada.

Most of the top websites in 2020 have a strong focus on food. Only *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* represent tabloid papers, as many of the rest are digital-native publications such as *Delish* and *Best Products*.

Top holiday food & beverage publishers 2020



Top publishers:

holiday foods & beverages in 2021

Many of the top publishers so far in 2021 are repeats from the previous year, with ***Totally The Bomb*** leading the pack.

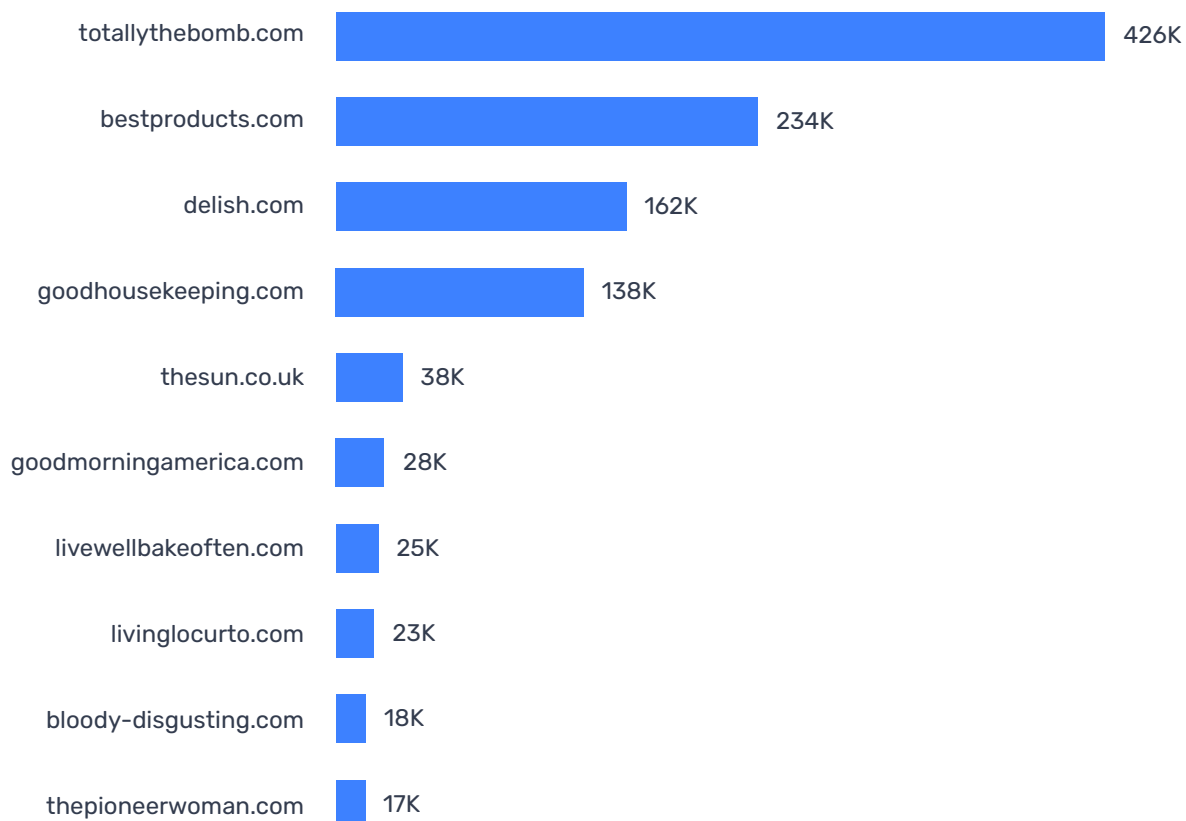
Engagements range from less than 20k to 430k. *Best Products*, *Delish*, *The Sun*, and *The Pioneer Woman* are repeats on the list this year. Once again, many of the publications on the list this year are focused on the food and beverage categories.

Nearly all of last year's top publishers posted at least 50 articles about holiday foods and

beverages, but in 2021 half have posted ten or less. This means that the top articles are more concentrated among a few media outlets. *Totally The Bomb* and *Best Products* have each produced four articles ranking in the top ten.

The most striking difference is to *Delish*, which has gone from 7 million engagements to just 162k this year. There's still time for that to change before the holidays of course, but it is noteworthy that at the time of writing they are not leading the pack.

Top holiday food & beverage publishers 2021



Top articles:

holiday foods & beverages in 2020

Two of the top ten articles getting the most engagement on holiday foods and beverages were published in July 2020.

Both articles from the month of July were published by *Delish* and generated more than 200k engagements. The articles highlighted Christmas products such as new sugar cookie-flavored *M&M's* and *International Delight's* "Elf"-inspired coffee creamers. It's unsurprising that all of the top articles about food and beverage

trends around the holidays referenced Christmas or the winter season.

The top article, however, focused on Halloween and was published in September 2020. *Delish's* article garnered more than a million engagements featuring drinks from *Applebee's*.

While some articles were published as early as July, four of the top ten fall and winter holiday-focused articles published in October 2020.

Top holiday food & beverage content of 2020

Website	Headline	Engagement
delish.com	Applebee's Has 2 New Boozy Halloween Drinks For \$5 Including One Topped With A Gummy Brain	1,057,254
bolde.com	If Gingerbread Houses Aren't Your Thing, How About A Charcuterie Chalet?	714,777
delish.com	International Delight Is Releasing "Elf"-Inspired Coffee Creamers This Holiday Season	289,167
ladbible.com	Costa Coffee Is Selling Terry's Chocolate Orange Hot Chocolate This Christmas	255,523
crafty.diply.com	Fireball Holiday Nog Is Just Begging To Be Topped Off With A Shot Of Fireball Whisky	240,773
southernthing.com	Little Debbie's Christmas Tree Cakes release will be delayed this year	236,689
delish.com	M&M's Just Announced A Brand New Sugar Cookie Flavor Coming This Holiday Season	224,248
delish.com	RumChata Just Released A Peppermint Bark Liqueur, So Get Ready To Make A Christmas Cocktail	200,004
delish.com	People Are Building 'Charcuterie Chalets' This Holiday Season	198,342
delish.com	Sam's Club Is Selling A Holiday-Themed Canada Dry Variety Pack With Cranberry And Blackberry Flavors	181,757

Top articles:

holiday foods & beverages in 2021

Most individual articles about holiday foods and beverages published before September 15th this year have fewer than 100k engagements.

Six of the top articles are focused on Halloween, whereas the remaining four highlight Christmas.

The top article – *Good Housekeeping* highlighting a Christmas bread wreath from *Waitrose* – was published in July 2021 and exceeded 100k engagements.

The top article referencing Halloween, a *Delish* piece featuring *Reese's* cups, was also published in July and was the only other article about holiday foods and beverages to receive over 100k engagements.

Sam's Club was the only retailer credited twice in articles and *Reese's* was the only brand highlighted twice within the top ten list.

Top holiday food & beverage content of 2021

Website	Headline	Engagement
goodhousekeeping.com	Waitrose is launching a Camembert and Garlic Doughball Wreath for Christmas	120,491
delish.com	Sam's Club Is Selling a Giant Container Filled With 375 Reese's Cups for Halloween	113,566
totallythebomb.com	Jack-O-Lantern Stuffed Bell Peppers Are The New Cooking Trend For Fall	87,069
totallythebomb.com	These Skeleton Charcuterie Boards Are Straight To The Bone Scary For Halloween	69,019
bestproducts.com	Sam's Club Is Selling a 16-Count Box of Halloween Hot Cocoa Bombs	66,452
bestproducts.com	Kit Kat's New Gingerbread Cookie Flavor Will Put You in the Holiday Spirit Earlier Than Usual	64,256
totallythebomb.com	Ghost Edition Tequila Bottles Exist and They Are Spooky Cool	38,870
bestproducts.com	Cinnamon Toast Crunch Cereal Now Comes in an Apple Pie Flavor for the Holidays	38,090
totallythebomb.com	Pumpkin Snack Boards Are The Hot New Food Trend For Fall	36,234
bestproducts.com	The New Reese's Peanut Brittle Cups Are the Brand's First-Ever Holiday Flavor	26,592

Notable holiday themes & highlights

Spotlight:

Novelty shapes

In 2020 there were several foods that gained attention around holidays through their resemblance to festive artifacts, and we're seeing them again this year.

There were new twists on classic gingerbread houses and wreaths. Instead of being sweet these decorative treats are constructed with savory charcuterie.

Last year brands were also noted to be jumping in on the trend of food in novelty shapes, with *Aldi's* melting snowman hot chocolate and a glazed turkey ice cream cake from *Baskin-Robbins*.

As previously mentioned, *Waitrose* announced it will sell a camembert and garlic knot wreath for Christmas. That article, which was published in July 2021, had more than 120k engagements.

	<p>If Gingerbread Houses Aren't Your Thing, How About A Charcuterie Chalet?</p> <p>Now THIS is the good stuff.</p> <p> bolde.com</p> <p>Nov 1, 2020</p>	<p>Total Interactions 714.6k</p> <p> 714.6k 22</p>
	<p>Aldi Is Selling A Melting Chocolate Snowman That Makes 'Perfect Hot Chocolate'</p> <p>The melting snowman costs £1.79 for one and can be found in Aldi stores now</p> <p> ladbible.com</p> <p>Jess Hardiman Published</p> <p>Oct 7, 2020</p>	<p>Total Interactions 76.3k</p> <p> 76.3k 0</p>
	<p>Baskin-Robbins New Turkey Ice Cream Cake Looks Wildly Realistic</p> <p>Just look at that caramel praline "glaze."</p> <p> delish.com</p> <p>Caitlyn Fitzpatrick</p> <p>Nov 15, 2020</p>	<p>Total Interactions 55.8k</p> <p> 55.8k 0</p>
	<p>Waitrose is launching a Camembert and Garlic Doughball Wreath for Christmas</p> <p>Sounds delicious.</p> <p> goodhousekeeping.com</p> <p>Susanne Norris</p> <p>Jul 28</p>	<p>Total Interactions 120.5k</p> <p> 120.5k 3</p>

Spotlight:

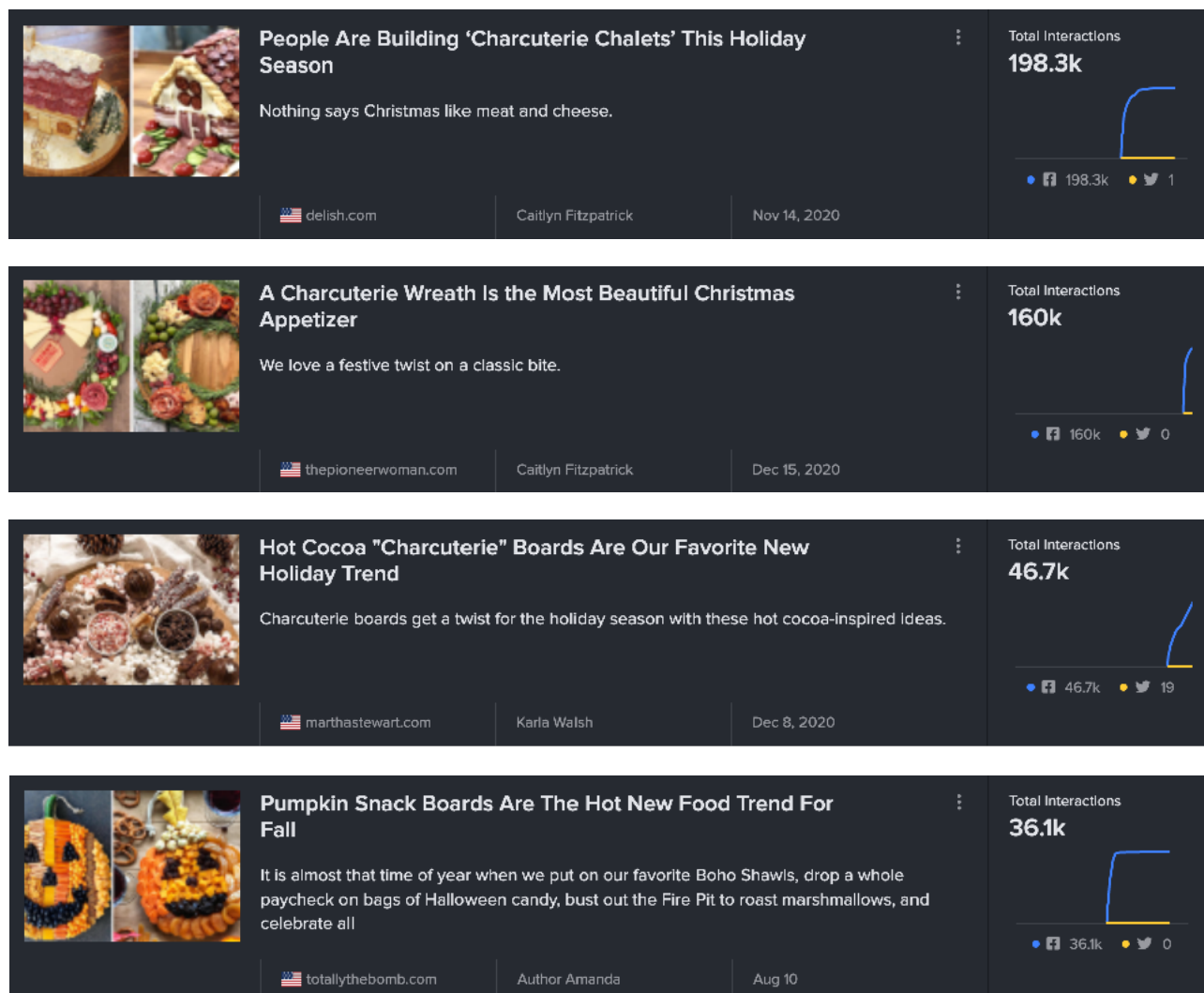
Charcuterie boards

Charcuterie and snack boards had quite the moment in 2020 and it is continuing into the 2021 holiday season.

Appetizers are becoming some of the more creative recipes shared ahead of the holidays. As mentioned, there were charcuterie boards that were crafted to resemble gingerbread houses but there were also other versions of snack boards that appeared such as hot cocoa-themed spreads.

All of the examples noted in past articles highlighted individuals efforts rather than branded campaigns.

In 2021 we noticed that pumpkin snack boards were already trending in August.



Spotlight:

Hybrid flavors

Treats that look like one type of food or beverage but reference flavors from another treat have been popular.

Cookie flavors have been popular in seasonal products, such as *Krispy Kreme's* donut cream filling that tastes like "sugar cookies." In September of this year *Kit Kat* launched a "gingerbread cookie"-flavored treat.

Instead of chocolate and marshmallow, *Pepsi* dubbed one of its seasonal sodas as "hot cocoa"-flavored.

Apple pie and peppermint bark have also been marketed as the "flavor" of other types of products in the fall and winter months. Just this year, Cinnamon Toast Crunch launched an "apple pie" flavor in August.

	<p>Krispy Kreme Announced Holiday Donuts Including One Stuffed With Sugar Cookie-Flavored Kreme</p> <p>Putting these on the nice list this year!</p> <p> delish.com Kristin Salaky Nov 23, 2020</p>	<p>Total Interactions 91.2k</p> <p> 91.2k 8</p>
	<p>Pepsi Now Has a Hot Cocoa-Flavored Soda That Combines Cola, Chocolate, and Marshmallow</p> <p>The winter beverage we didn't know we needed.</p> <p> delish.com Caitlyn Fitzpatrick Dec 17, 2020</p>	<p>Total Interactions 79.1k</p> <p> 79.1k 0</p>
	<p>Kit Kat's New Gingerbread Cookie Flavor Will Put You in the Holiday Spirit Earlier Than Usual</p> <p>There's no need to mix up the batter.</p> <p>bestproducts.com Caitlyn Fitzpatrick Sep 14</p>	<p>Total Interactions 64.3k</p> <p> 64.3k 1</p>
	<p>Cinnamon Toast Crunch Cereal Now Comes in an Apple Pie Flavor for the Holidays</p> <p>Pie for breakfast? Say less.</p> <p>bestproducts.com Caitlyn Fitzpatrick Aug 26</p>	<p>Total Interactions 38.1k</p> <p> 38.1k 3</p>

Spotlight:

Pinterest recipes

On Pinterest, the way people talk about holiday food and beverages is almost exclusively recipe-focused.

Among the ten most pinned articles below from 2020, only 2 percent of their total engagements are derived from Facebook and Twitter.

In terms of themes, there was a mix of flavor profiles ranging from sweet to savory. The most pinned article featured a side dish of Brussels

sprouts, which leaned toward savory. Seven of the other top articles focused on sweet dishes and desserts.

There were the berry-flavored holiday recipes from *Maker's Mark* and the popular grocery chain *Hy-Vee*. Cookie recipes and cocktail recipes were also popular on the platform.

Most pinned holiday food & beverage content of 2020

Website	Headline	Pins
eatwell101.com	Garlic Parmesan Roasted Brussels Sprouts	134,751
makersmark.com	Merry Berry Buck Cocktail Bourbon Cocktails Maker's Mark®	67,536
cakewhiz.com	Butter Pecan Cookies	64,541
greedyeats.com	Whipped Shortbread Cookies (Christmas Cookies) - Greedy Eats	48,203
simplisticallyliving.com	These Grinch Hot Cocoa Bombs Will Have Your Heart Growing Three Sizes	25,836
myheavenlyrecipes.com	Christmas Lasagna Dessert	25,203
shugarysweets.com	Cool Whip Candy {3 Muskateers} - Shugary Sweets	21,979
juliasalbum.com	Creamy Butternut Squash Pasta with Sausage and Spinach - Julia's Album	20,659
hy-vee.com	Mixed Berry Holiday Trifle	19,372
bellyfull.net	Jack Frost Winter Cocktail	19,221

Key Takeaways

What to remember

Key takeaways

1. Competition for attention

The total engagement with content is trending lower than in 2020, representing an added challenge for the food and beverage brands looking to capture attention and break through the noise this year. Furthermore, the top articles are more concentrated among a few media outlets.

2. Starting in the summer

In 2020 two of the top ten articles getting the most engagement on Christmas foods and beverages published in July.

The top article in 2021, on a garlic knot wreath, was published in July and exceeded more than 100k engagements.

3. Novelty shapes

In 2020 there were several foods that gained attention around the holidays through their resemblance to festive artifacts, and we're seeing them again this year.

We've seen charcuterie houses and wreaths, and several product launches from brands have stood out. *Aldi's* melting snowman hot chocolate and a glazed turkey ice cream cake from *Baskin-Robbins* were among the favorites.

4. Recipes on Pinterest

The way people talk about holiday food and beverages is almost exclusively recipe-focused on Pinterest. Among the ten most pinned articles from 2020, only 2 percent of their total engagements are derived from Facebook and Twitter.

There were the berry-flavored holiday recipes from *Maker's Mark* and the popular grocery chain *Hy-Vee*. Cookie recipes and cocktail recipes were also popular on Pinterest.



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