



Sensory Cocktails

Sensory cocktails are emerging as one of the most exciting trends in the beverage industry, transforming drinks into immersive, multi sensory experiences. Mintel notes there is a growing demand for multisensory food and beverage experiences reflecting consumers' desire for more immersive, real world engagement beyond their digital lives.

Moving beyond traditional mixology, sensory cocktails combine visual theatre, flavour, aroma, texture, and storytelling to create memorable, multi sensory drinking experiences. Eye catching elements such as colour changing ingredients, vibrant layered effects, and theatrical presentations enhance social media appeal and shareability, while bold flavour combinations, including sweet-sour, fruity-spicy, and other unexpected pairings, deliver novelty and excitement.

Bartenders are enhancing the experience through interactive elements such as smoke, vapour, flavoured rims, and creative garnishes. Foams, creamy toppings, frozen formats, and layered textures add depth and complexity, transforming drinks into immersive, experiences that extend beyond taste alone.

- Silky, velvety, creamy and buttery profiles are gaining traction in ANZ alcohol launches. (Mintel, 2026)
- Alcohol moderation is widespread: 74% NZ drinkers agree “I am drinking less alcohol than I used to”. (Mintel, 2026)
- 55% of New Zealand consumers say unique texture or format is important when choosing drinks. (Mintel, 2026)
- 71% of NZ drinkers say “feels indulgent/like a treat” is important when choosing drinks. (Mintel, 2026)
- 51% of Australian drinkers are interested in trying new alcoholic drink flavours from Asia. (Mintel, 2026)



On the Menu



Breaking Trail triple wood whisky with shiitake mushroom, said to taste like getting lost in the woods.
(Sago House, Singapore)



Port Elena layered Lucky Violet raspberry and tropical soda.
(Edinburgh, UK)



Serving up bespoke cocktails with a theatrical touch. Without a set menu, each drink is created around the guests preferences and seasonally available ingredients. (Bar Centifolia, Tokyo)



Agua Brava with a spicy Dorito chip rim.
(Two Schmucks, Spain)

On the Shelf



BuzzBallz demonstrates format innovation through its 200ml and 1.5L RTD cocktails, with each size offering a unique sensory experience through packaging. (Buzz Balls, USA)



Passionfruit Sherbet rim dust sweet and sour blend adding an extra sensory dimension to cocktails and mixed drinks. (FN Lemons, New Zealand)



Available in Mojito, Strawberry Daiquiri, Gin & Tonic, and Vodka Energy flavours (5% ABV), these freezer ready cocktails offer a convenient way to enjoy a refreshing frozen beverage at home. (24 Ice, Amsterdam)



Boba Pops are alcoholic popping boba (12.5% ABV), available in strawberry and various other flavours. Adding a unique sensory experience to beverages through flavour, texture, and visual appeal. (Boba Pops, USA)

“Consumers increasingly want drinks that deliver more than taste. They’re drawn to standout flavour, visually impactful colour and playful textures that make real world moments feel more immersive and shareable.”

-Mintel, 2026

This trend also creates opportunities for ingredient innovation. Solutions such as Q-Naturale® 200V, a natural high efficiency emulsifier, can be used to deliver oils, colours, and bioactive ingredients in beverages while supporting stability and visual appeal. Natural and synthetic flavours and colours further enable the development of distinctive flavour profiles and visually striking multi-layered drinks that capture consumer attention. Sugars, sweeteners and caramels can balance and elevate these complex flavour profiles.

A key aspect of the trend is "sense-maxing", with many concepts extending beyond the traditional five senses by evoking memories, emotions, and a sense of place through storytelling and cultural inspiration. The trend is well established within hospitality but remains largely untapped in RTD formats, presenting opportunities for innovation.

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Please contact Hawkins Watts for more information
Australia

+61 3 9561 3710

sales@hawkinswatts.com.au

New Zealand

+64 9 622 2720

sales@hawkinswatts.com



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