

No alcohol please—Pass the probiotics and super juice instead

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A growing demand for healthier drink options is putting the hospitality sector on notice as patrons increasingly shun alcohol and soft drinks in favor of probiotics and super juices.

A new study led by University of South Australia researcher Dr. Rob Hallak shows increasing numbers of Australians are driving sales of healthy beverages, including super juices, kombucha products, herbal teas, bottled water and probiotic drinks.

Drink sales account for 40 percent of the country's \$45 billion annual spend on eating out, with health drink sales topping \$2.1 billion in 2018.

The demand could help counter a global obesity epidemic fueled by the booming restaurant and takeaway food trade, which is renowned for its high-calorie, less nutritious, meals and large portions.

Dr. Hallak, a hospitality expert in UniSA's School of Management, surveyed 400 restaurant, café, and hotel managers in Australia and New Zealand, examining their approach to healthy drink options.

Only 35 percent of hospitality outlets in both countries sold probiotic drinks such as kombucha and kefir, but almost three quarters of those who did, reported "medium to strong demand" for these products. New Zealand businesses were 20 percent more likely to sell probiotic drinks than businesses in Australia.

Franchises and pubs were less inclined than independently-owned cafés and newer businesses to sell probiotic drinks, despite evidence suggesting a strong growth in [consumer demand](#) for healthy alternatives.

"It was surprising to see that less than 10 percent of businesses overall offered a 'healthy drinks' category on their menus," Dr. Hallak says.

"While controlling demand through regulations—including warning labels and taxes—may be one way to halt the consumption of sugary drinks, increasing the variety, availability and supply of affordable healthier drink options could be more effective."

There are challenges to selling healthier drink options however. The [profit margins](#) are smaller, storage/fridge space is limited, and their shelf life is short.

"Consumer demand for healthy drink options is certainly gaining traction and it's time the industry and government did more to encourage entrepreneurs in this space," he says.

The findings are published in the *British Food Journal*.

More information: Rob Hallak et al. Examining healthy beverages in the hospitality industry: evidence from Australia and New Zealand, *British Food Journal* (2019). [DOI: 10.1108/BFJ-05-2019-0324](https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-05-2019-0324)

Provided by University of South Australia

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