



 Birdseye Report | Industry Deep Dive

Food

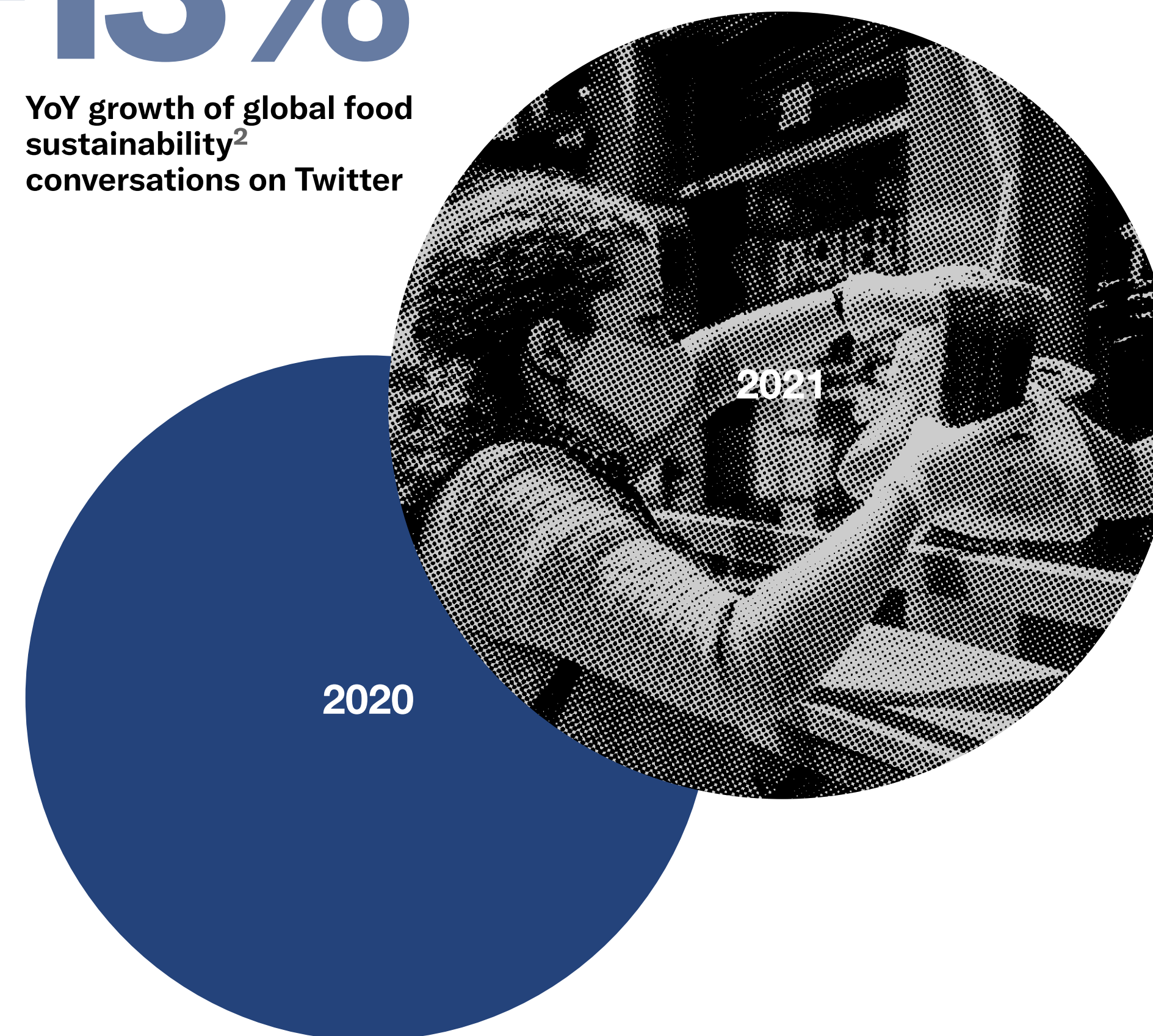
Presented by Talkwalker

Serving up the future of food

While sustainability has been a topic of conversation within the food industry for a number of years, conversation about food on Twitter shifted with the pandemic in 2020 and across the industry, brands grappled with the effects and rapid-fire changes spurred by lockdowns¹. During this time, Twitter conversation about food swelled, with a focus on a broad range of topics (food fads, home-baking, etc.), rather than just sustainability.

+13%

YoY growth of global food sustainability² conversations on Twitter



In 2021, we witnessed a respite from lockdowns and what seemed like a cautious return to normal. While some trends within the food industry are slow burns, we see increases in Twitter conversations about food in relation to sustainability; including a rise in plant-based meat alternatives, insects as a source of protein, and superfoods to boost healthy eating. Comparing 2021, our new normal, to 2019, food sustainability conversations are on the rise. To better prepare for what lies ahead, we explore this data and identify what food brands should be aware of to optimize their strategies as we head into 2022.

46.5%

of all conversations on Twitter around sustainable foods are led by Gen Z, showing a commitment to improving the way we source, use, and recycle food.

>75.3%

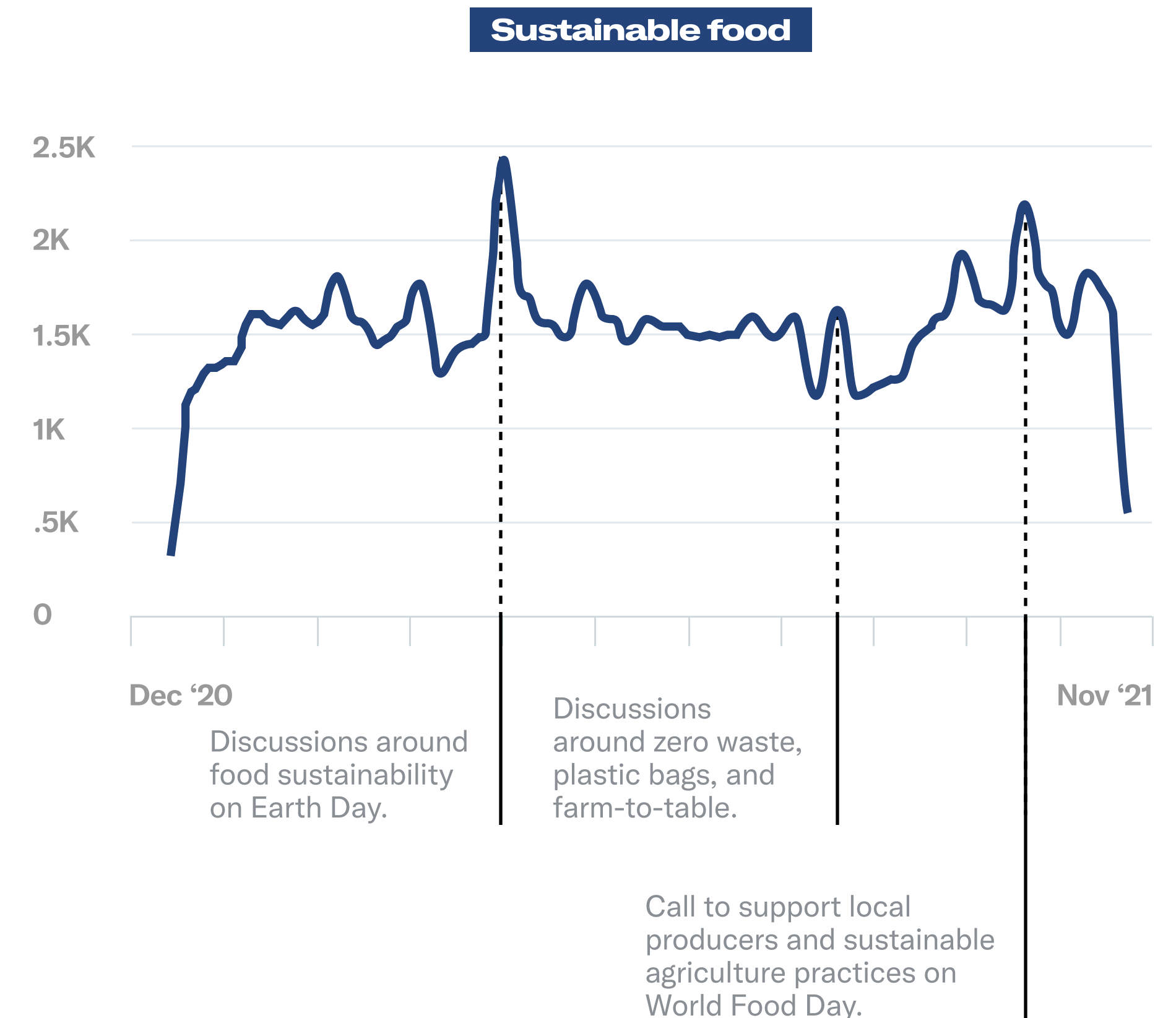
of all Tweets around food waste in 2021 were negative, as brands and consumers struggle to find the most effective ways to solve this issue.

6.5%

of all 2021 Earth Day discussions on Twitter were related to new vertical farming developments and farm-to-table solutions.

The data points above are based on a global analysis of Tweets combining keywords related to sustainability, such as sustainable, eco-friendly, and zero waste with food between January and October 2021. See Methodology for details.

YTD trended volume chart (2020-2021)



“The pandemic gave consumers first-hand experience of the fragility of day-to-day life, so the future of our planet has become a critical conversation, leading to the rise of sustainability awareness.

It’s not what’s on the plate that matters most, but how it got there, and what footprint it left behind. The brands that will shape the future of the food industry will be the ones taking action on these trends.”

[Elena Melnikova](#),
Chief Marketing Officer at Talkwalker



Trends to watch

Understanding these three trends is key to understanding how the food industry will evolve and innovate. As consumer interest continues around protein and plastic alternatives, alongside and in relation to healthy eating habits, these trends will feed into the larger food conversation.

01 Foods of the future

Preparing for the future of food means reducing our reliance on plastic and meat. Industry trends are gearing towards innovations in plastic alternatives, like compostable packaging and edible straws, as well as looking to insects as an alternative source of protein.

02 Let's talk takeout

Cooking meals at home is on the rise, as it's healthier for our bodies and the planet. However, pandemic restrictions made ordering in an appealing alternative, and conversation around the need for reusable takeout containers, and praise for restaurants innovating in this space, show that sustainability is an ongoing concern.

03 Healthy eating habits

Last year's lockdowns put our diets and exercise into perspective as everyone saw limitations on what they could eat and where they could go. Portion control, reducing carbs, and conscious consumption of processed foods are all garnering a fair share of the healthy eating conversation.

O1 Foods of the future

Ecology meets gastronomy.

To impact food sustainability, we believe brands need to lead from the front and that consumers will be interested in change. In fact, 35% of consumers are choosing brands based on their sustainability credentials more now than they did before the pandemic.

Growth of ecologically focused food conversation on Twitter YoY (2021 vs. 2020)

-3%

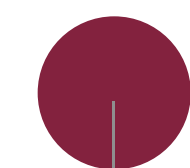
6/22

This data is based on a global analysis of Tweets combining keywords that relate to ecologically focused food. This query combines three groups, first words such as food, or eating; second, words like container, package or wrapper, and third, words like plastic, or biodegradable, or sustainable. The data points are taken between January - Oct in 2020 and 2021. See Methodology for details.

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+263.6%

Growth in Twitter conversations related to environmental/ecological practices that use the plant emoji 🌱



2020

2021



While ecologically-focused conversations dropped -3% YoY on Twitter, there are some growing consumer trends and needs within this conversation. From reducing plastic (54.4% of Twitter conversations around environmental practices related to food) to finding more carbon-friendly alternatives to protein (87.8% of Twitter conversations around proteins related to plant-based proteins), consumers are making it clear that they are interested in the food industry's ecological footprint.

To drive impact on food sustainability at scale, brands have to be willing to take the first step. Getting creative is one way to prepare for the future of food. Rising trends include compostable packaging, edible straws, and insects as a source of protein. It might seem buggy, but using straws you can eat and snacking on insects can be good for the environment as well as our health.

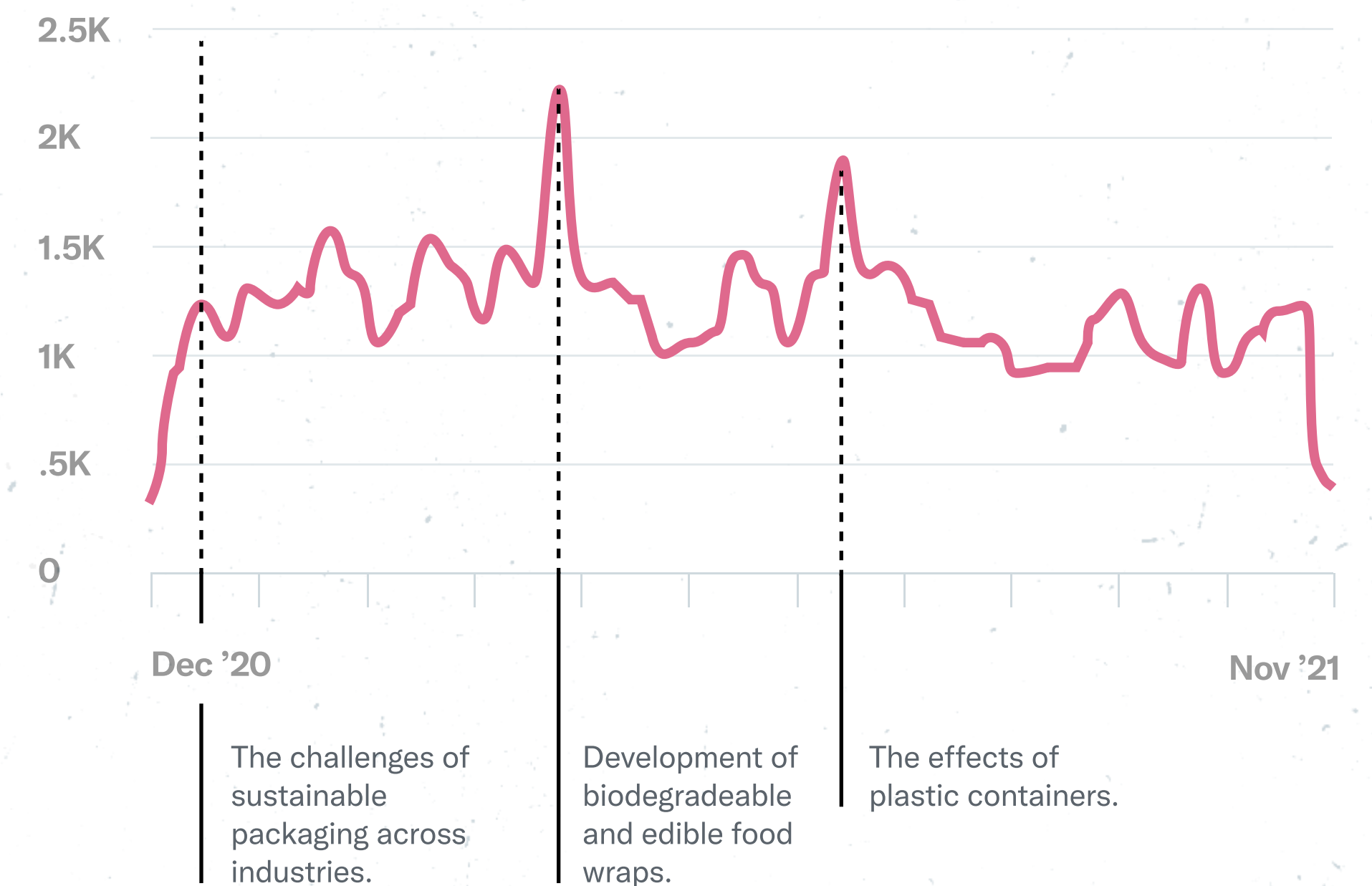
54.4%

of Twitter conversations around environmental practices related to food include the word "plastic"

87.8%

of Twitter conversations around proteins are about plant-based proteins

Volume of Tweets mentioning keywords related to food's effect on the environment



The chart above is based on a global analysis of Tweets combining keywords that relate to ecologically focused food between January 1st and November 15th 2021. See Methodology for details.

Conversation drivers

Which related concepts, events, or keywords are driving conversation about this topic on Twitter?

Packaging you can munch on

The challenge of sustainable packaging exists across all industries and people are demanding more eco-friendly options. The food industry can tackle some of these challenges through adoption of innovative ideas like biodegradable and sustainable packaging, compostable or edible straws, reusable bags and containers, and food film derived from konjac flour and starch.

The pros of protein alternatives

Many consumers are increasingly interested in alternative protein options, like plant- or bio-based alternatives including yeast, algae, and even insects. Edible insects show great potential as an environmentally friendly choice for future food systems. They're an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, have greater food conversion efficiency, and produce lower greenhouse gas emissions, making them a positive contribution toward the environment, food and nutritional security, and a healthier lifestyle.



Turn insights into action

01 **Play the long game**

To really drive brand love, companies in the food industry need to create and commit to a dedicated strategy. Intent matters.

02 **Don't get left behind**

There is room to jump into ecological conversation, with signs that consumers will engage with the message positively. Promote your efforts within the field on Twitter for increased brand uptake. And if you're not already tackling issues like sustainable packaging, listen to your consumers, and take actions now.



2 Let's talk takeout

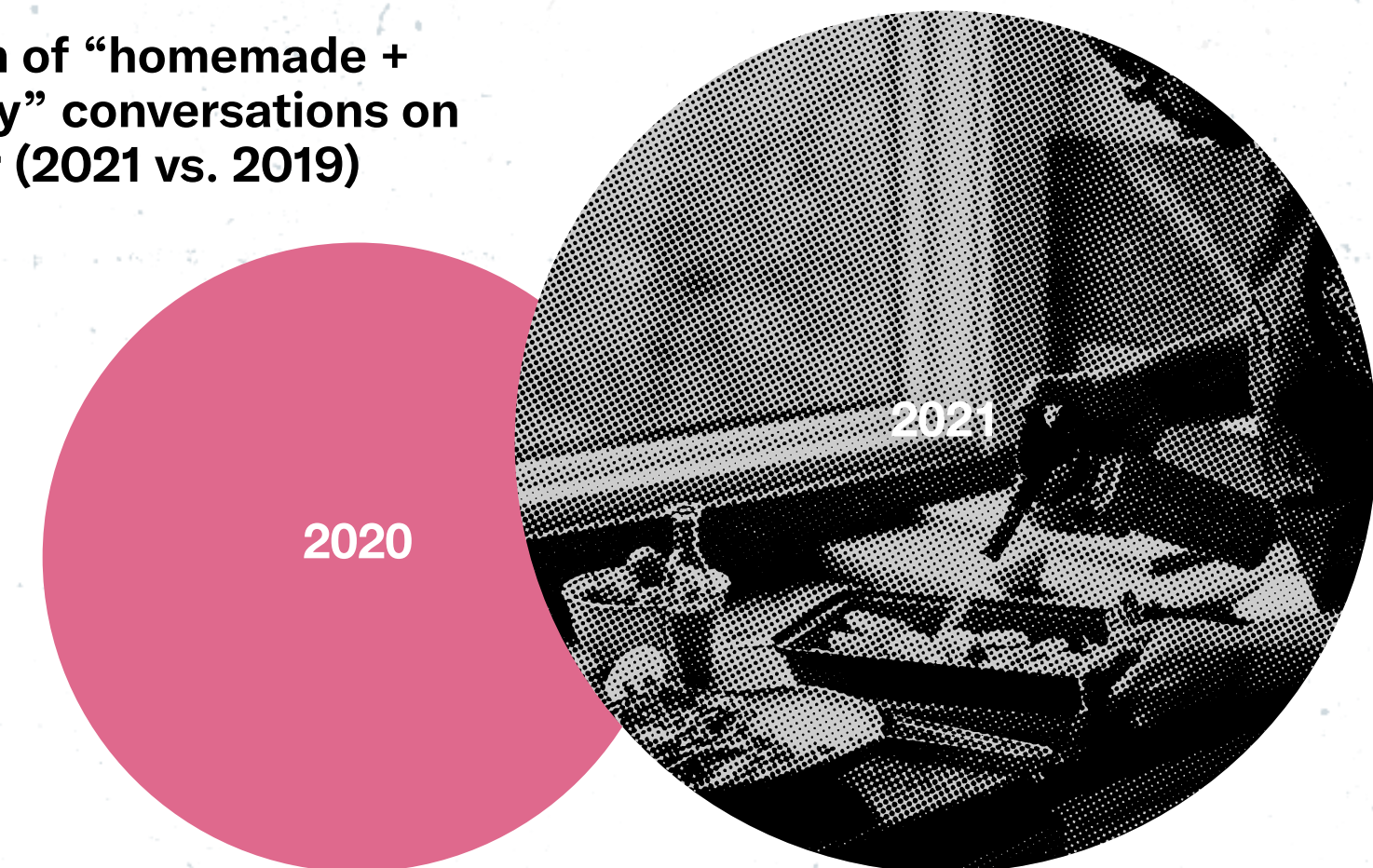
Eat in, eat out, eat well.

As the food industry adapts to the changes caused by the pandemic, some are taking more responsibility for their own sustainability choices and healthier eating. By making more food at home that's less processed, we can reduce packaging, eat better, and choose superfoods like turmeric and ginger that help boost our immune systems.

A pepperoni-topped outlier to these trends comes hot in a box. The pandemic had people stuck at home, ordering the ultimate comfort food right to their door. This kept Twitter buzzing about pandemic pizza delivery at the same time people were Tweeting about roasting the perfect chicken.

+27% PoP

Growth of “homemade + delivery” conversations on Twitter (2021 vs. 2019)



Tweet Volume YoY
(Jan - Oct in 2021 vs. 2020)

Mentioning the keyword “homemade”

+18%

Mentioning the keyword “delivery”

+34%

Popular emojis in Tweets mentioning the keywords "food delivery" in 2021 (Jan - Oct)

17.1% of emojis used



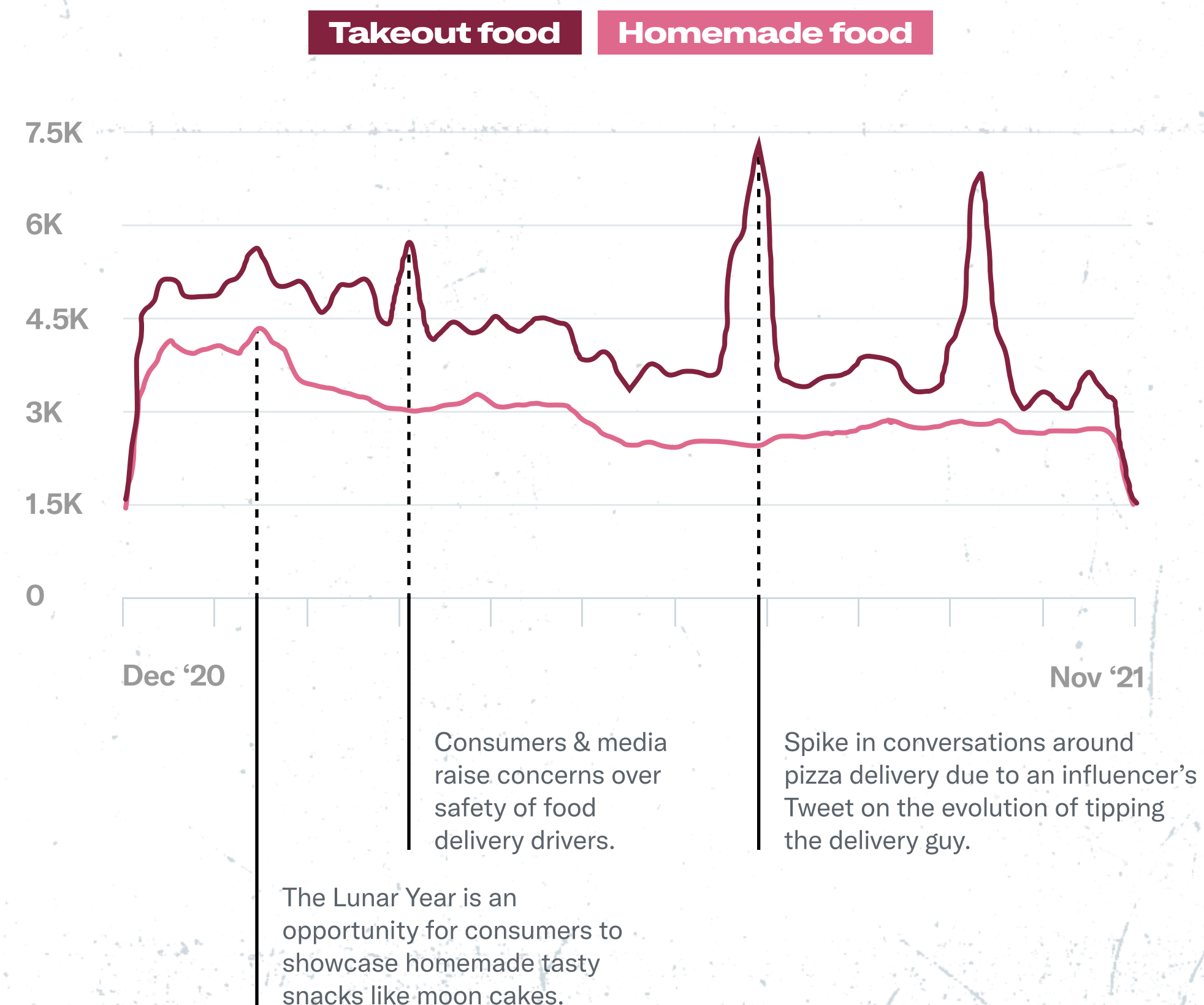
Followed by



The chart above was generated by Talkwalker and based on a global analysis of Tweets mentioning the keywords related to food delivery between January and October 2021. See Methodology for details.

PoP stands for period over period and is used for comparing time series data.

Volume of Tweets mentioning keywords related to homemade food and food delivery



The two lines in the chart above are based on a global analysis of Tweets that included keywords related to "food delivery" and "homemade food" respectively, between January 1st and November 15th 2021. See Methodology for details.

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Conversation drivers

Which related concepts, events, or keywords are driving conversation about this topic on Twitter?

Home cooked & hand tossed

92% of families plan to continue eating together at home as often, if not more than, they do now. In 2021, chicken was the most talked-about home-cooked food on Twitter (12.4%), beating out bread and other baked goods. Around takeout and food delivery, unsurprisingly, pizza was mentioned in 17.1% of Twitter conversations.

Body boosters

Following a global pandemic, it's no surprise online discussions turned to superfoods known to boost immunity. Body booster conversations on Twitter show interest in ginger (20.3%) and turmeric (18.1%) are on the rise as popular immunity-boosting supplements.

Seeding the conversation

Seeds are dominating the superfood conversation on Twitter with a 27.1% increase over 2020, coinciding with the rise in healthy eating habits. While a fungus, not a seed, interest in mushrooms is rising as the 9th most popular superfood. Conversations around mushrooms had 84.4% positive sentiment in 2021.

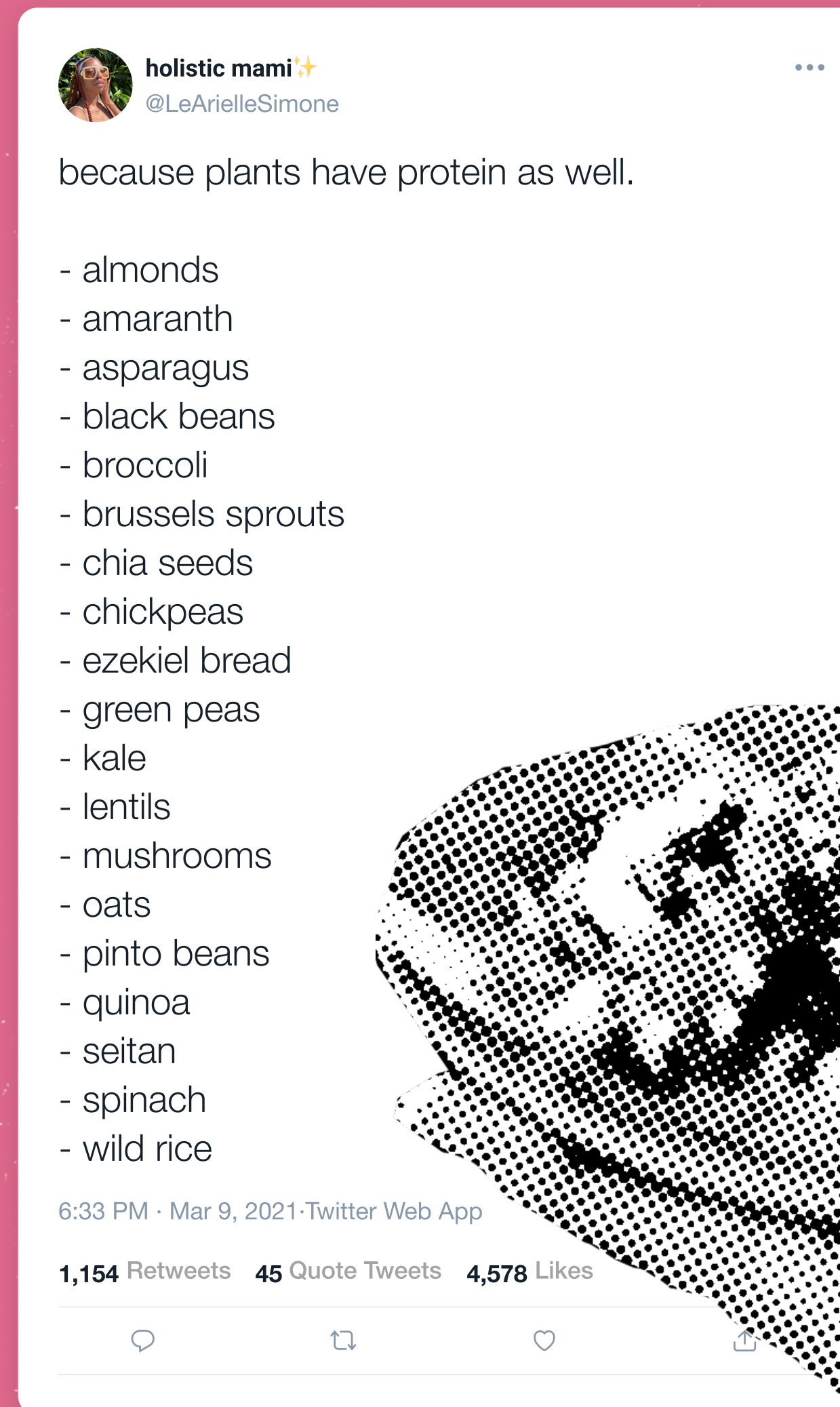
Turn insights into action

O1 Know your consumer

The Twitter conversations around boosting immunity can be used for direct brand impact. Adapt your campaigns and messaging to highlight popular “body boosting” ingredients, and join the conversations that are already being held in this area.

O2 Look to the future

Consider adapting your product line to include superfoods like seeds, avocado, berries, mushrooms, quinoa, garlic, and more. The more you can dig into the trend, the better you’ll be able to predict the next superfood fad, and be in a better position to include it in your future product innovations.



03 Healthy eating habits

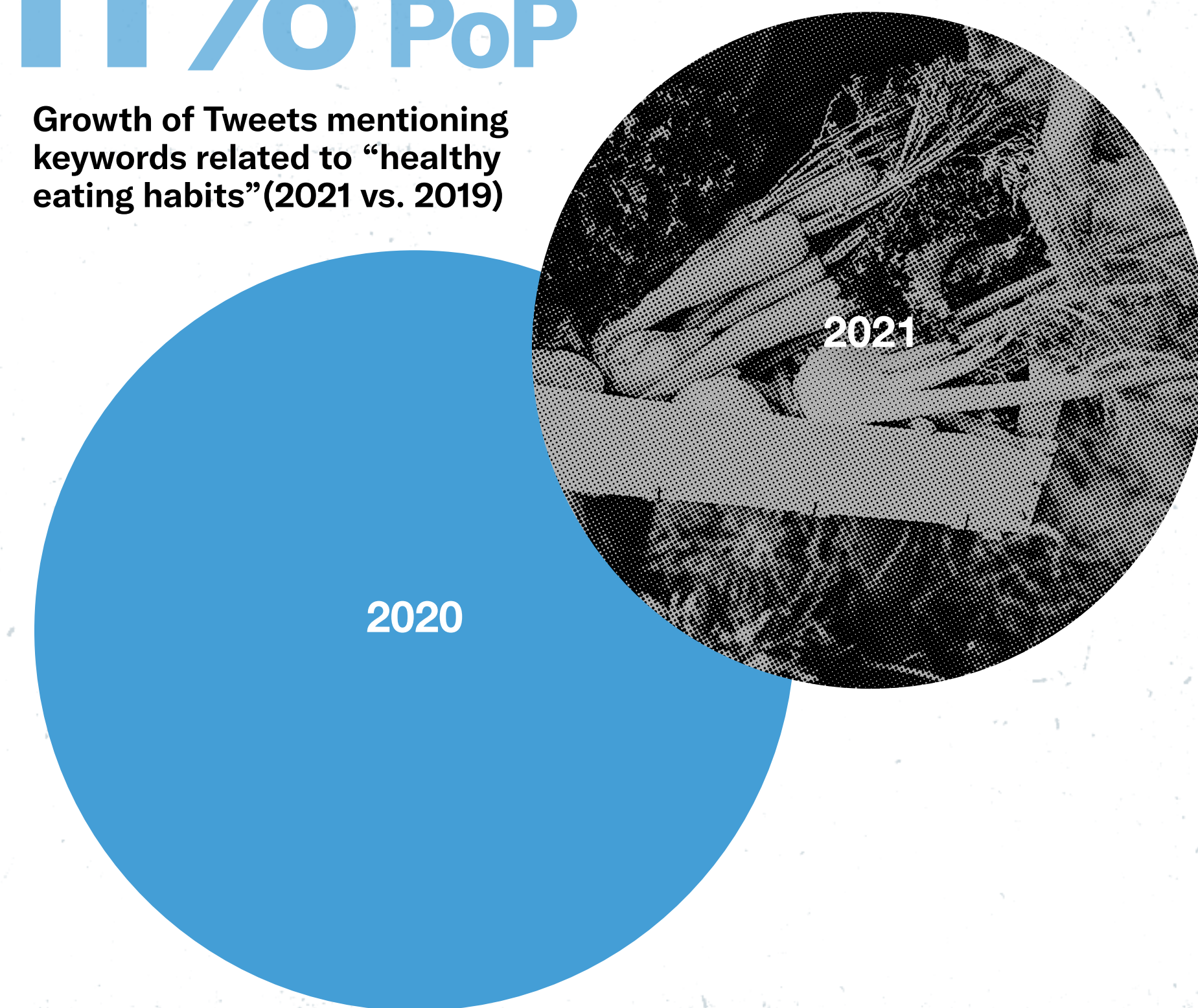
Weight loss and community gains.

While overall food industry conversations on Twitter declined (2021 vs. 2019), most likely due to a respite from lockdowns and a slow return to “normal,” there has been a consistent increase in Twitter conversations around healthy eating (+17% PoP).

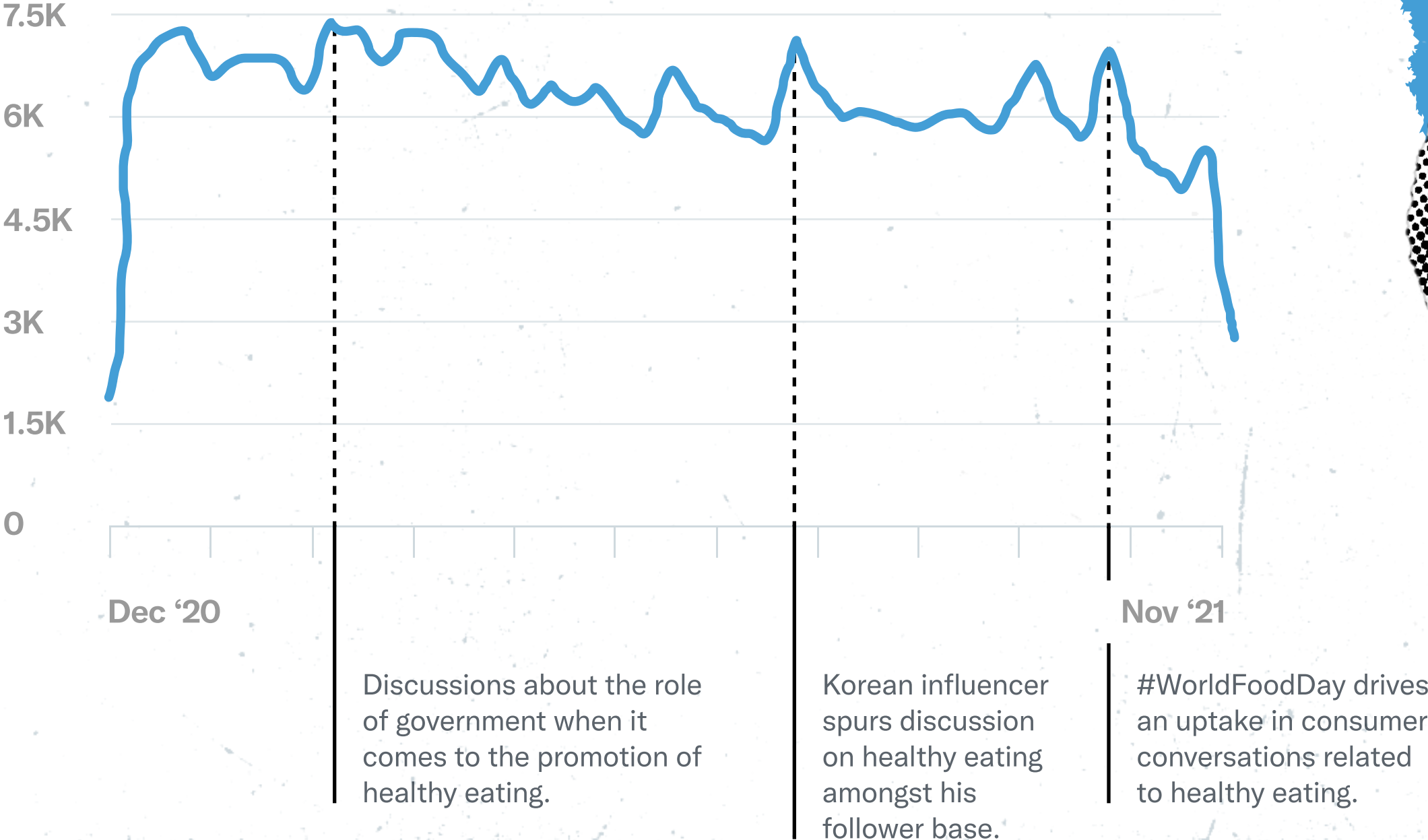
Controlling portions, limiting carbs, and being more aware of processed food were all topics of conversation, with peaks throughout 2020 surrounding the definition of healthy eating and healthy carbohydrates.

-11% PoP

Growth of Tweets mentioning keywords related to “healthy eating habits” (2021 vs. 2019)



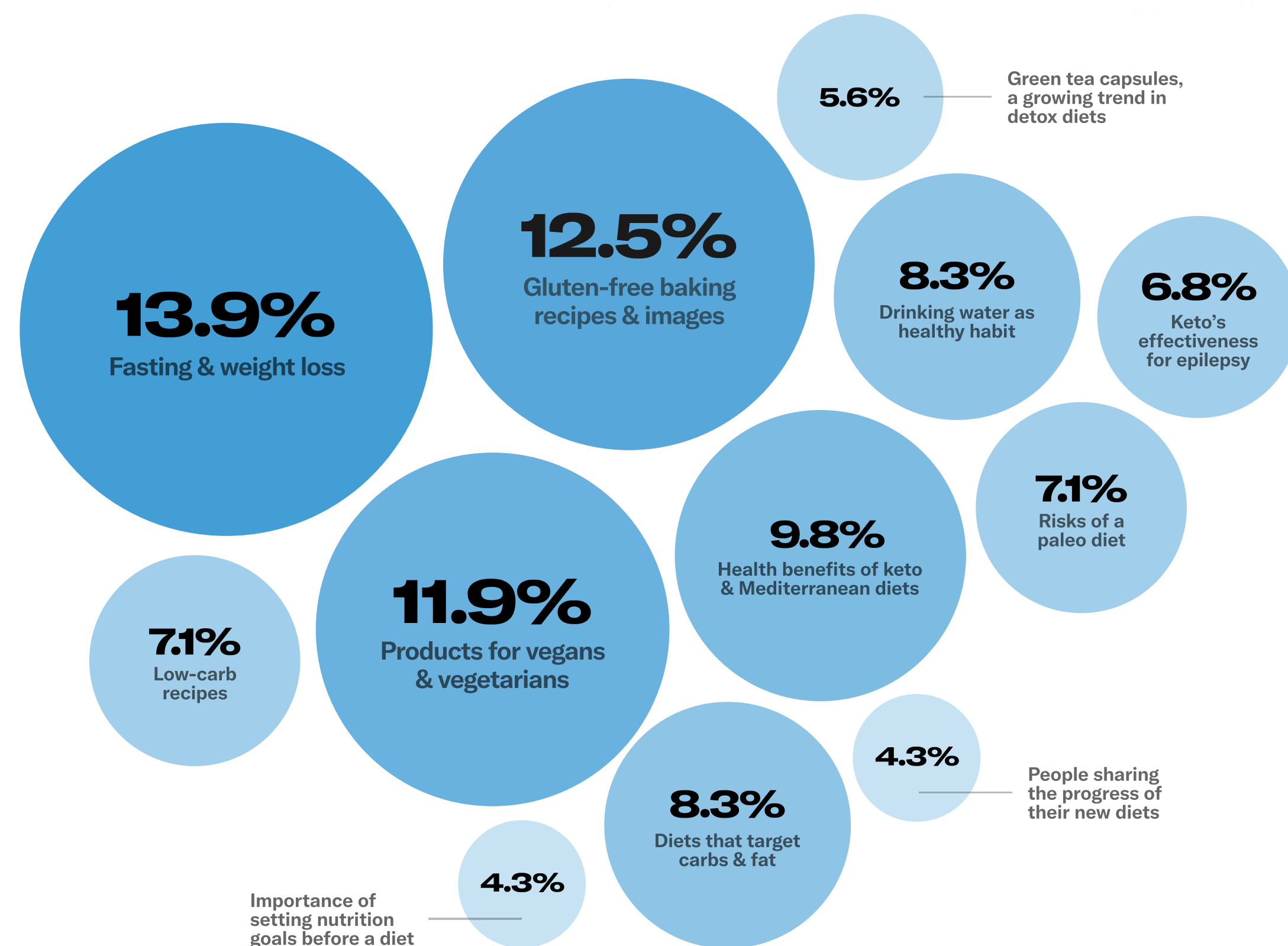
Volume of Tweets mentioning keywords related to healthy eating



The chart above is based on a global analysis of Tweets combining keywords mentioning eating with keywords related to health, mindfulness, and nutrition between January 1st and November 15th 2021. See Methodology for details.

Confidential: Do not forward or post online.

Conversation clusters of Tweets related to diets



Conversation drivers

Which related concepts, events, or keywords are driving conversation about this topic on Twitter?

Intermittent fasting

While diets like keto, the Mediterranean diet, paleo, and veganism are all on the rise, “intermittent fasting” was mentioned most at 13.9% of all diet-related conversations on Twitter.

Recipe sharing

19.6% of diet-related conversations are from people using Twitter to share recipes and images of the dishes they created according to different diets like gluten-free or low-carb. People are using social conversations around food as an opportunity to become a part of a community while also promoting healthier eating habits.

Sweet sentimentality

Nostalgic conversations around confectionery have grown by 55% since January 2021. People love discussing childhood candy and talking about brands that released special editions that revived original packaging.

Turn insights into action

O1 **Think long term**

Diets aren't just for January. It's easy to think that the diet conversation drops after the "New Year, New You" peak, but there is opportunity all year round. Intermittent fasting is the one to focus on at this time, due to popularity and ease of connection.

O2 **Be consistent with your tracking**

Track Twitter conversations over time, not just specific dates, to see if interest around a topic has increased or decreased. Then be part of the conversation by connecting that product to your brand through messaging and positioning. Long-term data is more valuable, and the results of consumer intelligence won't appear overnight.



What this means for food brands

With sustainability trends becoming increasingly popular, food brands who want to get ahead should tap into these insights and key takeaways to connect with their audience and capitalize on this growth.

01 **Actions not words**

To really drive brand love, create and commit to a dedicated strategy. Consumers want to see long-term commitment, and intent matters.

02 **Don't forget the details**

The insights provided throughout this report are global trends. Within the platform, you can dig deeper to see what's happening within specific age demographics or regions to help you create hyper-relevant, personalized messaging.

03 **Get closer to your consumer**

Consumers are going to have discussions about food no matter what you do. Successful brands in 2022 will be those that understand these conversations, and then adapt their messaging to be a part of them.

04 **Stay aware of fluctuating consumer interest**

Ensure you're always in the know with access to real-time insights.

05 **Be consistent with your tracking**

Track interest and conversations to employ the best practices at the right time.

06 **Keep up at all costs**

Track data points across different periods of time and measure insights that are relevant to your brand.

A growing appetite for change

Overall, many of the trends in online Twitter conversations about food are increasing, some slower than others. The numbers clearly show that across varying demographics, consumers are requiring more from companies in regard to sustainability. Food industry brands need to stay aware of what their consumers are thinking to remain relevant. Talkwalker's Consumer Intelligence Acceleration Platform™ offers brands the ability to understand the latest trends in real time, digging deeper into the consumer conversations on Twitter.





Behind the work

Talkwalker is the #1 Consumer Intelligence Acceleration platform for brands to drive business impact and revenue. Our platform combines a multitude of internal and external data sources with AI-enabled technology, for the most expansive view of consumers.

Our team augments brands' insights to increase their ROI from our platform. With offices around the globe, we help over 2,500 brands including those from the food industry to maximize profits with actionable consumer intelligence. By tracking conversations online, brands are able to acquire vital insights and unique data points that will steer them in a direction to drive impact and results.

[Learn more](#)

Methodology

Insights for this report were taken from Talkwalker's Social Intelligence product, by focusing on Twitter data between January 2020 and November 2021. The focus of the analysis was done on information from 2021, but given the nature of the report, we refer to the period of January 2020 to October 2020 mainly for comparative statistics to those in the same period of 2021.

Queries were used to identify the topics discussed, such as the relationship between food and sustainability, various popular diets, superfood and alternative proteins. In some cases, these may have been improved using Boolean operators, to help remove false positives. Filters were used in order to narrow down results for specific places or categories within the general queries.

To attain a deeper level of analysis, we used features like sentiment analysis, video analytics, and image recognition, which are powered by the Talkwalker AI Engine. Sentiment analysis is performed with an average of 90% accuracy, with the ability to detect sarcasm and ironic comments. Images are compared to a database of over 30,000 brand logos, to help identify brands in social media photos and videos.





About the Twitter Official Partner Program

Twitter Official Partners are best-in-breed companies with unparalleled access to world-class technology. Expanding possibilities on and off our platform, our partners ensure exceptional experiences for brands.

In order to earn and maintain the Twitter Official Partner badge and to ensure high-quality experiences for businesses, all our partners are vetted for excellence and must consistently meet our high performance standards.

Learn more about [the program](#) and our [Official Partners](#), or reach out to us at officialpartner@twitter.com to begin working with a partner.