



# Holiday Playbook 2024

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A Playbook of Trends,  
Insights and Activations  
for CPG Brands



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# Introduction

**Chicory's 2024 Contextual Commerce Holiday Playbook** is the definitive resource for CPGs and grocery retailers planning their contextual commerce strategy this season.

Consumers are entering the Q4 shopping season with more uncertainty than last year. While inflation has continued to slow down, talks of a potential recession are back on the table. Still, retail holiday spending is expected to break records this year, with expected growth of 9.5% from last year<sup>1</sup>.

Just like last year, we expect recipe pages to be prime, contextually relevant environments for CPG brands and agencies to reach their target audiences during the holiday season. This will be especially critical in the face of a shorter holiday season and a more purposeful, price-conscious audience. Tapping into consumers in the right mindset can help brands minimize risk in wasted impressions and media inefficiency.

This presents a tremendous opportunity for CPGs and retailers to make an impact during the holidays. **The 2024 Contextual Commerce Holiday Playbook** leverages the learnings from our clients' 2023 holiday campaigns coupled with recent consumer insights to provide strategies and tactics that can help you drive incremental sales, increase media efficiency and reach new & lapsed customers.



<sup>1</sup> eMarketer May 2024, [Holiday season ecommerce spending hasn't gotten much earlier, study shows](#)



# 2023 Holiday Recap and Learnings

## Recipes' Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Just like in 2022, the increase in friends and family gatherings last year continued to drive higher interest in meal-planning and recipe content. Chicory saw massive spikes in online recipe usage during the key Q4 holiday periods across our premium publisher and blogger network.



## Holiday Bargains Galore

Although inflation rates slowed down towards the end of last year, price consciousness continued to grow. 76.9% of shoppers reported that they will be more price-conscious when shopping for groceries in last year's holiday season.<sup>1</sup> Brands effectively engaged with price-sensitive consumers by featuring specific promotions or savings in creative, tapping into a high-intent audience during the holiday season.



<sup>1</sup> Consumer Capture: Holiday Entertaining 2023 | Chicory





## Season's Best Contextual Relevance

Targeting audiences in a purchase mindset during the holidays was a key strategy for even non-food brands in 2023. An international personal care brand tested in-recipe advertising to showcase its limited edition scented soaps, scrubs, and lotions. These products were strategically paired with holiday baking recipes like peppermint bark, sugar cookies and pumpkin cinnamon pie. The campaign generated 1.51X iROAS with a notable 30% increase in sales for the promoted seasonal items.

## The Non-Alc Holidays

The holiday season produced strong returns for the non-alcoholic beverage category last year. Two major juice brands partnered with Chicory to conquest simple syrup during the key holiday timeframe. The campaign drove positive sales lift across all measured markets and resulted in a 1.4X iROAS.





## 2024 Market Landscape and Trends

As online grocery shopping continues to grow, brands face new challenges, especially with a shortened holiday season and lingering consumer price-consciousness. It's crucial to get a temperature check on the market landscape and, by extension, what consumer behavior looks like moving into the holiday season.

### Online grocery shopping continues to grow.

Since the pandemic, online grocery shopping has seen massive growth that's seemingly not slowing down anytime soon. Last July, the online grocery market ended with \$7.9 billion in monthly sales<sup>1</sup> - a 9.2% increase compared to last year. Online grocery orders are usually driven primarily by convenience. This makes it more important than ever for brands to invest in effective digital campaigns to deliver products and messaging as seamlessly as possible.

### Unique challenges arise with a shortened holiday season.

This upcoming holiday season presents one of the shortest gaps since 2019, with only 27 days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. This condensed purchase window puts pressure on brands and retailers to be proactive and purposeful with their messaging.

Catering to early shopping mindsets could be crucial, especially with 34% of U.S. consumers<sup>2</sup> stating that they've already started their holiday shopping in July, up from 28% last year.

<sup>1</sup> [July online grocery sales rise, led by delivery | Chain Store Age](#)

<sup>2</sup> [A shorter holiday shopping season brings higher stakes | Ad Age](#)



## Recipe content is more popular than ever and will inspire holiday meals.

To successfully expand their digital reach in this environment, brands need to deliver high-quality ads during moments that matter. For CPG brands, online recipes are a prime opportunity. Today, 91% of consumers utilize online recipes as a primary source of meal inspiration. As the holiday season approaches, online recipes become even more important.

This content will be prime inspiration sources for consumers as they look for recipe inspiration this holiday season. Online recipes have inspired **86% of consumers**<sup>3</sup> to experiment with new meals or dishes, influenced **80%** to purchase new products or ingredients, and driven **68%** to explore previously unfamiliar brands. The standout takeaway? **65% of consumers** have added grocery products to their online shopping carts after encountering them within the context of a recipe.

## Consumer price-consciousness might linger into the holiday season.

Although inflation started showing signs of tapering off last year, retail giants like [Walmart have reported](#) that U.S. consumers' value-conscious behavior haven't changed much.<sup>4</sup> With news of a [potential recession](#)<sup>5</sup> back on the table, these concerns might only accelerate. Consumers could look for value-conscious purchasing options like promotions, or opting for private label products over brand name ones. Regardless, brands and retailers need to be aware of this price sensitivity and tailor their targeting accordingly.

<sup>3</sup> [Chicory's 2024 State of Online Recipes Report](#)

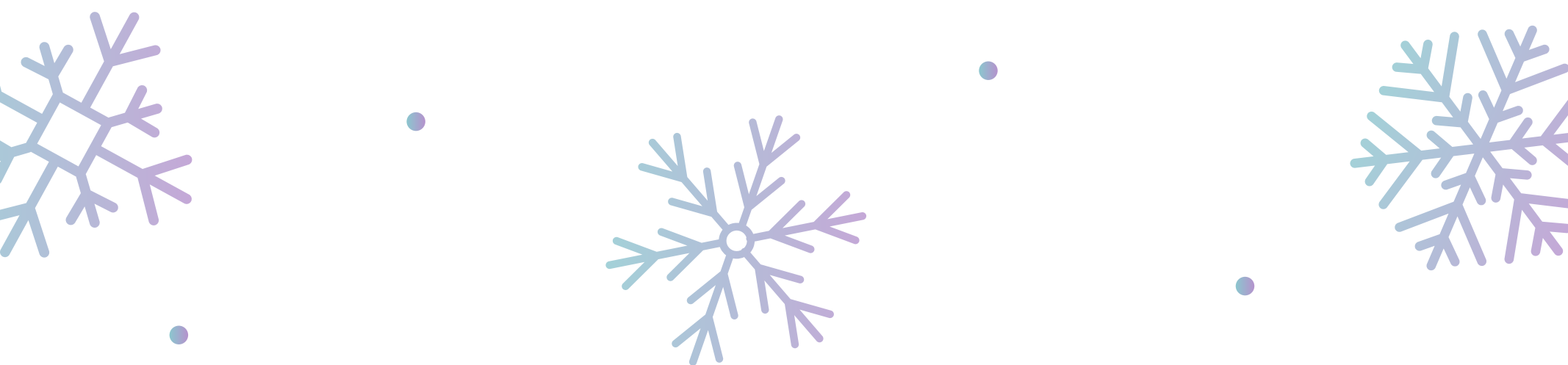
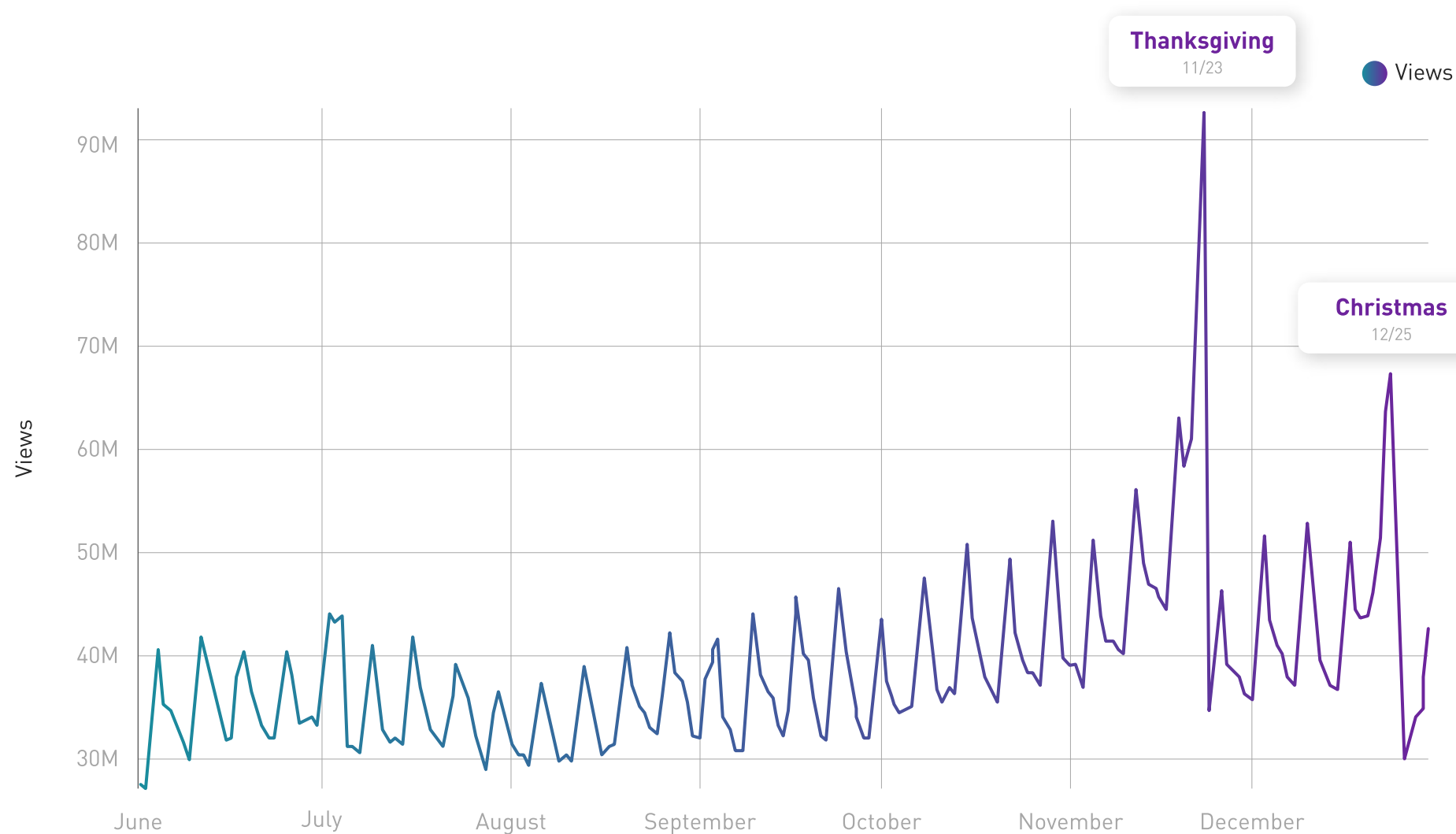
<sup>4</sup> [Retailers expect consumers' price-conscious behaviors to linger during the holiday season | EMARKETER](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Recession 2024: What to Watch and How to Prepare | U.S. News](#)

# Network Trends

## Peak Season for Recipe Traffic

As the festive season approaches, consumers are always looking for recipe inspiration around the holidays, leading to a surge in recipe traffic across our network of 5,200+ recipe sites. Peaks around holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas are constants year-over-year, and will be no exception in 2024.

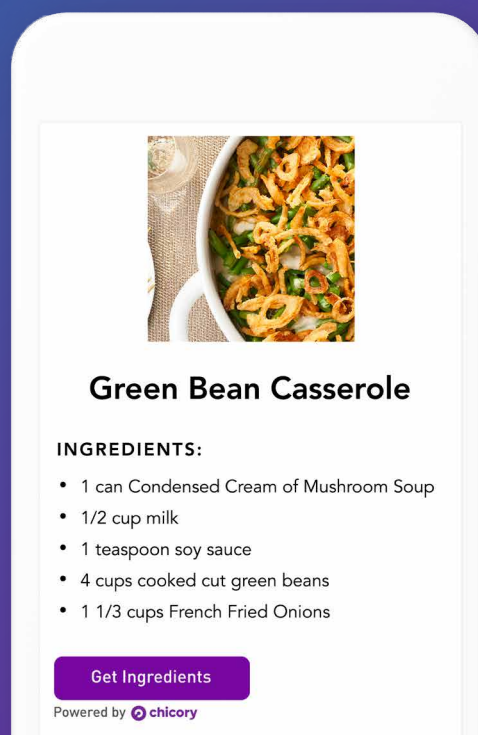




## Top Mains and Sides – Thanksgiving 2023

Thanksgiving meal planning is inspired by tradition, comfort and simplicity. Traditional dishes like Green Bean Casserole, Sweet Potato Casserole, and of course, Roasted Turkey all were some of the top recipes in November. Recipes that represent familiar comfort and are easy to prepare for large gatherings resonated the most with audiences.

- 1 [Green Bean Casserole](#)
- 2 [My Favorite Turkey Brine](#)
- 3 [Delicious, Creamy Mashed Potatoes](#)
- 4 [The Best Sweet Potato Casserole](#)
- 5 [How To Cook a Turkey for Thanksgiving](#)
- 6 [Perfect Turkey in an Electric Roaster Oven](#)
- 7 [Roasted Thanksgiving Turkey](#)
- 8 [Thanksgiving Dressing/Stuffing](#)
- 9 [Stuffed Mushrooms](#)
- 10 [Macaroni & Cheese](#)




**Green Bean Casserole**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 can Condensed Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 4 cups cooked cut green beans
- 1 1/3 cups French Fried Onions

[Get Ingredients](#)

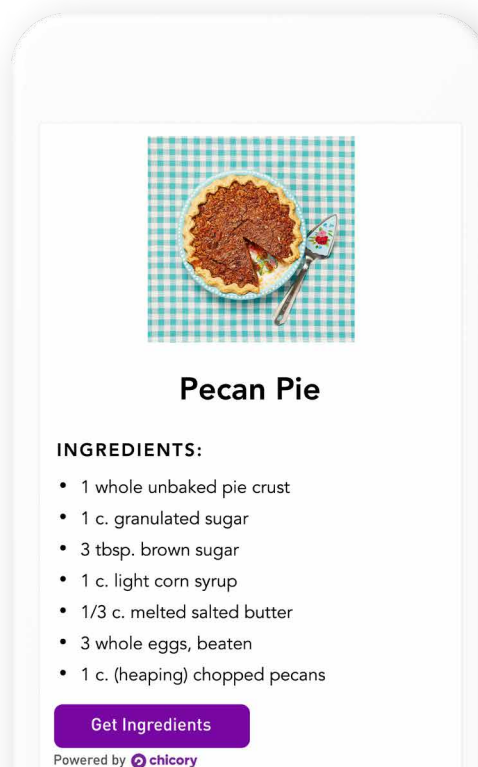
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**#1** Recipe from Chicory's Recipe Network during Thanksgiving

## Top Desserts – Thanksgiving 2023

Pecan dominated dessert recipes during Thanksgiving. Pecan Cream Pie, Pecan Brownies, and even Pecan Crust were some of the most popular recipes in the month of November. This is a prime opportunity for brands and agencies looking to align with seasonal flavors this upcoming Thanksgiving.

- 1 [Pecan Cream Pie](#)
- 2 [Pecan Pie Brownies](#)
- 3 [Pecan Pie](#)
- 4 [4-Ingredient Thanksgiving Dump Cake](#)
- 5 [Pecan Slab Pie](#)
- 6 [White Chocolate Lemon Truffles](#)
- 7 [Utterly Deadly Southern Pecan Pie](#)
- 8 [Chocolate Pie](#)
- 9 [Swedish Apple Cake](#)
- 10 [Perfect Pie Crust](#)




**Pecan Pie**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 whole unbaked pie crust
- 1 c. granulated sugar
- 3 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 c. light corn syrup
- 1/3 c. melted salted butter
- 3 whole eggs, beaten
- 1 c. (heaping) chopped pecans

[Get Ingredients](#)

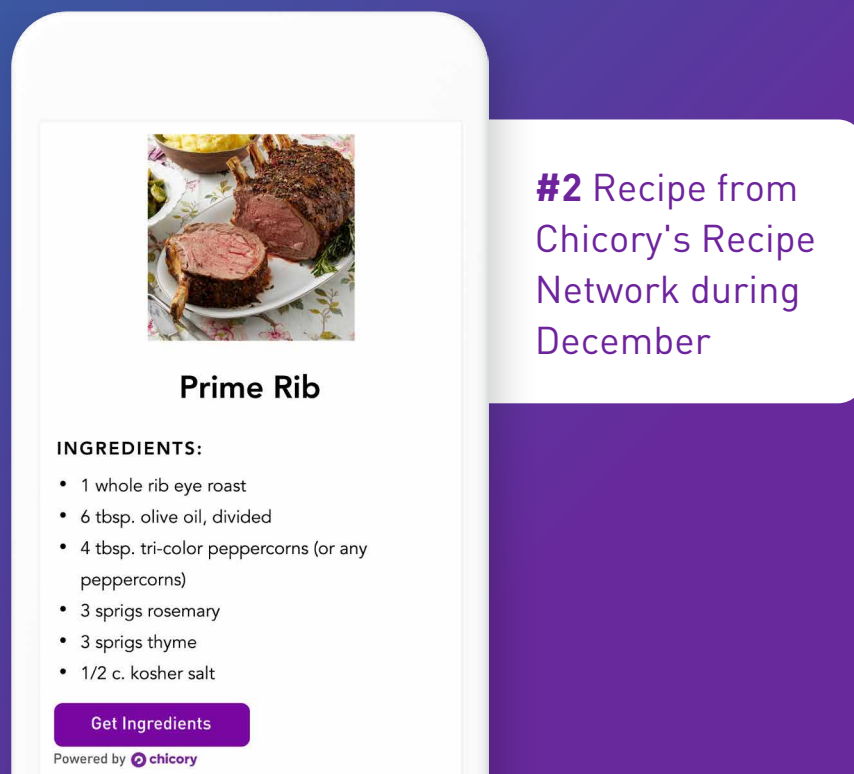
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**#3** Dessert recipe from Chicory's Recipe Network in November

## Top Mains and Sides – December 2023

Green Bean Casserole recipes remain popular moving into December. Unlike November, though, hearty, red meat recipes are highly popular in December, like Prime Rib, Roasted Beef Tenderloin, and Beef Wellington. This makes sense, as consumers could crave heartier meals entering the cold weather season.

- 1 Green Bean Casserole
- 2 Prime Rib
- 3 Roasted Beef Tenderloin
- 4 Stuffed Mushrooms
- 5 Best Easy Healthy Baked Salmon
- 6 Tater Tot Breakfast Casserole
- 7 Beef Wellington
- 8 Roast Beef
- 9 Instant Pot Pot Roast and Potatoes
- 10 Christmas Breakfast Casserole




**Prime Rib**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 whole rib eye roast
- 6 tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 4 tbsp. tri-color peppercorns (or any peppercorns)
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1/2 c. kosher salt

[Get Ingredients](#)

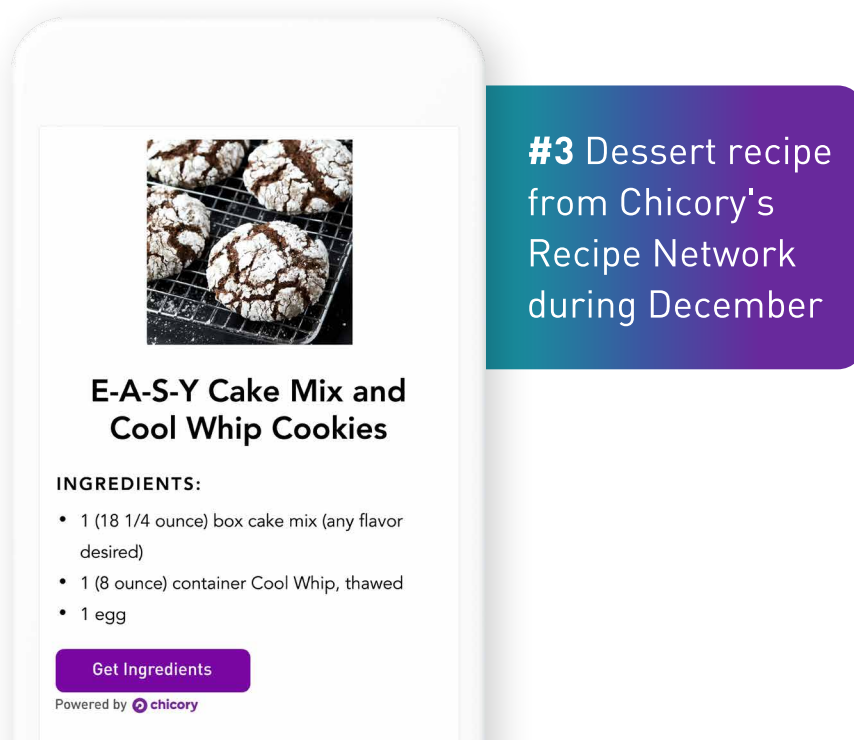
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**#2** Recipe from Chicory's Recipe Network during December

## Top Desserts – December 2023

Pie is all over November recipe usage, but cookies dominate December. Eight of the top ten recipes in December 2023 were cookie recipes. Seasonal twists, like Peppermint Bark, Shortbread Cookies, and Chocolate Crinkle Cookies all point to consumer eagerness for the holidays and the nostalgic, cozy spirit that comes with it.

- 1 Italian Ricotta Cookies
- 2 Chocolate Crinkle Cookies
- 3 E-A-S-Y Cake Mix and Cool Whip Cookies
- 4 Chewy Sugar Cookies
- 5 Peanut Butter-Chocolate No-Bake Cookies
- 6 Cream Cheese Cookies
- 7 Peppermint Bark
- 8 Shortbread Cookies
- 9 Gordon Ramsay's Yorkshire Pudding
- 10 Sugar Cookies




**E-A-S-Y Cake Mix and Cool Whip Cookies**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 (18 1/4 ounce) box cake mix (any flavor desired)
- 1 (8 ounce) container Cool Whip, thawed
- 1 egg

[Get Ingredients](#)

Powered by  chicory

**#3** Dessert recipe from Chicory's Recipe Network during December

# Holiday Success Stories

With the upcoming holiday landscape and previously successful online recipes in mind, let's look into some examples of brands that activate with Chicory during the holiday season, and how their holiday campaigns drove incremental growth.

## Ice Cream Brand Grows Sales at Multiple Retailers During Holiday Season

### Objective

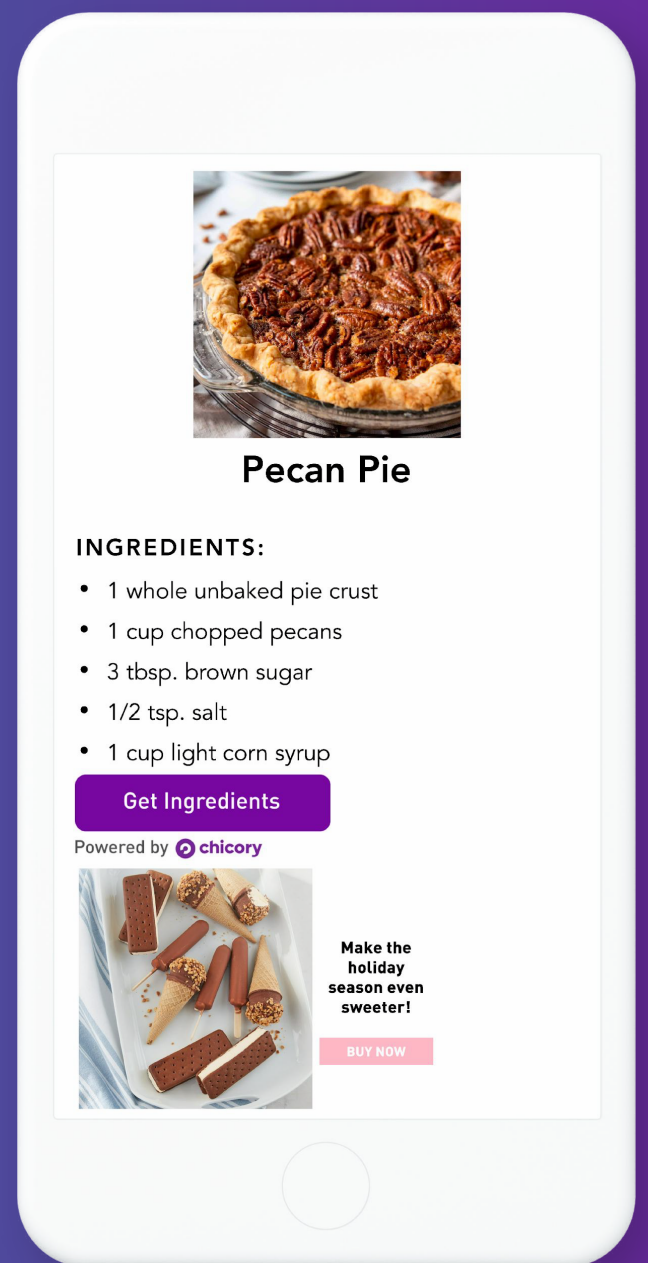
A popular ice cream company, known for its diverse array of ice cream brands and frozen novelty treats, collaborated with Chicory to grow ice cream sales during the holiday season, extending beyond the brand's peak summer period.

### Solution

To achieve this objective, Chicory leveraged its shoppable Premium In-line and Pairings ad units across recipe websites, effectively prompting consumers to purchase ice cream as they plan meals, compile their weekly shopping lists and prepare for upcoming holiday hosting occasions. In-line ad units targeted ingredient keywords such as "ice cream," while Pairings ad units focused on recipe categories like "desserts," "family favorites," "holiday baking," "fall flavors" and "kid-friendly."

### Results

The campaign yielded significant results, achieving a 5.93X incremental return on ad spend (iROAS) and generating a combined sales lift of +6.2% across all featured items, resulting in the sale of over 3 million units across multiple retailers.





## Seasonal Success for Co-Branded Sides

### Objective

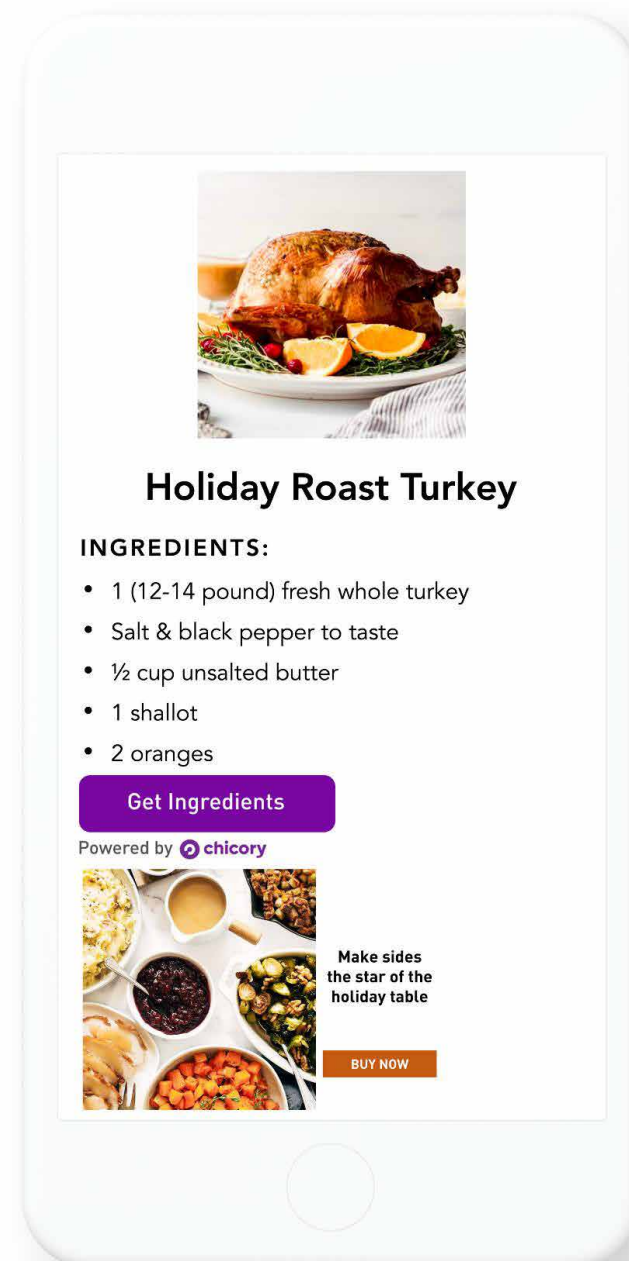
A major canned goods brand, a broth brand and a butter brand teamed up to execute a co-branded holiday campaign. The brands wanted to leverage shared recipes to promote their products for holiday entertaining, conquest specific ingredients, while also maximizing their collective ad budget.

### Solution

Leveraging Chicory Premium ads, the brands used in-line units 1:1 targeted to ingredients like green beans, corn, broth, butter and pineapple within shared holiday recipes. In addition, they used pairings units aligned with relevant recipe categories including Classic Holiday Meals, Holiday Entertaining, Simple Sides and Thanksgiving Feasts. Chicory developed co-branded creative for the Pairing ads which enabled both brands to double their products' impression volume. The ads drove shoppers to a curated product list at a major retailer and its banner stores.

### Results

The campaign achieved a 7.0X ROAS (combined). 58% of total sales were from new and lapsed shoppers.



## Bev-Alc Brands Inspire Shoppers to Create Festive Holiday Cocktail

### Objective

A global beverage conglomerate known for its diverse portfolio of premium spirits, wines and soft drinks collaborated with Chicory on a holiday campaign to promote its Italian aperitif and vodka brands. The goal of the campaign was to drive awareness and inspire shoppers to create festive cocktails using these products.

### Solution

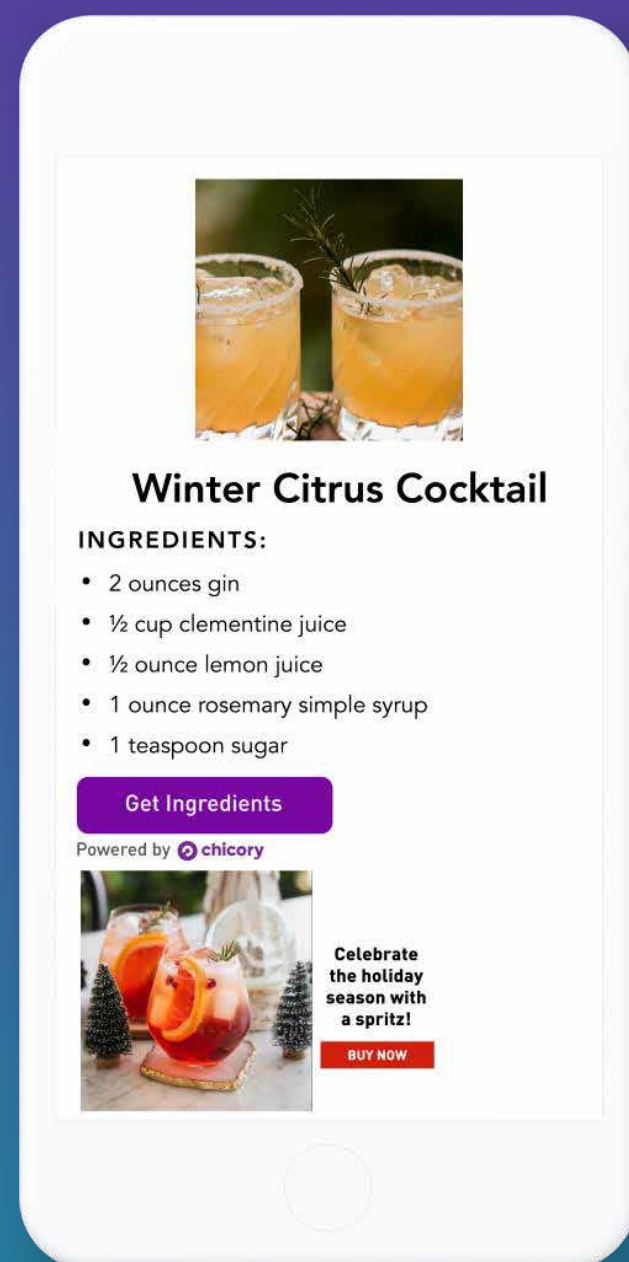
To attract at-home holiday mixologists, Chicory used its shoppable Premium In-line and Pairings ad units across recipe websites. In-line ads targeted specific ingredient keywords such as "orange aperitif" and "vodka," while Pairings ads focused on relevant recipe categories like "holiday entertaining," "cocktails," "spritz," "elevated appetizers and hors d'oeuvres" and "New Year's bites."

Shoppers interacting with the ads could expand the media units into shoppable modals, revealing a curated selection of available retailers personalized to their zip code.

This allowed them to easily choose their preferred retailer and seamlessly add the spirits to their shopping carts.

### Results

The campaign effectively reached shoppers seeking beverages for their festive celebrations, delivering a 2.23x incremental ROAS and driving a 2.2% sales lift at promoted retailers.







## The 2024 Holiday Playbook

Now that the holiday landscape is set, it's time to dive into tactical ways CPG brands can drive success this holiday season. Below are our recommendations to CPG brands looking to reach **high-intent grocery shoppers and drive growth with Chicory during Q4 2024:**

### Leverage online recipe usage peaks during the holiday season.

Consumer interest in online recipes grows exponentially from September through December across our network of 5,200+ recipe sites. We saw above that the highest peaks of the year occur around Thanksgiving and Christmas. CPG brands can use these dates as anchor points for campaigns, targeting audiences with peak impressions, while still maintaining contextual relevance. With the shortened holiday season, planning a strategic time frame behind your messaging is critical.

### Take advantage of shifts in alcoholic beverage recipe usage.

The holidays are historically a big time of year for BevAlc brands. Seasonal drinks are popular during the holiday season, from Mistletoe Martinis to Eggnog. BevAlc companies can leverage online recipes as contextually relevant environments to promote their brands on these seasonal recipes.



## **Be the go-to brand for simple, easy holiday recipes.**

Stress-free recipes are particularly popular around the holiday season. Recipes with keywords like “Easy” and “Simple” see high usage in September through December, which creates a prime opportunity for brands to lend a helping hand in the kitchen. CPG brands could push ready-to-eat meals, or opt to leverage simple ingredients like bouillon or canned vegetables. Either way, simple and easy recipes are prime opportunities for CPG brands in the holiday season.

## **Help value-conscious consumers save this holiday season.**

Inflation has slowed, but looming threats of a recession might have left consumers as price-conscious as they were last year. It's critical for CPG brands to take note and consider promoting value-based messaging. This could be as simple as targeting audiences on budget-friendly, time-saving recipes for busy families during the holiday season.

## **Inspire new usage occasions with co-branded campaigns.**

Online recipes inspire audiences more than anything else. When 80% of consumers say they're inspired to purchase a new product or ingredient solely off an online recipe, the potential for CPG brands is evident. This is especially true for co-branded initiatives. Uniting a broth brand and a canned goods brand, for example, to activate a comprehensive side dish campaign could be an effective way to help brands educate consumers on unique, holiday-specific use cases.





# Win The 2024 Fall and Holiday Season With Chicory

At the crux of this playbook lies our core recommendation: **Contextual commerce media is the key strategy for CPG brands looking to strategically target consumers and drive incrementality this holiday season.**

Let's dive into five benefits behind leveraging online recipe pages as contextually relevant advertising environments:

## Online Recipes Reach Consumers with High Purchase Intent

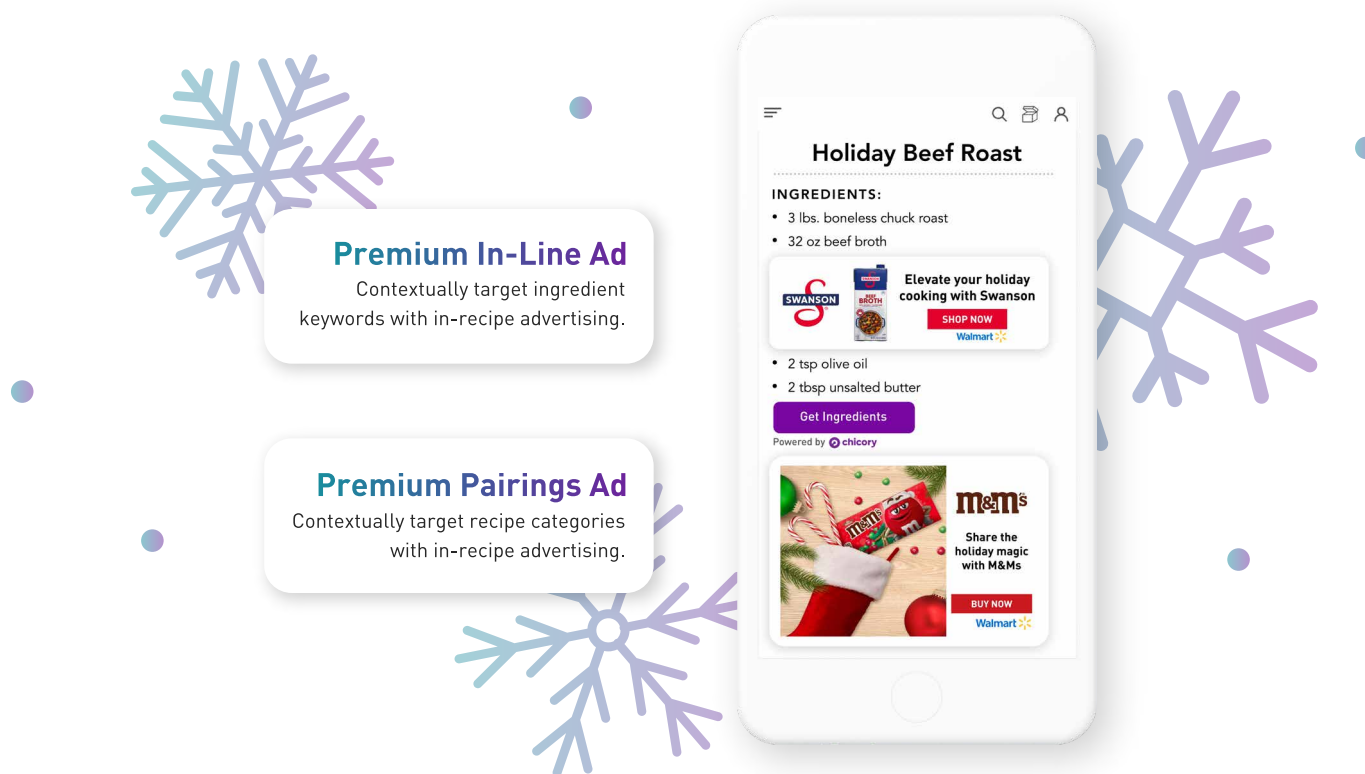
CPG brands and retailers are armed with a prime opportunity to convert recipe content in the holiday season into an advertising opportunity. Online recipes serve as a **moment of inspiration** within the purchasing journey, CPG brands are in a unique position to capitalize on this moment and connect with users based on their mindset.

Whether it's a value-conscious consumer looking for traditional Thanksgiving meals, or a reader looking to make holiday-themed cocktails - online recipes serve as contextually relevant environments to fulfill consumer needs.

## Recipes Drive Incremental Sales

Through its innovative ad suite, Chicory helps CPG brands and grocery retailers align their products with contextually relevant recipes, guide shoppers directly to retailer baskets, and **drive incremental traffic made up of new and lapsed shoppers.**

Incremental growth is a key benefit of adopting contextual commerce media in your advertising strategy. CPG brands can leverage online recipe usage peaks during the holiday season to drive that incremental growth even further.



Example of Chicory's in-recipe advertising units

An analysis of Chicory contextual in-recipe advertising campaigns illustrates the impact these tactics have on driving incremental sales.

Median iROAS of Chicory In-Recipe Campaigns:

### 3X Overall median iROAS of in-recipe ads.



**6x**

iROAS in snacks



**5.7x**

iROAS in adult beverage



**4.5x**

iROAS in meat

## Recipes Can Enable Media Efficiency

Because contextual commerce media enables CPG brands to activate a network of brand-safe, contextually relevant content, it works to solve risks behind harmful content exposure - maintaining high impression rates while staying on top of brand safety concerns.



Chicory enables CPG brands to target audiences on recipe pages, especially during popular seasonal peaks like the holiday season. Because of this, brands can ensure their products live in **contextually relevant environments**, putting ad dollars to work, increasing media efficiency, and tapping into a network of customers with high purchase intent during the holidays.

## Recipes Engage New and Lapsed Shoppers

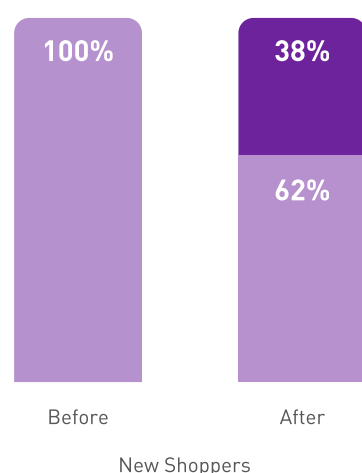
Because Chicory contextually reaches consumers across highly relevant, brand-safe content, [RMNs](#) and brands are able to reach **new and lapsed shoppers** during the holiday season. On average, new and lapsed shoppers account for 47% of total sales across Chicory's platform.



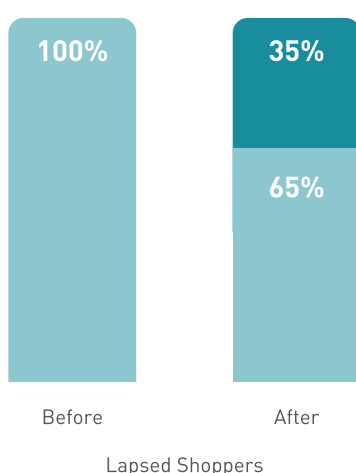
## Recipes Grow Category Share

Advertising in contextually relevant environments like recipe cards has a clear impact on category share. To quantify the idea that recipes influence consumers to purchase “new” products or brands we analyzed a sample of campaigns, across verticals, looking to shift share. On average, campaigns gain **38 percentage points** in category share against new shoppers. **35 points** against lapsed shoppers and **16 points** against existing shoppers.

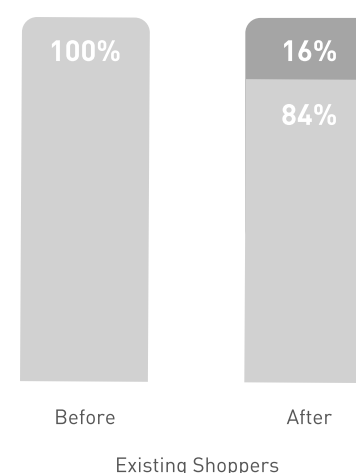
Category Share Shift:  
New Shoppers



Category Share Shift:  
Lapsed Shoppers



Other promoted  
Brand



Promoted Brand
 

 Other

## We Are Leaders in Context

Chicory believes in the power of combining contextually relevant content with engaging media experiences to inspire consumers and expedite the path to purchase.

Our end-to-end contextual commerce media platform:

- Transforms brand safe, contextually relevant content into commerce media for our CPG customers.
- Powers a network of recipe publishers and retailers.
- Reaches consumers in the right mindset with hyper-contextual ads and in-recipe commerce solutions.

**GET IN TOUCH**

## About Chicory

Chicory is the only end-to-end contextual commerce media platform. It combines the power of contextually relevant and brand-safe content and engaging media with a commerce experience powered by proprietary technology to deliver results and insights for its customers. The platform powers a network of recipe publishers and retailers that CPG brands use to reach 123 million high-intent grocery shoppers each month. Chicory's contextual advertising and shoppable recipe solutions can be found on over 5,200 websites and food blogs, including Taste of Home, The Kitchn and The Food Network. Sites enabled with Chicory's technology take grocery shoppers from inspiration to checkout in just a few clicks, driving products to cart for 70+ leading retailers.

