

The Dish: Foods aim to soothe your nerves, not wallet

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Troubled times on the menu. Restaurant bites the dust. The end of Gourmet magazine?

Headlines like these imply that we've stopped eating. On the contrary, Reuters recently reported that the economic recession may further expand America's ample waistline.

Experts told Reuters that as we try to save food dollars by cutting restaurant meals and bargain hunting at supermarkets, we'll select cheaper foods high in sugar, saturated fats and refined grains.

That, of course, is good news for packaged food producers, and they're offering various products to keep us in squirrel cheeks this year. But, turns out, drinks are among the most interesting newcomers, market research firm Datamonitor says.

And who couldn't use a drink about now?

Forget energy drinks. We're stressed enough, so goodbye Red Bull, hello Purple Stuff Pro-Relaxation & Calming Elixir containing rose hips and valerian root, both touted for soothing the nerves.

Some new drinks are focused on increasing brain power.

Mentions of the word "brain" in new food and beverage products worldwide nearly tripled in the 2007-2008 period versus the 2005-2006 period, Datamonitor reports.

When all else fails, flowers make us smile. Therefore, lavender, hibiscus and jasmine are showing up in drinks. **Ooba** Sparkling Refreshing Hibiscus Beverage is said to be antioxidant-rich.

