

## Gen Z and Millennials are opting for rooibos. Here's why

South African consumers are increasingly turning to herbal infusions, with rooibos leading the charge. This shift is particularly evident among Gen Z and Millennials, who, despite their shared health-conscious outlooks, exhibit distinct preferences in their tea consumption habits.



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Gen Zs are gravitating towards herbal infusions or tisanes as part of their holistic approach to health.

A recent survey by Mintel found that 37% of Gen Z consumers incorporate tea into their regular routines, surpassing other generations. This trend underscores their preference for beverages that offer both flavor and functional health benefits.

A GlobalData survey found that 67% of Gen Z tea drinkers in the US prefer herbal and sweet infusions, reinforcing the appeal of naturally sweet and flavourful options like rooibos.

In contrast, only 19% showed a preference for black tea, highlighting a generational shift toward lighter, botanical varieties.

### Caffeine-free and cool

Rooibos' caffeine-free nature further enhances its appeal among younger consumers who are increasingly mindful of their caffeine intake – a key differentiator from black tea, which naturally contains caffeine.

Adele du Toit, spokesperson for the SA Rooibos Council (SARC), notes a significant uptick in rooibos consumption among younger demographics.

“We've observed a marked increase in rooibos' popularity among the youth, which aligns with findings from the 2022 Sunday Times GenNext Survey, which tracks brand preferences among South Africans aged 8 t

30. It ranked Rooibos as the second 'coolest' hot beverage after Starbucks Coffee – and notably, the only herbal infusion to make the Top 10. This growing appeal is clearly driven by Rooibos' versatility, its health benefits and how well it fits into the lifestyles of health-conscious, trend-aware young consumers.”



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Innovations in rooibos products, such as energy drinks and health-boosting shots, have further cemented popularity among Gen Z. These offerings align with their desire for convenient, health-promoting beverage that fit into their dynamic lifestyles.

Millennials are increasingly favouring ready-to-drink (RTD) tea options that cater to their on-the-go lifestyles. According to Mintel, 41% of millennials reported consuming several or more RTD beverages weekly over three-month period, highlighting their preference for convenience without compromising on health benefits

Research by the Tea Association of the USA shows that 87% of millennials drink tea, suggesting a widespread openness to tea consumption within this age group. Additionally, Millennials preferred fruity or herbal flavours at 72% and 64% respectively.

Du Toit says millennials are seeking affordable luxuries that align with their wellness goals. Rooibos, being both cost-effective and healthy, fits seamlessly into this narrative.

The affordability of rooibos also makes it an attractive alternative to alcoholic beverages, which many millennials are reducing or eliminating from their diets.

## **Demand for functional teas**

The demand for functional teas that offer specific health benefits is also on the rise. In South Africa, various rooibos brands have introduced blends infused with ingredients like probiotics, ginkgo biloba and CBD to support gut health, cognitive function and relaxation.



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These innovations cater to both Gen Z and Millennials, who prioritise products that contribute to their overall well-being. Du Toit emphasises that functional beverages resonate with consumers seeking health benefits in their daily routines.

Rooibos, with its natural properties, serves as an excellent base for such products.

She says younger tea drinkers seek out sustainably and ethically sourced teas, along with global tea styles, all qualities that South African rooibos producers are well positioned to meet.

“As health and wellness continue to influence consumer choices, Rooibos stands out as a versatile and beneficial option for both Gen Z and Millennials. Its adaptability to various formats – from traditional brews to innovative RTD products – positions it well to meet the evolving preferences of these generations.”

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