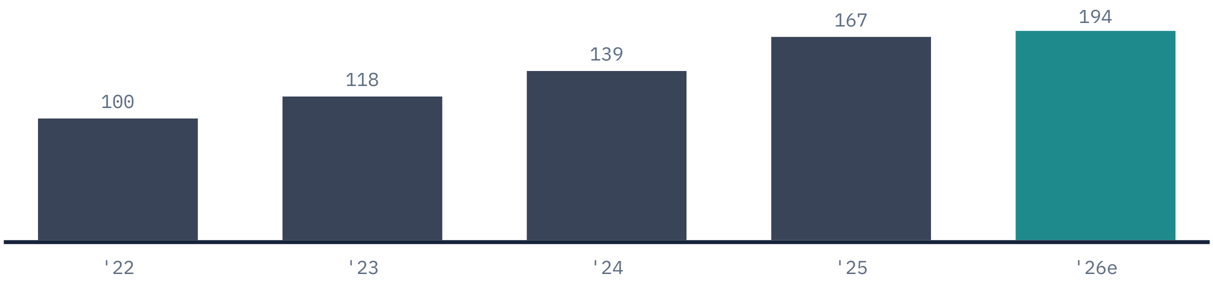
DEEP DIVE REPORT — SAMPLE

U.S. Cold-Brew Coffee Market: Size, Trends & Entry Strategy

Sample edition · 8 sources · Prepared 07/2026

Fig. 1 — U.S. cold-brew retail sales, indexed (2022 = 100) [1]



CONTENTS

SECTION 1

Executive Summary

The U.S. cold-brew coffee market is one of the few beverage categories still compounding at double digits: retail sales grew roughly **18–20% annually** from 2022–2025 and are on track to approach **$2.3B in 2026** [1, 2]. Growth is driven by ready-to-drink (RTD) formats, which now account for roughly two-thirds of category revenue [2].

- **Market size:** ~$1.9B in 2025 retail sales, projected ~$2.3B in 2026 [1]
- **Fastest segment:** multi-serve RTD (grocery), growing ~24% year over year [2]
- **Concentration:** the top three brands hold roughly **60%** of RTD shelf share, but private label is the fastest-growing entrant [4]
- **Entry recommendation:** differentiated flavor/function positioning through regional grocery and DTC subscriptions offers the most defensible wedge; competing head-on in plain RTD against Starbucks and Stok is capital-intensive with weak margins [4, 7]

The category's main risks are input-cost volatility — green coffee futures rose ~35% in 2025 [8] — and early signs of premium-price fatigue among younger consumers [6].

SECTION 2

Market Size & Growth

U.S. cold-brew retail sales reached an estimated **$1.9B in 2025**, up from ~$1.15B in 2022, a compound annual growth rate of roughly **18%** [1, 2]. Category forecasts put 2026 sales near **$2.3B**, with growth moderating but staying well above the broader coffee category's ~4% [1].

Where the growth sits

- **RTD single-serve** remains the largest slice (~45% of revenue) and grows with convenience-channel distribution [2]
- **Multi-serve RTD** (1L+ grocery formats) is the fastest riser at ~24% YoY as cold brew shifts from impulse buy to fridge staple [2]
- **At-home concentrates and pods** are smaller (~15%) but carry the best gross margins for new entrants [3]

Household penetration tells the runway story: only about **21% of U.S. coffee-drinking households** bought cold brew in the last year, versus ~50%+ for iced coffee broadly — leaving substantial conversion headroom [5].

Competitive Landscape

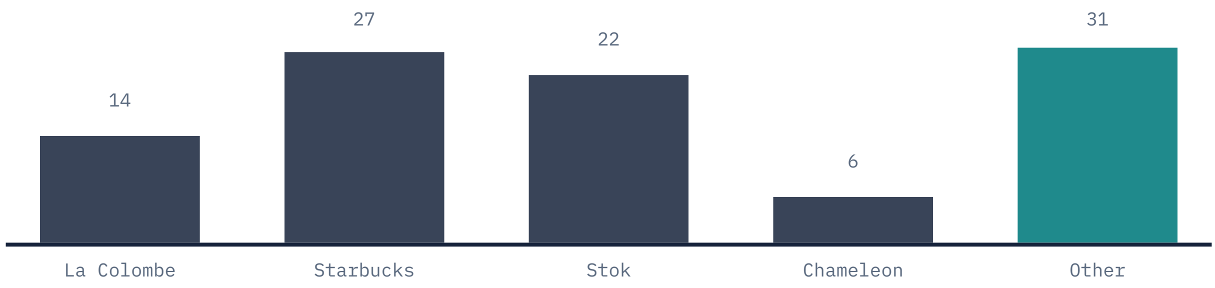
The RTD shelf is concentrated but not closed. **Starbucks** (via PepsiCo's distribution) anchors the category with ~27% shelf share, followed by **Stok** (Danone) at ~22% and **La Colombe** at ~14% [4]. The remaining third fragments across regional roasters, private label, and functional newcomers.

What's shifting

- **Private label** is the fastest-growing segment on shelf — Costco, Trader Joe's, and Target's Good & Gather all expanded cold-brew SKUs in 2025, pressuring mid-tier brands on price [4]
- **Functional entrants** (added protein, mushroom blends, low-acid claims) command 20–35% price premiums and are winning younger buyers [6]
- **La Colombe's draft-latte line** demonstrates that texture/format innovation, not just flavor, can carve share from incumbents [7]

Pricing where public: mainstream multi-serve runs **$0.22–0.28/oz**, premium and functional **$0.35–0.50/oz** [4, 6].

Fig. 2 — Estimated share of RTD cold-brew shelf, top brands (%) [4]



SECTION 4

Consumer Trends & Drivers

Three demand drivers explain the category's persistence:

- **Generational preference:** Gen Z and younger millennials drink a majority of their coffee cold; cold formats are their default, not a summer variant [5, 6]
- **Premiumization with limits:** consumers accept premium prices for perceived craft quality, but 2025 survey data shows **38% of under-35 buyers** trading down to private label at least occasionally — premium fatigue is real [6]
- **Function and health framing:** low-acid positioning and added-function claims are the most-cited purchase triggers after taste, and low-sugar formulations outgrew the sweetened segment in 2025 [6]

Seasonality continues to flatten: cold-brew sales in winter months now index at ~78 versus the summer peak, up from ~60 three years ago — supporting year-round shelf commitments from retailers [2].

SECTION 5

Risks & Open Questions

- **Input costs:** green coffee futures rose ~35% in 2025 on Brazilian supply concerns; brands with thin margins will face pressure through 2026 contracts [8]. Evidence on how much of this reaches shelf prices is mixed.
- **Private-label squeeze:** if retailers keep expanding own-brand cold brew, mid-tier national brands (the likeliest acquirers of a new entrant) get squeezed hardest [4]
- **Data gaps:** shelf-share figures are estimates from retail-panel reporting; direct-to-consumer and food-service volumes are not captured consistently in public sources — treat channel-mix numbers as directional [4]
- **Open question:** whether functional cold brew is a durable segment or a 2024–26 fad. Public data can't yet settle this; watch repeat-purchase rates rather than launch counts.

Entry strategy implication: the defensible wedge for a new entrant is a differentiated position (function, origin story, or format) sold through regional grocery plus DTC subscription, with co-packing to stay asset-light until volume justifies owned production [3, 7].

SECTION 6

Sources

Every bracketed citation [n] in this report refers to the numbered source below. All links were live at preparation time.

[1] Grand View Research — U.S. Cold Brew Coffee Market Report, 2026
https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/cold-brew-coffee-market

[2] Circana Retail Panel — RTD Coffee Category Review Q1 2026
https://www.circana.com/intelligence/beverage

[3] SCA Coffee Retail Report 2025 — At-Home Formats
https://sca.coffee/research

[4] Beverage Digest — RTD Coffee Shelf Share Estimates, 2025
https://www.beverage-digest.com

[5] National Coffee Association — NCDT 2026 Consumer Tracking
https://www.ncausa.org/research-trends

[6] Mintel — U.S. Cold Coffee Consumer Survey, 2025
https://www.mintel.com/coffee

[7] Food Business News — Cold Brew Innovation Roundup, 2025
https://www.foodbusinessnews.net

[8] ICE Coffee C Futures — 2025 Price Summary
https://www.ice.com/products/15/Coffee-C-Futures