entegra
PROCUREMENT SERVICES®

TOP 10 CULINARY TRENDS

Purchasing That Fits®

1 Meatless Goes Mainstream

Gone are the days when vegetarians and vegans searched menus in the hope of finding selections that fit their eating preference. As the plant-based eating movement becomes increasingly mainstream, look for more meatless options to be fully integrated across sectors. “Consumers,” says Hudson Riehle, Senior Vice President of research for the National Restaurant Association, “especially Millennials and Gen Z, are much more knowledgeable about food and want to eat as healthfully as they can. Many have adopted vegetarian and vegan diets.” According to Nielsen research for the Plant-Based Foods Association and the Good Food Institute, sales of plant-based food in the United States rose by 8.1% in 2017, topping $3.1 billion, and the numbers continue to climb!

Product options for meat stand-ins are becoming easier to find, including bean, mushroom or tofu-based “hamburgers.” These consumers are also more open to new flavors and textures, creating a whole new of plant-based cuisine in the form of grain combinations or exotic vegetable bowls.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Operators should ensure that their menus include multiple offerings that appeal to vegan and vegetarian consumers, possibly based on traditional ethnic cuisines such as Indian Dahl (with lentils) or Pan-Asian vegetables.

A build-your-own food bar serves as a great place to introduce new vegan meat alternatives and unusual dishes that include fruits and vegetables to adventurous diners!

Provide a selection of healthy grain bowls powered by entegra supplier UNCLE BEN’S® INTERNATIONAL GRAINS™ Quinoa & Ancient Grains Medley.

2 Beets Can't Be Beat

Voted one of the top five nutrition trends by the National Restaurant Association, beets are taking root, especially with Millennial and Gen Z consumers. They have functionality and versatility that has long been neglected in the dining scene until now. Producer Love Beets credits this superfood with improving liver function, reducing "bad" cholesterol, moderating depression, strengthening bones, reducing fatigue and improving exercise stamina and prenatal health. It's no wonder, then, that this veggie is popping up in a broad cross section of menus and as a component in trending recipes from bowls to plant-based burgers and overnight oats to desserts. For instance, beet juice can be enjoyed by itself or blended with other flavors and spices, and it adds an earthy touch to smoothies.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Consider keeping beets under the radar as a baked-in ingredient. Early adopters of the beet trend, Charles City (Iowa) Community Schools served chocolate beet cake for their Harvest of the Month lunch. The kids loved it!

Beets are making their way onto shelves in the snack aisle, as last year's trend toward alternatives to high-carb snack foods continues. Beet chips, puffed beets and candied beets provide additional choices to the grab-and-go menu.

Millennials and Gen Z are consuming less alcohol than previous generations. Capitalize on this trend by increasing your selection of zero-proof cocktails. Adding beet and other veggie juices also tie into functional and plant-based eating.

3 Must-Try Global Flavors

Diners continue the trend of expanding their culinary horizons, with old standby favorites like Mexican seeing continued growth and other ethnic foods, like Indian reaching the mainstream. A major grocery retailer recently identified flavors from the Pacific Rim (encompassing Asia, Oceania and the western coasts of North and South America) as popular now, with jackfruit serving as a meat alternative, ultra-sweet monk fruit taking the place of refined sugars and vibrantly colored tropical fruits headlining healthy bowls and smoothies.

Also beginning to trend are dishes from the Levantine nations of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. These have appeared on the menus of trendy restaurants across the United States. Look for sauces like zhug (a spicy hot sauce made with garlic and coriander), toum (a paste of garlic, olive oil and salt), and pomegranate molasses, as well as unfamiliar ingredients like urfa biber (a dried chili pepper with a smoky, raisin-like taste), lavash (a soft, unleavened flat bread) and schmaltz (rendered goose fat) to appear in innovative applications.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Seasoned jackfruit can be prepared as a substitute for pulled pork, fish, and other meats in favorites like barbecue sandwiches, tacos and pizza.

Add guava, dragon fruit and passion fruit to a salad bar or build-your-own healthy bowl or smoothie station!

Replace chorizo with longganisa, a Filipino pork sausage, for a new taste in omelets and breakfast sandwiches.

4 Purge the Plastic!

Sustainability continues to drive demand for reusable or biodegradable alternatives to single-use plastics. As cities move to ban plastic straws and Styrofoam food containers, “ecologically conscious consumerism” is moving beyond the domain of niche producers to the mainstream, and companies are seeing gains through providing sustainable alternatives. One large supermarket chain now encourages customers to BYOVB (bring your own vegetable bag), while producers are bringing to market compostable food wraps made from beeswax and waxed-canvas as well as silicone bags for sandwiches and snacks. With the commitment to a plastic-free world spanning generations from baby boomers to Gen Z, consumer demand will continue to drive the development of new, earth-friendly products. Entegra promotes ecological sustainability through many supplier programs available to our Program Participants, from biodegradable takeout containers to stylish planet-friendly tableware to straw-free drink lids.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Capitalize on the grab-and-go, takeout and delivery service trends by using – and advertising your use of – compostable, biodegradable containers and packaging with ethical appeal.

U.S. firm MonoSol has developed an edible, water-soluble containers for single servings of drink mixes, oatmeal and more. Look for more innovative solutions just over the horizon!

Cafeteria style foodservice operators can easily replace single-use plastics with planet-friendly products including reusable bamboo plates, paper straws, and compostable flatware, such as from entegra’s suppliers VerTerra and Eco Products.

5 Focus on Functional Foods

We are used to saying “food is fuel,” but in today’s world, consumers bring a much more nuanced understanding of the effects of their food choices on overall health, wellness and self-image. Increasingly, informed diners will seek out particular foods to perform specific functions, whether for nutrition, illness prevention, mood improvement, or beauty enhancement. One popular example of this trend is the still-growing popularity of fermented foods, which promote digestive health and may improve mood and reduce anxiety. Fermented is now moving beyond traditional foods like tofu and kimchi into new offerings like kombucha cocktail mixers, miso dressings, kefir breakfast items and even frozen treats.

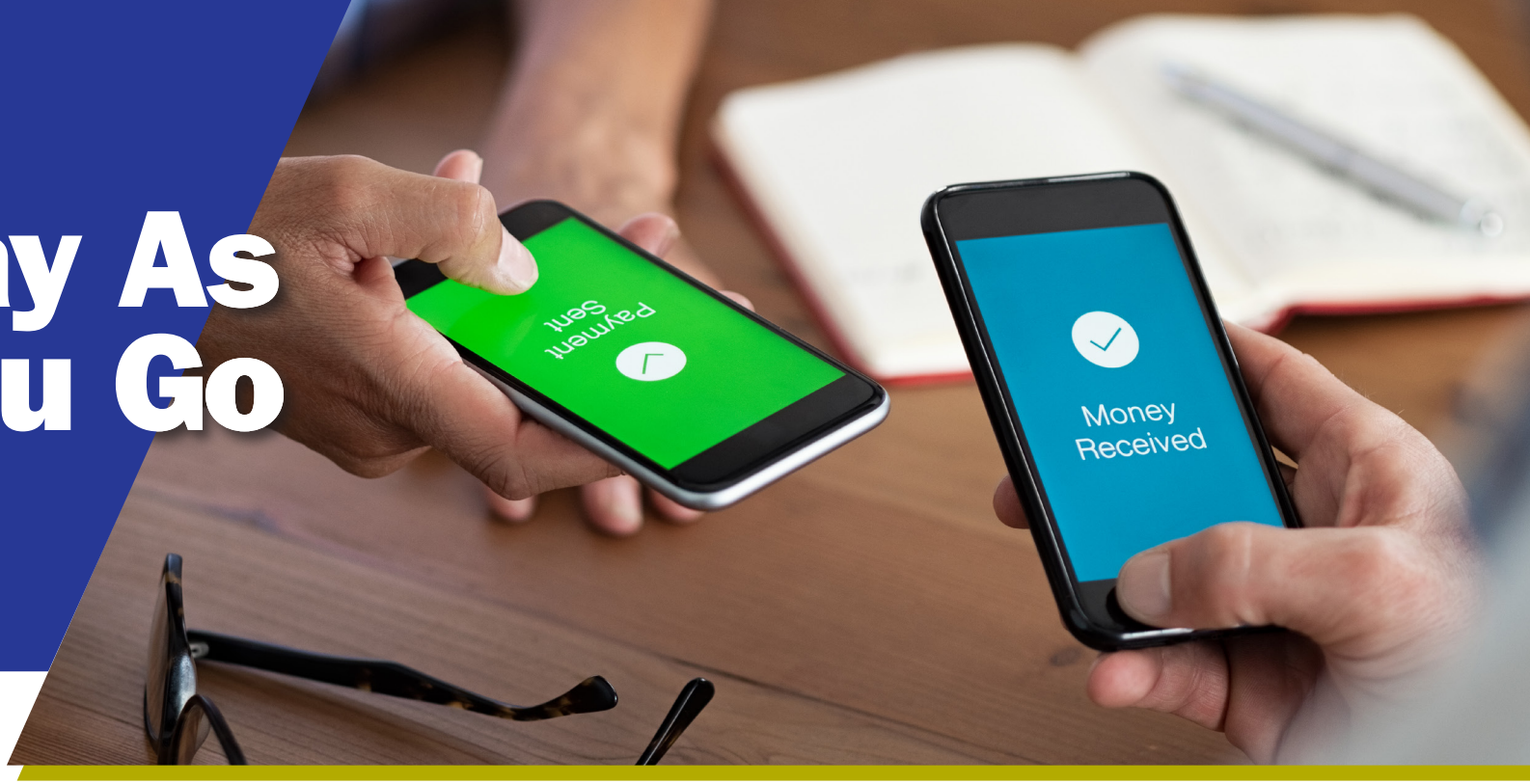
OPERATOR IDEAS

Anti-inflammatory properties in foods contribute to heart and vascular health. Vitamin C in citrus fruits, carotenoids in weedy greens and antioxidant polyphenols in nuts are just a few examples found on this year’s trendy menus.

Delicious on its own, kombucha tea can be used in many ways. Consider combining it with gelatin to make gummy treats and candies. It can also be made into ice cream or shaved ices and flavored with berries or maple syrup.

Create function-specific menus and use posters to educate consumers on the benefits of the ingredients. For example, build a stress-relief supper featuring salmon with leafy greens, avocado, green tea and dark chocolate!

6 Pay As You Go



The research firm First Data reported seventy-five percent growth in smartphone-enabled payments for services through apps like Apple Pay, Android Pay and Samsung Pay. The growth was seen mostly in the quick service sector, including foodservice locations. Business Insider magazine predicts that by 2025, seventy-five percent of all transactions will be cashless.

This trend makes sense when you consider how convenient this service is to customers with smartphone devices. Paying becomes as easy as the touch of a button, with options to track transactions all in one place on your phone.

In addition, online security has become more trustworthy in the past decade and is now considered standard for financial transactions across all business segments. Passcodes and fingerprint or facial recognition make payment by device more secure than carrying cash or credit cards.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Implementing mobile payment requires planning and training. For a quick primer on best practices visit https://www.mobilepaymentstoday.com/articles/ten-best-practices-for-implementing-mobile-into-retail-operations/.

Mobile payment simplifies pop up operations! Combine with another food trend to test out trendy new offerings.

Combine mobile pay with online, app or kiosk ordering to capture sales among Gen Zers, who enjoy a fast-paced, grab-and-go lifestyle. Eighty percent of businesses that implement mobile pay see an increase in spend.

7 Tea Gets Trendy

Not since the Boston Tea Party in 1773 has there been so much excitement over tea! Americans are not new to the beverage, but it is now beginning to garner the reverence that coffee has long enjoyed. With its many varieties, applications, and health benefits, tea is being showcased with craft tea blending, nitro tea on tap and even tea-based cocktails. The introduction of nitrogenated coffee into the market led almost immediately to the same application in tea. The nitrogen produces a resemblance to stout, with cascading bubbles, a thick head and a creamy mouthfeel. Another emerging trend is the enjoyment of cheese tea, an import from Taiwan that features a topping of melted cream or cottage cheese blended with whipping cream, milk, and salt on black, green or floral tea.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Promote a specialty "Tea of the Week" in your operation, using point of sale signage or table tents to explain the sourcing, history and functional health benefits of particular varieties and blends.

A variety of trendy tea flavors, including Passionfruit Pineapple Organic Hibiscus, can be served as-is or as the basis for delicious alcoholic or zero-proof cocktails.

Operators might provide unfamiliar consumers with a gentle introduction to cheese tea, by offering samples aside a pop-up menu offering.

8 Desserts are Heating Up

Dessert trends are leaving behind the sugar bombs of yesteryear. A new assortment of desserts trending today highlights spicy and globally influenced flavors with added attributes like dairy-free, gluten-free, vegan, and portability. A touch of heat in sweets is a mainstay of many global cuisines. Look to such products as Mexico's Guajillo chili chocolate and Chamoy sauce or to North African harissa sauce (made with jalapenos). These foods incorporate sweet and sour flavors with spice infusions.

"Millennials grew up eating Flamin' Hot Cheetos," quips Trend Insights Manager Melina Romero, explaining the generation's preference for heat; she predicts that spicy will merge with fermentation to produce the next trend in the dessert category.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Spice up your house-made ice cream with your choice of spicy flavors! A shop in Seattle adds spicy heat to vegan ice cream with turmeric and black pepper along with ginger to produce a distinctive flavor profile.

Traditional use of chamoy sauce includes pairing it with a variety of fruits. Offer a dessert dipping plate with cut mango, pineapple, strawberries and more with a bowl of chamoy for a spicy-sweet delight!

Add Guajillo chili to any chocolate dessert! Make a spicy hot chocolate cake or utilize these flavors in portable desserts like cupcakes and cookies.

9 Not So Sweet

Customers are purposefully seeking out more nutritious and powerful diet choices, especially in a non-commercial setting. Popular keto, paleo and the newly emerging pegan (paleo+ vegan) diets are driving millennials and Gen Z away from processed sugars and changing their tastes away from the sugary trends of previous decades. As consumers pay more attention to the nutritional and wellness function of foods, they are swapping out traditional and artificial sweeteners in favor of clean, organic and lower glycemic index (GI) sweeteners. Spicy and savory are becoming the preference over sweet flavors.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Try monk fruit extract in place of sugar in drinks and snacks. It's 300 times sweeter than sugar and low in GI, making it a healthy, low-cal alternative!

Serve shredded coconut macaroons dipped in spicy dark chocolate or nut butters for a naturally sweet, clean dessert or snack.

Look for lower sugar beverages. Entegra supplier Pepsico has committed to reducing sugar in its line of bottled beverages, including sodas, Gatorade and Lipton teas. Create your own sodas with more healthy, low sugar options. Carbonation systems like Sodastream allow operators to make unique flavors based on regional and age-group tastes, and reduce plastic waste of bottled drinks at the same time.

10

It's Crunch Time!

Several trends come together to make seeds and nuts among the most popular foods right now: they are plant-based, portable, snack-friendly and packed with functional health benefits. Seeds are no longer a throwaway part of the plant. Their crunch adds a delicious texture to salads and even soft cheeses. They are being roasted, tossed in soup and mixed with chocolate. Healthy omega-3 oils and protein also move seeds into the functional foods trend, fitting nicely with the dietary needs of vegans and people with nut allergies and sensitivities.

Nuts are becoming more than a bar snack, as the popular keto and paleo diets send munchers looking for high protein, healthy fat and low carb choices. Look for macadamia, pecans and Brazil nuts to appear more frequently on this year's menus.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Sweet basil seeds, also known as Sabja seeds, are popular in Indian and Thai cuisines. Like chia seed, they plump in warm water, releasing anti-oxidants and digestive enzymes. Plus, they have twice the fiber, iron, potassium and calcium!

Try tahini in the place of almond and other trendy nut butters. Made from ground, hulled sesame seeds, tahini has a slightly savory flavor that makes it perfect in everything from smoothies to baked goods.

A selenium-rich superfood, Brazil nuts can be used in baked goods and pesto; they also make a delicious "milk." Food blogger Ella Woodward recommends an easy preparation of Brazil nuts toasted for 10 minutes with maple syrup and a pinch of Himalayan salt.

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