



TOP CULINARY TRENDS 10

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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.

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.



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.

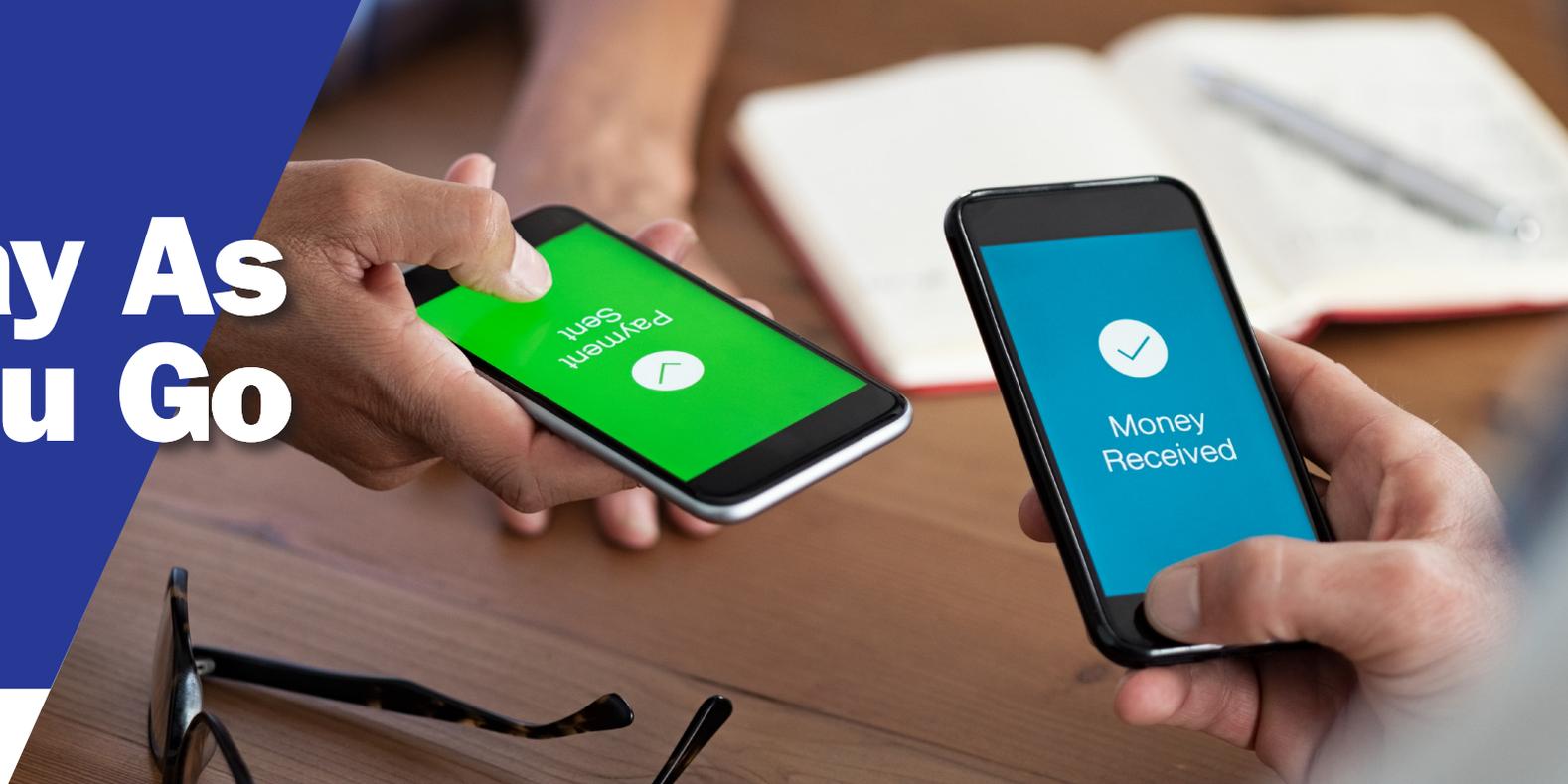
OPERATOR IDEAS

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!

4 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.

5 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.

Out with the Old



With diners more eager than ever to expand their culinary vocabulary, chefs will look to replace typical ingredients with fresher faces this year. Look for easier access to more exotic citrus varieties like kumquat, pomelos, and ugli fruit. Meyer lemons, sweeter and less acidic than traditional varieties, will appear in salads and desserts. Kale will take a back seat to new drivers like dandelion greens, sorrel and amaranth. Consumers will continue to seek out alternatives to sugar this year, with honey and agave yielding to sweeteners derived from golden beet, sweet potato, butternut squash and carrot. Herbs making their debut on the main stage this year include savory in both the peppery summer and piney winter varieties, lemon verbena and seeds of the white caraway flower.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Related to buckwheat and rhubarb, sorrel leaves brighten dishes with a lemony tang. It is easy to grow, and homegrown ingredients appeal to the seed-to-table and transparent sourcing trends.

Ugli fruit gives a delicious Caribbean twist to ice cream or cheesecake topping.

An East Asian citrus fruit, yuzu is still not very well known in the United States. Its sweet and tangy flavor add a fresh, new twist to cocktails, sauces, salads and spreads.

7 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.

Delivering Growth



Off-premises dining is booming in 2019, driven by the availability of third-party delivery services like Grubhub and Uber Eats. Diners want to stay home for dinner, but they're not necessarily interested in cooking—or watching expenses, for that matter. Rather, says Forbes magazine, people want to relax and enjoy restaurant-quality prepared food along with streaming entertainment in private time with family and friends. This trend is providing significant growth, with meals delivered to homes rising 2% last year to encompass 32% of all traffic in the restaurant sector.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Restaurants need to differentiate themselves from their competition in “grocerants” and convenience stores, both of which offer ready-to-eat meals. Consider using social media to advertise delivery deals and specials.

Look for third-party providers to offer flat rate subscription services rather than “per delivery” charges. This offers restaurants an opportunity to partner for increased traffic to both companies.

Consider adding a “ghost restaurant” – a “back of the house-only” space tailored specifically to the delivery market. Try out new menu items or experiment with a new cuisine without the overhead and staffing costs of a full-service restaurant.

Lower the Proof



With an increased awareness of the functional (nutrition and wellness) values of food and drink, Gen Z is turning away from alcohol use. Social media platform Pinterest reports an increase of 746% in the search term “sober living,” and 45% of millennials surveyed by Mintel expressed a willingness to give up alcohol to improve their health. Young people want to enjoy the bar scene, but more for the experience than for alcohol. Like in food, their focus is on quality ingredients, unusual flavors and visual appeal.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Offer a lineup of healthy non-alcoholic shots!
For example, producer KOR Shots combines coconut water, fruit juices and functional ingredients like activated charcoal, turmeric, apple cider vinegar and ginger.

Punch up fruity cocktails with herbs and spices and less or no alcohol. Southern Living magazine suggests mocktails like vanilla rosemary lemonade and citrus tea with cloves.

Create Instagram-worthy drinks. Beautiful bar drinks bring people back. Add house-made ice cubes filled with berries or mint leaves to well drinks, like gin and tonic. Top off cocktails with edible flowers, fruit or even non-edible decorations.

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Waste Not



Consumers want nothing to go to waste: not their time, not their money and not the planet's resources. In addition to the trending movement away from single-use plastics, an emerging concern in 2019 is the waste of food itself in the form of uneaten leftovers, spoiled produce, parings and so-called "ugly food" – discolored, blemished or oddly shaped produce. The James Beard Foundation reports that nearly one third of food grown worldwide goes to waste somewhere along the line from farms to markets to restaurants to households. This translates to a per person cost of \$1500 to \$1800 per year!

OPERATOR IDEAS

Explore food waste recycling programs in your area. California Safe Soil in Sacramento, for example, is a growing company with operations that use a patented enzymatic digestion process to turn fresh food waste into fertilizer and animal feed.

Adopt a seed-to-table approach to produce sourcing. Advertise local producers or, better yet, grow your own in backyard, rooftop or window box gardens.

Values-driven consumers want to put their money where their values lie. Adopt—and advertise—a commitment to nose-to-tail and root-to-leaf ingredient usage.

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