

TOP CULINARY TRENDS 10

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.

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.

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.

4 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!

5 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.

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.

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.

Snack On Fat



The Keto diet – a low-carb, fat-heavy diet designed to stimulate the body’s burning of stored fat – is all the rage, and consumers are looking to supplement meat and egg staples with grain-free, paleo and vegan friendly ingredients. Familiar favorites like avocado and almond butter will be joined by high-protein, low-carb combinations like coconut butter-filled chocolates, Brazil nuts and mozzarella sticks wrapped in cured meat. Producers are developing keto-friendly snack bars with medium-chain triglycerides (a healthier fat), oil and powders. Love Good Fats, for example, sells bars in flavors like mint chocolate chip and peanut butter and jelly.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Try offering house-made “fat bombs.” These simple, keto-friendly treats combine a few clean ingredients rolled into a ball. Frozen sweet bombs might feature nut butters dusted with cocoa powder, and a savory version might use cream cheese and avocado with a blend of spices.

For the keto-sacking crowd, combine ghee, clarified butter originally from Indian cuisine with sweet or savory spices for a delicious popcorn topping.

Trendy “butter coffee” combines butter and coffee in a blender, infusing the drink with a milk-saturated taste. The fats digest slowly, releasing energy gradually throughout the day. Try a vegan alternative with coconut oil and a dash of maple syrup!

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.

1 One-Size Doesn't Fit



Now that baby boomers are moving into senior living facilities, they bring sophisticated palates and a clear preference for maintaining control over their eating. One size fits all dining plans don't fit the needs of today's seniors, according to Suzanne Owens, CEO and President of the Peter Becker Community. "We were finding that some of the people who we were talking to about moving in didn't want to be in a community with a rigid meal plan," Owens says. "They want flexibility to be able to cook in their apartments or dine out in the community, with choices."

Innovative plans incorporate features like informal cafés, "white tablecloth" venues and specialty buffets, along with the ability to spend meal-plan dollars on restaurant or delivery dining. Tiered pricing allows seniors to match their spending to their dining habits, with a base cost rising in increments to a full-service plan that might exceed the one-size charge. Surprisingly, Owens found the new system led to residents wanting more food from their service rather than less.

OPERATOR IDEAS

Takeout is all the rage, and restaurants are seeing significant growth through rideshare delivery services. Partner with local restaurants to provide your residents with outside food on site!

Ditch required plans in favor of more customizable options. Being open to making changes along the way will be attractive to this generation of seniors!

Create incentives to buy into the plan with a "points and perks" system, allowing residents to earn guest meals or seats at a chef's table with a tasting menu!

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