

TOP 10 TRENDS

2018

ON THE MENU

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



1

REELING IN SEACUTERIE

Taking a cue from the sociability of charcuterie boards while leveraging the new casual, social side of seafood, seacuterie—seafood charcuterie—is making a huge splash. Starring preserved fish and shellfish, flavor-forward dishes like salmon rillettes and smoked mussels are finding their way onto bar snack menus and shareables.

- ▶ Beet-cured salmon, tuna conserva, smoked fish dip, pepperoncini, olives, twice-baked saltines and toast—*L&E Oyster Bar, Los Angeles*

With so many consumers flocking to the shareable experience, seacuterie offers an exciting, adventurous option. Whether on an impressive board with signature accompaniments and garnishes or parsed into single dishes, like smoked trout dip or pickled shrimp toast, seacuterie rides the popular wave of modern seafood and serves up big menu potential.



2

PLANT-BASED PURÉES

The American diner has embraced hummus, so chefs are now innovating, changing out the ingredients or adding swirls and toppings. The hummus boom has also opened the door for other plant-based purées, finding favor in many applications—from smooth spreads and finishes to elements in contemporary dressings and sauces.

- ▶ Pea and Mint Hummus, black-pepper cracker, endive and cucumber —*Twenty Five Lusk, San Francisco*

Innovation around hummus includes flavor renditions like beet or avocado hummus dips, but it also sees it moving beyond spreads, into dressings, drizzles and more. The opportunity has now extended into other plant-based purées, too, with thrilling combinations like harissa and roasted carrot, or smoked eggplant, maybe spooned under a grilled lamb loin or swiped onto a bowl as part of a modern plate presentation.



3

INDIAN MASH-UPS

The bold and beautiful flavors of India are finally going mainstream here—thanks to a thoroughly New American approach: the mash-up. Tacos, loaded fries, chicken wings, sandwiches and more are offering familiar platforms for craveable flavors and ingredients like butter chicken, turmeric, chutney, tandoori and chaat masala.

- ▶ Dynamite Tangra Wings with an “insanely spicy” Indian-Chinese sauce and ghost-chile dust—*Curry Up Now, multiple locations*

With serious flavor play propelling this trend forward, Indian mash-ups are thrilling consumers. And with such a rich pantry of spices and ingredients, chefs are finding many pathways to intriguing menu differentiation—from chicken tikka poutine to watermelon chaat.



4

EASTERN MED MEATS

Döner kebab and shawarma are ready for their close-up. Hailing from the Eastern Mediterranean, these heavily seasoned meats that cook on rotating spits are spinning into the spotlight. Both were discovered through the fervent exploration of that culinary pocket of the world, and are finding traction thanks to adaptation by the fast-casual segment.

- ▶ Berlin Döner Wrap with seasoned lamb and beef or chicken, Berliner red sauce, feta, cabbage/carrot slaw, sumac, tomato, onion, cucumber, tzatziki—*Spitz, multiple locations*

The opportunity with these two flavor-rich meats is endless. Consumers are always hungry for the next sandwich, and both shawarma and döner kebab tucked into some kind of flatbread offer a sound, seriously delicious foundation. They also work elsewhere on the menu, from bowl builds and flatbreads to loaded fries and nachos.



5

NEXT-LEVEL TEXTURE

Textural play has always been part of recipe development, but today, creative forms used in intriguing ways mark a significant opportunity. From savory brittles and popped grains to crispy meats and inventive crumbles, chefs are carefully considering the strategic use of texture for an elevated eating experience.

- ▶ Grilled Chicken Salad with kale, stone fruit, goat cheese, peppers and sunflower brittle in a sorghum vinaigrette—*Ida Claire, Dallas*

With an unrelenting demand for an elevated flavor experience, chefs are taking a hard look at textural components. Modern plate presentation relies on a mindful interplay of ingredients. Texture is the new umami, adding a craveable, signature mark to a dish.



6

HOT ON YOGURT

Yogurt makes for a wonderfully modern condiment, providing creamy mouthfeel, tanginess and a touch of adventure. Chefs are taking this to the next level by pairing yogurt with heat, making it a complex experience that goes from spicy to cooling and back again.

- ▶ Butter Chicken Tacos with sambal yogurt—*PGH Taco Truck, Pittsburgh*

Turning to yogurt flavored with some kind of heat—maybe gochujang, Sriracha or Calabrian chile—gives chefs a clear pathway to on-trend flavor building. Yogurt is a condiment for today, boasting a solid footing in health and wellness, along with a creamy, tangy, profile. Spicy yogurt delivers a complex and compelling balance of warm heat with a cooling counterpoint.



7

TACOS 2.0

Tacos are reaching new culinary heights today, unrestrained by borders or expectations. Today, chefs are turning to the taco because it's a beloved carrier that can house any flavor combination. From veg-centric builds to creative takes on popular flavor systems, the taco is staging a delicious uprising.

- ▶ Mr. Potato Taco with crispy pee wee potatoes, pico de gallo and chimichurri—*TLT Food, two locations in California*

Tacos offer a safe platform for menu innovation, much like burgers and sandwiches. The opportunity leverages that comfort level and popularity, then stretches the taco into eclectic, thoughtful, craveable builds.



8

SORGHUM'S TIME

Ancient grains have certainly made inroads on menus today, setting the stage for sorghum. This ancient grain has a leg up, too—it boasts an American narrative and solves some modern recipe development challenges, thanks to its gluten-free status. It can be milled into flour, cooked like rice, made into a syrup or popped like popcorn.

- ▶ Roasted Everything Carrots: Roasted carrots, sorghum grains, radish and watercress—*Restauracion, Long Beach, Calif.*

Just as American consumers look for the next chile pepper, they keep their eye out for the next ancient grain. Sorghum is the rising star, giving quinoa and farro a little competition, bolstered by a gluten-free countenance. Odds are in its favor, with extra muscle from its Americana halo—and its versatility. Chefs would be wise to capitalize on its provenance while touting its uniqueness in the marketplace.



9

FALAFEL'S MOMENTUM

Yet another pickup from the Eastern Med phenomenon, the irresistible falafel is ready to break out. Easily signaturized with additional elements, falafel boasts a mild profile that cries out for creative flavor-boosting. Thanks to both the chickpea boom and the veg-centric phenomenon, falafel holds huge menu potential.

- ▶ Black-Eyed Pea Falafel with apple amba, tahini yogurt and lettuce—*Sarma, Somerville, Mass.*

Falafel has a lot going for it—it's deep-fried and delicious, easily customizable and vegetarian to boot. That is a winning trifecta, giving chefs a versatile platform to signaturize. From changing out the ingredients in the filling to giving falafel a taco treatment, there are a number of pathways to menu differentiation.



10

COCKTAILS WITH WHIMSY

The seriousness of cocktail culture has spawned a backlash—albeit a fun one. Cocktails that are playful, inventive with just a hint of irreverence, are finding space at the bar. The frôsé is perhaps the frothiest example, but other movers and shakers include over-the-top brunch cocktails, tableside theatre with cotton candy flourishes, and boozy punch bowls.

- ▶ The Waffle Thief: Bourbon, spiced rum, cinnamon-vanilla infused maple syrup, lemon juice, pomegranate, blueberries, garnished with Eggo Minis—*Datz, Tampa, Fla.*

Showcasing a brand's fun side in a memorable way is one of the biggest draws with this trend. Still with a focus on craft and quality, cocktails that are lighthearted, whimsical and creative jazz up the idea of sociable, shareable experiences. From frozen Negronis to beermosas, brands across segments can find a way to express their personality, extending a vibe that embraces a modern cocktail culture.



YOUR SECRET WEAPON

The bold, balanced flavor of iSabor! by Texas Pete® Mexican-Style Hot Sauce is the secret ingredient for your kitchen. No matter the cuisine or operation, Texas Pete® will make your menu legendary. Add it to your arsenal today. TexasPeteFoodservice.com



TEXASPETE