

TOP 10 TRENDS

2019

TOP 10 TRENDS

ON THE MENU

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



1

THE BIG BING THEORY

The jianbing, or bing for short, is a Chinese crêpe that is crisp and craveable, with a winning combination of egg, flour, black bean paste and chile paste, along with a crunchy wonton that lends a pleasing textural contrast. Born on the streets of Shanghai, the bing is showing up on American menus, where chefs are highlighting its potential as a signature handheld.

BBQ Pulled Pork Bing:

Wheat and bean flours, eggs, barbecue pork, cabbage, crispy wonton, green onion, cilantro, roasted sesame, sweet-bean paste, garlic-chile sauce—Tai Chi Jianbing, San Francisco

With the continual hunt for the next big opportunity in global handhelds, the bing is poised to satisfy that quest. Authentic replication delivers a fantastic street-food style dish, but customization and translation—whether through the fillings or the inclusions in the batter—make the bing a great addition to breakfast, lunch, bar bite or snacking menus.



2

EGGS BREAK OUT

Eggs are certainly not a new or emerging ingredient, but they're showing up in trend-forward menu applications that capitalize on their newfound hip status. Cured and shaved egg yolk, egg pies, yolk jam, smoked eggs—all ready for some serious Instagram love.

Crispy Rice topped with brown-sugar bacon, roasted maitake mushrooms, sweet peas and a swirl of yolk jam—*Bywater American Bistro, New Orleans*

Eggs win the game of familiar favorites—everyone knows and loves them. That familiarity helps bridge the gap into more adventurous profiles, encouraging chefs to offer intriguing dishes without alienating guests. Eggs carry huge social currency, giving chefs a large arena in which to push boundaries and expand creativity.



3

INDULGENT VEGAN

Finally, vegan fare is discovering the “wicked” side of menu development. Driven by a huge spike in seriously creative plant-forward dishes, vegan fare now includes indulgences like loaded fries, nachos, cauliflower wings bathed in ranch, and burgers with all the decadent trimmings.

Disco Fries topped with *gravy and vegan cheddar shreds*—*Tony's Darts Away, Burbank, Calif.*

Vegan menu items used to be aimed at a small group of diners, often placating them rather than inspiring them. Culinary ingenuity with plant-based products, together with the evolution of vegan-friendly product development, is resulting in craveable, indulgent options that appeal to a wider consumer base.



4

FLATBREAD'S RISE

Thanks to a fascination with all of the wonderful flavors coming out of the Eastern Mediterranean, along with a serious boom in hummus, interesting flatbreads are finding their way into both shareables and handhelds.

Butternut Squash Flatbread: *Turkish flatbread with feta, baharat, pepitas, fried sage and wildflower honey*—*Bavel, Los Angeles*

Whether the flatbreads are puffy and charred or crispy and cracker-like, today's opportunity positions them as social ambassadors, inviting conviviality through ripping, scooping, tearing and dipping. They also act as on-trend carriers of global handhelds, giving operators a delicious (and familiar) way to tap into a number of emerging flavor hotspots.



5

XO MARKS THE SPOT

Boasting all the markings of a winning condiment, XO sauce delivers an umami-rich, complex, slightly spicy experience, elevating dishes with a deft touch. It also carries street swagger, hailing from Hong Kong and touting a cool name.

Bogan Bun Burger with *Gouda, bacon XO jam, Lucky sauce, pickles, grilled red onion and arugula*—*Lucky Buns, Washington, D.C.*

XO sauce is one of those high-impact ingredients that carries an air of mystery and intrigue—qualities that resonate with a large number of consumers today. With rich, complex flavors like dried seafood, chiles and ham, it lifts other flavors in a dish. Its specialness gives restaurant brands a chance to highlight it on the menu—either through a limited-time offer or through a memorable tableside flourish.



6

FRENCH EVOLUTION

It's funny to talk about innovation in a foundational cuisine, but it's happening with French cuisine. New restaurants are popping up, celebrated for their creative approach that combines French technique with American ingenuity. Less about bold mash-up and more about sublime interpretation, the modern French trend opens up a new world.

Fried Chicken Pain Perdu, served with *buttered syrup*—*Bistro Georgette, Denver*

What we're seeing with French cuisine today is a subtle, elegant marriage with American menus, perhaps as a backlash to the more assertive approach of the popular global mash-up. The way in here is easier, building on a classic, beloved and familiar cuisine, then adding American ingenuity for signature result.



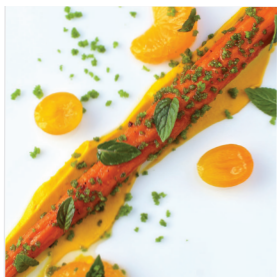
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RICE REIMAGINED

Rice is a staple, but is only now moving into the spotlight. It's propelled by everything from the bowls trend, which often relies on rice as a base, to an exploration of heirloom rice that brings rich narratives to the table. And as with much of today's menu inspiration, a discovery of world cultures has helped position rice as the next frontier of trend-forward dishes.

Fried Rice Tots made from *local jasmine rice and togarashi, served with banana ketchup*—*Guerrilla Street Food, St. Louis*

The opportunity with rice goes a few different ways today. First, its familiarity helps cushion an adventurous meal, so Laotian stir-fries, Brazilian stews, eclectic breakfast bowls—all get a calming anchor of rice. Second, rice can lend a gluten-free ingredient to a trend-forward build, like a crispy rice salad or Indian street-food snack.



8

SNAP, CRACKLE & POP

Textural play has always been an important component of recipe building. Today, chefs are pushing the envelope, turning to pearls, powders, dusts and crumbles for high-impact finishes and flourishes. Flavor intensity is one marker here, as is a penchant for Instagram stardom.

Oysters & Pearls with frozen pearls of Baja cocktail sauce, dotted over shucked oysters, served with dry ice—Yellowbelly, St. Louis

In this day and age, looks are everything. Plate presentation. Cocktail creativity. Powders made with habanero and carrot, crystals made from basil, pearls made from cranberry juice—operators are employing these elements to raise their game. Notice the flavor concentration in these ingredients. They're not just for show. They add a flavor surprise as well as whimsy—a winning combination today.



9

PLAY DOUGH

It's hard to think of a more satisfying menu item than a buttery, flaky pastry. Thanks to serious play with laminated doughs like croissants and kouign-amann, baked goods are playing for keeps today, wowing with artistry like bicolor dough, intriguing flavor combinations, savory surprises and more.

Charcoal Croissant with caramelized pralines—Pitchoun!, Los Angeles

From croissants that are hollowed out and filled from the top with savory sandwich ingredients to pastries that beg for a close-up because of their sheer fabulousness, this trend expresses craftsmanship beautifully. It answers the call by today's consumers for creative interpretations of comforting carriers, with inherent social-media savviness to boot.



10

FUNCTIONAL SIPPING

Beverages—both alcoholic and non—that deliver more than flavor are making their mark on menus. Functional ingredients in beverage is the name of the game today, promoting everything from digestive health and mental clarity to stronger immunity—all while delivering on the promise of a fantastic flavor experience.

Boo-Tox: Fresh-pressed beet juice, ginger, coconut, activated charcoal, local honey syrup and coarse sea salt, lemon vodka—Honey Salt, Las Vegas

In the non-alc world, this trend is all about digging deeper into functionality. Ingredients like carrot, beets, turmeric, ginger, blueberries—how can the beverage menu leverage the inherent goodness while still delivering something delicious? In the realm of cocktails, functional ingredients play a new role in balancing “evil” with “good.” The health halo may be a bit fuzzy, but it still fits nicely.

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ON YOUR MENU



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