

TOP 10 TRENDS 2020

TOP 10 TRENDS

ON THE MENU

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



1

AUSSIE INVASION

Australian fare is making impressive inroads here, thanks to its relaxed vibe, relatable coffee culture and fresh approach to all-day café food and beverage. Comfort-centric and casual describe everything from the ricotta pancakes and “avo smash” to the mini meat pies topped with mushy minted peas.

Pickled Chile Scrambled Eggs on sourdough toast with avocado and watercress—*Two Hands, New York*

Adapting Aussie favorites onto American menus is an easy translation of a global cuisine. With that comfort level built in, menu developers are granted more free rein. That is especially good news when looking at enlivening breakfast, lunch and all-day menus. Aussies excel at serving it up with a beach-casual feel that conveys quality through an eclectic, but familiar experience.



2

HIGH ON HONEY

Chefs are tapping this ancient, beloved and natural ingredient, using it in unexpected ways—and unexpected forms. Creativity abounds, from “new” hot honey to fermented and whipped honey. Honeycomb, brittle and pollen as textural elements are whimsical touches.

Whipped Feta Dip with fermented honey—*Butcher & Bee, with locations in Nashville, Tenn., and Charleston, S.C.*

Innovative uses of honey help build complex flavor play, balancing savory and hot with nuanced sweetness. Employing intriguing applications creates memorable impact. Honey also presents an opportunity to connect a restaurant brand to a sense of place, highlighting local hives, honey varietals and the story of beekeeping.

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3

FORWARD WITH FRUIT

Veg-centricity has opened up the doors to innovation with fruit. Chefs are applying aggressive, high-impact techniques, like roasting and pickling, yielding ingredients that bring splashes of color, contrasts of texture and depths of flavor to the table.

Dry-aged Duck Tacos with mezcal-pineapple salsa, charred pineapple mole and radish—*WoodWind, Chicago*

With the impact veg-centricity has had on menu development, it's exciting to consider the possibilities with fruit. Beyond the wholesome and seasonal cues, the spectrum of flavor in the fruit world is vast, so execution of the trend promises to enthrall diners. Leveraging fruit in new ways also handily solves part of the food waste dilemma.



4

BALKAN BOUNTY

A trek eastward from the Mediterranean gets rewarded with a treasure trove of flavors and formats primed for American menus. Chefs here are reaching into the Balkan Peninsula, riding the wave of Eastern Med success into somewhat uncharted, but exciting waters.

Bulgarian Beef Kebabs with luteniza, an eggplant-pepper condiment—*Zahav, Philadelphia*

Balkan flatbreads, condiments and flavor-rich meats, among other things, serve as the next chapter in a continuing flavor story from that corner of the world. With chefs always on the lookout for global flavor touches that diners will embrace, there's much to discover here, with first-to-market opportunity.



5

CARDAMOM MOMENTUM

Chefs are leveraging the warm, aromatic, notes of this spice, moving it into the foreground in menu development. Thanks to the popularity of a handful of global cuisines that love cardamom, along with the embrace of chai spice, it's not a big leap for consumers.

Organic Carrot Hotcakes topped with cardamom cream cheese and maple syrup—*Sunny Point Café, West Asheville, N.C.*

Landing the next flavor, the next spice that will help lift menu items and create differentiation is crucial today. Cardamom, when used judiciously, can play outside of Indian and Eastern Med, bringing savory, sweet, floral notes in unexpected but welcome places, delivering that all-important differentiation.



6

EASTERN MED'S NEXT MOVE

The flavors and formats from this region are becoming so familiar that forward-thinking concepts are melding them with other cuisines, like Mexican and Japanese. This new Eastern Med mash-up opens the floodgates to exciting combinations between a pantry bursting with flavor and a world of opportunities.

Short Rib Skewer served with Israeli mole and puffy pita—*Miss Ada, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

Now that Eastern Med favorites like hummus, falafel and shawarma are becoming more mainstream, there's an invitation to dabble, creating appealing flavor affinities between the Eastern Med, the American South, Japan, Vietnam and beyond.



7

BOWL'D INTENTIONS

As a proven category, bowls offer a fantastic platform for operators. Today, chefs are leveraging the value proposition of bowls, homing in on wholesomeness and dialing up purpose while elevating flavor and textural play.

Green Tea Soba Power Bowl: Exotic mushrooms, avocado, butternut squash, egg, kimchi, crispy shallots, nori and sesame vinaigrette—*Linger, Denver*

With functionality and purpose of foods a growing consumer consideration, bowls present a proven format for restaurants trying to answer that demand. Composition, transparency and flavor complexity are the building blocks for success. Purpose-driven, curated bowls also help attract diners following any number of trending lifestyle diets.

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8

GETTING CULTURED

Fermentation is moving further into flavor strategy today. Menu developers are exploring its potential to unlock dimension, change and deepen flavor—all while leveraging its glowing health halo.

Roasted Corn Nuts featuring Purépecha corn and seasoned with lacto-fermented jalapeño-sauerkraut salt—*Onda, Los Angeles*

The fervor around fermentation today is sparking innovation in the world of flavor development. Different approaches can yield umami, intensify flavor or bring out new dimensions—all great opportunities for menu differentiation. Playing up fermentation also delivers on healthful messaging, a boon for those guests tracking its many benefits.



9

BRUNCH'S NEXT FRONTIER

This daypart is already established as a playground for bold flavor play, so watching chefs push into new global regions is exciting. A hotbed of innovation here is the global-themed restaurant using brunch to introduce guests to exotic flavors.

Baked Eggs with mole cream, sautéed escarole, kabocha squash, fermented honey garlic —*Lou, Nashville, Tenn.*

Winning at brunch is a good way to bring in younger generations, who seem particularly drawn to this daypart's relaxed, anything-goes vibe. Adventure tends to be part of that equation, so new and emerging global flavors cushioned in familiar formats is a sound strategy.



10

NON-ALC'S NEW GROOVE

We're now living in an age when the term "nonalcoholic cocktail" actually resonates. Beverage developers are keying into a new thirst for booze-free choices with an adult sensibility, focusing on flavor, balance and sophistication.

The Castaway with coconut cream, lime juice, cucumber, ginger beer and a sweetgrass tincture—*The Roosevelt Room, Austin, Texas*

There's a larger call for adult beverages that don't carry a buzz. That crowd will be searching for options that don't dumb down their drinks, keeping balance and flavor refreshingly on point. And on well-crafted zero-proof menus, it's hard to tell the difference in price point.

AMPLIFY
THE
FLAVOR
ON YOUR MENU IN 2020



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