

PRESENTED BY

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TOP 10

TRENDS

— 2021 —



FLAVOR & the menu

TOP 10 TRENDS

ON THE MENU



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## FOUND IN TRANSLATION: CHINESE-AMERICAN MASH-UPS

Reimagining Chinese-American food stalwarts by using the Chinese pantry in unexpected, fun formats is an opportunity primed for further exploration. New, bold flavors applied to familiar profiles can deliver a global mash-up that diners are ready to embrace, thanks to their longstanding trust in Americanized Chinese cuisine. Innovative chefs are experimenting with classic flavor systems like kung pao, orange chicken and General Tso's, while applying an American twist to Chinese traditions like the bao.

**Kumquat "Orange" Chicken** with kumquat-chile marmalade and preserved kumquats—*Sababa, Washington, D.C.*



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## IN THE WEEDS: SEAWEED

Chefs in this country have always looked to the sea for inspiration, but only recently have they turned such sharp attention to sea vegetables. No longer limited to sushi and high-impact seasonings like furikake and togarashi, seaweed's impact is on menus is noticeable, as chefs play with the colors, textures and nuanced flavors of different sea vegetables and sea greens. Its eco-friendly sustainability story is a powerful draw, too, for diners and chefs alike. Meaningful flavor narratives will roll in with the tide.

**Breakfast Udon** featuring hijiki, red miso butter, scallions, fried egg and Grana Padano—*Bar Beau, Brooklyn, N.Y.*



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## IMMUNITY ON THE MENU

2020 brought forth a greater self-awareness about health, wellness and our bodies' ability to fight disease. With recent research showing a skyrocketing interest in immunity-boosting foods, operators have a unique opportunity to offer solutions in 2021 to meet this new consumer demand. Sincerity of messaging and positioning is as important as menu development here, as concepts seek to find the perfect balance between function and comfort.

**Winter Immunity Bowl:** Farro, quinoa, carrot, broccolini, garbanzo beans, edamame, organic kale and lion's mane mushrooms in a garlic broth—*True Food Kitchen, based in Phoenix*



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### PIMENTO MAKES A PLAY

Pimento cheese has enjoyed a long reign as a Southern comfort classic, but chefs are increasingly exploring potential that is a far cry from its geographic roots. Its versatility is inherent; beyond the fundamental ingredients, no two pimento cheese recipes are alike and applications are limited only by the imagination. Its base adds an exciting depth of character that is further enhanced by any number of playful flavor combinations, from everything bagel seasoning to smoked peppers. It's no wonder there's a groundswell ready to crown it the new American cheese.

**NYC Pimento Cheese** with cheddar cheese and jalapeño cream cheese topped with everything bagel spice—*Pulkies, New York*



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### BREAD LOVE

Bread is back. Can we get an "Amen!" please? As a gateway to comfort, bread has no equal, but there's much more to this trend. There's a culinary movement pushing artisanry to the foreground, presenting significant opportunities to showcase flavor while expressing thoughtful hospitality. Global inspirations are on the rise here, too, with consumers ready to embrace pillowy Japanese milk bread and chewy Turkish pide with equal delight. Now is the time to level up.

**Sourdough Focaccia** with housemade seaweed butter—*Spork, Pittsburgh*



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### THE SANDWICH REVOLUTION

Exploring the potential for sophisticated sandwich development is an imperative that would be unwise to ignore, given the multiple drivers that are in play for 2021. The list begins with the comfort factor, which is compelling diners to seek meaty and hearty builds, twists on longstanding favorites, and indulgent, melty combinations, but in fresh ways that help to counter COVID fatigue. Layer all that with the pandemic-prompted need to provide fare that stands up to the challenges of takeout, and conditions are ripe for truly creative menu development in the sandwich space.

**Curio Katsu Cheddar Sandwich** on a toasted potato chip-black sesame bun with miso mayo, red onion, pickles and kimchi—*Curio Bar & Restaurant, San Francisco*

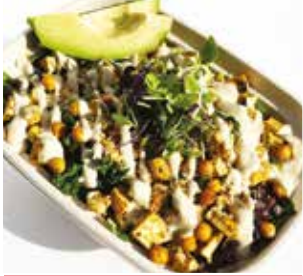


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### EASY BAKE

Cooked or parcooked, savory or sweet, take and bakes may have had their genesis in the takeout imperative of COVID-19, but they present a solid strategy for the future, providing new revenue opportunities as end-of-meal transactions and takeout items. But the real opportunity lies in elevating these dishes beyond Grandma's casserole. Take and bakes offer chefs a fresh format to explore and enhance tried-and-true flavor systems in ways that bring the signatures of on-premise dining to home kitchens.

**Crespelle** featuring shrimp, mushrooms, prosciutto and béchamel—*Stellina Pizzeria, Washington, D.C.*



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## MAKING A SPLASH: PLANT-BASED DAIRY

Deepening their roots in the culinary landscape, plant-based “milks” are finding a foothold in a broad array of applications from sauces to soups to dressings and more. Consumer awareness of these products is high, especially among Gen Z and Millennials, presenting menu developers with a chance to push boundaries without pushing away diners. Plus, there are opportunities to leverage a nutrition narrative, eco-friendly factors, allergy avoidance, lifestyle choices and other decision drivers.

**Southern Fried Chicken** made with oat milk, cornstarch, gluten-free baking powder, apple cider vinegar, cornmeal and seasonings—*Pinewood Kitchen & Mercantile, Nunnely, Tenn.*



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## TEA IT UP: THAI TEA

Thai tea has been enjoying a moment as a beverage darling embraced by America’s hip coffeehouse culture. But its emergence as a legit flavor profile lends it the gravitas of staying power as it moves into other beverages, as well as desserts and brunch fare, which may be only the tip of its opportunity. Visually captivating with an orange hue that can bring a much-needed optimism to the table, Thai tea promises a fun culinary adventure for operators ready to explore.

**Thai Iced Tea** featuring a sweetened condensed milk “snowball”—*Farmhouse Kitchen, San Francisco*



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## HIT REFRESH: HARD SELTZERS

The “LaCroix phenomenon” paved the way for the age of hard seltzers, with consumers—Millennials and Gen Z especially—loving the lighthearted and bubbly beverage category. Delighting drinkers with a low-carb, low-sugar and low-ABV experience, hard seltzers also come through with flavor and intrigue. Today, restaurant brands are leveraging boozy seltzers’ popularity and looking at their trend-forward flavor combinations and effervescence as a pathway to building modern cocktails.

**Cactus Claw:** White Claw with a shot of Patrón Tequila, twist of lime, salt and Tajín seasoning—*Jotoro Kitchen + Tequila Bar, Tampa, Fla.*

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