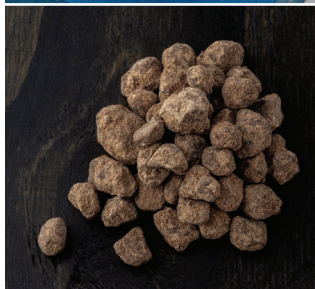


TOP 10 TRENDS

ON THE MENU



1 ASIAN BREAKFAST WAKES UP

As the morning daypart evolves to keep pace with nontraditional schedules, the definition of breakfast fare enjoys a similar fluidity, with flavors from the global pantry continuing to inform menu innovation. Pushing beyond familiar Mexican flavors and formats, menu developers are looking to the East and finding opportunity in the cuisines of Asian countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea, Japan and China. Umami drives craveability, as chefs take a deft hand in applying ingredients like miso, gochujang, bonito flakes, soy sauce and fish sauce. But there is also a sweet side to the story, especially in beverages that take their cues from Vietnamese and Thai coffee culture, plus Taiwanese boba drinks.

Japanese Spicy Chicken Sandwich with sesame chile oil, togarashi, a fried egg, spicy mayo, slaw and sunomono (pickled cucumber salad)
—*Breakfast Republic, based in Southern California*

2 MUSTARD'S MOMENT HAS ARRIVED

Forward-leaning chefs are flexing mustard's muscle, promoting the condiment from utility to star player in modern menu development. Its familiarity makes mustard a safe base for innovation, with its tangy, spicy profile at the core of varieties that range from mild and yellow to karashi, a hot Japanese mustard. Menu developers also turn to an array of ingredients that sweeten, deepen or sharpen different styles of mustard, giving this trend a long runway. Rising interest in complementary ingredients and flavor systems, notably pastrami and pretzels, further expand the opportunity.

Pretzel Crisps with ricotta mustard
—*Sweetbriar, New York*

3 AFTERNOON DELIGHT: A NEW VIEW OF HAPPY HOUR

The lines dividing traditional foodservice dayparts have begun to blur, as many consumers carry on the clockless schedules they adopted early in the pandemic. In response, restaurants are starting to incorporate strategies to optimize untapped shoulder periods. The afternoon hours present a welcome opportunity for patrons to get a change of scenery, take in a late lunch meeting or seek out an early happy hour. Unconventional dining schedules are leading to exciting opportunities for differentiated, compelling, snackable menus in relaxed, inviting spaces.

Fiesta de Botanas: Tacos Dorados, Cóctel de Camarones, Brochetas de Carne, Empanadas de Jaiba, Naranjas, Queso Fresco, Chicharrones, Pickled Veggies and two salsas—*Mi Vida, two locations in Washington, D.C.*

4 SKEWERED MEATS STICK THE LANDING

From Greek souvlaki and Japanese kushiyaki to Turkish kabobs and Middle Eastern shashlik, nearly every global cuisine offers up menu-development inspiration for skewered meat applications. While there's plenty of room for flavor play within these classic preparations, chefs are opening the door to novel ideas that elevate the familiar format with trending meats, flavor-forward marinades and complementary sauces, dips and side dishes. Both approaches play to consumer interest in global flavor discovery, particularly items that deliver a casual street-food vibe. They also deliver good value, thanks in large part to smaller portion sizes.

Short Rib Frites au Poivre Skewers served over crushed market potatoes and topped with crispy shoestring frites and sauce au poivre
—*Maison Yaki, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

5 BROWN BUTTER: WELCOME TO THE DARK SIDE

In today's foodservice landscape, where complexity of flavor is the name of the game, brown butter is carving out a new niche. Its nutty tones, toasty aroma, silky mouthfeel and rich depth bring flavor premiums to both savory and sweet dishes. Keep an eye on the unexpected, like oysters on the half shell swimming in a pool of brown butter or a brown butter-espresso muffin. On beverage menus, whether served hot or cold, non-alc or boozy, brown butter is a game-changer. It's both nostalgic and comforting, yet progressive and adventurous, and it even might be poised to challenge the pumpkin spice latte for consumer fealty.

Hamachi Crudo with brown butter-miso aioli
—*Girl & the Goat, with locations in Chicago and Los Angeles*

6 NEXT-LEVEL SWEETENERS

Origin stories, flavor narratives, wholesomeness and intrigue all resonate with diners, and they are driving a trend in the use of high-impact sweeteners like piloncillo, Okinawan black sugar, maple syrup, honey, jaggery and date sugar. It's not enough to simply swap in one of these alternatives for white refined sugar or high fructose corn syrup. It's the creative applications featuring next-level sweeteners that broaden modern flavor play, leading to valuable differentiation on menus. And it isn't possible to overemphasize the opportunity to innovate with natural sweeteners in the beverage category, given the passion of younger generations for sweeter profiles in their drinks.

Japanese Sweet Potato with miso and buttered black sugar
—*KYU, with locations in New York and Miami*

7 NATURAL COLORS MAKE A SPLASH

Color has always been integral to recipe building, helping deliver that full sensory experience patrons seek in restaurant dining. Today, color is pulling sharper focus, drawing inspiration from nature and wowing the world with its incredible spectrum. Savvy menu developers look to leverage the wide-ranging aesthetics of naturally derived ingredient sources, including their inherent nutritional benefits. Think ube, beets, turmeric, matcha, pandan, charcoal, spirulina and butterfly pea flower. But think twice before consigning color exclusively to a wellness positioning. Today's opportunities lie in what color does best: bring joy.

Cherry Bomb Burger: Lentil patty, Flower "cheddar," tomato confit, Gentilina lettuce and soybean sprouts, housed in a bright pink bun colored with cherry and beet extract
—*Flower Burger, Los Angeles*

8 TIME FOR THAI MASH-UPS

Thai cuisine is full of big, bright, fresh, aromatic flavors. It carries an energetic street-food vibe and intrinsically plays in both plant-forward and meat-centric worlds. Today, it's serving as inspiration for eclectic, craveable mash-ups, bringing together Thai flavors, ingredients and/or formats with elements of other global cuisines in a perfect synergy on the plate or in the glass. Despite the absence of a major Thai chain in this country, the embrace by consumers of Thai cuisine makes it ripe for mash-ups and inventive menu play by progressive coffeehouses, bars, restaurants, pop-ups and food trucks.

Thai Fried Garlic Sausage topped with green curry sauerkraut and wasabi mustard, served in a grilled Amoroso roll
—*The Black Thai, Greenville, S.C.*

9 MODERN MOVES FOR MALTED MILK

Malted milk powder offers menu developers the opportunity to reach across generations, employing a comforting, retro ingredient that carries a hip vibe—keying into neo-nostalgia with an eye to leveraging its recognizable flavor profile. Easy to source, store and handle, malted milk powder boasts notes of roasted butterscotch and toffee, introducing depth of flavor to desserts, sweet snacks, beverages and more. Pay particular attention to the opportunities around "salted malted," already emerging in creative dessert applications, as well as novel riffs that might influence the next coffeehouse breakout.

Chow Nai Sundae with vanilla ice cream, fried malted milk, Ovaltine hot fudge and buttered peanuts
—*Bonnie's, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

10 TAPPING INTO CIDER CULTURE

A number of drivers can be credited with propelling cider's rise from popular beverage to cultural phenomenon: the low-ABV trend, interest in the functional benefits of fermented ingredients, a growing market for gluten-free options, and a deepening appreciation for craft and heritage. But the most influential factor may be the welcoming, relaxing vibe of cider taprooms and tastings. As cider drinkers encompass all walks of life, spanning generations, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds in equal measure, cider culture is opening intriguing opportunities for exploration and trial.

Peach for the Stars Cider Slushie with Kalle cider, Chambord, peach and strawberry purée, garnished with candied peach and strawberry rings
—*Après, Portland, Maine*

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