

# Food Fanatics

NOW WITH MORE FLAVOR



WE DID THE RESEARCH ON WHAT YOUR NEXT BEST CUSTOMER IS LOOKING FOR

II. MAKE FINE DINING CASUAL



WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL MEDIA: CONSISTENCY IS KEY

V. OFFER

**NA  
DRINKS**  
AT THE  
**BAR**

SOME RULES TO OPERATE BY: I. GET BACK TO GREAT SERVICE

**74% OF GEN Z DINERS GO OUT TO EAT 1/WEEK**



# WHAT GEN Z WANTS

STUFFY IS OUT

AND HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

READ MORE



SERVE SHAREABLES:

**ONE FOR YOU ONE FOR ME**

SO GO DO IT



III. FOCUS ON THE WOW FACTOR

IV. SERVE STREET FOOD WITH A STORY

RETRO IS IN

PLUS TEAM HAPPINESS TIPS + ROAD TRIP: LOUISVILLE



JUMP TO IT

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"74% of Gen Z diners go out to eat 1/week"  
—Technomic

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**FOOD FANATICS®** is the go-to source for the foodservice industry and anyone truly passionate about food, the people behind it and improving the bottom line. Founded in 2012 and redesigned in 2025, the print publication and online magazine is a US Foods publication produced by The Specialists.

**ABOUT US FOODS** With a promise to help its customers Make It, US Foods is one of America's great food companies and a leading foodservice distributor, partnering with approximately 250,000 restaurants and foodservice operators to help their businesses succeed. With more than 70 broadline locations and approximately 90 cash-and-carry stores, US Foods and its 30,000 associates provides its customers with a broad and innovative food offering and a comprehensive suite of e-commerce, technology and business solutions. US Foods is headquartered in Rosemont, Ill. Visit usfoods.com to learn more.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KITCHEN EIGHTY-EIGHT. SEE PAGE 36



## I GET IT.

THOSE LONG, HOT DAYS IN THE KITCHEN WHEN THE PAN GREASE STINGS YOUR HANDS AND THE SWEAT STINGS YOUR EYES, AND YOU JUST WISH THE TICKETS WOULD STOP COMING.

THE LAST THING YOU WANNA DO IS STEP INTO YOUR DINING ROOM WITH A BIG SMILE PLASTERED ON YOUR FACE.

BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE TO.

WE'RE IN A SERVICE INDUSTRY, AND THE NEXT BIG RESTAURANT CUSTOMER-GEN Z-LOVES BEING SERVED AND FEELING SEEN. THE GOOD NEWS? THEY'RE NOT LOOKING FOR PERFECTION; THEY CRAVE AUTHENTICITY, EVEN A LITTLE CHAOS. SO STEP OUT FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN-GETTING A GLIMPSE OF THE WIZARD TURNS A MEAL INTO A MEMORY. AND IF YOU CAN CREATE MEMORIES, NOW YOU'RE REALLY COOKIN'.

-FOODFANATICS@USFOODS.COM



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FOOD FANATICS

FF1125

EVERY ISSUE WE HIT YOU WITH A #CHALLENGE.  
LET'S GET STARTED.

## WHO'S GOT THE **BEST** STYLE?



**JIBRIEL SAUNDERS**

EXECUTIVE CHEF | FREEDOM PLAZA, ARIZONA

"This apron, coat and hat combination is more than just attire; it's a reflection of my identity. The chef's coat and apron embody precision, professionalism and leadership, while the hat brings in a touch of Arizona's fun western spirit! Together they tell a story of not just how I cook (craftsmanship rooted in tradition yet defined by individuality), but how I carry myself in the kitchen."

**CHRIS CLEASANT**

BAR MANAGER | ONE11 MADISON, MEMPHIS

"My apron pins are a mixture of distilleries that I've visited as well as an expression of my personality. As you can see, I kind of see myself as somewhat of a nerd with lots of '90s nostalgia and sci-fi references and comic books. If you've ever seen the movie 'Office Space,' then you kind of get the idea of where I'm coming from [hint: 30 pieces of flare...]."



**TRAVIS ALLEN**

EXECUTIVE CHEF | THE FARMER'S CELLAR, MINNESOTA

"My favorite chef coats are typically Chef Works! I'm a big fan of the cost and breathable materials."



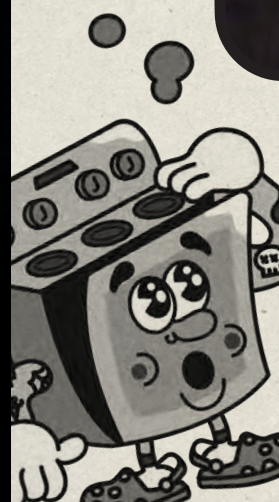
NEXT ISSUE'S CHALLENGE?

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HIDING PLACE AT WORK?

TO ANSWER: POST A PHOTO  
OF YOURSELF THERE AND TAG  
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HOT PLATES

FF1125

# HOT PLATES

BUZZWORTHY BITES BLOWING UP MENUS



## SHAREABLES ARE HOT!!

### THE MORE THE MERRIER:

Gen Z is loving shareable plates, and hey, we are, too. They're fun, they're Instagram-able, and an awesome way to sample a menu. Go ahead, turn this page and find out what's hot this season.

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPECIALISTS

THIS ISSUE'S SPECIALS: SALADS WITHOUT LETTUCE, RETRO DESSERTS, AND INGREDIENTS TO WATCH



## THESE SAMMIES ARE SICK!

These unique, handheld hits from US Foods customers deliver the boldness, craveability and social buzz today's diners want



**BIG MUDDY**  
**SUGARFIRE SMOKE HOUSE, ST. LOUIS**

Housemade jalapeno cheddar smoked sausage link, smoked brisket, lettuce, pickles, with sweet & Alabama white barbecue sauces



**ELK FRY BREAD**  
**JAVELINA, PORTLAND, ORE.**

Apple & onion-braised elk shoulder with Huckleberry barbecue sauce, arugula & pickled red onion on housemade fry bread



**SPICY RIGATONI VODKA CHICKEN PARM SANDWICH**  
**ELM STREET DINER NORWALK, CONN.**

The name says it all!

LOAD IT UP

# ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT 4.0

**AMBAR, CHICAGO**  
OWNED AND OPERATED BY IVAN IRIČANIN

## THIS BALKAN-INSPIRED CHICAGO RESTAURANT

by Ivan Iričanin, CEO and founder of Street Guys Hospitality, allows diners to choose from its "Dining Without Limits" tasting menu of more than 30 small plates for just \$34.99. The unlimited sampler features regional specialties like sarma from northern Serbia, grilled kebabs, sirnica and fan-favorites ajvar and beet tzatziki from the mezze selection—A.L.

### IMPROVE YOUR BALKAN FOOD VOCAB:

**"SARMA"**  
SLOW-COOKED, PORK BELLY-STUFFED CABBAGE

**"SIRNICA"**  
CHEESE PIE

**"AJVAR"**  
ROASTED RED PEPPER AND EGGPLANT RELISH

GETTING HUNGRY? READ MORE:



^ BALKAN DISHES ON THE ALL-YOU-CARE-TO-SAMPLE MENU AT AMBAR IN CHICAGO

GROWING UPWARD

# 9.7%

projected annual growth of the U.S. HALAL FOOD MARKET by 2033  
(Source: Technomic)



## PIZZA A LA INDIA

As Indian flavors continue to permeate menus nationwide, **MAZALA PIZZA**'s bringing them to the masses with Indian-influenced pies, sliders and wings. An emerging chain with five locations, Mazala's pizzas include butter masala, tikka, samosa smash, palak (spinach) and firecracker with jalapenos (pictured).



FULL STORY HERE



## "NOT ALL SALADS NEED LETTUCE!"

### WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

> The US Foods culinary support team has been working with customers to develop salad selections that prioritize vegetables over lettuces. In the fall, play into the season by combining roasted root veggies with other ingredients—you'll stay competitive on pricing without worrying about the market price of lettuce and off-season quality. Utilize pre-cut veggies for quality consistency and to reduce prep labor expenses.

### GOT ANY IDEAS?

> You could try a Grilled Tri-Color Carrot Salad with: Caramelized fennel  
Toasted pistachios  
Cajun-spiced garbanzo beans  
Pomegranate seeds  
Maple-tahini dressing

MORE IDEAS HERE:







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# MORE TRENDING SHAREABLES

**THE GEN Z** dining cohort, which has surpassed millennials in restaurant visits, according to Technomic, prefers to share their food—in person and on socials. **According to research from Y-Pulse, 66% of those surveyed enjoy restaurants that serve shareable food.** Here are three trending shareable items identified by our Food Fanatics® chefs.

## OYSTERS

Grilled oysters with citrus garlic butter, cilantro and plantain-cashew crumble at **BRASERO** in Chicago.

**“OYSTERS ARE THE BEST VESSELS FOR SHAREABLE APPETIZERS... THEY REALLY HIT THE ‘WOW’ FACTOR”**



—US FOODS FOOD FANATICS®  
CHEF RICHARD PAPIER



IMAGES COURTESY OF BRASERO, SYN ROOFTOP BAR & LOUNGE, AND THE POINT



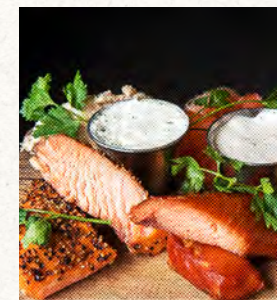
## SKEWERS

The meat, veggie and flavor combinations are boundless

### PERUVIAN CHICKEN ANTICUCHOS

RESTAURANT: SYN  
ROOFTOP BAR & LOUNGE  
LOCATION: RESTON, VA

Aji panca mojo-glazed chicken and potatoes with cilantro aioli, aji amarillo mayo, crispy quinoa garnish



## SEA-CUTERIE

A lighter option than traditional pork-based boards

### IVY CITY SMOKEHOUSE FISH BOARD

RESTAURANT: THE POINT  
LOCATION: WASHINGTON, D.C.

Pepper salmon, salmon candy, Great Lakes whitefish spread and horseradish cream



# WHAT, YOU WANT MORE?

SCAN HERE FOR MORE SHAREABLE IDEAS





# GET 'EM POPPIN'!

Looking to spice up your shareable appetizer menu? Dive into irresistible flavor with Molly's Kitchen® Cream Cheese Stuffed Jalapeño Poppers and Battered Whole Mushrooms – both ready to steal the show, perfect for any platter.

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# NO ONE CAN WATCH

# 'THEY ARE SWEEPING THE NATION!

They're on sandwiches, in beers  
and in pouches at the grocery store.  
And I'm seeing this chocolate everywhere!"  
— US FOODS FOOD FANATICS® CHEF TYLER HERALD





COOL, LET'S TRY IT!



SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE

# PICKLES

# #PISTACHIOS

Pickles and pistachios are having a serious moment. Pickles have exploded in popularity—as tangy toppings for hot chicken and pizza and even as flavoring for ice cream and martinis. Meanwhile, pistachios are riding a viral flavor wave, sparked by TikTok-famous Dubai-style chocolate bars filled with pistachio and crunchy kataifi. Pistachios in general—named a top trending ingredient for this year by research firm Technomic—bring a pop of flavor and crunch to both sweet and savory creations.

*"I've made a pickle-brined, fried portobello mushroom sandwich with a dill pickle aioli. It's a great way to use the whole pickle jar product."—Jennifer Steakley*

## Our Voices



**JENNIFER  
STEAKLEY**  
US FOODS  
FOOD FANATICS®  
CHEF



**TYLER  
HERALD**  
US FOODS  
FOOD FANATICS®  
CHEF

## Seeing Green On the Menu



**FRIED PICKLE  
CHIPS**  
LUCKY RABBIT  
JONESTOWN, TEXAS



**DUBAI CHOCOLATE  
BROWNIE**  
KING ST. OYSTER BAR  
D.C., VA., MD.



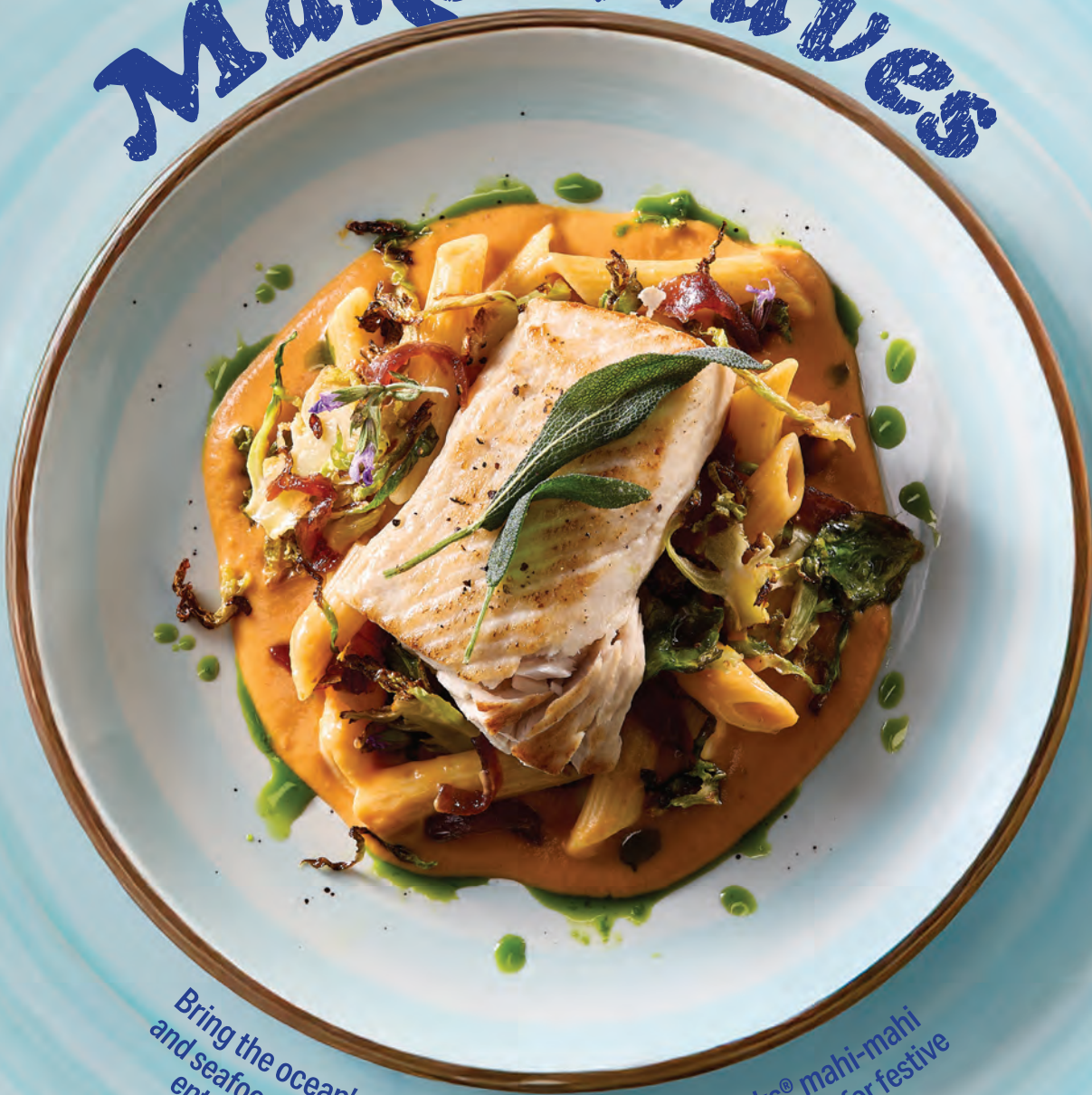
**BIG DILLY PIZZA**  
OG ZAZA  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.  
(MULTIPLE LOCATIONS)



**DUBAI TO  
JANKEN**  
JANKEN  
PORTLAND, ORE.



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HOT PLATES

FF1125

# BAKED ALASKA IS BACK, BABY!

## GET YOUR TORCHES READY...

This hot-cold, frozen-baked dessert's making a dramatic comeback thanks to the tableside torching element. It's nostalgic and delivers that Instagram-able "wow" factor—perfect for younger diners and those looking for an experience.

**BAKED ALASKA FOR 2025**  
 A FRESH TAKE BY TRULUCK'S  
 @trulucksrestaurant

a US Foods customer and upscale seafood restaurant chain with locations in Texas, Florida, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

Their version of the classic dessert features a chocolate cake base and Oreo cookie crust.



SHOP DESSERTS HERE!

'WE'RE SEEING A RETURN TO CLASSIC AND RETRO DESSERTS, EVEN JUST SERVE A NICE SLICE OF CAKE OR THREE FRESHLY BAKED COOKIES AND COUNT YOUR PROFITS.'

—US FOODS NEW BUSINESS MANAGER AUSTIN KOSATER

## ..... MORE REINVENTED CLASSICS FROM TRULUCK'S .....



**CHOCOLATE MALT CAKE**  
 Layers of rich cocoa cake frosted with decadent chocolate icing and topped with berries and a warm, housemade ganache



**KEY LIME PIE**  
 A graham cracker-almond crust filled with tangy key lime custard and topped with freshly whipped cream



**CARROT CAKE**  
 The iconic Truluck's dessert—a tower of spiced carrot cake layered with cream cheese frosting and topped with spicy pecans and warm butterscotch sauce



WHO'S DOING IT GREAT AND WHERE.

# ROAD TRIP! LOUISVILLE!

"THERE'S SO MUCH MORE HERE THAN JUST BOURBON, BIG HATS, BASEBALL + BLUEGRASS"



—KIMBERLIE THOMPSON,  
US FOODS TERRITORY MANAGER



## THE VETERAN:

**1 Volare Italian Ristorante**  
2300 FRANKFORT AVE.  
[@volare\\_italian\\_restaurant](https://www.volareitalianrestaurant.com)

Executive Chef and Managing Partner **JOSH MOORE**, a "Chopped" champion and lifelong cook, has led the culinary direction at this beloved fine-dining staple for more than 20 years. Blending Italian cuisine with seasonal Kentucky ingredients, Moore even incorporates year-round produce from his family-run, 10-acre farm in nearby Taylorsville. The restaurant is also listed on Louisville's Urban Bourbon Trail, thanks to its bourbon-braised short ribs, bourbon gelato and more.

## THE NEWBIE:

**2 The House of Marigold**  
10310 SHELBYVILLE ROAD  
[@thehouseofmarigoldky](https://www.thehouseofmarigoldky.com)

This breakfast & lunch spot owned by husband-wife duo **ADRIENNE** and **CHEF KRIS COLE** builds off of their Marigold Catering Company (a proudly Black- and female-owned company) with a menu featuring seasonal comfort food alongside craft cocktails and a robust coffee program. The patio once went viral on TikTok as the most beautiful in Louisville, and the interior design boasts natural lighting and pink-pastel hues. The Coles also operate Est. 1927 by Marigold, a counter-service café at the Speed Art Museum, and plan to open a second location of The House of Marigold this fall.

YOU'RE GONNA WANT TO TRY THESE:

**3 THE KING CRAB COCKTAIL**  
AT DEL FRISCO'S  
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BY AMELIA LEVIN

# THE WOW GENERATION

WHY SURPRISE, DELIGHT AND A DASH OF HOSPITALITY ARE —————> THE KEYS TO THE NEXT DINER'S HEART—AND DOLLARS.



# meet ZOE

→ SHE'S A 23-YEAR-OLD JUNIOR MARKETING EXEC AT A BOUTIQUE BRANDING AGENCY IN ANY MID-TIER TO LARGE U.S. CITY. SHE WEARS OVER-SIZED BLAZERS, LOW-RISE, BAGGY JEANS, PULLS HER HAIR INTO A CLAW CLIP AND ALWAYS CARRIES A TINY NOTEBOOK, HEADPHONES AND A CLEAN-INGREDIENT PROTEIN BAR IN HER TOTE.

She eats out two to three times a week—sometimes with a friend, a date or a group for Friday happy hour or weekend brunch. She won't always order a drink—maybe a craft NA cocktail or a low-ABV vermouth spritzer if she's hitting 8 a.m. yoga the next day. Instagram is her Yelp. She finds restaurants through chefs, influencers and newsletters like The Infatuation, Cherry Bombe and Broadsheet.

This is today's Gen Z diner. Your next best customer.

Yes, millennials were the last big wave. But Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012—is now entering adulthood in full force with major buying power. The core dining group includes 18- to 28-year-olds: college students, young professionals and those starting families.

Generational experts call them “the loneliest generation.” A 2018 Cigna study found 18- to 22-year-olds reported the highest loneliness scores—blamed on too much screen time, not enough face time. Then came the pandemic.

All that's changing: Research from Technomic indicates that Gen Zers dine out often, with 74% visiting restaurants at least once per week. They're even surpassing millennials—73% of whom dine out once a week—as the most frequent restaurant-goers.

So it's no surprise that this generation wants surprise and delight when they dine out. The question remains, how do you do so with the loneliest diners—and still appeal to everyone else? Experts weigh in with five ways.



“WE’RE IN A PERIOD WHERE HOSPITALITY IS BECOMING REALLY IMPORTANT AGAIN ...

THERE’S BEEN A LOT OF CONSTERNATION IN THIS WORLD IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND I THINK PEOPLE ARE REALLY YEARNING FOR KINDNESS.”

**Kevin Boehm**  
co-founder of Chicago's Boka Restaurant Group and a 2019 James Beard Award winner

images courtesy of Bûcheron

## 1. GET BACK TO GREAT SERVICE HOSPITALITY'S BACK, BABY.

If you've dined out post-pandemic and noticed a decline in service, you are not alone. A 2024 study on restaurant reputation rankings from Chatmeter, an intelligence platform, indicates that reviews by customers mentioning “mistakes” were up 6.9%, while also noting that references to staff attitudes were up 21.8%.

Translation: The bar is low. That's an opportunity.

Whoever figures out how to give great service again—those are the restaurants that are going to win. You can have the best food in town and the coolest place, but if your service sucks, diners—especially Gen Zers, who just want to be treated well and heard—will go somewhere else.

This is the view of Kevin Boehm, co-founder of Chicago's Boka Restaurant Group and a 2019 James Beard Award winner. “We're in a period where hospitality is becoming really important again because there's been a lot of consternation in this world in the last five years and I think people are really yearning for kindness again.”

At Minneapolis hot spot Bûcheron—2025's James Beard

↑  
ABOVE: CHEF ADAM RITTER AND JEANIE JANAS RITTER (2ND AND 3RD FROM LEFT), CO-OWNERS OF BÛCHERON IN MINNEAPOLIS, PHOTOGRAPHED WITH THEIR TEAM.

↓  
BELOW: BÛCHERON'S KABOCHA SQUASH WONTONS WITH MAPLE-ORANGE DIPPING SAUCE





Best New Restaurant—co-owner and hospitality director Jeanie Janas Ritter says it's about caring. "It really just comes down to giving a sh\*t and making an effort—and the guests see that." Ritter and her GM are on the floor nightly, clearing tables, talking with guests and modeling service.

Bûcheron also includes an 18% hospitality charge and runs on a four-day workweek to keep her staff happy and energized. "If you look at our reviews, everybody mentions the service because they're surprised—they're not used to it. People don't give hospitality anymore. You might get service, but genuine hospitality is rare. It really comes down to just giving a sh\*t."

## 2. MAKE FINE DINING MORE CASUAL

*GOOD SERVICE DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN STIFF.*

"It started with the bistronomy movement in Paris—fine dining without the stuffiness," Ritter says. "At our restaurant, you can come dressed up or in jeans and a T-shirt and still have a great time."

Any generation appreciates great food and service. "Even if you're younger and looking at restaurants differently, you still appreciate good lighting, good music, great people who care," Ritter says.

Boka's latest tavern-style pizza spot proves the point. "It's beautiful and trendy but the check average is still low and doesn't break the bank," Boehm says. "They like scarcity, they want to be respected, and they have high standards for food."

## THREE EASY WAYS TO TELL YOUR STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA, NOW!

1.

**JUST START RECORDING.**  
"Pull out your smartphone and start recording everything you're already doing. You have a media machine in your pocket—use it. If you don't, others will beat you at the game."

2.

**SHOW IT ALL.**  
"Don't be shy or afraid—even though that's natural. People want to see the real deal, not a polished commercial. There's no need to edit videos and reels. Just go on Facebook or Instagram live—no one's going to watch it in real time, and it automatically sets up the reel for you to post easily."

3.

**ASK FOR HELP.**  
"If you're unsure, ask for help. At the next shift meeting, ask who knows a young person good with videos and social. Then hire that person or pay them with food if that's what they want!"



**READ MORE!**  
BY SHAWN WALCHER,  
OWNER, CALI BBQ,  
SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

## 3. FOCUS ON THAT WOW FACTOR

*GIVE THAT SURPRISE AND DELIGHT*

Elm Street Diner in Norwalk, Conn.—35 miles from NYC—is made for diners like Zoe.

"Our demographics skew much younger—we have many Gen Z and younger millennial diners," says owner John Moshos.

The menu is built for buzz: mile-high chicken parm sandwiches, pancake tacos, waffle towers, candy-bar French toast, cake shakes and more. Viral moments fuel more than 700K followers.

"TikTok is a huge part of our business," Moshos says.

Weekend brunch is a hit, but the draw is year-round. "We have core regulars, college students, and even people traveling from other countries who've seen videos of our food."

"This is the wave of the future," Moshos says. "With younger demographics, it's all about creating memorable experiences, innovating, and being consistent on social media. The Gen Z diner is more knowledgeable about food and willing to pay for quality and uniqueness."

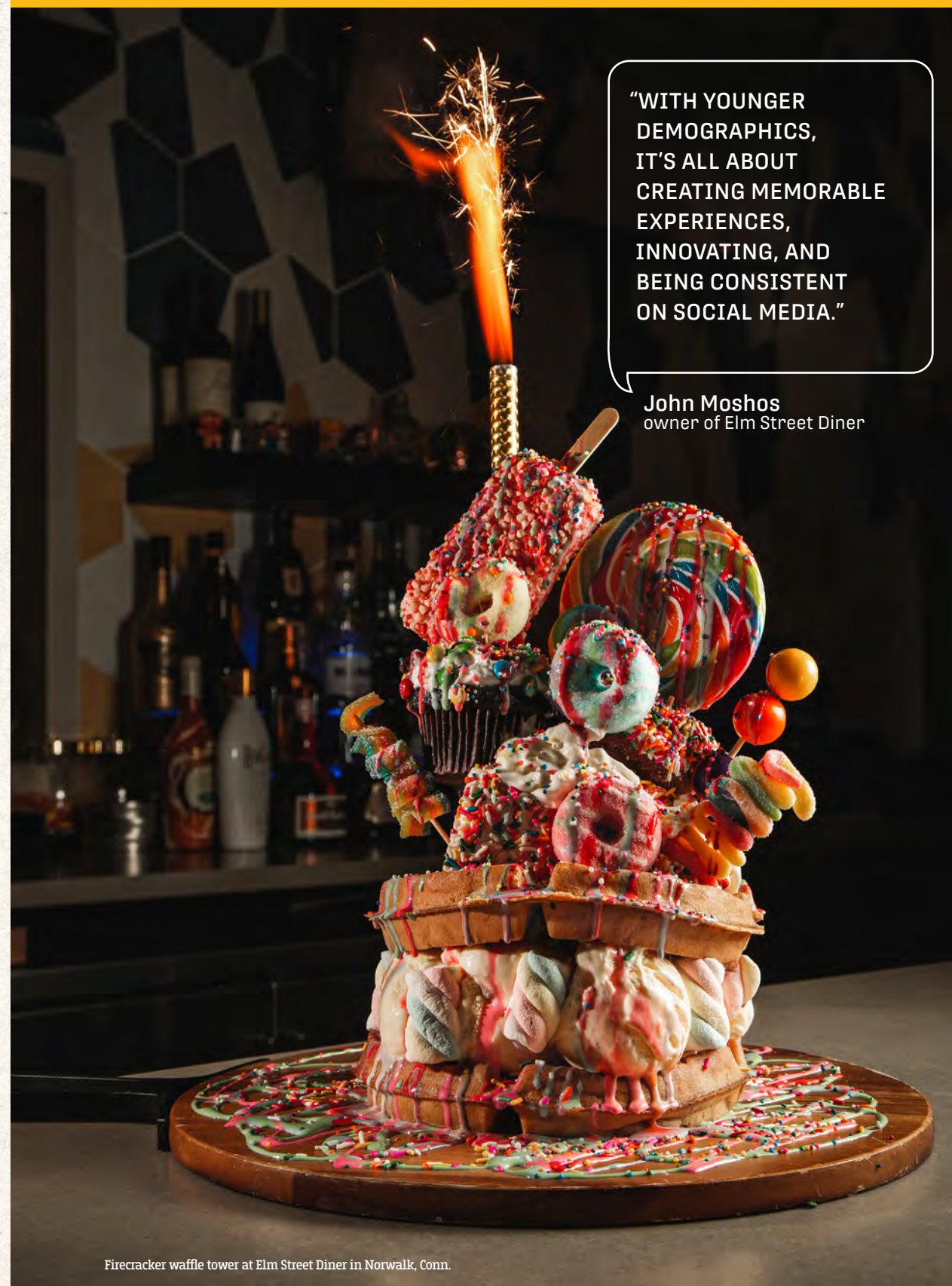
US Foods Food Fanatics® Chef Eric Tirone says operators should create that "holy sh\*t" moment. "From bone marrow with a whiskey shot to cheese pulls that look like tightropes—whatever it takes to wow them." Family-style also resonates. "Six apps, two entrées, two desserts for three people. That old-school one-app-one-entrée-one-dessert model is going away," Tirone says.

Chef Austin Kosater, US Foods New Business Manager, agrees. "COVID made us scared of each other, but we're craving that

"WITH YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHICS, IT'S ALL ABOUT CREATING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES, INNOVATING, AND BEING CONSISTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA."

**John Moshos**  
owner of Elm Street Diner

Image courtesy of Elm Street Diner



Firecracker waffle tower at Elm Street Diner in Norwalk, Conn.



Winter Sausage Ragout



Spring Vegetable Carbonara



## BARILLA IS ALWAYS IN SEASON



Summer Caesar Pasta Salad



Fall Classic Mac and Cheese



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Janken, Portland Ore.

human interaction again—especially Gen Z. You can plate a bunch of apps beautifully, offer dipping sauces and mocktails and charge more.”

Case in point: Elm Street's Super Sampler—chicken fingers, wings, fried mozzarella, cheesesteak egg rolls, onion ring tower and sauces—sells for \$25.

US Foods Food Fanatics® Chef Jennifer Steakley adds: “It's more about the experience—where can I go to relax with friends or a date? What's going to bring the excitement to the table?”

Sizzling platters are also booming. Datassential reports a whopping +2,348% jump in U.S. menu growth last year. Hibachi-

style experiences—once limited to Teppanyaki steakhouses—are popping up at catering pop-ups, trucks and even meal kits. Cozymeal calls them a top dining trend of 2025.

### 4. SERVE STREET FOOD WITH A STORY BECAUSE HERITAGE AND EXPERIENCES MATTER.

Street food couture is in. Think: walking tacos, corn dogs, bao buns and empanadas—reimagined.

“There are a lot more second-generation, mixed-race American chefs,” says US Foods Food Fanatics® Chef Valerie Rubin. “I'm half Filipino and half Jewish. I bring that influence—growing up eating all those foods—into the menus I make.”

Rubin notes Filipino, Vietnamese, Persian and

### GEN Z PREFERENCES & ACTION STEPS FOR YOU

SOURCE: TASTEWISE



#### Flavor vs. Convenience: Nearly split

50.8% prioritize flavor/variety, 50.5% convenience

**action:** focus on core menu items, done well



#### Quick > Comfort

75.5% prefer quick and easy meals, edging out comfort food by 3.3%

**action:** offer online ordering and takeout options, packaged well



#### Natural > Organic

“Natural” foods valued 1.8x more than organic

**action:** source and advertise clean-label products



#### Meaningful Choices

50% choose local produce with 3x choosing grass-fed

**action:** highlight sustainable items on menus and social media

image courtesy of Janken

# 74%

of Gen Zers visit restaurants at least once per week

—TECHNOMIC





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labor-saving solution that delivers a crispy, consistent bite.

## 5. REVISIT YOUR BAR BUSINESS

*OFFER LOW  
AND NO-  
ALCOHOL  
OPTIONS.*

Gen Z's drinking habits  
are shifting. They're

"THE GEN Z GENERATION DOESN'T DRINK LIKE  
OTHER GENERATIONS DO...DRINKING ISN'T ON TREND  
LIKE IT USED TO BE. WE'VE ADAPTED WITH MORE  
NA [NON-ALCOHOLIC] OPTIONS THAN WE'VE EVER HAD."

—Jeanie Janas Ritter, co-owner and hospitality director of Bûcheron

Armenian cuisines are  
growing. "I'm also seeing  
Moroccan and Middle Eastern,  
especially at breakfast. And  
there's a convergence of  
South American, Filipino and  
Pacific Island food—it scales  
easily and has bold flavor."

Indian cuisine is also trending.  
At LA's Pijja Palace, achaari wings  
and Malai rigatoni join pizzas  
topped with tikka, kofta and  
tandoori onions. Mazala Pizza  
in Chicago, New Jersey and  
California offers Manchurian,  
tikka and samosa pies.  
In Cincinnati, Crown  
Restaurant Group's  
Marigold blends an  
Indian curry house  
with a London gastropub,  
serving dishes like  
curried lamb shank  
with kachumber and  
housemade potpies.

drinking less—or not at all.

"The Gen Z generation  
doesn't drink like other  
generations do," says Ritter.  
"Drinking isn't on trend like  
it used to be. We've adapted  
with more NA [non-alcoholic]  
options than we've ever had."

Bûcheron offers a Pentire

NA Crocus - made with  
Aplos Ease, yuzu, bay, bubbles  
and lime at Bûcheron



Coastal Spritz, Crocus with  
yuzu and bay leaf, and a phony  
negroni. None of the Above in  
St. Louis features housemade  
shrubs and zero-proof cocktails.

Still, when Gen Z does drink,  
it's often vodka, tequila or hard  
seltzers. Nearly two-thirds of  
non-drinkers say they've never  
had alcohol and don't plan to,  
citing taste and health.

Gen Z's desire to drink less  
and operators' need to drive  
profitability is a recipe for  
success. You can use bar and

kitchen staples to build  
an NA menu without  
adding inventory. Also,  
consider experimenting  
with dirty soda—  
labeled a "megatrend"  
by Datassential—which  
can be customizable  
with a wide range of  
syrops, fruit purees  
and creams.

Gen Z diners crave  
connection, creativity  
and authenticity. They'll  
reward restaurants  
that offer great food,  
genuine hospitality and  
a vibe worth sharing.  
Focus on creating  
experiences that make  
them feel seen, and  
you'll win not just Gen Z,  
but every generation. **FF**

image courtesy of Bûcheron

"We're still in the experience and emotion economies.  
But now we're also entering the **IDENTITY ECONOMY**  
—where brands help consumers become who they  
want to be."

—Trends Expert Katie Ayoub, Katie Ayoub & Associates **READ MORE**





The latest stuff. Because we love stuff.

# GEAR CHECK!



WITH US FOODS TERRITORY MANAGER  
EUGENE PHILBIN

NEED SOMETHING  
FOR YOUR  
KITCHEN? SCAN  
AND ORDER:



“While molecular gastronomy has taken a back seat, the toys used around it are gaining popularity for sure.”

THIS ISSUE, WE’VE GOT:

## HIGH-TECH TOYS



### BLUETOOTH MEAT PROBES

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### SMOKING GUNS

Add dramatic, smokey flavor to small dishes, cocktails, cheeses or plated desserts with a quick burst of hickory, applewood or other wood chips.



### PELLET SMOKERS

Deliver steady, wood-fired heat with minimal effort—great for brisket, ribs, fish and vegetables.

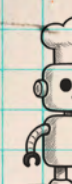
## THE ROBOTS ARE HERE!

Laugh all you want. But the chefs and operators on the bot train say the benefits outweigh the initial costs and implementation efforts. **BRUCE THOMPSON**, executive chef at The Commons of Providence in Sandusky, Ohio, worked with US Foods CHECK® Business Tools Automated service solutions, powered by Bear Robotics, to purchase two food delivery bots for the dining hall at his senior living facility.

OUR  
FUTURE  
ROBOT  
OVERLORD?



SCAN FOR THE  
FULL SCOOP  
& TO LEARN MORE



# 50%

OF RESTAURANTS ARE PLANNING TO ADOPT  
SOME FORM OF AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY WITHIN  
THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS.

STAT SOURCE: DATASSENTIAL, 2025



## THE HIDDEN COSTS KILLING YOUR RESTAURANT RIGHT NOW

Takeaways from one of the top educational sessions at Food Fanatics 2025 in Las Vegas

SCAN THE CODE OR VISIT USFOODS.COM  
TO READ ALL TEN



### 1. YOUR MENU IS TOO BIG

Don't clutter your menu with low-selling items. Big menus lead to longer ticket times, slower turns and confused guests who can't make a decision.

### 2. YOU DON'T HAVE A CLEAR BUDGET

If you don't have a weekly or monthly sales budget or some numbers to aim for, you're probably not going to hit them. You'll likely also over-order and overschedule.

### 3. YOU'RE NOT THINKING ABOUT TAKEOUT PACKAGING.

If the integrity of the food is compromised between the time you box it and your customers eat it—they won't be happy. If it's a sloppy mess, it ruins the guest experience and they won't order again.

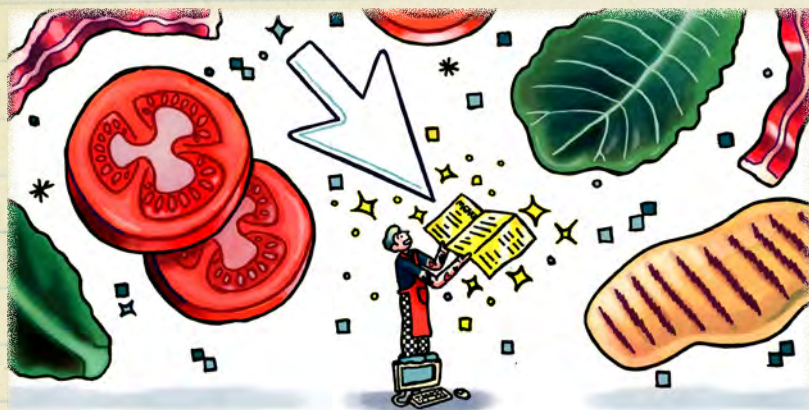
NEED  
MENU  
HELP?  
TURN TO  
PAGE  
32



KEEP ON EVOLVIN'

**OLD SCHOOL WAYS, NEW SCHOOL TOOLS**

THIS US FOODS CUSTOMER WENT THROUGH THE MENU PROFIT PRO™ PROGRAM—AND LIVED TO TELL THE STORY.



When **BARBARA** and **JOHN PACIOTTI**, owners of **THE COFFEE STATION**, a 43-year-strong, family-owned breakfast and lunch spot with locations in Morton and Garnet Valley, Pa., decided to analyze and engineer their menu, they leaned into using Menu Profit Pro™, part of US Foods **CHECK®** Business Tools, available exclusively from US Foods® for US Foods customers. John tells us all:

**Food Fanatics (FF): "YOU'RE A LOCAL INSTITUTION—WHY DO THIS NOW?"****John Paciotti (JP):**

"I'm like a **DINOSAUR** when it comes to the tech stuff. Everyone's been trying to get me to digitize my menu and order online forever. I knew the menu costing would be a lot of work, but I wanted to see it and judge myself on how well I had done."

**FF: WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST SURPRISES?**

**JP:** "You think you're selling a lot of something—and then you actually look at it, and you're selling

one item a month. We took off about four items. We had a green sandwich—it was an Italian roll with fresh broccoli or spinach, sharp provolone, maybe roasted peppers. I was shocked to see it wasn't selling!"

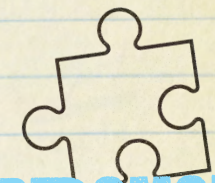
**FF: HOW HAS THE MENU COSTING AND REDESIGN HELPED?**

**JP:** "We had an old-school menu, but when we worked with the US Foods menu designer, she made visual tweaks—like putting a bubble around the chicken pasta soup—our highest profit item—and using a different color so your eyes are drawn to it. It's amazing what a difference that makes."

KNOW YOUR DOGS  
AND STARS...



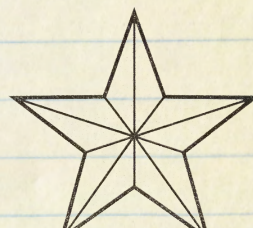
**CUT!**  
THE DOGS  
AKA LOW SALES  
+ LOW PROFITABILITY



**PROMOTE**  
THE PUZZLES AKA HIGH  
PROFITABILITY + LOW SALES



**RESET**  
THE PLOW HORSES  
AKA LOW PROFITABILITY  
+ HIGH SALES



**PROMOTE**  
THE STARS AKA HIGH  
SALES + HIGH PROFITABILITY

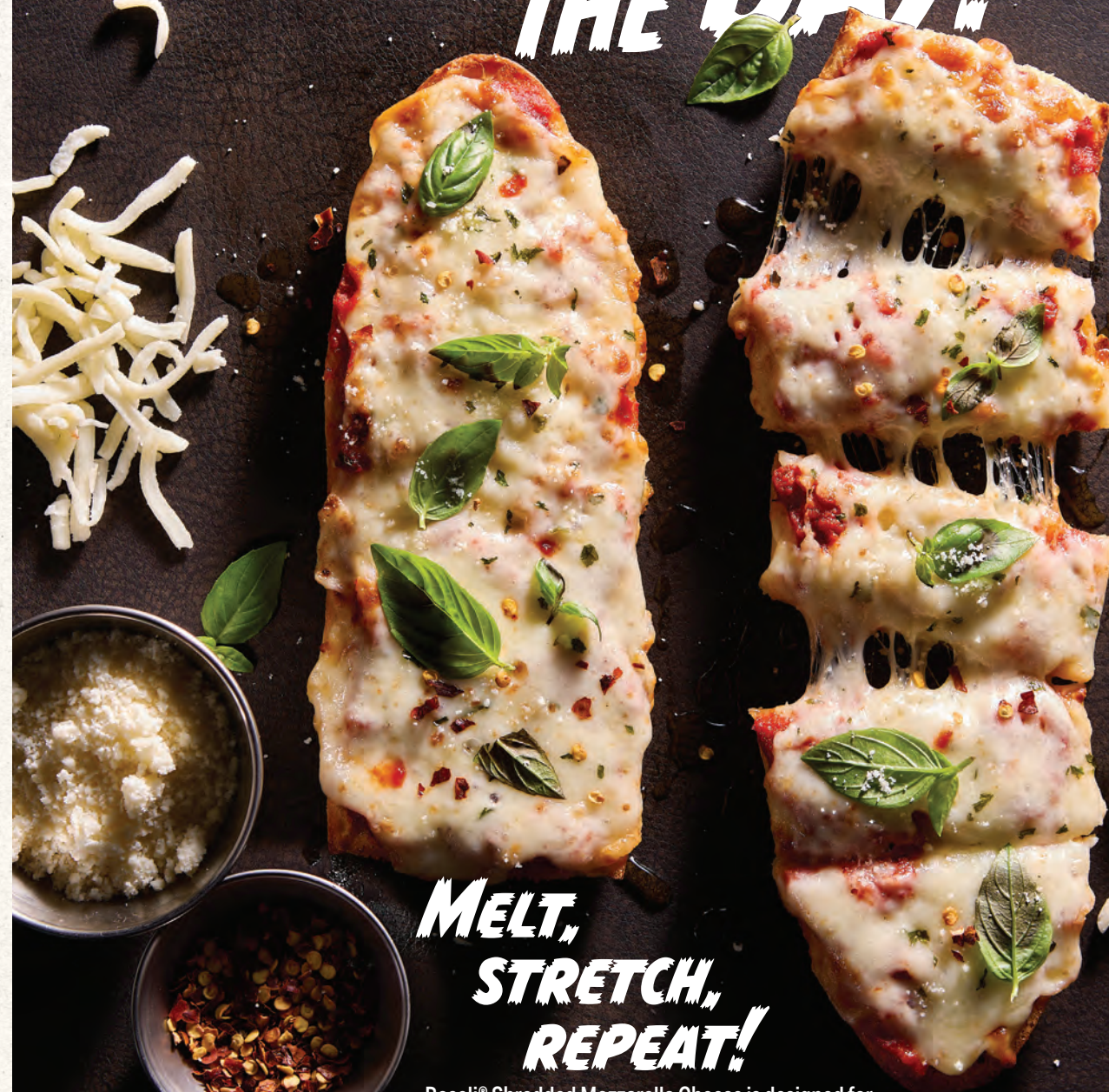


**READ THE FULL  
STORY HERE**

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TODAY, WE'RE MAKING:

# ARANCINI IN THREE STEPS

A RECIPE FROM  
CHEF ANTHONY SITEK  
OF ROSIE'S ITALIAN

## "EVERYONE

SEEMS TO KNOW AND LOVE ARANCINI," says Anthony Sitek, chef/owner of Rosie's Italian in Cincinnati. The fried risotto balls "are very versatile and great for showcasing different flavors—we like to use pesto, cheese and red sauce for ours. Honestly, who doesn't love that combo?"

THE FILLING POSSIBILITIES DON'T STOP THERE—Sitek has stuffed arancini with ground meat or Bolognese, peas, pancetta or just the cheese blend (the most important part for creating that stick to hold everything together).

WHAT  
FILLINGS  
DO YOU WANT  
TO TRY??

LET US KNOW!  
SHARE A PHOTO  
OF YOUR  
ARANCINI AND  
TAG @US\_FOODS  
FOR A CHANCE  
TO BE FEATURED  
ON OUR  
INSTAGRAM PAGE!

# ONE:



## 1 MAKE THE RISOTTO!

"FIRST, MAKE THE RISOTTO. We sweat down really fine diced onions, then add the arborio rice to toast it. Then we add the white wine, reduce that down, then add our homemade chicken stock a little at a time. We're looking for that al dente feel."

# TWO:



## 2 ADD CHEESE, PESTO + FILLINGS. COOL COMPLETELY!

"ONCE THE RISOTTO'S COOKED, PULL IT OFF THE HEAT. Then, when it's cooled down a bit, we add in our nut-free basil pesto—we want to make sure it gets that vibrant green color—like blooming trees. Then we fold in more shredded mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses to make sure it's sticky and the balls hold together. If you wanted to add other fillings, like Bolognese or ground meat and peas, you could add this now, **BUT YOU NEED A LOT OF CHEESE.**"

Sitek sources the arborio rice, mozzarella, Parmesan and Alta Cucina tomatoes from US Foods!

# SHOP THE SHOOT

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD  
MOX6 AND ORDER!



# THREE:



## 3 SHAPE, BREAD, FRY AND SERVE!

"WE SHAPE OUR ARANCINI in about ounce-and-a-half portions—ours are smaller in size, so we serve seven in a portion. Then we use a classic, three-step breading process: flour, egg wash and a panko-Italian breadcrumb mix before frying until golden and crisp. We serve our arancini with a simple roasted tomato and garlic sauce."



HOW'S YOUR AURA LATELY?

# VIBE CHECK

WE INTERVIEWED US FOODS CUSTOMER  
TAYLOR CHRISTENSON  
ABOUT WORKING WITH  
YOUNGER EMPLOYEES

Taylor is the owner and  
operator of Kitchen Eighty-Eight  
in American Fork, Utah

## WHAT DO YOUNGER TEAM MEMBERS VALUE MOST?

"We recognize that younger employees value meaning, flexibility and real feedback. We're intentional about offering purpose, not just a paycheck—even though we do pay well."

## WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC STRATEGIES YOU USE?

"We hold frequent open forum sessions: These are regular team huddles and monthly 'idea circles' where all levels can pitch changes and ask questions."

At Kitchen Eighty-Eight in American Fork, Utah, owner Taylor Christensen isn't just running a restaurant—he's building a people-first culture where team members, most of them in their 20s, feel respected, supported and genuinely proud of their work.

## WHAT'S YOUR TRAINING STRUCTURE?

"Our team has some redundancy—we have 10 shift leaders even though we only have two shifts daily. We can't get to every crew member all the time, so we support them through these leaders."

## WHAT DOES GROWTH LOOK LIKE?

"We believe in quick feedback loops: We don't wait for annual reviews—we give real-time coaching and recognition using our communication platforms."

## HOW DO YOU EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES?

"We believe in ownership through delegation—we give team members ownership over certain parts of the operation based on their interests. For example, we let anyone participate in creating our social media content."



READ THE  
FULL STORY  
BY SCANNING!!



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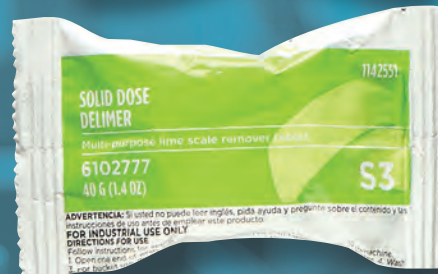
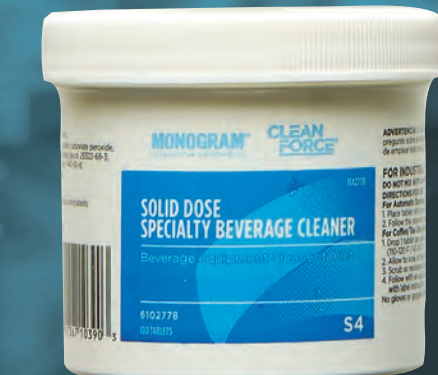


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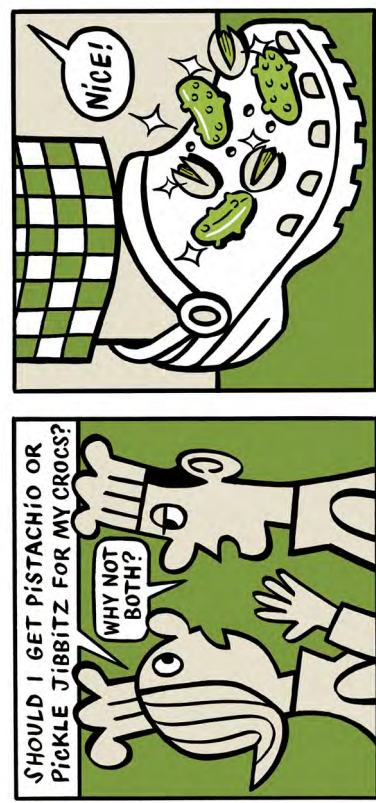
# THE FUNNY PAGES

THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?  
SUBMIT COMIC IDEAS  
TO @US\_FOODS AND  
TAG #USFOODSCOMICS

## CHEF INFLUENCER



Baked A-What-a? Read more on page 17



Read some actual social media tips on page 24

What's the dill with pickles? (and pistachios?) Find out on page 14



# BACKBURNER

FIVE Q'S 'CAUSE NO ONE'S GOT TIME FOR MORE

NOVEMBER 2025

## JOSHUA HEDQUIST

OWNER + CHEF @ OGZAZA, ST. PAUL, MINN.

### 1. WHAT'S YOUR LOVE/ HATE INGREDIENT?

"Flour. It's a pain in the butt to work with because it's so inconsistent. People don't realize a bag of flour is like a sponge. If it's humid out, it will be moist, if it's dry out, it will be dry and all that will change your dough recipe. It also gets everywhere—even after a shower, I'll still have flour in my nose but it also makes the best f\$@king thing in the world, which is pizza."

### 2. BEST R&D ADVICE?

"Food is more than flavor; it's also about texture. When you put something in your mouth and there's no texture, it's boring and missing something. Our Big Dilly pizza does so well I think because of the crispiness of our homemade pickles."

### 3. HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR STAFF HAPPY?

"Pay them a lot of f\$@king money. We have tip prompts on our kiosks and a decent amount of people tip. We've implemented tip sharing through our POS system so our cooks get tips during the hours they work."

### 4. WHAT ARE YOU DOING WHEN YOU'RE NOT ON THE CLOCK?

"I can't answer that."



### 5. GO-TO TOOL. WHAT AND WHY?

**"MAYBE MY MANDOLIN.  
WE CALL IT KNUCKLES**

**'CAUSE** if you're not careful, it will take your finger off and leave you with nothing but knuckles. We use it for making pickles, slicing garlic and making other ingredients uniform. It's also fun to have an element of danger in the kitchen."

**WANNA BE NEXT?**

HIT US UP ON SOCIAL AND  
TAG #USFOODSBACKBURNER  
@US\_FOODS

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF OGZAZA

