

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



WANTS

STUFFY IS OUT

AND HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

READ MORE

IN IS IN
RETRO



PLUS

TEAM HAPPINESS TIPS + ROAD TRIP: LOUISVILLE

SHAREABLES:

SERVE

ONE FOR YOU ONE FOR ME

III. FOCUS ON THE WOW FACTOR IV. SERVE STREET FOOD WITH A STORY

JU MP TO IT

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KITCHEN EIGHTY-EIGHT. SEE PAGE 36

Food Fanatics®

PUBLISHING
PARTNER:
THE SPECIALISTS

STORIES
Amelia Levin

ART DIRECTION
Katie Kalupson

LEADERSHIP
Dan Consiglio
Scott Rasmussen

SOCIALS
Jessica Braun

ACCOUNT
Anne Czowiecki

US FOODS
ADVISORY BOARD

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dave Flitman

EVP, FIELD
OPERATIONS

Randy Taylor

SVP, CHIEF
MARKETING OFFICER

Diane Hund

VP, CREATIVE

Jovo Balach

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Ed Petruczenko

SR. MANAGER,
MARKETING
CONTENT AND
DEPLOYMENT

Laura Kron

CONTRIBUTING
ARTISTS

ILLUSTRATION

Hunter French

Mario Zucca

Annelise

Capossela

PHOTO

Scott Semler

Victoria Holt

FEEDBACK

We welcome your comments:
foodfanatics@usfoods.com

CONTACT FOOD FANATICS®:

Holly.Connor@usfoods.com,
Digital Content Marketing Manager

CONTACT THE SPECIALISTS AT

DanConsiglio@beaspécialist.com

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

For rates and a media kit,
contact Holly Connor 1-847-232-5955
or email Holly.Connor@usfoods.com

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

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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

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.

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FOOD FANATICS

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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 #USFOODSCHALLENGE

Thank You!

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TERMSOFSUE

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HOT PLATES

FF1125

HOT PLATES

BUZZWORTHY BITES BLOWING UP MENUS



SHAREABLES ARE
HOT!!

THE MORE THE MERIER:
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.



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

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY THE SPECIALISTS

FOODFANATICS.COM 97

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

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

"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:



GROWING UPWARD

9.7%

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

PIZZA A LA INDIA

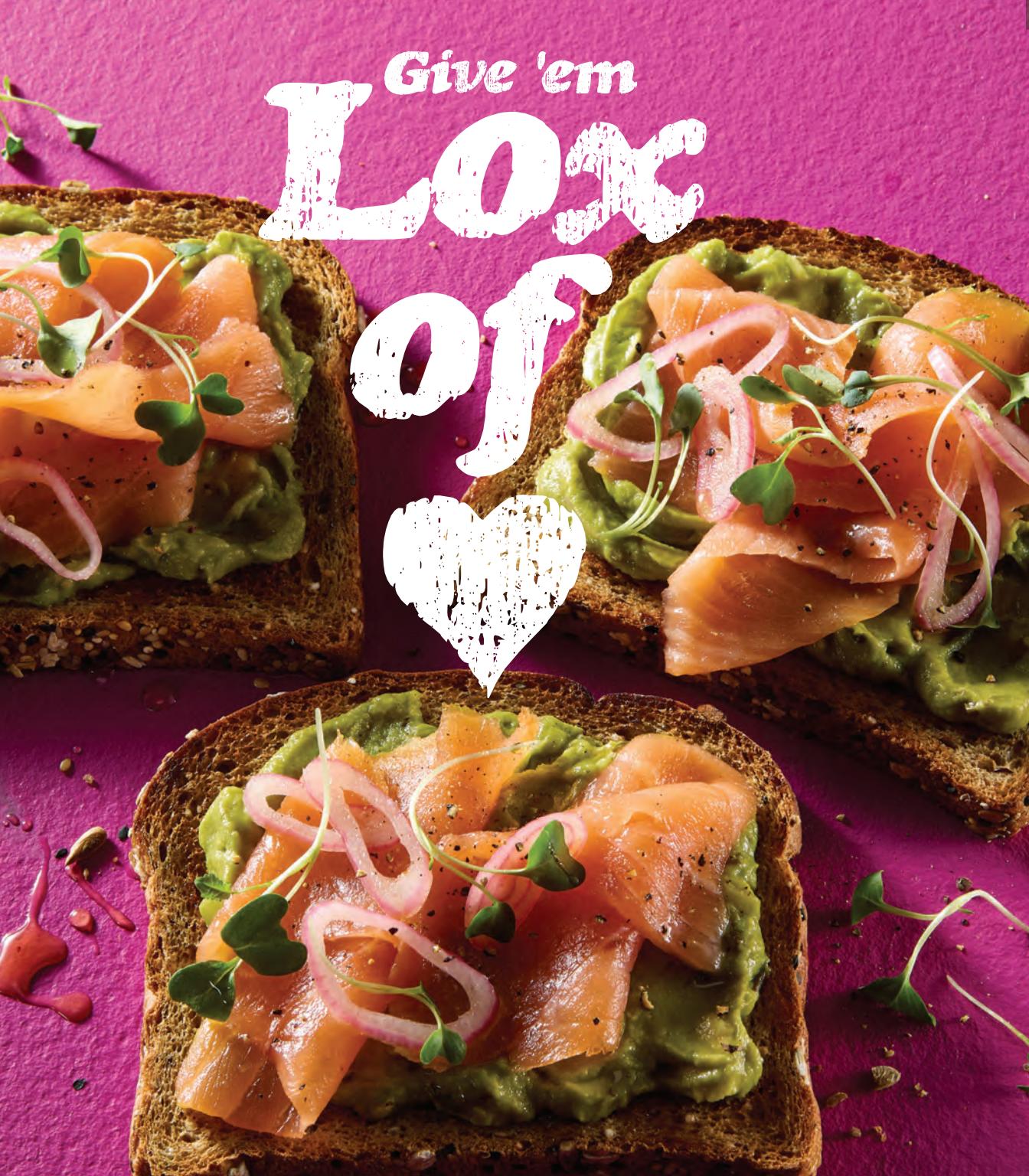
As Indian flavors continue to permeate menus nationwide, **MAZALA PIZZA**'s bringing them to the masses with Indian-influenced pies, sliders and wings. An emerging chain with five locations, Mazala's pizzas include butter masala, tikka, samosa smash, palak (spinach) and firecracker with jalapenos (pictured).



FULL
STORY
HERE



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of

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HOT PLATES

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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



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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.



PRODUCT #: 1072665: Battered Whole Mushrooms

1031583: Breaded Cream Cheese Stuffed Jalapeño Poppers

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BRAND

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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

PICKLES & PISTACHIOS

COOK, LET'S TRY IT!



SCAN TO
LEARN MORE

Our Voices



JENNIFER
STEAKLEY
US FOODS
FOOD FANATICS®
CHEF



TYLER
HERALD
US FOODS
FOOD FANATICS®
CHEF

"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

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 katiaffi. 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.



Seeing Green On the Menu

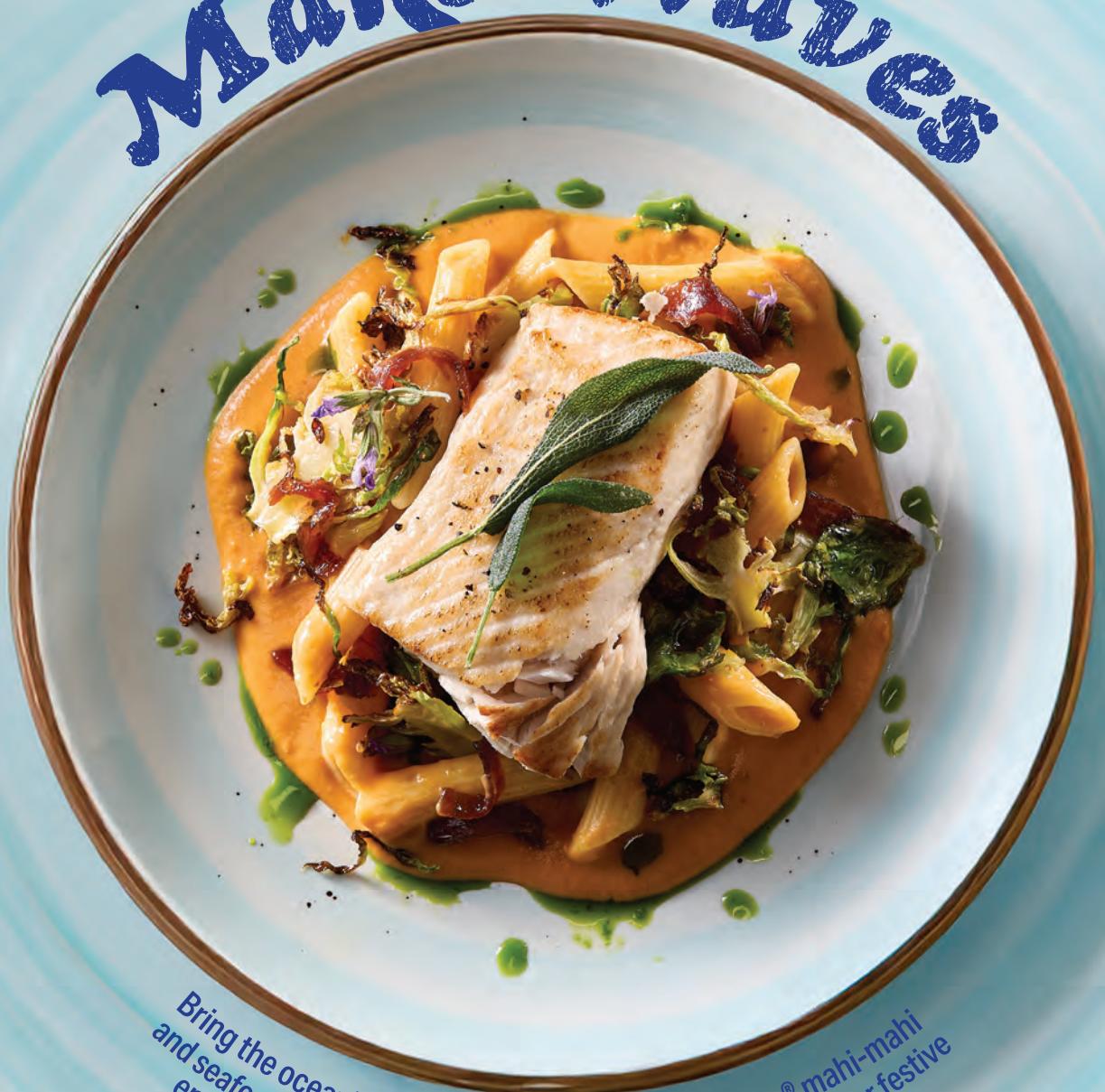


DUBAI CHOCOLATE BIG DILLY PIZZA
DUBAI TO JANKEEN, OGAZZA, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. (MULTIPLE LOCATIONS)

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

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HOT PLATES

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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.



PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION: THE SPECIALISTS; DESSERT PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRULUCK'S

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](http://volare_italian_restaurant)

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](http://thehouseofmarigoldky)

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**
[@delfriscoslouisville](http://delfriscoslouisville)

4 **THE 12 OZ.
WAGYU PICANA
AT STEAKHOUSE
BOURRÉ BONNE**
[@hotelbourrebonne](http://hotelbourrebonne)

5 **THE CRAWFISH
BAYOU DIP AT
LOU LOU
ON MARKET**
[@loulouonmarket](http://loulouonmarket)

6 **THE 80/20
BURGER AT
80/20 @ KAEILIN'S**
[@8020Kaelins](http://8020kaelins)

7 **THE SMOKED
BRISKET EGG ROLLS
AT HAUCK'S CORNER**
[@hauckscorner](http://hauckscorner)

8 **THE DEVILED
EGGS AT CASK
SOUTHERN
KITCHEN & BAR**
[@cask_louisville](http://cask_louisville)

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ABOUT 'EM ALL!

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OR SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE



BY AMELIA LEVIN

THE YOUNG GENERATION

WHY SURPRISE, DELIGHT AND A DASH OF HOSPITALITY ARE

→ THE KEYS TO THE NEXT DINER'S HEART—AND DOLLARS.

→ 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.

CShe 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.



images courtesy of Bûcheron

"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

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



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

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\$ 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%."

2. MAKE FINE DINING MORE CASUAL

GOOD SERVICE DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN STIFF.

"It started with the bistro 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 WALCHEF,
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%" 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

image courtesy of Elm Street Diner

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

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

John Moshos
owner of Elm Street Diner



Winter Sausage Ragout



Spring Vegetable Carbonara



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Fall Classic Mac and Cheese



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PROFESSIONALS

THE BIG STORY



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

image courtesy of Janken

74%
of Gen Zers visit restaurants at least once per week
—TECHNOMIC



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



PARBAKED AND FLATBREAD PIZZA CRUSTS



BONICI® parbaked crusts and flatbreads are the perfect canvas for your crustable creation, offering a freezer-to-oven, labor-saving solution that delivers a crispy, consistent bite.

Scan here to view the full pizza portfolio



"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 Bücheron

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.

5. REVISIT YOUR BAR BUSINESS

OFFER LOW AND NO-ALCOHOL OPTIONS.

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

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."

Bücheron offers a Pentire

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



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 syrups, 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

"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](#)

image courtesy of Bücheron



GEAR CHECK!

The latest stuff. Because we love stuff.



WITH US FOODS TERRITORY MANAGER
EUGENE PHILBIN

THIS ISSUE, WE'VE GOT:

HIGH-TECH TOYS



BLUETOOTH MEAT PROBES

Track internal temperatures in real time from your phone for perfect roasts, smoked meats and more.



BLUETOOTH IMMERSION CIRCULATORS

Enable sous vide cooking with pinpoint accuracy by controlling water temperature and cook times from your phone.



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.

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.”



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: DATASENTIAL, 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.

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."



READ THE FULL STORY HERE

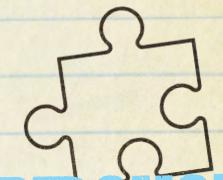
(AND GET THE MENU PROFIT PRO™ LINK!)



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THE PUZZLES AKA HIGH PROFITABILITY + LOW SALES



RESET
THE PLOW HORSES AKA LOW PROFITABILITY + HIGH SALES



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THE STARS AKA HIGH SALES + HIGH PROFITABILITY

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BRAND

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!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTORIA HOLT FOR FOOD FANATICS®

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.**"

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."

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

SHOP THE SHOOT

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD
MOXE AND ORDER!



HOW'S YOUR AURA LATELY?

VIBE CHECK

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

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.

READ THE
FULL STORY
BY SCANNING!!



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."

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

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."

BUNS OF GLORY



Serve up crave-worthy classics with Hilltop Hearth® Mini Hamburger Slider Buns—the secret ingredient to making your bar bites legendary. Perfect for piling high with all the fixings and keeping every bite together, these buns are built for back-to-back happy hours and late-night cravings.

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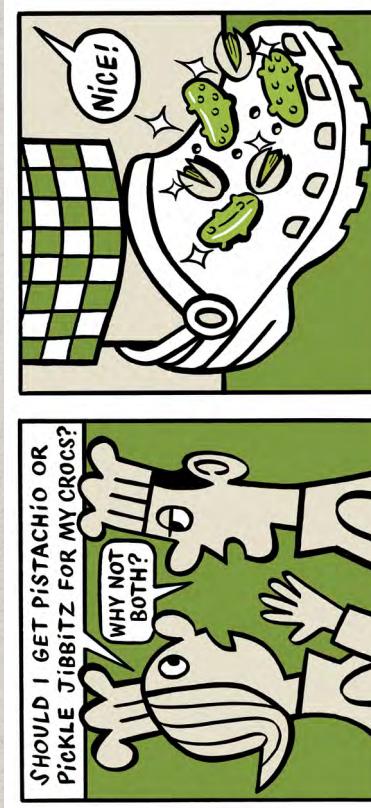
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FOOD FANATICS

THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?
SUBMIT COMIC IDEAS
TO @US_FOODS AND
TAG #USFOODSCOMICS

THE FUNNY PAGES



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

Read some actual social media tips on page 24

FF1125

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?

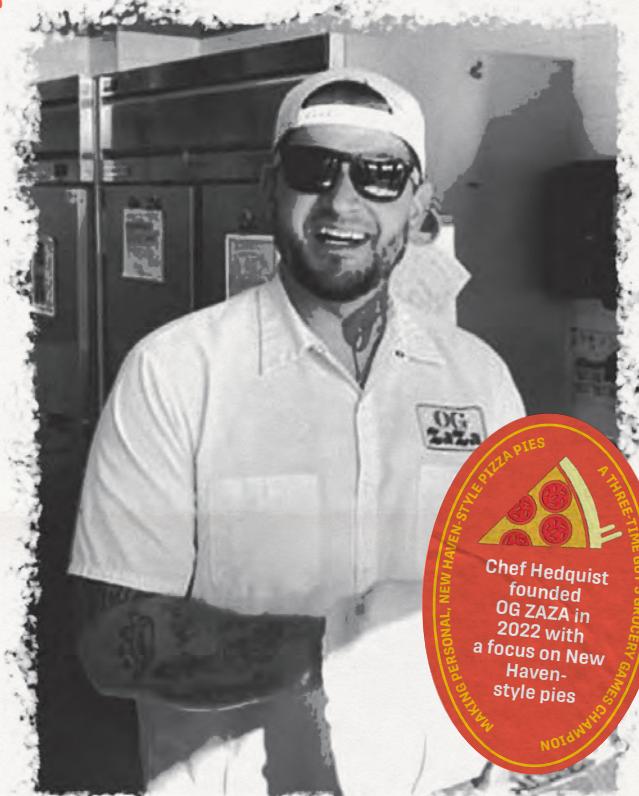
"Food is more than flavor; it's also about texture. When you put something in your mouth and there's no texture, it's boring and missing something. Our Big Dilly pizza does so well I think because of the crispiness of our homemade pickles."

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