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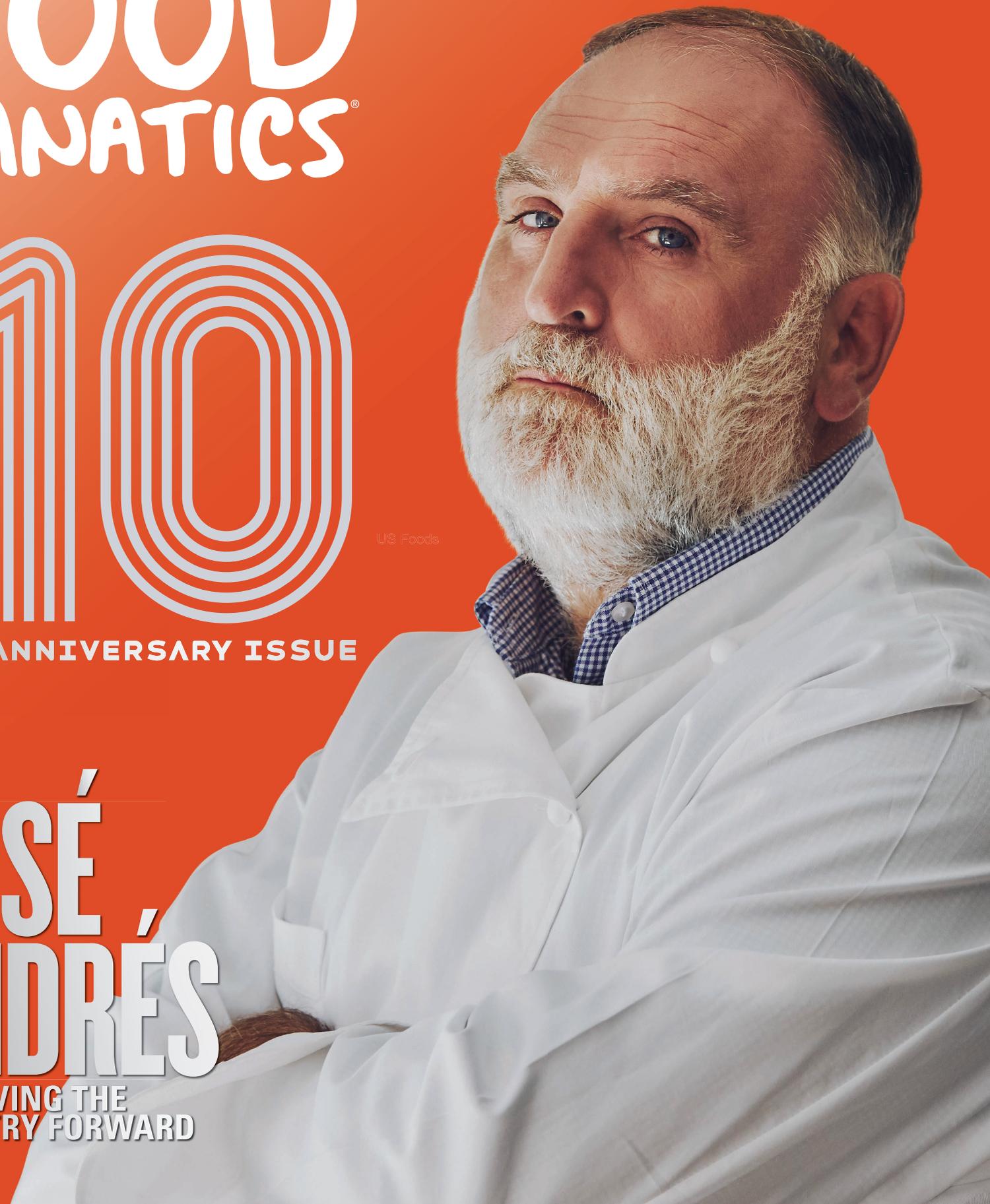
US Foods

YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

PLUS

JOSÉ / ANDRÉS

ON MOVING THE
INDUSTRY FORWARD





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FOOD FANATICS

FALL 2022 / 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Sharing the Love of Food—Inspiring Business Success



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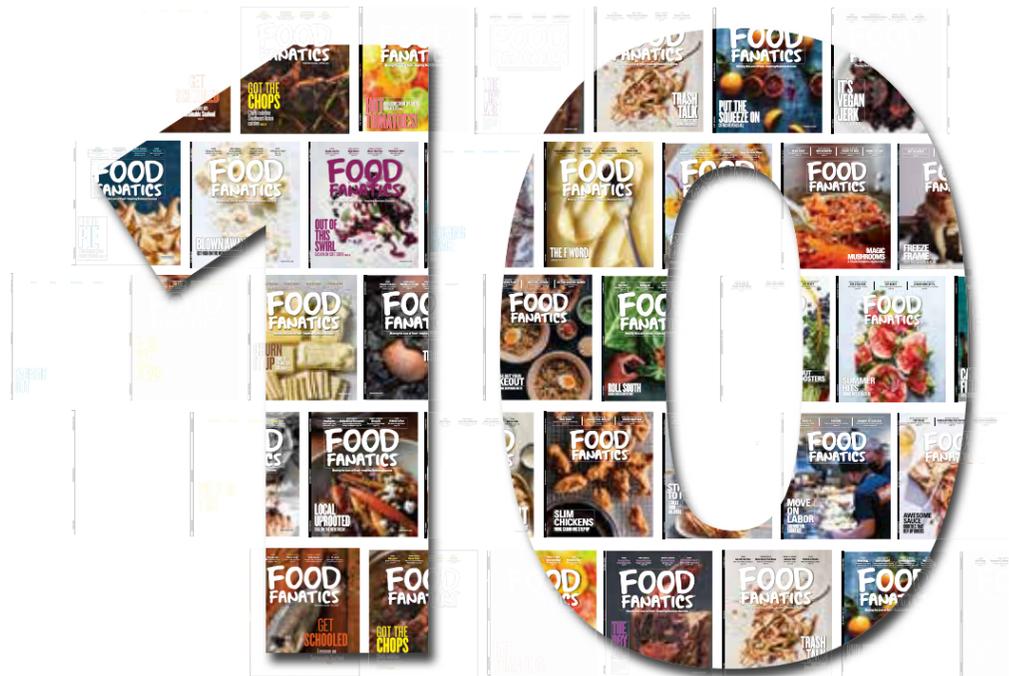
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CELEBRATING



YEARS OF FOOD FANATICS® MAGAZINE

Welcome to the fall edition of Food Fanatics® magazine and our 10th anniversary issue!

Greetings! While I am new to the role of leading the marketing team that publishes this great magazine, I am not new to US Foods®. I've been here for 27 years, currently in the role of Executive Vice President of Field Operations. I am loving this interim opportunity to work more closely with the merchandising and marketing teams and excited to have a first-row seat for the creation of our industry-leading food trends magazine.

I am equally excited that we are rolling out our 10th anniversary edition of Food Fanatics magazine! This gave us a unique opportunity to look back over the past decade. So much has changed during this time, yet there have been key themes that consistently top the list, such as our focus on sustainability, our love for comfort foods or simply our quest to taste great cuisine from every corner of the world.

In this issue, we wanted to look back while keeping an eye to the future. We talked with someone who does that every day – Chef Jose Andres. Read about his approach to staying relevant and on-trend – particularly his dedication to helping feed those in need during difficult times.

I couldn't be more proud of Food Fanatics – from our US Foods Chefs that go by this same moniker, to the amazing advice, direction and recipes we have published in this magazine over the past 10 years. We continue to lead the industry with our approach to identifying and sharing food trends and food products that help our operators make it. If I had to pick a couple of my favorite stories from this edition, I would point you to our story on how classics continue to perform well in the restaurant industry, as well as a helpful article about how looking back can help restaurants plan for success today.

Enjoy this special issue of Food Fanatics magazine, and join us in celebrating 10 years of sharing the love of food and inspiring business success.

Thanks for reading,

Jay Kvasnicka
Executive Vice President, Field Operations
US Foods®



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JOSE ANDRES

Reflections
from the
past propel
the future

By Monica Eng

Where's chef?
On the front lines
feeding people
wherever there's
a crisis.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN





José Andrés on the ground in Mozambique, far left, and in California with World Central Kitchen.

Andrés feeding the community displaced by California wildfires.



“THAT TELLS ME THAT WHEN WE UNITE, THE FOOD COMMUNITY CAN BE A BIG FORCE OF CHANGE”

—Chef José Andrés

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN



→ **No other individual** in food has accomplished more than José Andrés over the past decade. But it didn't start out that way.

He was fired from El Bulli in 1990 for showing up late to an appointment with then-boss Ferran Adria. To this day, Andrés insists he was on time.

It was a low point in his life that he now sees as a lucky moment because it pushed him to move to the U.S. and start again.

By 1993, Andrés became part of the team that opened Jaleo in Washington, D.C. Now, nearly 30 years later his ThinkFoodGroup runs 30 restaurants across the U.S. But perhaps more notably, in 2010 Andrés founded World Central Kitchen (WCK), a nonprofit that feeds people around the world in the wake of emergencies. The organization has set up relief operations across the U.S. and in more than a dozen countries, including Ukraine where WCK was one of the first organizations on the ground this year. Wherever Andrés lands, droves of chefs

volunteer to help. Many host fundraisers, donating proceeds to WCK. Supporters include Jeff Bezos, who contributed \$100 million in naming him a recipient of his new Courage and Civility Award.

Earlier this year, Andrés convinced the White House to host its first food summit in more than 50 years. The event will take place this fall; topics on the table could affect all parts of the food industry.

With so much on his proverbial plate, how does the chef balance being a dad, husband and leader of a huge restaurant group while trying to save the world?

We recently sat down with him at his Jaleo restaurant in Chicago before he hosted a special dining experience for customers of Capital One bank. The following is an edited transcript of the chat, covering a variety of topics, from industry issues and technology to finding common ground on today's most challenging food issues.

ME: You've spent much of this year so far working to feed displaced people from Ukraine. What's the best way for food industry folks to help?

JA: Raising money at the end is the key. Sometimes the situation and the conditions are hard. We had some chefs who came to our main kitchen just outside Ukraine and that was great. (But we also) have 500 restaurants in Ukraine that we support financially, so any dollar that anyone can give helps, but I know the industry here has gone through a very hard time, so I'm not expecting anything.

ME: You're chairing the first White House Food Summit since 1969, which produced groundbreaking advances in school food and feeding programs like SNAP. What topics are on the table this time?

JA: School lunches, food deserts and food insecurity, too. My perfect idea is to have a true food advisor to the president, who is not out of the USDA or FDA. They'd be an advisor the same way you have national security advisors or defense advisors or a national science advisory board.

ME: What do you think of new food technologies like CRISPR that aim to do things like take bitterness out of mustard greens so more people will eat them?

JA: I think the world is a better place today because over the last hundreds and thousands of years, somebody always tried to push for something else. More of these things, I think, are not bad. But only the really good ideas will survive. I myself am supporting or investing in the growth of fish cells to produce salmon (and) the growth of meat cells to produce meat. But I'm not against eating salmon or meat. It just goes with my line of diversifying resources.

ME: Do you see Americans changing their diets to try to help the planet? Do you think that's a growth area?

JA: I think it's complicated. In the end, people want to enjoy life today and that's been true for a long time. People keep doing very dumb things, smoking and drinking even though it's proven that you shouldn't be drinking or smoking too much. So if we don't really care what we are doing to our own bodies and to our own health, I have a hard time believing that humanity will care about anybody else. But I'm hopeful that America will care. We have to.

ME: You've faced a lot of bleak situations and pushed through. How do you keep your hope and motivation?

JA: We do it because we have to. I mean, what are you going to do? I missed the birthday of my daughters. I missed a lot of things (over) the last 100 days because I was coming and going to Ukraine. The last three years, I've been in Lebanon and in fires in volcanoes.

Sometimes you wonder to yourself, "why am I doing this?" But then you hear the inner voice say, "I do it because I believe it is the right thing to do," because my daughters are seeing an example in me of trying to fix things with action not just with words. And because my wife encourages me to do it. I do it because it's the only way you can inspire people to join and use their talents to help others.

But mainly you do it because there may be people whose day began very dark and when they see you,

JOSÉ ANDRÉS BY THE YEARS



1969 Born in Asturias, Spain

1990 Fired after two years from El Bulli in Catalonia, Spain

1991 Andrés arrives in the U.S.

1993 With partners, opens Jaleo in Washington, D.C.

2003 Wins James Beard Award for Best Chef Mid-Atlantic

2010 Launches World Central Kitchen

2012 Named Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People

2015 Awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama

2018 Wins James Beard Award for Humanitarian of the Year

2022 Sets up WCK in and around Ukraine where teams serve about 1 million meals a day

2022 Stars in Ron Howard's documentary, "We Feed People," and launches first podcast, "Longer Tables"

2022 Chairs the White House Summit on Hunger



they smile because all of a sudden, you're giving them a little glimpse of hope. That's probably the main reason.

ME: So you have this partnership with Capital One bank where you are curating dining experiences at U.S. restaurants for its members. How did that come about?

JA: If this is something where I'm helping restaurants to move away from these COVID-19 times and start celebrating our cities, then it's great. And even if it's only the restaurants that are part of the programs in different cities with Capital One across America it sends the message of "come on guys let's get out of the house." I support anything making our streets full again, making our streets vibrant again and making the restaurants alive with people and celebration.

ME: What are the biggest lessons you took out of the pandemic on how to make restaurants work?

JA: We need to value close family and friends and the people next to you. It came at a good moment for me because (my daughters are) all going to university and it was a way to bond with them more. It also taught me to value the people I work with, especially in the early days of the pandemic. From the moment they told me I had to close my restaurants, we put together a team of more than 3,000 restaurants in North America. We were the biggest restaurant company out there for a few months covering local needs in a lot of places. And that felt really good.

ME: You opened new restaurants in the last few years rather than shrinking. Any advice for other restaurateurs?

JA: I grew but I had to close some restaurants, too. For six or seven weeks, we kept all the staff at all the restaurants on the payroll and that depleted any money we had in the bank. That was a big decision. So the big learning and the growth is we have a lot of good loyal people that have been with us forever. They stuck with us and kept pushing.

But I think this pandemic has shown all of us to be more resilient. We saw so much creativity and bending the rules of alcohol and cocktails to-go, and the local government overall adapted to allow us to take over the streets (for outdoor dining).

ME: So many chefs hang onto your every word. Is that a lot of pressure to feel people are listening to you?

JA: I don't know if that's true. It doesn't feel that way to me.

ME: It's true.

JA: Then we need to bring it down to earth.

ME: You often say, 'We don't need higher walls, we need longer tables.' What does that mean?

JA: That you cannot be the holder of all the truth. Other people have opinions and you need to find common ground. You also need to know where your limits are



and what you are willing to accept. At the White House summit, we're gonna have a lot of issues. Will the food industry be able to feed itself? Will the farmers of America be able to feed themselves? The issue of the minimum wage for the restaurant industry. It's complicated. Should everybody make a minimum wage that is also a living wage? Yes, totally. Now, how do we make it happen in a way that makes

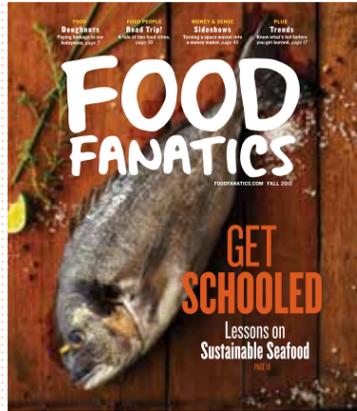
sense and is good for everybody and does not just increase wages for people in the front of the house while wages for the kitchen stay low? That's something we have to solve because that creates an even bigger gap inside the restaurant. I'm not in favor of that.

So we need to be informed, learning and listening. Longer tables. Bring everybody in. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REDUX

THEN 2012



SUSTAINABILITY'S RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL SEAFOOD

Efforts to protect the world's waterways are succeeding, but other threats remain

A decade ago, a groundswell of restaurateurs, chefs, suppliers and seafood advocates set a course to reverse the dire state of the seafood industry. Overfishing that led to endangered species, inadequate global regulation and weak sustainability efforts put the industry on a disastrous path.

Today, U.S. seafood stocks are healthier than ever and global sustainability has made significant inroads. Sustainable seafood, from seasonal catches to farm-raised options, are commonplace. Aquaculture practices have improved substantially and grown dramatically.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ | FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON | PROP STYLING BY STEPHANIE HANES



NOW

HOOKED ON SUSTAINABILITY

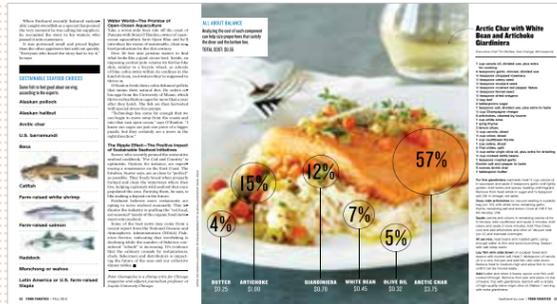
The wave continues

By Kristin Eddy



FOR A MOMENT

As the fishing industry fights to save endangered species, restaurants are doing their part with responsible sourcing and sustainable seafood programs.



Restaurant suppliers have also established programs to ensure traceability and responsible sourcing, guided by organizations such as the Marine Stewardship Council that certifies sustainable fisheries.

However, there's no rest for the weary. Bycatch—unintended catch from trolling fish—is still a mammoth challenge and climate change both threaten the health of the oceans.

"It is essential that we act now to safeguard the ocean's biodiversity and food supplies," said Rupert Howes, chief executive of MSC. "Consumers and markets are a powerful force for change."



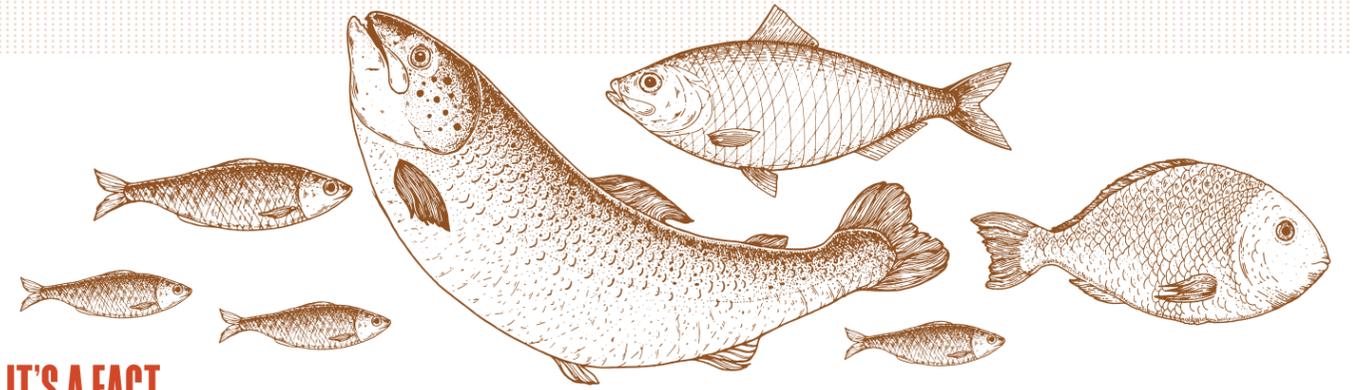
NOW

→ **Fresh and wild** once described the hallmark of the best possible seafood. But that was before the evolution of farm-raised practices and sustainability advancements that improved both.

Improvements and certification for standards, which have come with the growth of aquaculture over the last decade, have steadily chipped away at the stigma that farm-raised seafood can't stand up to its wild cousins. Look no further than farm-raised branzino, which regularly appears now on chef-driven menus, usually whole, fried or grilled.

"They are sustainable sources but also sustainable food costs," says chef Chris Robertson, who moved to Portland, Oregon's Southpark Seafood restaurant seven years ago after a career with New York-based Union Square Hospitality.

"Farm-raised products are more consistent and don't rely on the weather and the catch," Robertson says. "The supply and prices don't fluctuate that much."



IT'S A FACT

U.S. fisheries held steady with more than **90%** of stocks not subject to overfishing, and **80%** with population sizes sufficient to be considered not over-fished. Stocks on the overfishing list held steady at **26** while over-fished stocks slightly increased to **51**, up from **49**, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVA KOLENKO. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING AMY PALIWODA

Robertson wasn't always a fan of "land" fish—aquaculture that thrives offshore. But he discovered that farm-raised can be an excellent product when it comes from the right source.

He brings in trout from San Francisco retailer TwoXSea, which farms in the Sierra Nevada mountains, and king salmon from Creative Salmon in Tofino, British Columbia, a Canada-certified producer of Pacific Chinook salmon.

With high-end products finding appreciation in his restaurant's kitchen, education is the next item on the menu.

"You can't judge based on how it serves the restaurant's interests," he says. "It's deeper than that. Wild and farmed both are good—and both can be bad," he says. "But it can be hard to communicate that to the public who believe wild is always best."

It's important, Robertson says, to keep preparation simple. If the recipe is so ingredient-packed that it overwhelms the flavor of the fish, does it matter whether it's wild or farmed? Robertson says their preparations generally stick to grilled or broiled with seasonal produce around it. Then it's up to the waitstaff to point out the beauty of the product. ■



Consumers who say people should eat seafood from sustainable sources, up from **65%** two years ago

—Marine Seafood Council global study of 25,000 respondents

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THEN
2013



FUSION'S REVOLUTION

Connected by geography and common ingredients, Asian cuisine has influenced and dominated menus like no other.

Chinese introduced Americans to the flavors, but Japanese and Korean have had greater influence, helping their Thai, Vietnamese and Filipino neighbors make inroads.



Leveling up Chinese cuisine at Eight Tables features Osmanthus Smoked Squab with morel and garlic chive sticky rice steamed in lotus leaves.

NOW

FUSION'S NEXT EVOLUTION

Chinese cuisine reconnects with its roots

By Amber Gibson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH WEAVER



Cuisines from each of these countries are represented in just about every segment, from fast casual to fine dining, sometimes fused but always connected by common ingredients. Certain dishes have evolved into concepts of their own and have found their way onto non-Asian menus. Within the last 10 years:

- JAPANESE**
 Ramen shops
 Izakayas
 Sushi burritos
 Sushi
 Bento boxes
 Omakase

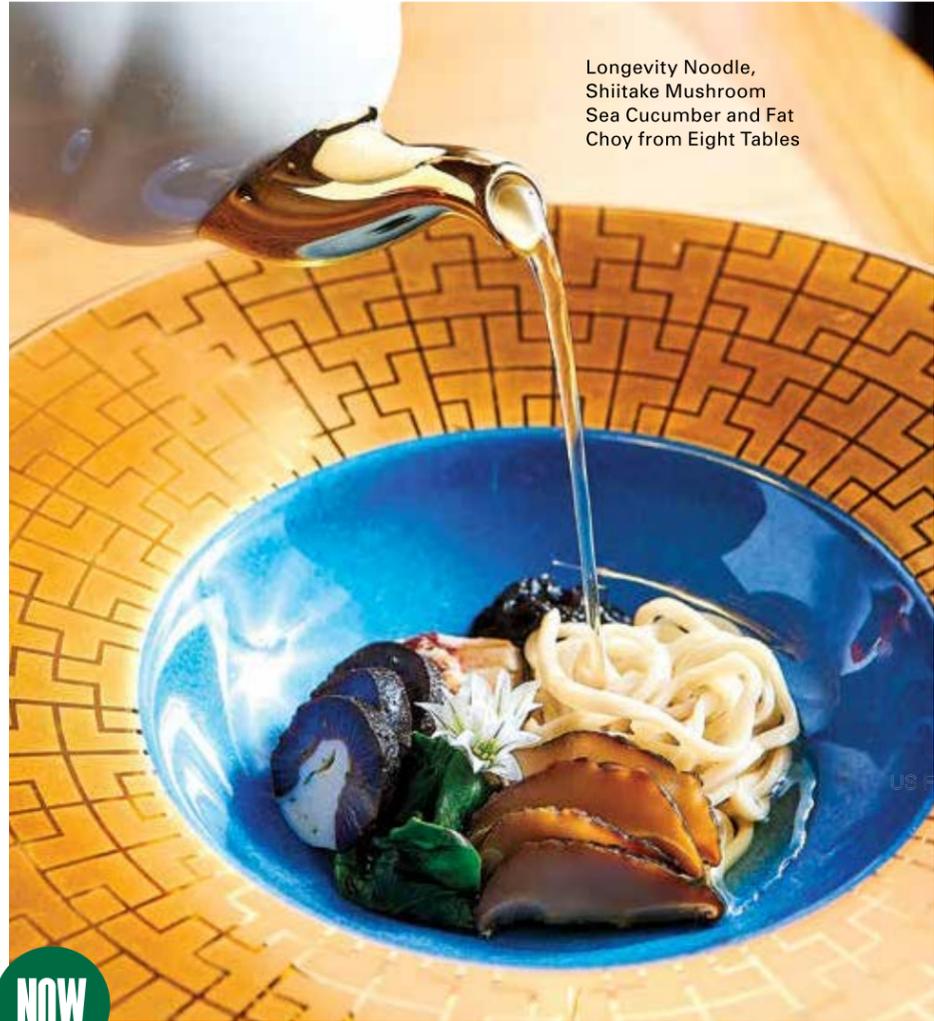
- FILIPINO**
 Adobo
 Ube
 Calamansi
 Pancit

- THAI**
 Curries
 Pad Thai
 Satay
 Street food

- KOREAN**
 Banchan
 Barbecue
 Fried chicken
 Gochujang
 Steakhouse

- VIETNAMESE**
 Bahn mi
 Next level herbs
 Summer rolls
 Pho

- CHINESE**
 Dim sum
 Dumplings
 Stir-fry bowls



NOW

► **One could argue that** Chinese cuisine launched fusion, paving the way for Japanese, Korean and other Asian concepts while American chefs wove their common ingredients into their menus.

Chinese, however, hasn't evolved like its Asian neighbors. While it was this country's first taste of Asian food, the immigrants from southern China had altered its Cantonese food so greatly to suit American palates that it became recognizable only to non-Asians. Inexpensive takeout along with mom and pop hole-in-the-walls lacking service and decor had become so entrenched that attempts to elevate and modernize have largely failed, minus the success of Mister Jiu's, Brandon Jew's San Francisco restaurant that opened in 2016.

But now a new generation of chefs are embracing the food of their Chinese upbringing and creating restaurants that are garnering headlines and becoming world-class dining destinations, such as Kato in Los Angeles and Eight Tables in San Francisco.

"The West seldom understands refined Chinese cuisine and it's long and cultured history dating back more than a thousand years," says George Chen,



"CHINESE FOOD IS GENERALLY RELEGATED TO THE IDEA THAT IT'S FAMILY STYLE AND SIMPLE, CHEAP AND NOT VERY HEALTHY FOOD. MY MISSION IN LIFE IS TO DEMYSTIFY, EDUCATE AND CHANGE THESE AWFUL GENERAL PERCEPTIONS."

—George Chen, owner of Eight Tables and China Live

owner of Eight Tables and China Live in San Francisco. "Chinese food is generally relegated to the idea that it's family style and simple, cheap and not very healthy food. My mission in life is to demystify, educate and change these awful general perceptions."

Chef de cuisine Floyd Nunn is leading the kitchen with Chen's supervision and his own creative fusion, like adding ground foie gras with shrimp and pork for xiao long bao soup dumplings. Porcini mushroom dan dan is another favorite, enriching delicate egg custard with local porcini mushrooms and slices of abalone and chicken, then finishing the dish tableside with a clear chicken broth poured over the top.



A spin on the mochi pancake turned mini pumpkin bites filled with red bean paste. Scan for the recipe.



In New York, Blue Willow, which opened last year, is modernizing the regional cuisine of Hunan. The restaurant merges European and Chinese styles with interiors of antique wood carvings, hanging lamps and artworks of serene lake landscapes.

"It's important to keep the flavors very traditional and authentic, but we are modernizing the approach to traditional Chinese food in New York City with regards to interior design, menu design, branding, customer service, food plating and marketing strategies," says owner Vincent Lin.

Chefs like Ryan Wong, who opened Needle in 2019 in the Los Angeles area, and Calvin Eng, a 2022 James Beard



109%

Projected growth of furikake on non-Asian menus over the next four years

—Datassential

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH WEAVER

PUMPKIN BITES PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA. HEADSHOT COURTESY OF EIGHT TABLES



A whole fish, top, deboned, stuffed with sticky rice, seasoned with housemade fish sauce and shrimp paste and basted with hot oil is served at Bonnie's. Small bites representing "Nine Essential Flavors," are served at Eight Tables.

emerging chef nominee who opened Bonnie's last year in Brooklyn, New York, are cooking food of their Cantonese upbringing influenced by their classical training. At Bonnie's, whole deboned rainbow trout is flavored with his housemade fish sauce and shrimp paste and basted in hot oil. Wong offers a rendition of spicy salt chicken wings with onion, peppers and pork collar steak with black pepper sauce, zucchini and eggplant.

"The menu doesn't necessarily have to change to something that targets specifically Asian or non-Asian, but the options must be there to fit the palates of both Westerners and Chinese customers," Lin says. ■



IT'S A FACT

Sophisticated imperial dining in China existed during the Song Dynasty—800 years before Escoffier. This inspired George Chen to create *Eight Tables*, based on the sequential coursing, techniques and ingredients popular during that time.

Porcini Dun Dan

*Chef de cuisine Floyd Nunn
Eight Tables, San Francisco*

700 grams porcini stock, recipe follows
300 grams Jidori egg
37 grams salt, divided use
2 grams xanthan gum
2 liters water
20 grams ginseng
1 scallion, chopped
10 grams ginger
1 boneless skinless, chicken breast
1 abalone, poached, recipe follows
1 porcini mushroom, thinly sliced
Medjool dates, as needed
Chicken soup, recipe follows

Blend porcini stock, eggs, 7 grams salt and xanthan gum in a blender on low speed for 2 minutes to make custard base; strain.

Bring water, remaining salt and aromatics to a simmer. Add chicken and poach at 158 F for 10 minutes. Do not simmer, remove from poaching liquid.

At service, cook 40 grams of custard base in a small bowl for 9 minutes on full steam. Layer garnishes—chicken, abalone, porcini and dates—onto the custard. Pour hot soup tableside over the custard to finish. Makes 4 servings with leftover custard and soup.

To make porcini stock: Combine 1,000 grams water, 300 grams porcini trim and 50 grams dried porcini in a saucepan. Bring to a simmer and steep 20 minutes. Strain and cool stock.

To make abalone: Shuck 1 abalone and remove liver and foot. Place into a sealable bag with 1 scallion, 10 grams sliced ginger and 10 grams salt and cook at 140 F for 30 minutes. Shock in water bath; slice.

To make chicken soup: Place 1 whole chicken into a pot with enough water to just cover and add 400 grams Jinhua ham or domestic cured unsmoked ham, 50 grams ginger, 40 grams scallion, 20 grams ginseng and 4 jujube dates. Simmer for 90 minutes. Do not boil; skim fat and discard solids.

TOP: PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM FRIEDLANDER. BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH WEAVER



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUARENA

A sublime and elegant Porcini Dun Dan; more soup can be served on the side.

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10013000535504	2008860	HEINZ Yellow Mustard	.2 oz	500
10013000531402	1052380	HEINZ Mayonnaise	12 g	500
10013000533604	4063616	HEINZ Malt Vinegar	9 g	200
10013000531808	9009218	HEINZ SWEET Relish	9 g	200
10013000533109	2267458	HEINZ Ranch Dressing	12 g	200
10013000531600	1009224	HEINZ Tartar Sauce	12 g	200

89%

of consumers agree that the **condiment brand** an operator offers **indicates** their **commitment to quality.**²

Datassential Inc. Kraft Heinz Independent Study - Consumer Condiment Claims, April 2020



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THEN 2014



A STEAK TO CLAIM Red meat is still a driver

America's relationship with beef seems complicated, given the yearly ebb and flow of consumption over the last decade along with the growth of vegetable-centered options and plant-based proteins. Don't forget the fact that beef isn't the healthiest option and cattle is killing the environment.

But the reality is diners still want beef, and restaurants are where they'll go to satisfy that craving, especially if they trade down to chicken at the grocery store because it's cheaper than steak as the USDA predicts.

Over the last decade, steak has evolved and so have diners. A la carte steakhouses of the early 2000s thrived but then gave way to the popularity of aging meat, the debate between wet and dry to maximize tenderness and flavor, and then the transition to prime and wood-fired steaks.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA



Various cuts of wagyu beef, brushed with wagyu fat, (above), and rosemary, offers different textural experiences at Holu in Chicago.

NOW

SMALL IS NOW BIG ENOUGH

Bites of luxe steak give beef-loving carnivores just the right amount of indulgence

By Amber Gibson



Celebrity chef chophouses, which made Las Vegas its epicenter, continue to grow and expand with José Andrés opening a Bazaar Meat in Chicago and Tyler Florence launching Miller & Lux in San Francisco, both last year.

Themed chophouses have also made their mark, specifically Italian, and in the last few years, Korean and Asian-themed.

All the while, many low- to mid-range steakhouses have shuttered as beef prices have steadily increased. Restaurants countered with lower-cost underutilized cuts but prime cuts still come at a cost.

The current trend of high-end meat tasting portions couldn't be better timed, considering what's top of mind in 2022 and the year to come: health consciousness, recession worries, \$50-plus for a steak entree and overall higher prices for consumer goods. A small taste of luxury can be large and incredibly satisfying.



NOW

» **After a decade of decadent steaks** where the focus has been go big or go home, today's diners still want the flavor but a different kind of indulgence. Carnivores can now command size and variety.

"Instead of committing to a 16-ounce porterhouse, you're getting seven different cuts from multiple animals, says Simon Kim, executive chef of Cote, New York City's first Korean steakhouse that opened in 2017. "It gives you so much more content and stimulation, and it's more of a journey. Whether you love it or don't like a bite as much, it's time to move on."

Cote's 10-course, \$185 steak omakase totals about 8 ounces of meat, including both wet- and dry-aged beef, American and Japanese wagyu and grand cru galbi. It also includes banchan—vegetable side dishes—so that diners get a sense of value but also don't feel like they've overindulged from the richness of the intensely marbled meat.

By the time Kim brought Michelin-starred Cote to Miami last year, the trend had spread across the country. His omakase-style steak option coincides with another trend in steak. Similar high-end beef offered by the bite (or two), is a hallmark of Bazaar Meat by José Andrés (in Chicago and Las Vegas) and RPM Steak in Chicago. The luxe meat is a draw but not the focus, which positions

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLIE TONG



TREND & TRACKER

THE ULTIMATE IN EVERYTHING

High-end meat isn't the only ingredient that can create cachet on menus.

LAST SEEN

Chef Joe Mosconi mixes Yakami Orchard yuzu juice—known as the king of citrus—for a tart and fragrant accent in truffle vinaigrette that accompanies scallops at Chicago's Venteux.

Chef Jeremy Fox calls his Ocean Mist Farms artichokes the wagyu of artichokes, grilling and serving them with a side of whipped feta at Birdie G's in Santa Monica, California.

Jordan Anderson, executive chef and co-owner of Sami & Susu in New York, says that especially exquisite squash blossoms from Norwich Farms are the highlight of his lamb-stuffed dish—not the meat.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLIE TONG



At Niku, diners can choose luxurious bites of meat, opposite page, or steak for the table that's shared and augmented with ample side dishes.

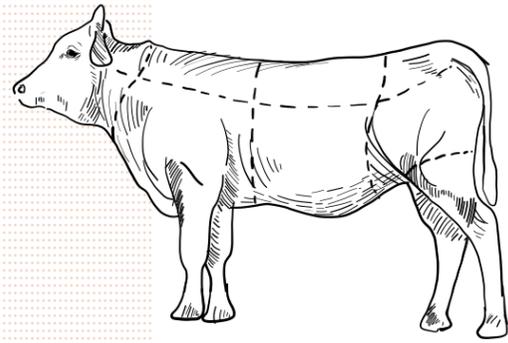
them as an add-on or a way to build side dishes around. It satisfies the carnivore in meat-indulging diners while not adding guilt for those trying to eat healthier or committed to reducing their carbon footprint.

Stake Chophouse & Bar in Coronado, California, offers a trio of tastings in 3-ounce portions of picanha, New York strip and Japanese A5 wagyu. Bazaar Meat offers a "Tasting through Japan" experience with five different breeds and cuts of wagyu meat from five different Japanese prefectures. Diners can choose from olive wagyu sirloin from Kagawa or sendai chuck roll from Miyagi, all available in 1-ounce portions prepared tableside on an ishiyaki stone.

"We wanted to respect this culinary treasure by keeping it as pure and traditional as we can," says Alex Pitts, executive chef at Bazaar Meat. "We use a really fantastic Shiro Yuasa soy sauce and brush it on with a Japanese horsehair brush. We recommend just 1 ounce per person—wagyu is, and should be, regarded as a very special treat." Pitts admits that their wagyu service is a loss leader, but they're committed to preserving this section of their menu to elevate the guest experience.

At Michelin-starred Niku in San Francisco, guests are presented with a board of raw A5 wagyu steaks before ordering, to illustrate the differences in marbling and flavor. Diners choose their steak knife from a box presented

2014



THERE'S MORE TO EATING BEEF THAN THE NUMBERS

0.34%

Projected decline in beef consumption in pounds per capita in 2022 (a similar modest decline is forecasted for 2023) because of lower livestock inventory. However, the decline shakes out to 10.3 pounds higher in consumption per capita than the 2012 to 2021 average, indicating that the growth in vegetable dishes, plant-based foods and climate change may have limited impact on consumer behavior toward beef.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture



The Butcher's Board at Cote offers a more varied and robust meat experience.

Crispy Potatoes with Wagyu Fat and Chickpea Miso

Chef Dustin Falcon
Niku, San Francisco

- 1 cup creme fraiche
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon chickpea miso
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 pinch granulated onion powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 teaspoon tamari
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 3 large Yukon gold potatoes, peeled
- Rendered wagyu or beef fat, as needed
- Heavy cream, as needed
- Canola oil, as needed
- Chives, chopped as needed
- Chive oil, as needed

Whisk together creme fraiche, sour cream, miso, lemon juice, onion powder, 1 teaspoon salt, tamari and sugar until thick and fluffy. Adjust dip seasoning if needed.

Thinly slice potatoes using a mandolin and layer potatoes in a 9x9 baking pan lightly, brushing with the beef fat, heavy cream, and a sprinkling of salt. Repeat to fill the pan. Wrap in foil and bake at 350 F for 90 minutes or until tender. Place a weighted pan on top and refrigerate overnight.

At service, cut the potatoes into desired size and fry in canola oil until golden brown. Garnish with chives and chive oil. Serve with soy dip. Makes 3 to 4 servings.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF COTE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUJARENA



Changing out the dipping sauce allows this side dish to fit into any concept.



Side dishes, such as rice with grilled shiitake mushrooms, round out bites of premium meat.

tableside, and tasting portions of steak are accompanied by freshly ground local wasabi from Half Moon Bay to cleanse the palate between bites.

To pair with these higher-priced small, rich bites, side dishes at Niku also reflect a bit of luxury, like buckwheat parker house rolls with wagyu butter but with a more affordable price of \$10. Chef Dustin Falcon, executive chef at Niku, also uses fat trimmed from steaks in dishes ranging from potato stacks to a wagyu fat brownie.

Chef Marc Zimmerman shies away from “steakhouse” when describing Gozu, his wagyu-centric restaurant that utilizes the whole animal with Japanese and Californian influences.

“Beef is incorporated through the menu in many ways,” he says. “We do whole muscle curing to make bacon, lardo and other charcuterie.” Tallow is used in pastries and confits while lean cuts are fermented with koji, water and salt, resulting in a beef shoyu.

Zimmerman also serves wagyu simply grilled and glazed with tare and uses wagyu dashi to fortify his chawanmushi egg custard, a staple on the menu since opening in 2019.

“Our dashi is made from a combination of both wet- and dry-aged beef which contains high levels of glutamate resulting in additional umami,” he explains. “Trim comes from any number of cuts as we work our way through an animal.” ■



\$2.4 BILLION

Growth of wagyu beef market, progressing at a CAGR of **6.15%** through 2025

—Technavio Research

Koshihikari Rice with Grilled Shiitake Mushrooms

*Chef Dustin Falcon
Niku, San Francisco*

- 1 cup soy sauce**
- ½ cup light brown sugar**
- ¼ cup mirin**
- ¼ cup water**
- ½ pound shiitake mushrooms, grilled**
- 2 cups Koshihikari sushi rice, slightly rinsed**
- 2 cups water**
- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil**
- 4 tablespoons black vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons sugar**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 1x1-inch square kombu, chopped**

Combine soy, light brown sugar, mirin and water in a small pot and bring to a simmer for 2 minutes; cool. Chop mushrooms and add soy mixture to marinate 1 hour.

Process rice in a rice cooker with water and olive oil. Combine black vinegar, sugar, salt and kombu and add to rice for desired taste; set aside.

Top rice with mushrooms and serve. Make 4 to 6 servings.

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THEN 2015



EXPANDING PASTABILITIES

It's no secret that pasta has been shunned over the past decade as the gluten free craze and a consumer push for healthier choices have affected all menus. But during the pandemic, sales soared at grocery stores and carryout orders. It's the ultimate comfort food.

Data from IRI, a Chicago-based marketing firm, shows pasta sales have slowed but are still notable, showing 11.3% higher than in 2019 before the pandemic.

Pasta isn't inherently unhealthy in moderation, and it's good for the bottom line. But whether diners will order it depends on the same criteria for any comfort food. It needs the feel-good factor, quality ingredients, sound prep and value.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVA KOLENKO, FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON, PROP STYLING AMY PALIWODA



NOW

NOODLING AROUND

Pasta's appeal is tied to comfort and making the carbs count

NOW

➔ **Outside of Italian** concepts where it will always have a home, pasta has formidable competition given the growth and proliferation of global cuisine over the past decade. Consumer preferences for diets that eschew gluten also turned pasta into a pariah.

But somewhere mid-decade, pasta came back. Inspired by Thomas McNaughton's San Francisco Flour+Water, where nine dishes from a 10-course tasting menu are devoted entirely to housemade pasta, chefs across the country started or deepened their pasta programs, giving extruded shapes and billowy packages new cache.

Diners see them as special, and not the boxed dried variety they can make at home, which drives them to restaurants like Fox & the Knife in Boston, Mother Wolf in Los Angeles and Misi in Brooklyn, New York. The carb-wary see it as comfort and worth the indulgence.

Chefs at these restaurants say their pasta sets itself apart by technique and simplicity. A few years ago, cacio e pepe became the "it" pasta but Mother Wolf

chef/owner Evan Funke has been serving his rendition since 2007, when he landed at Canyon Ranch in nearby Santa Monica. The difference, he says, lies in toasting the peppercorns to release flavor into fat, using super starchy water from cooking pasta and swirling it into noodles off the heat.

Menus from the country's most highly regarded pasta emporiums share common characteristics. They pay homage to traditions of regional Italy, they're seasonal and they're not gut grenades. Instead, they're lighter and lean equally or more toward the flavor of the pasta rather than relying solely on the sauce. Portion size, typically smaller, not larger, is commensurate with the food and labor costs of making pasta.

Vegetables are playing a larger role as pasta partners, and various grains are supplementing the flour for a more nutritious take. Some chefs make gluten-free pasta, like Flour+Water, but remember that ultimately diners are seeking out incredible pasta that tastes indulgent enough to satisfy their craving. ■



LET'S NOT MEAT

Only three of the 10 housemade pastas at Missy Robbins' Misi in New York are accompanied by meat but all of the housemade dishes are simple and balanced. Some examples:

- Corzetti (stamped pasta), garlic scapes, pine nuts and basil
- Spinach and mascarpone filled tortelli, brown butter and ricotta salata
- Sheep's milk ricotta-filled occhi (similar to round ravioli), bottarga and lemon
- Mezze rigatoni, 30 clove pomodoro and basil

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVA KOLENKO. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING AMY PALIWODA



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CAVATAPPI
+160%

LOVED THE LEAST
(Highest growth or decline over the last decade)



FARFALLE
-52.6%



ANGEL HAIR
-48.3%

Source: Datassential



34% Consumers who strongly agree that they sometimes visit a restaurant specifically because they're craving a pasta or noodle dish. —Technomic

THEN
2016



THE SECRET BEHIND CLASSICS

Be the same but different

Chef Michael Kornick once said that restaurants just need to include menu classics roast chicken and Caesar salad to be successful.

That was 23 years ago when Kornick ran several of Chicago's buzziest restaurants, from his namesake mk to Marche and Red Light. Forward-thinking chefs generally want to be more adventuresome. But classics exist for a reason. They're familiar and safe but they also elicit other emotions such as comfort and nostalgia.

NOW

CLASSICS IN THE MAKING

Creamy comfort endures

By Jacqueline Raposo

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA

Get the recipe for Pistachio Paris-Brest on page 43.



2016

Do you still need roast chicken and Caesar salad or other classics such as creme brulee and chocolate molten lava cake on the menu?



YES, despite the restaurant boom of the last decade that has dramatically changed the dining landscape since Kornick's heyday. And double yes considering how the world has been upended by the pandemic along with the threat of a recession.

They just can't be snoozers. Because tapping into what's familiar yet exciting transcends time and will always be the cornerstone of a successful menu.



Pasteis de nata can change with the seasons. Scan for the recipe.

NOW

► **Each decade has brought** a new European dessert to Americans' attention. French chef Michel Bras gets credit for the molten chocolate cake that defined dessert menus through the 1980s. Creamy creme brulee surged through the 1990s. Crispy macarons spread all over in the aughts; canelés, too.

"Dominique Ansel Bakery is responsible for popularizing the canele," says Niko Triantafyllou, a food writer who recorded much of chef Dominique Ansel's early work. Ansel debuted his cronut in 2013. But by then, his tender and custardy canelés were already opening minds. The cronut furthered interest in such offerings.

Today, creamy European pastries continue to make deep cuts in American dessert menus. And no more show-stopper of a plate has recently spread as much as the Paris-Brest.

An almond-studded ring of pate a choux sandwiching creme mousseline, the Paris-Brest is a visual stunner. Its workable components mean a lean kitchen staff can impress with minimal fuss. "Not all restaurants these days pay for a full-time, top-tier pastry chef," says Gabriel Rucker, chef/owner of Canard and Le Pigeon in Portland, Oregon. "A savory cook can grasp the choux dough that makes the Paris-Brest. It's very utilitarian."

Rucker changes up his Paris-Brest seasonally: In late winter, it may present with cremeux, kumquat honey, chamomile anglaise and candied poppyseed. In the summer, with coconut cream and strawberries. Flavor familiarity helps

Pistachio Paris-Brest

Chef Michelle Palazzo
Frenchette, New York City

360 grams butter, softened
118 grams white sugar, divided use
260 grams brown sugar
360 grams flour
Pistachio croquant, recipe follows
Choux dough, your recipe
Pistachio praline, recipe follows
Pistachio cream, recipe follows
Powdered sugar, as needed
Chopped pistachios, as needed

Beat together butter and sugars. Add flour and 60 grams pistachio croquant. Place dough for craquelin crust between 2 sheets of wax paper and roll out to 1-millimeter thickness; set aside.

Place choux dough in a pastry bag fitted with an 807 tip and pipe out medium-sized rings of choux. Top each choux ring with a craquelin crust ring cut to the same size, lightly pushing the crusts down to secure them. Place in a 400 F oven, reduce heat to 350 F and bake 30 minutes or until browned; cool and set aside.

Halve pastry lengthwise. On the bottom half, pipe pistachio praline. Layer with pistachio croquant followed by a ring of pistachio cream. Add top half and more pistachio praline, powdered sugar and chopped pistachios.

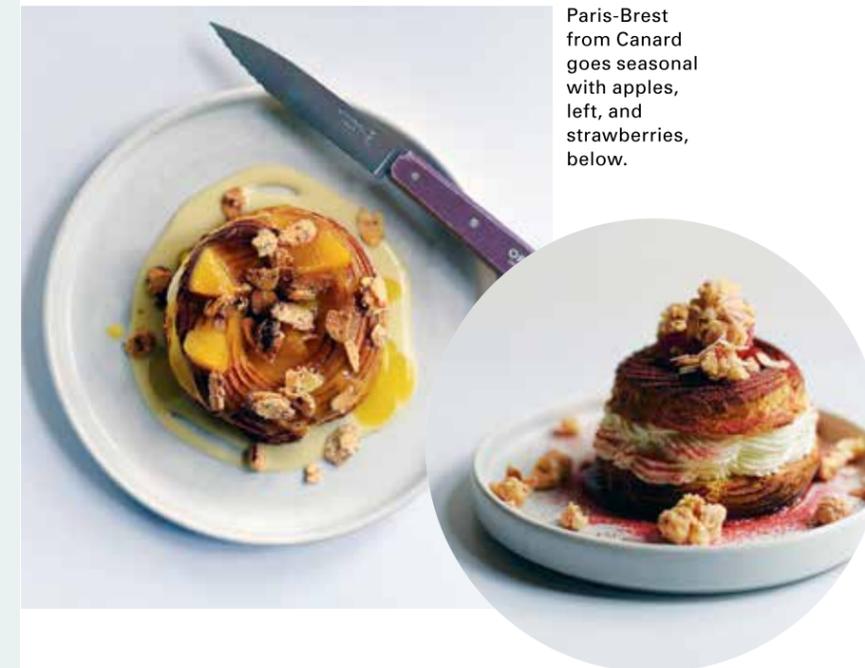
To make pistachio praline: Create caramel with 150 grams sugar and 85 grams water. Pour over 252 grams pistachios; cool. Grind until it forms a paste consistency. Add enough pistachio paste until a nutty green color is reached. Season with salt to taste.

To make pistachio croquant: Cook 375 grams sugar and 150 grams water over high heat for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in 195 grams chopped toasted pistachios. Pour over sheet tray lined with parchment. Cool and process until crumbled.

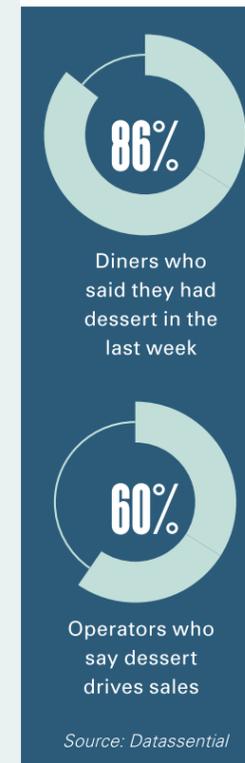
To make pistachio cream: Heat ½ kilogram sugar with 333 grams water in a saucepan. Whisk in 16 egg yolks in a stream. Beat in 1.05 kilograms softened butter, pistachio paste as desired and 10 grams salt.

ROASTED CHICKEN PHOTOGRAPHY BY TYLLIE BARBOSA. PASTEIS DE NATA PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CANARD



Paris-Brest from Canard goes seasonal with apples, left, and strawberries, below.



diners order the dessert with little coaching from servers. "People will see a word they might not understand and a bunch of flavors that they really like," Rucker says. "They'll say, 'Well, I might not know what a Paris-Brest is but I like things that have coconut and strawberry.'"

Also quickly rising the ranks are the Portuguese pasteis de nata, buttery puff pastry cups filled with custard and baked until caramelized. Until recently, they were only sold amongst Portuguese communities peppering the Northeast. American diners might recognize them as the *daan tat* (egg tarts) sold in Chinese bakeries, which hail from Macau. But a huge rise in tourism to Portugal has Americans now seeking them out locally. Social media posts featuring them often go viral. "If you are a fan of warm, fresh, flaky croissants and creme brulee, then pasteis de nata are a must try," says Mauro Magalhães, owner of Natas and Bowls in Kearny, New Jersey.

"It is only a matter of time before they are rightly recognized as one of the top European pastries," Magalhães believes.

Which creamy, custardy, crackly pastry will win in the decade to come? Only time will tell. But for now, the present looks sweet. ■



HOW FAR CAN YOU TAKE A CLASSIC?

If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck. In this case, a salad of little gem lettuce, feta, za'atar, shallots, anchovy-butter-milk dressing and olive oil isn't called a Caesar salad but it sure looks like one turned upside down—in a good way. It's from Saffy's, a Middle-Eastern all-day casual concept in Los Angeles that chef/owners Ori Menashe and Genevieve Gergis recently opened.



】 **ROAST CHICKEN** Umeboshi with baby bok choy and plum wine and white sesame and Caesar salad of little gem lettuce, anchovy, sourdough croutons and Parmesan
Ray Hayashi and Cynthia Hetliner, Ryla, Hermosa Beach, California

】 **ROASTED CHICKEN** with haydari yogurt, za'atar, Aleppo pepper and pea vines
Chef/owner Renee Erickson, The Whale Wins, Seattle

】 **ROAST HALF CHICKEN** from Joyce Farms, mulberry, braised carrots, carrot top gremolata and sochan (greens)
Chef/co-owner Eric Burlison, Eldr, Asheville, North Carolina

】 **CAESAR SALAD** with napa cabbage, vegan tahini Caesar dressing, chickpea-hazelnut dukkah and shaved halloumi
Butcher & Bee, chef/owner Michael Shemtov, Nashville

】 **CAESAR SALAD** of gem lettuce, baby arugula, capers, migas, Grana Padano and Greek yogurt dressing
Beatrix, Chicago

CLASSICS UPDATED

Young chefs may sneer at putting chicken or Caesar salad on a menu, but the experienced ones with the burn marks up and down their arms prove they know better. Some examples:



BY THE NUMBERS | CHICKEN

CHARACTERISTICS

Antibiotic free	257%
Leg quarter	71%
Thigh	42%
Natural	13%
Free-range	7%

FLAVORS

Turmeric	118%
Chimichurri	75%
Tahini	72%
Garlic Parmesan	69%
Sriracha	67%
Maple	64%

Source: Datassential

BEATRIX PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMANTHA BRAUER; SAFFY'S PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGITTE NEMAN



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LOOK FOR THE SEAL.



UP YOUR CATERING GAME

7 WAYS TO CASH IN

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With workers back

in the office and gatherings resumed, catering has returned in a big way.

But before jumping in for the first time or the umpteenth, it's an opportunity to hit reset and make catering better than it's ever been. Start with this seasoned chef checklist.

1 FIND AND KNOW YOUR CLIENT

Chances are you have regular customers who work in the neighborhood. Start with those guests who know and love your cooking. Then identify others in your area. Make sure you understand the operations of each company. A manufacturing outfit will have different menu needs from a social media marketing company.

2 BUILD SMART MENUS

Use current menu items from your production line along with items that travel well. Keep the menus smaller, allowing for ease of execution. Highlight gluten-free, paleo, vegetarian and vegan offerings. Keep them fresh and up to date, not just among the staff who communicate with clients but also online. New dishes are exciting but remember to focus on customer favorites. A foundation of menu items that you are known for keeps people ordering.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL STRABBING



SPECIAL ADVERTORIAL SECTION

5 OFFER REWARDS

The best catering and carryout programs have rewards built in. Programs can be designed around frequency and abundance of ingredients in the walk-in that need to sell right away. BOGO, one free on 10, complimentary desserts or percentages off on orders over a set amount keep customers loyal. If you have customers ordering for their office or home and frequent your restaurant, send a round of drinks or desserts on a regular basis. Take care of those who take care of you.



6 HONE DELIVERY/CUSTOMER SERVICE

Whether using a third-party service or your own, make sure that the orders are bagged and tagged properly, and every order is checked into the delivery vehicle. Missing items or inaccurate orders are costly and will put your hard work in jeopardy. To stay prompt and timely, offer a time range for delivery that allows for a cushion. Office catering is based on workers' valuable time. Use your branded stickers to seal bags along with stapling. Same day or next day follow-up quality calls are a must. Maintaining an open and timely communication with your customers shows them you care about their experience.



3 USE THE RIGHT PACKAGING

While you won't plate the food, the containers that carry it reflect your business. Quality food deserves quality packaging. Consider sturdiness and utility, such as whether the client will need to reheat dishes. Remember to include serving utensils and give clients the choice to opt-in on plates and napkins. Because a growing number of consumers care about sustainability and climate change, it's worth using earth-friendly packaging, including trays and bowls. If it's costlier, pass it on to the customer.

4 SCHEDULE SERVICE WISELY

With labor still an issue, be wary of stressing staff. Start by offering service that works best with your current production and cooking schedule. Consider two- or three-day services to start, then add additional days and service times as you find your footing. If you serve lunch and dinner, don't try to open with a breakfast service out of the gate. Get it right, then add to it. Removing a service time will be detrimental to the growth of your program.



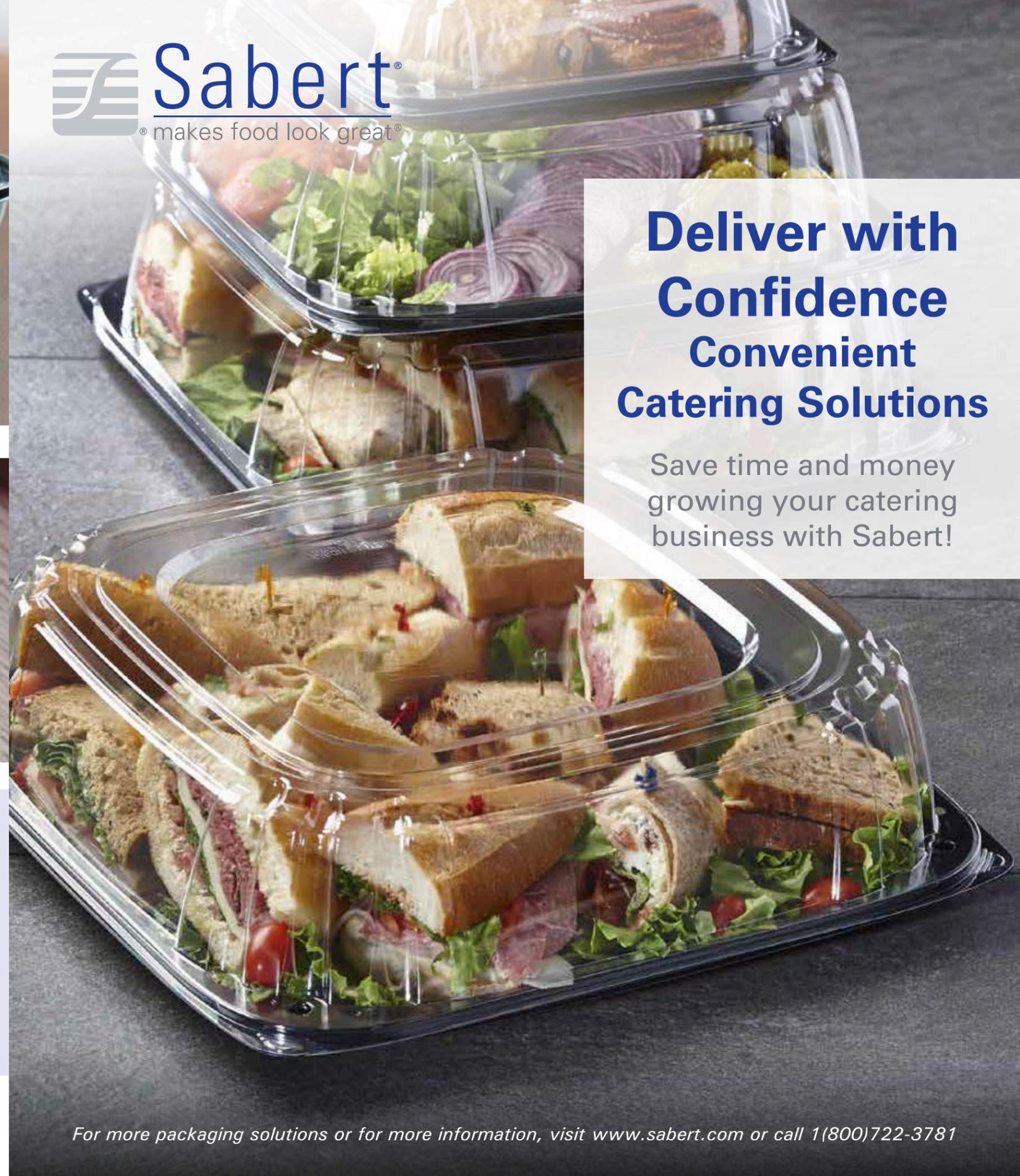
7 REMEMBER ADD-ONS

Be creative with offering add-ons to your menu ordering platform. Be mindful of choosing items that add value to your concept and make sense across your program. Impulse items like specialty packaged beverages, healthy snacks like nuts, dried fruits and baked chips can build the check. Individually packed personal size desserts are always an easy sale. Cookies and brownies have low costs and high profit. But again, be mindful of your client. If gluten-free and vegan options are necessary, be sure to include them, too.

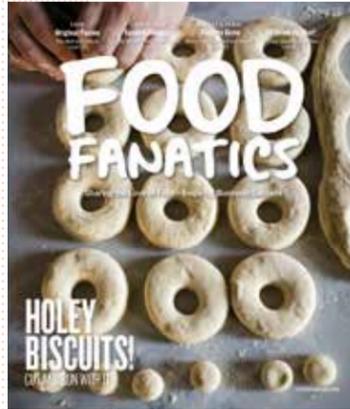


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THEN 2017



PROOF OF BREAD

A love-hate relationship with carbs shows there's no letting go

Of all the foods consumers swear off, bread is their kryptonite. Regardless of the latest fads or medical research, consumers keep coming back to gluten.

But just as trends change so has bread and attitudes about whether carbs are a bad thing. Over the last decade, smarter carbs justify baked goods.

Mid-decade, restaurants with in-house bread programs began milling their own flour and setting the stage for bread made with more nutritious grains, such as Kamut and einkorn. Improved versions of gluten-free bread become commonplace along with an upcharge.

By 2017, charging for housemade or parbaked bread, a practice that began in earnest in 2012, becomes the norm as a way to add to the bottom line and cut waste of a food that was once free.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA



Diners see bread, such as sourdough bagels, (clockwise) poppyseed, heff beer, olive, date raisin walnut and whole wheat, as carb-worthy.

NOW

BREAD IS ALIVE AND WELL



Biscuits enjoy growth outside of their Southern roots as ideal carriers for handheld breakfast items.

By the close of 2019, carbs are front and center again with more nutritious renditions, such as naan made with wheat berries and spelt. Concepts with a wood-fire oven churn out fresh-baked pita and other breads that puff.

With time on their hands and a shortage of yeast due to demand during the pandemic, chefs and consumers breathed new life into sourdough bread. Its gut benefits from the fermented levain are keeping growth steady, according to food research firm Datassential. Yeast-raised bread, such as brioche, continues to be a favorite. It's expected to continue growing—33% over the next three years.

Milk bread moves beyond its Asian roots and into casual and fine dining restaurants with its billowy, soft texture, making it even harder to shun carbs.



GOOD TO BE DENSE

Carb watchers may look the other way when bagels are made with good-for-the-gut fermented levain and flour from higher nutrient grains. Roll them in seeds and seasonings for good measure.

NOW

CARB LOADING, EXPLAINED

Over the last few years, close to half of all consumers want to eat healthier, according to various surveys. That in part means limiting simple carbohydrates such as bread, bagels, pasta and other carb-loaded foods. But restaurant bread and pasta programs are thriving. What gives?

It's not a paradox considering the way consumers view health and wellness, which are different. The former is exemplified through nutrition while the latter is expressed through indulgences to address stress and self-care, according to Nik Modi, an analyst for RBC Capital Markets.



CHARGE!

Years ago when restaurants started charging for bread, you may have thought, what nerve. Newsflash: They've been cashing in so maybe it's time to make some dough. Just ensure it's charge-worthy; Salt Traders, with locations in Austin and Round Rock, Texas, bake their own bread, serving it with whipped butter for \$5. Off Alley in Seattle does likewise and charges \$8.

TREND TRACKER

Don't Be A Pleb

Serving housemade corn tortillas with good butter is solid. But don't risk your cred by offering a knife.

LAST SEEN: Angry Egret Dinette in Los Angeles offers them as a starter with a side of Beurre de Baratte.

Cloud 9

Why are Parker House rolls and milk bread a part of bread service, either on tasting menus or as a side? So light and fluffy, it's easy to get carried away.

LAST SEEN: As part of an omakase at Mako in Chicago, they've served it with miso butter.

Do One Better

Moon Rabbit in Washington, D.C., serves turmeric mantou buns with honey butter and a dab of umami busting chile paste for that spicy-sweet dynamic.

Butter Up

Housemade cultured butter or ordered from your purveyor gets a thumbs up but why not go next level and charge more for a compound butter that complements your concept?

LAST SEEN: Butter in New York City, offers Parker House rolls with two housemade butters, \$5 or three, \$7.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA



Angry Egret Dinette in Los Angeles gets \$5 for housemade tortillas and butter.



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³The NPD Group/SupplyTrack®, Frozen Biscuits in Foodservice Channel, 12 months ending May 2022, in Units & Pounds

THEN 2018



OFF-PREMISE RULES—THEN, NOW AND LATER

In an episode of “The Bear,” the much talked about Hulu series where dysfunctional relationships play out in a troubled restaurant, online ordering is switched on for the first time. Complete and utter disaster follows.

True-to-life, it's what happens when you're unprepared and a takeout latecomer despite the National Restaurant Association reporting for nearly 10 years that off-premise dining would make up 70% of an establishment's business by the end of the decade.

By 2018, however, the importance of off-premise dining began to truly sink in but then the pandemic fueled the NRA projection, which it estimated at 60% in 2019. Restaurants without a sound takeout program suffered the most when the pandemic cut off business a year

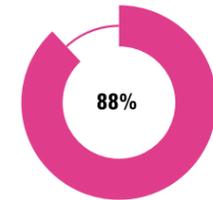


Takeout had taken off by 2018 only to soar even higher when the pandemic hit in 2020.

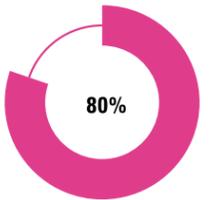
NOW

TAKEOUT ADDS UP

The advantages of off-premise dining are backed by the numbers, but high third-party service fees are killing the bottom line. Expect change, however. Keep a lookout as technology and other developments provide relief.



Percentage of customers who want more off-premise options



Customers who would be enticed by discounts on less busy days



Adults who would probably join a loyalty and rewards program



Customers who prefer to order directly from a restaurant



Customers who would order multi-course meal bundles



Customers willing to pay a little more for better packaging



Gen Z



Millennials



Gen X



Boomers

Takeout customers who would choose a restaurant offering alcoholic beverages over a restaurant that does not

Source: National Restaurant Association State of the Restaurant Industry 2022

2018

NOW



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Source: *BlackBox Intelligence



TREND + TRACKER

Before Side Hustles Became a Thing.

True then and still true today: A private dining area or unused space has alternative concept potential. Bonus if an existing window can become a pickup window.

LAST SEEN: In 2012, Liz Davis opened Xico, a Mexican neighborhood concept with a side window dedicated for takeout as a way to capture lunch sales in the competitive Portland, Oregon, market. Though no one could predict it at the time, it also saved the restaurant in 2020. "We served to-go food only for almost 2 years and are now reopen for onsite dining," she says. "(We're) still using the window for pickup."

Don't Let Fees Eat You For Lunch.

New restaurants need a third-party pickup and delivery service for marketing but there are ways to save on paying those high commissions.

LAST SEEN: Yes, Thai, a Chicago neighborhood restaurant, encourages customers on its website landing page to call them for the pickup orders to avoid fees, saying they lose \$6.70 per order

Pack It Up.

The clock is ticking on upping your earth-friendly packaging game.

LAST SEEN: 62% to 72% of consumers regularly or occasionally choose foods with recyclable or compostable packaging, according to Datassential. As climate change worsens, expect these numbers to climb.

The New Definition of Local.

If you have merchandise or a food product, such as a sauce, spices or signature dish, extend your reach.

LAST SEEN: Uber Eats won't be the last Goldbelly competitor to offer nationwide shipping, launching recently in Los Angeles, New York and Miami with more cities to come.

You Can't Be Heard if You're Not Seen.

The majority of younger diners order food on a mobile device, making it even more important than ever to treat social media like exercising or brushing teeth: Do it daily. Seeing enticing images of food, specials or events on social media will drive traffic to your restaurant.

later. The lessons, however, came hard but fast, allowing the most intrepid operators to pivot quickly so that the register could keep ringing. Restaurants figured out which foods traveled best, which containers helped or hindered food quality, and upped costs for off-premise to help defray third-party commissions.

The growth of off-premise dining and its impact on business is far from over; third-party giants have been swallowing each other up, making it more challenging for restaurants to shop for the lowest commissions. As the threat of a recession looms large, investing more in technology, such as building your own online ordering system, may give you pause. But one thing remains certain: surveys show most customers prefer ordering directly from a restaurant's platform. For any holdouts, just watch that infamous episode of "The Bear."

THEN 2019



POWER PLANTS

Expect grains, vegetables and protein alternatives to keep fueling menus

Plant-based foods and protein alternatives have had an immense impact on menus in the last decade. In 2014, this publication reported on grains and nutrient-charged produce becoming culinary superstars while chefs discussed the growing demand for meatless dishes.

Eight years later, vegetable and grain-focused appetizers and entrees are the norm, and quinoa and kale are pervasive. In 2016, consumers cringed at a “burger that bleeds” when the Impossible Burger debuted, but now their biggest fans are meat-eaters.

Pescatarians, flexitarians, omnivores, ovo-tarians and lacto-ovo-tarians became part of the lexicon. Cobbling together a meal with side dishes

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA



Umami packs the punch in meatless pizza. See recipe on page 63.

NOW

MEATLESS MARCHES ON

The way to enlist all diners

By Amber Gibson

2019



became a thing of the past. Today, 52% of consumers are eating more plant-based foods, according to consumer data company NielsenIQ. When 57% of consumers believe their food choices impact the environment and more than half consider climate change to be important—says research firm Datassential—it's likely that plant-forward dishes and meat analogues (euphemism for fake meat) will continue to grow.

For cell-grown chicken, cattle and shrimp as well as plant-based meat alternatives, taste and price will drive acceptance and proliferation. Protein grown in a lab isn't available in the U.S. yet, and so far, only 1 in 3 consumers think meat analogues are as healthy as traditional plant-based foods, according to Datassential.

But this much we know is true: Consumers are more educated about food than ever and the youngest diners (the future) are the most receptive to foods that benefit the planet.

NOW

→ **When meatless diners** no longer need to hunt and peck the side dish offerings to cobble together a meal, the bar has been raised—perhaps permanently. With higher expectations, pizza is one universally beloved food that can do better than marinara as a base and saying goodbye forever to meat and cheese.

Some pizzaiolos agree. They're experimenting with a slew of options and working with new plant-based meat and cheese alternatives.

For example, chefs across the country are loving Miyoko's liquid vegan pizza mozzarella, a plant-based cheese made from cultured cashew milk. They've fallen hard for the way it easily melts and bubbles. "It's easily applied to the pizza, fires well and browns," says chef Rob Larman of Il Fuoco in Sonoma, California.

At Margo's Santa Monica, chef Blake Thorson reaches for Beehive's seitan pepperoni. "Beehive has the closest texture and taste to real pepperoni," he says. "It crisps up beautifully if you add a little olive oil on top before cooking." Italian chef Luca Issa at Piccolo Buco in Oakbrook, Illinois, uses smooth yellow cherry tomato puree instead of red sauce on his Neapolitan-style vegan pizza, topped with roasted red peppers, eggplant, thinly sliced zucchini, fermented black garlic and crumbled dehydrated Kalamata olives. "Because the yellow tomato sauce is sweeter, it adds just a little something extra special to a pizza that doesn't have cheese or fat," Issa says.

Gen-Z diners are the most likely to opt for plant-based proteins and dairy alternatives no matter the type of food, according to research firm Datassential. But one truism remains for all diners: just about no one will sacrifice taste. ■



Scan for the recipe to Vegan Pepperoni Pizza.

Yellow Tomato Pizza with Ricotta, Black Garlic and Vegetables

Chef Luca Issa
Piccolo Bucco,
Oakbrook, Illinois

- 1 pound dairy-free ricotta
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- Pizza dough, preferable sourdough
- 12 ounces yellow tomato puree
- 2 tablespoons mint, finely chopped
- 4 ounces roasted red peppers
- 4 ounces zucchini, sliced paper-thin
- 4 ounces eggplant, sliced paper-thin
- 4 ounces blistered cherry tomatoes
- 3 ounces Kalamata olives, pitted, oven-dried
- 2 ounces fermented black garlic, chopped

Whisk together ricotta, oil, salt and pepper; set aside.

Stretch dough into 10- to 12-inch round. Spread with sauce and equally distribute ingredients to preference.

Bake in an oven preheated to pizza temperature until crust is golden. Pipe ricotta onto the pie and serve. Makes 1 pizza.



Ground nuts and milk alternatives can stand in for the creamy in cream-based pasta sauces.

THE CREAMIEST CREAMLESS DISH

▶ **A vegan pasta** dish isn't any huge feat but a silky, creamy one without the help of butter, eggs or heavy cream is a different animal. No problem, though, if you're Matthew Kenney, who started building an empire of plant-based food long before it was a thing.

During the pandemic, he opened two locations of Sestina, an Italian vegan pasta bar concept, one in Culver City, California, and then New York City. Last year, the third one opened in Los Angeles and more are scheduled.

Kenney's team lean on nut milks and nut-based cheeses for the housemade pastas. Nuts can be

ground, giving sauces heft, body and protein in addition to the creaminess that comes naturally from pasta water.

These dishes include truffle tagliatelle, elbows in a vodka sauce with tomatoes, basil and plant-based Parmesan and English pea ravioli in Alfredo sauce and herb oil.

In Portland, Oregon, recently opened Lilla, an Italian vegan restaurant makes in-house Parmesan as an ingredient for its smooth pasta sauces that include classic carbonara and alfredo.

At Crossroads Kitchen in Los Angeles, fettuccine carbonara starts with sauteing garlic in olive oil followed by housemade mushroom bacon, white wine, vegetable stock and plant-based Parmesan. It's topped with what looks like an egg yolk but it's made from bearnaise congealed in olive oil that oozes once it's broken.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY JENNIFER BARGUIARENA

Plant-based bacon is sliced into strips.



TREND TRACKER

Pig's Out

A pork-free, plant-based bacon that looks, tastes and snaps like the real thing? Yes, says My Forest Foods, which is amping up production and distribution of the imitation bacon made from mycelium, the root of mushrooms. It contains just mycelium, coconut oil, salt, sugar, "natural flavors" and beet juice for color forged into a block that's sliced like bacon.

Clucking For Real?

Kids at a Singapore restaurant chow down on the first ever nuggets made from cultured meat—a protein grown from chicken cells in a lab. Nearly two years later, the FDA and the USDA are still sorting rules for lab-grown products, though U.S.-based Eat Just which makes Good Meat cultured chicken says approval is expected this year.

LAST SEEN: Once approved, you might see lab chicken at a José Andrés restaurant; he joined the board of directors last year.

The Nail on Iceberg's Coffin

Nutrient-dense leafy salad greens developed by a gene editing technology known as CRISPR are expected to be available next year.

LAST SEEN: Pairwise removed the sharpness from mustard greens to make them more neutral. Expect seedless blackberries, black raspberries and pitless cherries via the same technology from the California-based company.

OK to Wreck

A plant-based filet mignon is slated to hit the market next year. Made with the same soy protein as plant-based burgers, this cut from Juicy Marbles resembles the real deal with what look like muscle fibers and strands of fat. A plus: If your line cook kills it by mistake, the faux filet will still have the texture of medium-rare.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER BAKOS



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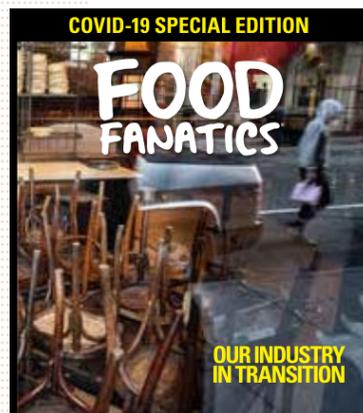
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THEN

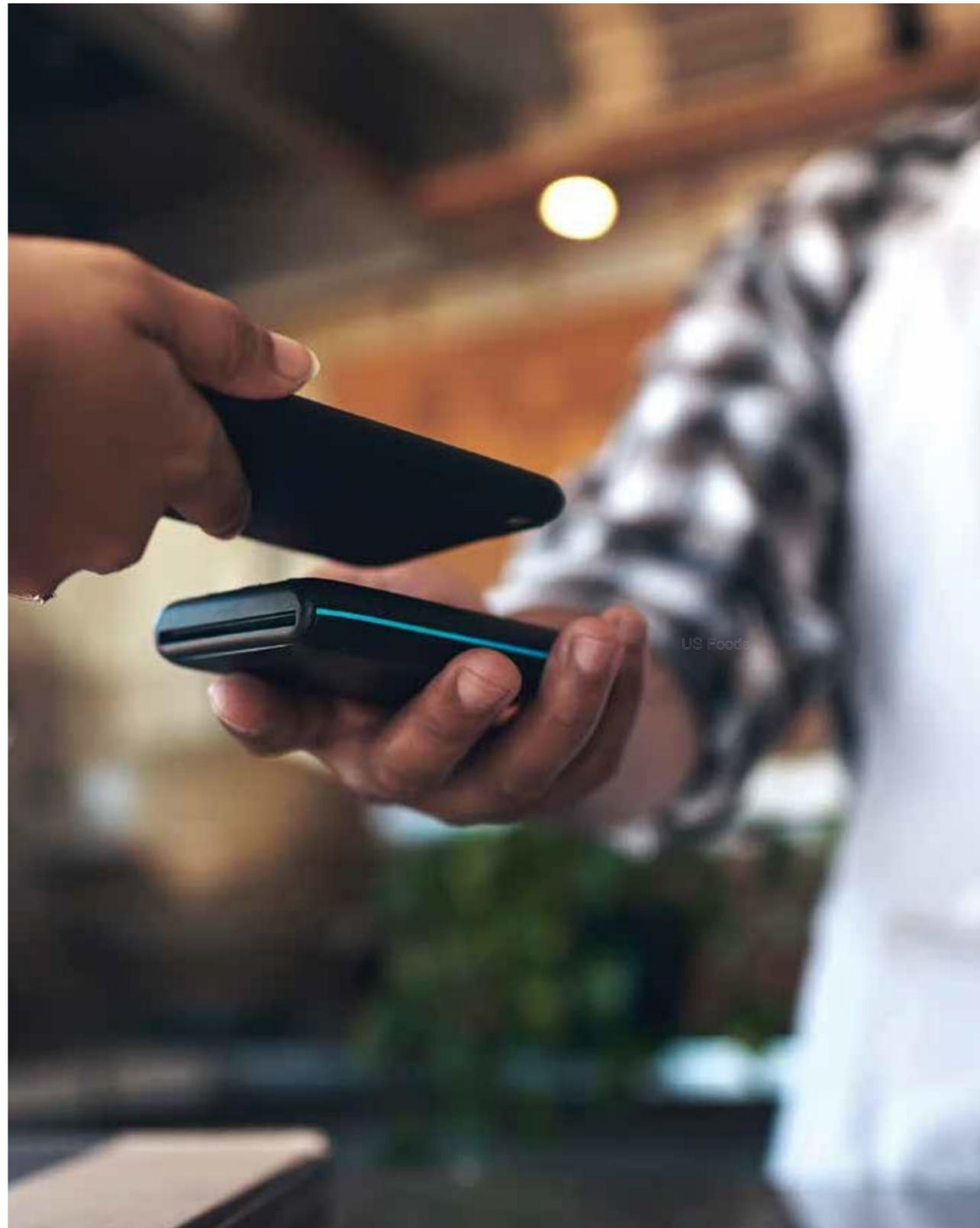
2020



IF YOU HAVE TECH, YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING

The start of this decade will always have the indelible pall of COVID-19, the pandemic that blew up the world, hitting hospitality harder than any other industry. While more than 80,000 eating and drinking establishments closed temporarily or permanently, according to the National Restaurant Association, and many more continue to be affected, the majority managed to rebound.

For restaurants equipped with the right technology, the blow has been less painful. Every effort to stay operating would prove to be more effective during



NOW

TECH SAVES THE DAY

It's the one sure thing

By Abigail Covington



→ Whether it's 2012 or 2022, technology comes to the rescue. It saves hours in inventory, streamlines the profit and loss numbers and makes the difference between painful and painless online ordering.

Over the past decade, thousands of social media apps, Silicon Valley startups, and hungry entrepreneurs have brought their big ideas and bleeding edge technologies to the nearly trillion-dollar foodservice industry, hoping to revolutionize how the country eats, cooks and purchases food.

Some ideas flopped but others like mobile payments and ghost kitchens are reshaping the industry. Tech will continue to revolutionize foodservice, which means it's safe to say that further advances will play off, especially in these four areas:

POS PIVOTS TO DIGITAL

Operators took note and within a few years self-serve kiosks, online ordering, and digital menu boards began popping up in QSRs and fast-casuals. Panera Bread introduced kiosks in 2014. A year later, Chili's partnered with Ziosk to install tabletop tablets that allowed customers to order, pay their bill and even play games from the comfort of their booth. The swap led to a 20% increase in

dessert sales.

Independent operators put their own spin on these tech-driven trends by partnering with payment processing companies like Square and Toast to outfit servers to take orders and payments tableside.

> **WHAT'S NEXT:** Expect more digital tools and programs for internal operations and systems that work harder to integrate sales, inventory and ordering so you don't have to.

2020



and after the pandemic—just as it has with past challenges. Operations equipped with healthy and strong staff and management, buttressed by loyal customers and up-to-date technology, were able to stay above water. Some even thrived.

Outdoor and off-premise dining and experiences, like meal and drink kits and online cooking and presentations, fed and entertained the new work-from-home majority and kept revenue flowing.

Operators addressed the weaknesses exposed by the pandemic, from poor inventory tools to menus with items that didn't travel well.

The once-shunned QR code proved to be a game changer while smarter menu pricing came into play (read: price increases).

Programs that help with hiring and scheduling also took away some of the stress of labor woes.

Technology made all of these changes possible. No matter what lies ahead—a recession or new COVID variants that impact business—operators who have leveraged technology know it will always be the differentiator.

LOOKS GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

A decade ago, Instagram was all the rage. Diners snapped photos of their favorite dishes at their favorite restaurants and shared them among friends on their feeds, giving operators a valuable new source of free, word-of-mouth marketing. As a result, the visual appeal of dishes became increasingly important to all restaurants.

> WHAT'S NEXT: TikTok, will continue its rise as it grabs users of all ages. Already a platform that launches trends, it's becoming the go-to for restaurant recommendations, making sites like Yelp less relevant.

I'LL TAKE MINE TO GO

In 2016, Starbucks reported that more than 20% of the company's in-store transactions originated from the company's popular mobile app. Chicagoland restaurant group Lettuce Entertain You reported similar numbers for revenue tied to their in-app rewards program The Frequent Diner's Club. Delivery apps like GrubHub and DoorDash went gangbusters, too. Third-party sales topped \$5 billion in the first half of 2018, a 55% increase from the previous year. In 2019, restaurant



1.5%
BILLION

Number of TikTok users by the end of 2022
—Data.ai



8 out of 10
Operators said tech provides a competitive edge and reported wanting to increase their investments

delivery sales went up again by roughly the same amount. Then technology proved to be life or death for restaurants when the pandemic hit and off-premise dining was the only way to keep operating.
> WHAT'S NEXT: Technology that enables restaurants to get out from under the ball and chain of high commissions from third-party apps.

THE FUTURE IS AUTOMATED

Tech features like in-app ordering and tableside tablets used to be considered inessential but now they're viewed

more like prerequisites, both by operators and consumers. In the National Restaurant Association's 2022 industry survey, 8 in 10 operators said tech provides a competitive edge, adding that they want to increase their investments.

> WHAT'S NEXT: Artificial intelligence and robots will continue to evolve as a way to predict diner preferences as well as address labor (robots that cook, deliver food—on and off-premise—and wash dishes, while lab-grown food will keep making advances. Many factors will influence whether these advances will take hold but one thing's for sure: Innovation is guaranteed. ■

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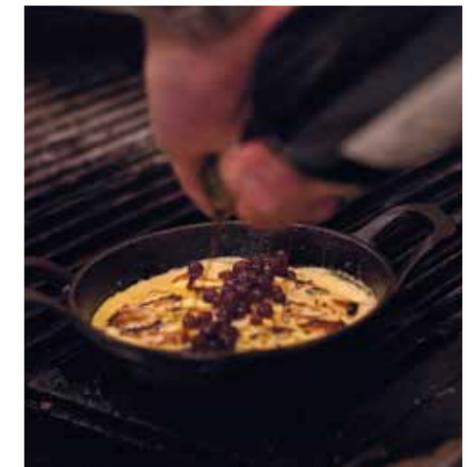
This Way,

Grilled halloumi from Aba with turmeric cream, saba, grapes and watercress.



Cheese

ITS VERSATILE, SUSTAINABLE AND PROTEIN-FORWARD PROFILE SATISFIES DINER DEMANDS



» **NEVER BEFORE HAVE CHEFS** and restaurateurs been so aware and responsive to diner preferences.

Customers want healthier selections. Check. More meatless options and protein-based menu choices, specifically center of the plate. Check and check. These options should also be sustainable and help limit food waste.

Because checking these boxes not only satisfies diner demands, they also align with what's important to chefs. Of all the ingredients that can help menus be as sustainable as possible while meeting such preferences, cheese bubbles to the surface.

Consider Farmhouse in Corona del Mar, California, which devotes a page on its website to a lengthy statement on sustainability. The menu supports its ethos with several items, including roasted coriander and cumin-spiced carrots with burrata cheese, pistachios and mint along with a carrot pistou made with the root vegetable's tops that would otherwise be discarded. To provide "meatier" options and to highlight additional California products, the restaurant also offers a cheese board as well as a Swiss chard and cheese gratin that includes fennel, caramelized onion and herbs, cauliflower "bechamel" and mozzarella and fontina cheese.

Clockwise, at Aba, cheese shines as a starter with whipped feta, pistachios, olive oil and lemon zest while grilling halloumi gives the cheese a smoky flavor and dimension needed to be a center-of-the-plate star.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN T. MCGILL



Stracciatella provides the protein for an appetizer paired with marinated tomatoes, sherry vinaigrette and croutons at *Aba*.

SPECIAL ADVERTORIAL SECTION

Aba, a Mediterranean concept with locations in Chicago, Miami and Austin also serves several dishes with cheese, including whipped feta with crushed pistachios, olive oil and lemon zest. The menu takes cheese one step further by setting it up as a satisfying meatless entree. Relying on halloumi's firm and meaty texture, executive Chef CJ Jacobson grills and pairs it with spicy turmeric cream, grapes, saba and watercress.

Burrata, however, has arguably become the most popular center-of-the-plate option. According to Datassential, burrata is expected to experience 51% growth over the next four years.

At the Tasting Room in Frederick, Maryland, burrata is on both the lunch and dinner menu, served with charred bread, orange, harissa, coriander, mustard, fennel and tomato.

Bastone! in Atlanta goes all out by menuing a mozzarella bar. Of the nine choices, diners can order five as a flight. Chef/owner Pasquale Pascarella says he once sourced all cheeses from Italy but found that by the time they arrived, they weren't as fresh as he wanted. Now, all but a few are U.S.-made cheese, including options from California. The approach is more sustainable and in the long run cuts waste.

Waste can also be reduced by cross-utilizing ingredients. "We often will use ingredients that overlap into many dishes and we have a strong back of house system in place to help minimize waste," says Marc Jacobs, executive partner and divisional president for Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, which includes *Aba*.

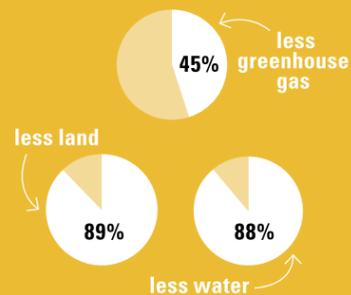
Pascarella concurs. "The best dishes in my opinion are the ones when you need to cross utilize product." ■

Likewise at *Terra Plata* in Seattle, where chef/owner Tamara Murphy has been committed to purchasing sustainable products, such as cheese from California (see sidebar), since opening her restaurant in 2011. They include heirloom tomatoes with sumac, basil, za'atar, golden balsamic, arugula, crispy quinoa and ricotta salata as well as burrata with seasonal fruit, lemon, olive oil and sourdough breadcrumbs.

To satisfy the demand for more plant-forward options, restaurants reach for a variety of ingredients, including cheese to bring in the protein, add contrast and maximize menu appeal. At *Bar Pollino* in Boston, sugar snap peas are paired with whipped ricotta and a drizzle of honey. Chef/owners Jamie Bissonnette and Ken Oringer also menu mozzarella sticks but instead of ubiquitous marinara, they're accompanied by *Osetra* caviar.

BY THE NUMBERS
SUSTAINABILITY FROM A CALIFORNIA
CHEESE PERSPECTIVE

Over the past 50 years through a variety of measures, California dairy farms have reduced their environmental footprint:



Source: California Milk Advisory Board

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THEN

2021



KINDNESS GOES THE DISTANCE

Over the years, the charitable contributions of most independent restaurants have meant doling out gift certificates for fundraisers, sponsoring nonprofit organizations or banding together to cook for a cause.

NOW

CARING KEEPS GOING

Doing good has become personal



Chef/owner Suzanne Goin, right, and co-owner Caroline Styne of several southern California restaurants, including A.O.C. and Lucques.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAY KATCHATORIAN



But in the last decade, charitable efforts have taken on deeper meaning. Restaurants have grown closer to the people they help and the causes they support, all the while aligning their moral compass.

Fuel Pizza, which got its start in Charlotte, North Carolina, partnered with school districts to teach children about nutrition and the field-to-fork concept. In May 2013, 200 volunteers raised \$200,000 to open Oregon Pubic House in Portland, Oregon, as a way to give back to the local community. Since then, the restaurant/pub has donated more than \$206,000 to various charities including one that the customers choose.

The pandemic, which left so many people jobless, including restaurant workers, sped up the change. Causes, specifically the #MeToo movement and social unrest a year prior, also pressed the industry to take a closer look at itself and to take care of their own. For example, Chef Ed Lee launched Let's Empower Employment in 2018 to address diversity, equity and sustainability while the James Beard Foundation reworked its mission to be more inclusive.

"There is an opportunity now for momentous change," Lee says.



NOW

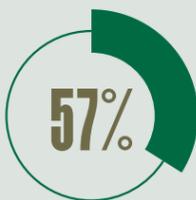
→ **Ask anyone in** the business why they tolerate back-breaking hours, holidays and milestones away from family, the drama of personal lives disrupting shifts and the precarious earnings. The response will be quick and similar.

"I like taking care of people." That reason for being in the business has extended to helping the community in a way that's never been seen collectively. Just a few taps away from reaching their peers and thousands of customers on social media, chefs and restaurateurs wield a big microphone for doing good.

They'll agree that a cultural shift started pre-COVID-19 as employers learned that nurturing and supporting staff would make for better workers. But the impact of the pandemic on lives and livelihoods lost, racial and political unrest and the accompanying stress of uncertainty pushed that caring beyond their walls.

Sponsoring school sports teams and providing free food to a nonprofit fundraiser have evolved into donating sizable chunks of time and resources to nonprofit organizations. Gauging from social media, restaurant owners and workers turn out in droves to answer calls for help now more than ever.

Arguably among the most notable: Chef José Andrés and his nonprofit World Central Kitchen (see story on page 8) that's on the ground with food and resources whenever a humanitarian, climate or community crisis strike. He lands—anywhere, say California when wildfires destroy homes or Houston when a hurricane devastates the area—and restaurant workers turn out in droves



OVERALL CONSUMERS vs 72% Gen X

Those who think it's a good idea for restaurants and brands to tackle key issues such as human rights, gender equality and race relations —Datassential

BECAUSE RESTAURANTS AT THE MOST BASIC LEVEL NOURISH PEOPLE, THEY'RE A NATURAL PLACE TO HELP OTHERS.

to volunteer. Many have flown to Ukraine on their own dime since WCK surfaced to feed communities hurt by the ongoing war with Russia.

Because restaurants at the most basic level nourish people, they're a natural place to help others. In March, chef Suzanne Goin and co-owner Caroline Styne donated more than \$4,100—all the proceeds from two nights of takeout from their A.O.C. restaurant and wine bar in Los Angeles—to WCK. By using social media to spur sales, the effort also raised awareness about WCK and its efforts in Ukraine, where the funds were dedicated. In July, the co-owners dedicated the month to encourage guests to support Planned Parenthood in response to the reversal of Roe vs. Wade, and pledged to contribute as well.

Restaurants are also showing the power of grassroots efforts, specifically Bakers Against Racism, which started in 2020 by pastry chef turned social activist Paola Velez as a "social community, connecting bakers and creatives all across the globe to fight against racism in all of its forms." The inaugural bake sale and its followup, Bakers for Ukraine, have raised more than \$2.4 million from four continents and 200 U.S. cities representing 40 states. ■



Paola Velez, pastry chef-turned-activist, has created a global community of Bakers Against Racism via bake sale fundraisers.

BAKERS AGAINST RACISM PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PAOLA VELEZ, SAM POLK PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF EVERYTABLE



Staff/owners at Slice of New York

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SLICE OF NY

TREND TRACKER

HIT CAUSE.

Reproductive rights are human rights, according to chefs donating sales or organizing fundraisers.

LAST SEEN: Daisy's donates 25% of proceeds from pappardelle while Big Jones pulled together a bake sale, both Chicago restaurants supporting the Chicago Abortion Fund.

YOU CARE, WE CARE.

Restaurants are wearing their mission on their sleeve, calling out their commitment to sustainability and caring for the planet on their website and menus. Smart, considering that 72% of consumers say they're concerned about food waste and its impact on the environment.

IT'S HARDER THAN IT LOOKS.

Pay-what-you-can models to make healthy food accessible to everyone are a challenge—look no further than Panera Cares, which closed all of those locations. But that doesn't mean operators have stopped trying.

LAST SEEN: Sam Polk, co-founder of California-based Everytable crunches numbers and uses a three-pronged service model to make lower prices in distressed neighborhoods workable, while chef/owner Telly Justice is offering the model on Sundays at Hags in New York City's East Village.

WORK TO OWN.

Co-op models aren't new, but the restaurant industry is giving them a closer look as a way to affect equity, diversity and the labor shortage.

LAST SEEN: A Slice of New York, which has two locations, including San Jose, California, is succeeding with 45% of its staff with an ownership stake in the business.



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¹ Food Dive 2022.

↓ THEN

2022



TURNING A CORNER

Avoiding the worst of times

As the industry emerges from the worst pandemic in modern history, an impending recession looms large.

An economic downturn in 2023 could permanently knock off restaurants still teetering from the fallout of COVID-19. Despite all the comeback measures, even thriving restaurants could experience a setback.

Longtime restaurateurs, such as Danny McGowan, who endured the country's longest economic decline—from the end of 2007 to mid-2009—while a partner in Lettuce Entertain You restaurants, believe there are ways to



↓ NOW

LOOKING AHEAD

7 ways restaurants can succeed

By Bret Thorn
Illustrations by Ryan Todd

→ **I have been** covering the restaurant industry for 23 years, possibly longer than many of your employees have been alive. In that time, I've reported on economic booms and downturns, smoking restrictions, the elimination of trans-fats, molecular gastronomy, labor shortages, surges in burger and chicken sandwich sales called "wars" for some reason, and so much more. One thing has remained constant: No matter what happens, some restaurants thrive and others fail.

No one goes into the restaurant industry for the easy hours or the fast buck because they don't exist. It's a business of so many moving parts that successful operators need to juggle that I marvel that so many of them stay in business. Over the years, I have learned some important lessons about what works and what doesn't, and I'd like to share some of them with you here.

ONE /

HAVE ENOUGH MONEY

The most frequent reason restaurants fail is that they're undercapitalized: They didn't raise enough money to get through difficult times. It can take months—or years—for a restaurant to turn a profit, and you need enough funding until income outpaces expenses. That doesn't just include budgeted expenses, such as taxes, marketing and insurance, but also the nearly inevitable costly surprises that crop up. Pandemics aside, unforeseen circumstances happen all the time. Check your numbers twice, cut your anticipated income in half and then double the amount that you think you'll need. Keep a cushion.

TWO /

LOVE YOUR REGULARS

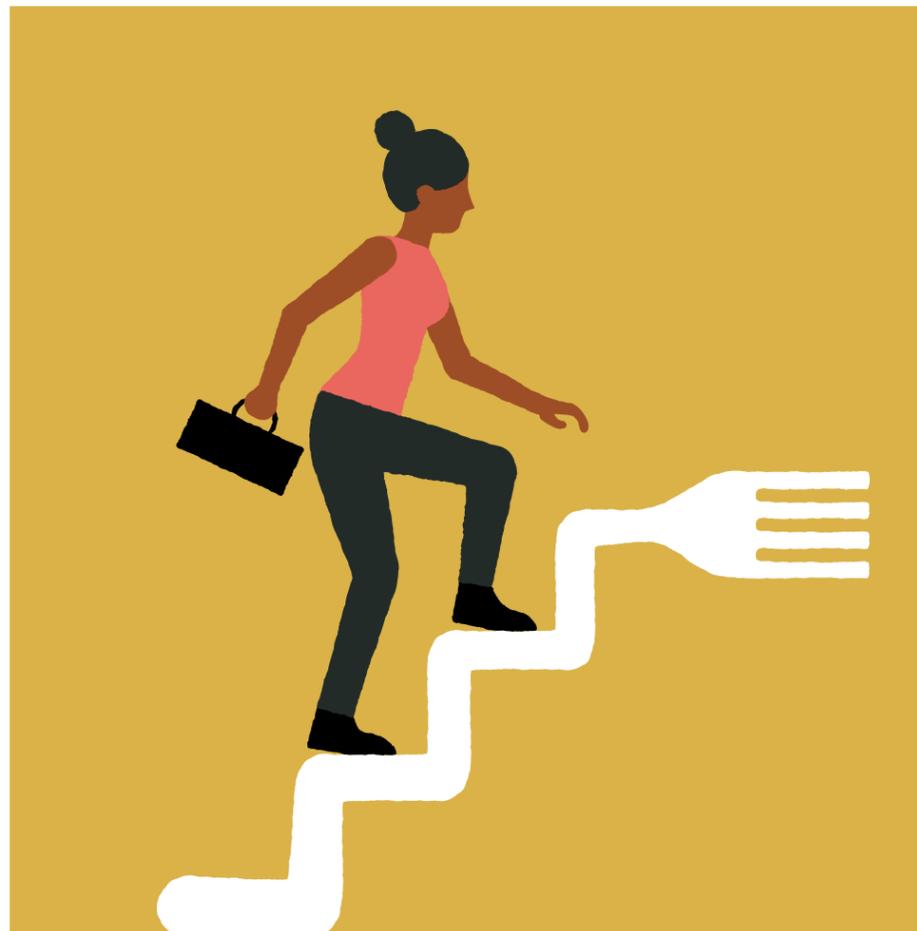
Remember to always appreciate your regulars. Pay attention and support your staff, but don't let the new flashy customer overshadow the people who actually pay your bills. Everyone likes comped food or drink but find personal ways to acknowledge your regulars, too. Do they like being insiders? Slip them samples of a dish you're working on and ask for their feedback. Take the time to chat with them and of course always greet them with delight when they walk in.



minimize the impact. Many lessons learned then, combined with practices that have helped recover from the pandemic, can pave the way (see story on page 84).

But even in the best of times, succeeding takes constant work, says Bret Thorn, who has been covering the restaurant industry for Nation's Restaurant News for 23 years.

"It's a business of so many moving parts that successful operators need to juggle that I marvel that so many of them stay in business," he says. In his reporting, he's seen common threads of what works. Turn to the previous page.



THREE/ LISTEN TO YOUR CRITICS

Everyone is a critic now, thanks to social media and influencers. Most are well-intentioned but uninformed. Some might have an ax to grind, but more likely their tastes just don't align with yours or they just want to vent. You can tell the difference between someone who's angry or mean-spirited and someone who has accurately pointed to flaws (and every restaurant has them). Look for patterns: If online reviews say your music is too loud or your fish is salty, it's likely that your music is too loud or your fish is salty.

FOUR/ THE CUSTOMER IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

The summer that I waited tables (at a Big Boy restaurant in Denver) I quickly learned that rude or obnoxious customers are not to be taken to heart. They weren't being jerks to me; they didn't even know me. They were just being jerks. That's not a big deal, and part of the fun of working in restaurants is turning frowns upside down. But when customers are abusive to your staff, or are throwing the kitchen into disarray because of their extreme demands, it's time to buy their drinks and send them on their way.

69% DINERS SAY THAT COMPLIMENTARY EXTRAS WOULD GO FAR IN INCREASING RESTAURANT LOYALTY
—Open Table

SIX/ YOU CAN'T FIX WHAT YOU DON'T MEASURE

I'm not a software expert, but I do know that there's a lot of accounting that caters to restaurant operators. Find software you like, take the time to set it up to suit your needs, and then use it. Everyone measures food cost and labor cost, but I know of restaurant companies that have beef costs, chicken costs and other specific line items to measure all of their big food expenses, and who measure labor cost based on daypart. The more specific you can get when it comes where your money is going, the easier it will be for you to spot problems before they get out of control.

FIVE/ PUT YOUR STAFF FIRST

This can be hard. But you can't run your business without them.

"Restaurants are not just about food. They're really about people," Lauren Fernandez, whose company Full Course helps small restaurant operators grow their businesses, told me last year. A veteran restaurateur, she said, "If you don't treat your people right, they're not going to treat your customers right and if you don't treat your customers right, you're not going to have a healthy, sustainable, growing business."



Lose The Lost Leader.

Removing a signature item, one beloved by diners, seemed counterintuitive until it wasn't.

LAST SEEN: The owners of Chicago's Parachute removed its best-selling item—the renowned \$15 bing bread filled with cheddar cheese, green onions, potatoes and bacon—after realizing that its high labor costs and low profit margin would not work with the restaurant's model to pay staff a livable wage.

Still Poppin'.

FOMO will continue fueling pop-ups as long as the food is on-trend and good-looking. In other words, Insta- and TikTok-worthy.

LAST SEEN: Japanese-style sandwiches from Sandoitchi, the Dallas-born pop-up that's been popping up throughout Texas, sell out preorders in minutes. The light and fluffy milk bread holds together artful presentations of egg salad, ham and cheese and even strawberries and cream.



NOW

Looking Back to Move Forward Lessons from the last 10 years

By Danny McGowan

► **Throughout my 35 years** in the restaurant business, I have experienced the best and the worst of times. Fortunately, there have been more peaks than valleys, but some important lessons have come from both. These best practices can help position you for success during a likely recession as well as continue to help you build back your business after the pandemic.

MENUS

If you cut your menu during the pandemic to help offset labor shortages, supply chain issues and increased costs, that same mindset will be helpful in a recession. Focus on your signature items, guest favorites and best-perceived value items. Value will drive traffic; your guests should feel you are looking out for them. Stick to the basics and execute them well.

LABOR

We learned from the pandemic that we couldn't fill positions and a lot of restaurants continue to be short staffed. When talent

is available, find a spot for them. During a recession, the short-sighted will let good key people go. Keep them and if you can afford it, consider adding spots for the future. Recessions will end and things will turn around. Your bench and team will be stronger and ready when that happens.

OFF-PREMISE DINING

Just about everyone pivoted to add carryout during the pandemic and some went further to add family or group meals to fill the void of the family or friends' night out. Those same meals can be repurposed into "value

Urban Belly, left, dishes from the Table at Crate in Northbrook, Illinois, and Danny McGowan.

meals" nightly or during slower earlier parts of the week. You could also only open for carryout on some shifts to tighten up the labor model.

RENT

Landlords were flexible during some of the worst times. They reduced or deferred rent. During a recession, you can renegotiate or ask for temporary relief. If you are in a high-traffic area or office complex experiencing a major decrease in traffic, it is not unheard of to ask for some relief.

TECHNOLOGY

In the last 10 years, technology has transformed the restaurant world for the better. Your digital world should always be up to date, but even more so during a recession when you need constant contact with customers. Your social media needs to be on point and relevant to what guests will be looking for; focus less on the excessive and more on value. Be sure your web page has easy and clear links to online ordering. You will save a lot on commissions if the customer orders directly from you instead of through a third-party.

HOURS

Most restaurants that re-opened after pandemic-related closures changed their hours of operation due to limited staffing and limited guests. During a recession, the same strategy can be used. Do you need to be open for lunch every day or at all? Can you eliminate a few shifts that really won't affect your overall sales? Can you only open six days a week—maybe just five and maximize sales in a limited amount of time?

CONCEPT

Many restaurant groups experimented with pop-up concepts, a strategy that saw a jump in interest during the pandemic. Be prepared again to run a few different concepts out of your one space to optimize that location. ■

Danny McGowan is the chief operating officer for the eight concepts and 12 restaurants under the Cornerstone Restaurant Group.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CORNERSTONE RESTAURANT GROUP

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