

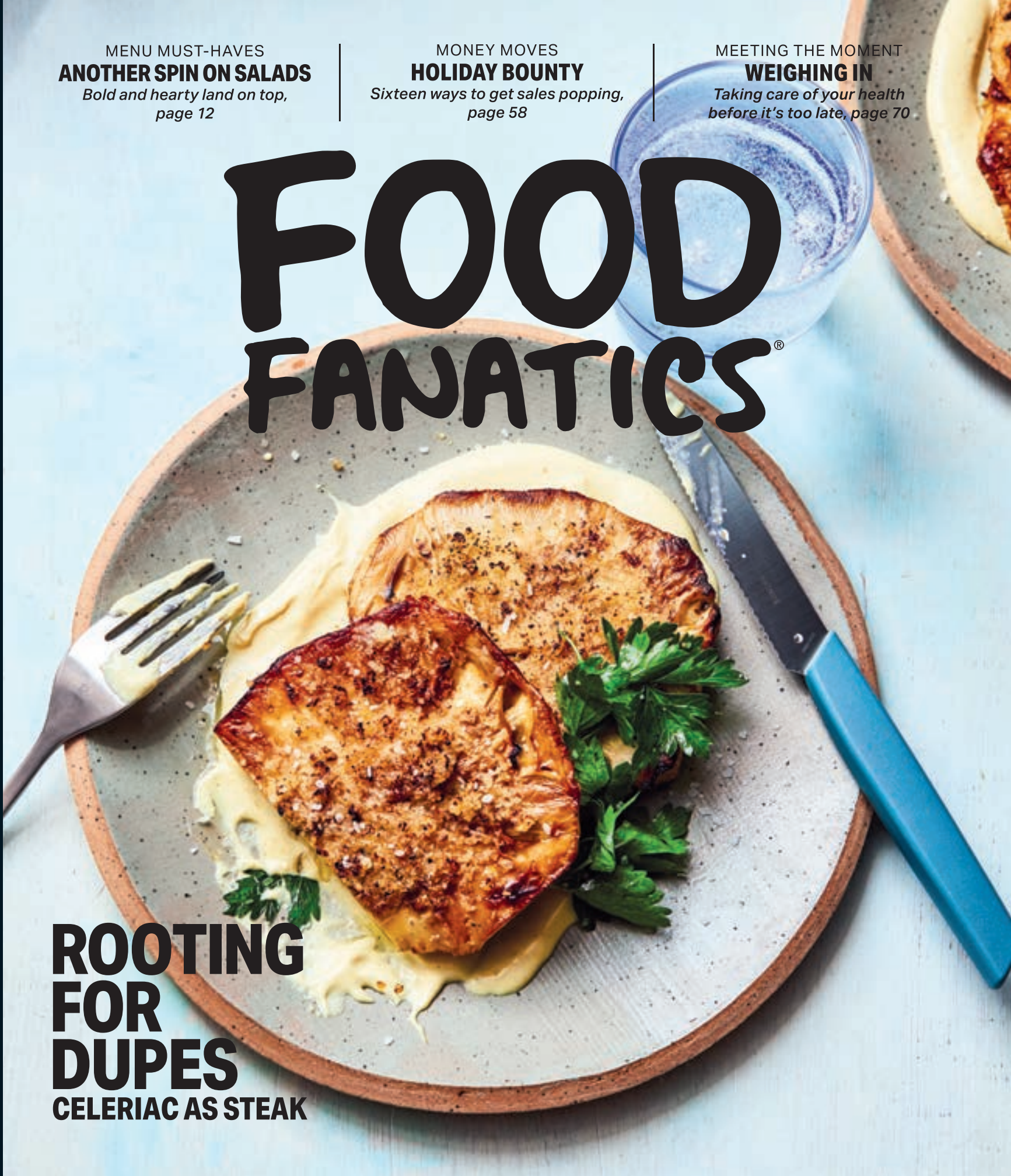
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FOOD FANATICS[™] FALL 2023

Sharing the Love of Food—Inspiring Business Success

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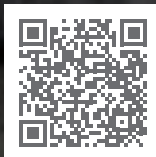
Horseradish encrusted celeriac in a mustard sauce satisfies as a dupe for steak. See recipe on page 30.



Pasta? Wrong—it's a dupe also known as yuba. See story on page 28.

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TURN A NEW LEAF

Fall in love with this autumn edition of Food Fanatics® magazine!

As summer unwinds and the cool of fall awakens, restaurants warm up their menus for the cozy crusade of customers. Always a season of trendspotting and transition, operators must look at their diners' options, ask important questions to scale, and breathe in inspiration from peers of proven success. Of course, we take this a step further to do the work for you.

In **Menu Must-Haves**, we unearth the meaty desire for unprocessed, omnivore-friendly foods that don't skimp on taste, such as cauliflower steak and vegetable-forward burgers, in "Stand-ins Stand Out." We talk to chefs across the country to unpeel their recipes for a cold-weather favorite, onion soup. Plus, we pour the details for making draft cocktails a success, and more.

In **Money Moves**, we ask, "Is it time to expand?" Here we touch on the current economic state and provide a step-by-step checklist to help you understand your needs, get organized, critique your concept and more. We also analyze how price adjustments according to demand can level out margins or make them better, along with thoughtful ways to drive traffic over the holidays.

Lastly, in **Meeting the Moment**, we pull up our boots and take a road trip through Houston to visit six buzzworthy restaurants that make the Interstate 610 Loop and its James Beard Foundation nominees' global influences. We also interview Chicago chef and restaurateur Jimmy Bannos of Heaven on Seven about his life-saving changes in a success-hungry industry.

As always, please enjoy our carefully curated stories, beautiful imagery and insightful advice, to grow your business for seasons to come.

Thanks for reading,

Jim Sturgell
Executive Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer
US Foods®



OVER THE TOP

**Ingredients that
scale new heights**

By Laura Yee

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK LAWLOR

Retro taco ingredients—ground beef, lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, jalapenos and crema—top a pie at chef-driven Zazas in Chicago.



Whether pizza is coal or wood-fired,

New York or Detroit-style, deep-dish or thin crust, toppings stick to the norm. America's No. 1 favorite topping is pepperoni followed by sausage (a distant second) and extra cheese, according to a recent YouGov survey. Asleep yet?

All the other common pizza toppings, such as mushrooms, bacon, pineapple, tomatoes and spinach, fall into single-digit percentages as favorites, leaving plenty of room for disrupting the category. After all, isn't basic boring?

The latest pizzerias across the country seemingly agree. While the usual suspects are present, toppings are becoming more robust. It's as if other sections of the menu have jumped onto pizza.

That's the case with Phew's Pies, a pop-up turned pizza truck that Matthew Foster rolled onto the streets of Atlanta two years ago, slinging 12-inch pizzas priced from \$13 to \$25. He spent the first part of his career in



WHY GO OFF THE BOARD?

Flavor combinations of starters and entrees can translate to pizza. With cross-utilization, the back of the house can reduce waste, control labor and wake up diners from their routine pizza orders. The unexpected can also trend on social media and become a signature.

Matthew Foster, chef/owner of Phew's Pies, riffs on pizza with lemon-pepper wet wings, a classic Atlanta staple.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAIN BAGWELL



Zazas channels an appetizer with artichokes, breadcrumbs, dill-infused ricotta, mozzarella and lemon.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK LAWLOR



In Chicago, Pizza Friendly Pizza's Neapolitan pan pie features mushrooms, caramelized onions, white miso, green onion and lemon vinaigrette on a black garlic sauce.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK LAWLOR



ALSO SEEN ON MENUS

Is that a sandwich,
appetizer, entree or a pizza?

- › **J Bird:** braised beef, red pepper, caramelized onion, mushroom, garlic, blue cheese, fresh mozzarella, arugula, balsamic glaze
- › **Kale Yes!** kale, mushroom, caramelized onion, garlic, ricotta, fresh mozzarella, Calabrian chili oil, pecorino
—*Crust Wood Fired Pizza, Charleston, South Carolina*

- › **Oddfather:** zucchini, smoked eggplant, Italian-style tempura crumbs
- › **Oldtown:** mushroom, Muenster, garlic cream, pumpernickel
- › **Ploughman:** ham, horseradish, red onion, smoked cheddar
—*Stretch, New York City*

- › **Cheddah & Feta:** broccoli leaves, stalk pesto, Calabrian chili, aged cheddar on dough made from upcycled ingredients
—*Shuggie's, San Francisco*

- › **Grilled Cheese:** butter, mozzarella, provolone, cheddar, dill pickles
- › **B.S.T:** tomato cream sauce, mozzarella, bacon, spinach, tomato
—*Park Pizza Co, Charleston, South Carolina*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAIN BAGWELL



Braised oxtail tops a Phew's pie while the braising liquid works as the sauce.

entertainment production, but the pandemic and a love for pizza led him to switch gears. Self-taught, Foster researched regional pizza styles, including Detroit and New York, and landed on a Neapolitan-like take. Toppings, however, are influenced by “the culture and flavors of metro cities, urban areas,” Foster says, referencing his lemon-pepper wet pizza, which is very Atlanta.

A lemon-pepper sauce is ladled onto the base and topped with chicken from air-fried seasoned wings and fresh and shredded mozzarella cheese. A pair of lemon-pepper wings sits proudly in the center along with lemon wedges. Rapper and activist Killer Mike retweeted a

description of the pizza and sales went from serving a few friends to 100-plus overnight.

Foster also applies entree logic to pizza with Caribbean-inspired oxtail. The braising liquid for the oxtails is reduced and serves as the sauce. The rich meat is removed from the oxtails and scattered onto the pizza along with the mirepoix from the braise, shredded mozzarella and dollops of ricotta.

If the oxtail pizza is reminiscent of an entree, his pesto pizza channels an appetizer vibe. Pesto made with pecans works as the base, which is topped with spinach, garlic, caramelized onion, shredded mozzarella and pecan gremolata. When the pizza emerges from the oven,

Matthew Wilde, chef/
owner of Bob's Pizza,
found a hit with a pickle,
mortadella and dill pie.



a ball of black truffle burrata is plopped onto the center, giving customers a creamy spread for the slices and a reason never to ignore the crust.

"I don't see the pies as a trend," Foster says. "It's how I love eating pizza."

Matthew Wilde, who spent the first part of his career as a fine dining chef, reflects similarly. He had no intentions of opening a pizzeria, let alone owning his current four in the Chicago area. But he agreed on one condition: Along with the customer-favorite ingredients, he would sell a chef-driven version at Bob's Pizza.

Inspired by the classic Cubano sandwich, Wilde created what was first called Pilsen-style pizza (because his first restaurant was located in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood) and later changed the name to ham and pickle pizza, which didn't exactly engender fans—until they tasted it. Now it's the bestseller, consisting of a garlic cream base topped with housemade pickles and nut-free mortadella. It's finished with shredded mozzarella, salt, pepper and fresh dill. The pickles and meat are thinly sliced, essential for balance and mouthfeel, Wilde says.

Until earlier this year, Wilde offered a Korean chicken pizza. While it had its avid fans, he took it off the menu. "I want every pizza to have the largest number of fans and a tight menu. I have one dessert for two reasons: People don't order dessert (after pizza) and our focus is pizza," Wilde says.

And that's why the moniker for the once-reluctant pizza owner is now "Home of the Original Pickle Pizza." ■

BOTTOM LEFT PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAIN BAGWELL

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TOGETHER AND LOOKED
LIKE A STAR.

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ANOTHER SPIN ON SALADS

Bold and hearty land on top

By Amber Gibson
Photography by Iain Bagwell
Food Styling by D'mytrek Brown
Prop Styling by Mindi Shapiro

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHELE HENDERSON



Salad gets some heft from radicchio, goat cheese, walnuts, grilled mushrooms and burnt onion ash. See recipe on page 17.

As vegetables gained star status on menus, something curious happened to salads:

They became un-boring. No longer a perfunctory prelude to an entree, leafy salads are standing tall, sturdy and unapologetically assertive.

Fueled by diners wanting to eat healthier, greens in salads have expanded beyond romaine, kale and mesclun. Hardier versions with more flavor—from endive and Swiss chard to several members of the radicchio family—are the base or a part of the mix. Supporting ingredients, including vegetables, fruit, protein and cheese, add heft and contrast, while sweet, acidic and salty accents provide a balance of creamy and crunchy elements so each bite packs a powerful punch.

Leafy greens thrive in cooler weather, so they are more flavorful this time of year. “Late fall radicchio, especially the Castelfranco, are the most delicious,” says Jay Kumar, chef at Lore in Brooklyn, New York.

Because hardier greens aren’t staid, they provide more of a creative outlet resulting in salads just as compelling as any starter. Here are some ways it’s all coming together.

Fall for bittersweet

Bitter greens are nutrient dense and excellent sources of fiber, but it’s important to lighten the assertive flavor with sweetness and fat. SPQR in San Francisco serves a brilliant purple insalata rossa of radicchio with several sweet accents—cherries, roasted beets and crunchy spiced pecans with a tangy goat cheese and mulled red wine vinaigrette. “It started with the idea to do something monochromatic,” says Chef Matthew Accarrino. “The sweetness of the cherries, earthiness of the beets, richness of the cheese and bitterness of the radicchio play so well together. We plated it in a playful way to mimic a bird’s nest, which I think is perfect for fall.”



FORTIFIED SALADS

Also seen at:

› Dandelion Salad with mixed greens, cucumber, avocado and lemon vinaigrette

› Charred cabbage Caesar with Parmesan tahini dressing, cashews, anchovy and crispy shallots
—The Dandelion, Philadelphia

› Coleman’s market lettuces, avocado, beet, cucumber and buckwheat

› Windrose arugula, cherries, Humbolt fog cheese, spiced pecan and aged balsamic
—Hatchet Hall, Los Angeles

› Farm lettuces, sprouts, creamy tahini vinaigrette, coconut carrot puree, kumquats, herbs and sunflower seed crunch
—Field & Vine, Somerville, Massachusetts

› White radicchio (Castelfranco), Robiola cheese, hazelnuts and honey
—Via Carota, New York City

Red Leaf Salad with Poached Pears, Figs and Squash

Executive Chef Trevor Stockton
The Restaurant at RT Lodge, Maryville, Tennessee

- 1 cup blue cheese crumbles
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Heavy pinch of black pepper
- 1 large head red leaf lettuce, rinsed, leaves intact
- 2 poached pears, recipe follows
- 1 small squash, peeled, roasted and thinly sliced*
- 4 figs, stemmed, sliced, drizzled with honey*
- 1 cup toasted pistachios
- 1 whole shallot, peeled and minced
- 4 sprigs dill, large stems removed
- Sea salt, as needed

Stir together blue cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon zest and juice and pepper; refrigerate overnight.

Layer lettuce with pears and squash on a plate or bowl, leaving more pears on top. Spoon desired amount of blue cheese dressing over the salad. Top with 1 halved fig, pistachios (*squash and figs are optional), shallot and dill. Sprinkle with sea salt on top. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

To poach pears: Place two peeled, cored and quartered pears in a saucepan with 1 cup white wine, 1 sprig rosemary, knob of sliced ginger and a pinch of salt. Place over low-medium heat and poach until almost tender. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature; store covered in liquid.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN HEINKEL

A salad with red leaf lettuce gets bulked up with the help of pears, figs and squash.



Chicories with Walnut Anchoiade, Goat Cheese, Mushroom Skewer and Burnt Onion Ash

Chef/owner Brian Bornemann
Isla, Santa Monica, California

- 16 ounces walnuts, toasted and sifted
- 10 brown anchovy filets, chopped
- 1 orange, juiced and zested
- ½ tablespoon smoked honey
- ½ teaspoon mortared garlic, lightly sweated
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- Arbequina olive oil, as needed
- 1 bottle port wine
- Shallots, sliced as needed
- ½ cup aged sherry vinegar, preferably Pedro Ximenez
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Chicories, such as Belgian endive (frisee), dandelion and Treviso, washed and chopped
- Goat cheese, as needed
- Onion ash, recipe follows
- Trumpet mushrooms, skewered, roasted and seasoned

Combine walnuts, anchovies, juice, honey, garlic, salt and pepper to make anchoiade. Add enough olive oil to bind; set aside.

Combine port and shallots and cook down to 16 ounces. Combine port shallot with both vinegars and salt. Slowly whisk in olive oil to preference. Toss desired amount in chicories and plate. Top with anchoiade and 2 ounces goat cheese per serving, sprinkle onion ash and place skewer along the plate. Makes supporting ingredients for 10 to 12 servings.

To make onion ash: Completely char and grill 3 large trimmed and quartered yellow onions; dehydrate and blitz.



Castelfranco, a flavorful but less sharp chicory, is having a moment on menus.

At RT Lodge in Tennessee, Chef Trevor Stockton looks to soft white wine-poached pears for sweetness to complement red leaf lettuce. Blue cheese dressing provides contrast, while toasted walnuts with rosemary, salt and pepper enhance the nuttiness and tone down the bitterness of the greens. He also has a version with Castelfranco, squash, pistachios and figs accompanied by a drizzle of honey. Sometimes it takes a bit of education, even with the savviest diners who say they don't like flavorful greens because of their sharpness. For example, on Che Fico's Instagram page, the San Francisco restaurant explains that Castelfranco, part of the radicchio family, has an exquisite bitter flavor with sweet undertones, much milder than radicchio di Chioggia, the better-known-purple and white variety. The restaurant offers a similar explanation to diners asking about the perceived bitterness of a dish—featuring Castelfranco layered with pickled Hachiya persimmons and Tomates teleka (a blend of goat, sheep and cow's milk cheese) garnished with toasted hazelnuts and mint.

Say it with citrus

Citrus is another popular sweet and sour foil during colder months, whether it's a citrusy

dressing or colorful fresh pomelo, mandarin, grapefruit, kumquat and blood orange segments strewn across a salad. At St. Cecilia in Atlanta, Executive Chef Nate Boer drizzles red endive leaves with honey, lemon juice and olive oil with a garnish of orange zest. "The sweet, rich honey and the contrasting bright natural acidity of lemon are perfect ingredients to both complement and balance the bitterness and subtle sweetness of the endive," he says.

Play hide and seek

Not all salads are green up front. A robust foundation of leafy greens can be creatively camouflaged to add an element of unexpected intrigue. Isla in Santa Monica, California, specializes in wood-fired coastal Californian cuisine, so its mountain of chicories is dusted with burnt onion ash, turning half the plate pitch black. "The ash uses remaining onion and onion stems from other dishes on the menu, lending a hint of bitterness and sweetness to the dish," says Chef Brian Bornemann. "The visual appeal is rather stark, making it more of a dramatic salad aesthetically." A flurry of cheese can do the trick, too. The garlicky chrysanthemum salad at Michelin-starred Don Angie in New York City is hidden under a pile of grated Parmesan. At Rolf and

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PREMAM

A mound of ricotta salata covers Swiss chard tossed with aged balsamic, radishes and bread crumbs, a flavorful seasonal salad inspired by Rolf & Daughters in Nashville.

CHEW ON THIS

Don't serve diners a fibrous salad that's hard to chew. With hardier greens like Swiss chard and even younger turnip greens, consider deveining the greens or chopping them into fork-sized pieces. "You want to ensure you don't get too much stem in the mix," says Brian Bornemann, the chef at Isla.

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Daughters in Nashville, Swiss chard is tossed with breadcrumbs and aged balsamic, then covered with a giant fluff of finely grated ricotta salata. Diners don’t even see the Swiss chard until the salad is mixed tableside. If you’re feeling especially fancy, three-star Michelin Le Cinq at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris has even served salads completely covered in large slices of Perigord black truffle.

Dressing it up

Dressing is a crucial element that ties everything together. Bornemann makes a port shallot vinaigrette and walnut anchoiade for his chicory salad, which offset the bitterness of the greens and add a sweet and salty crescendo. “It’s quite a crowd pleaser due to the balance,” he says. “Even for those who may typically shy away from bitter greens and the ingredients in general.”

At Lore, Kumar leans on chickpeas for his dressing, a staple ingredient in Indian cuisine and an important part of his heritage. The vegan dressing incorporates nutritional yeast, garlic and white balsamic. “Our creamy chickpea dressing contrasts with the bitter lettuces,” Kumar says. He sticks to younger, petite radicchios so the whole leaves are still tender. Finished with fried chickpea croutons, the salad is so popular that Kumar keeps it on the menu year-round, adjusting the greens for seasonality. “Dressing ratios vary by taste, but we use just enough to coat the greens.”

Rather than mixing up a dressing, Boer drizzles honey, lemon juice and olive oil separately over his salad. “There’s a beautiful simplicity to effortlessly slicing a lemon and giving it a squeeze over some greens from the garden, adding a drizzle of honey from the cupboard, then liberally pouring some of your favorite extra-virgin olive oil to finish the dish,” he says. “This technique adds variety as the flavors of sweet and tart sway back and forth with each bite.” ■



LETTUCE EVOLVE

THEN

When greens served as just a vehicle for flavor:

Iceberg
Romaine
Mesclun mix
Baby greens

NOW

When health and flavor drive greens:

Power greens
Little Gem
Swiss chard
Dandelion
Market/Farm lettuces
Castelfranco, Treviso and other chicories

Leafy Salad with Roasted Carrots, Chickpea Croutons and Crunchy Seeds

*Executive Chef Jay Kumar
Lore, Brooklyn, New York*

6 heads radicchio, mixed varieties such as di Chioggia, rosa, Castelfranco
½ cup fresh herbs, such as parsley, dill and mint, plus extra for garnish
16 ounces canned chickpeas, divided use
½ head roasted garlic
⅓ cup aquafaba
1 lime, juiced
1½ teaspoon white balsamic vinegar
1¼ teaspoon black pepper, divided use
1 teaspoon nutritional yeast
1 teaspoon paprika
2½ cups canola oil, divided use
Kosher salt, as needed
½ pound fresh carrots with leaves
Olive oil, as needed
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ teaspoon ground coriander
¼ teaspoon ground fennel
Crunchy seeds, recipe follows

Remove stems of radicchio heads, rinse leaves; dry, combine with herbs in a large bowl and set aside.

Combine ⅓ cup chickpeas, garlic, aquafaba, lime juice, balsamic vinegar, 1 teaspoon black pepper, nutritional yeast and paprika in a blender to make dressing. Process until smooth; slowly add 1½ cups oil to emulsify. Add salt to taste, adjust seasonings and set aside.

Trim and peel carrots, leaving ½-inch tops (reserving leaves for garnish), toss with olive oil and salt and pepper, and roast at 375 F until cooked through and charred.

Heat remaining 1 cup oil to 350 F and fry chickpeas for 2 to 4 minutes or until crisp and chickpeas float to the top. Toss chickpea croutons with cumin, coriander, fennel and salt to taste.

To assemble, toss greens with dressing and plate in a serving bowl. Top with 2 to 3 carrots, chickpea croutons and crunchy seeds. Garnish with herbs and carrot tops. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

To make crunchy seeds: Toss ⅓ cup each of flax, pumpkin and sunflower seeds with 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Create a paste with 4 garlic cloves, 1-inch knob fresh ginger root and 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil. Coat seeds with garlic-ginger paste, spread onto a sheet pan and bake at 350 F for 15 minutes or until crisp.



It lies in prep and layering flavors

It lies in prep and layering flavors



Smart prep along with layering flavors make simple onion soup stand out. Get the recipe on page 26.

Whenever a cuisine is having a moment,

its most iconic dishes are also enjoying a lift—like onion soup, courtesy of the resurgence of French restaurants during the last several years.


Onion soup, however, has become so ubiquitous that it has ventured beyond its homeland, showing up at steakhouses, sports bars and American bistros. When more than half of all diners like or love it, according to food research firm Datassential, onion soup is a contender for sales, especially with cooler months ahead.

To stand out, chefs are relying on technique, presentation, additional ingredients and even turning the classic on its head. While the soup is simple—broth, caramelized onions, cheese and bread—its soul-satisfying complexity is achieved by layering flavors.

“When you consider the role of each part of the soup, you are rewarded with a deep and flavorful result,” says Alexandre Viriot, executive chef at La Societe in San Francisco.

CAMPHOR, LOS ANGELES


Details: Co-executive chefs Max Boonthanakit and Lijo George execute a menu that’s anything but ordinary at their French-influenced modern bistro, which reflects their global travels and work experience, including Boonthanakit’s time at Alain Ducasse’s restaurant in Thailand.

 **Prep:** Their version of French onion soup remedies the ratio problem that results after the bubbly, cheesy, soup-soaked crouton is gone, leaving plenty of soup and onions. Instead, they feature an exceptionally large, thick slice of toasted sourdough on a plate with bruleed cheese. The soup, which is poured tableside, encourages sharing. Each bite is soup and cheesy.




CHEZ MAGGY, DENVER

Details: French Chef Ludo Lefebvre, beloved in Los Angeles for his sometimes offbeat but always exceptionally-executed take on his homeland’s cuisine, opened his first restaurant outside California last year. The restaurant pays homage to his mother-in-law who’s from the Mile High City—appropriately local but decidedly French.

 **Prep:** Beef or chicken bones are often the go-to for French onion soup, but in France, it’s veal bones, which is the route Lefebvre takes. A thick slice of sourdough sits on top of the soup, but the cheese—Comte and Gruyere—is draped generously so it oozes all over the sides of the serving vessel. It’s a head-turner, one that entices other diners to order if they hadn’t already.


LA SOCIETE BAR & CAFE, SAN FRANCISCO

Details: U.S.-born Alexandre Viriot brings a trove of experience to this restaurant, which opened a year ago. He’s worked with legendary greats Guy Savoy, Joel Robuchon and Alain Ducasse.

 **Prep:** Oxtail provides the base for Viriot’s dramatic presentation of onion soup. Instead of tossing the meat, he turns it into a ragout presented on a split bone, atop smoked marrow. He also prefers white over yellow onions sliced into chunks so that the allum doesn’t turn to mush. His soup gets a splash of sherry, sherry vinegar and brandy for depth and brightness. For cheese, he prefers the tang of 24-month aged Comte, but Gruyere works, too.

LE CLOU, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Details: One of several French restaurants that opened in the nation’s capital in the last year features Michelin-star Chef Nicholas Stefanelli’s take on the modern French brasserie.

 **Prep:** Caramelizing onions takes time so it’s important not to rush it, otherwise the result will be bitter. As a rule, the onions are doused with a spirit, wine or some kind of acid. Stefanelli goes with sherry and uses a mix of Comte and Gruyere on a raft of pain de mie, a neutral-tasting fluffy bread that allows the depth of the onion and beef-fortified broth to deliver deep, straightforward flavor.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC FIORITO OF GAMMA NINE PHOTOGRAPHY





Meat from making the onion soup base fills a smoked bone marrow at La Societe Bar & Cafe, San Francisco.

Onion Soup with Smoked Bone Marrow and Oxtail Ragout

*Chef Alexandre Viriot
La Societe Bar & Cafe, San Francisco*

- 2 ounces duck fat
- 3½ ounces garlic, sliced
- 36 ounces white onion, sliced root to stem on thickest mandolin depth
- 1 bay leaf
- 5 stems thyme, tied with butcher's twine
- ½ ounce fresh cracked black pepper
- 5 ounces butter, diced
- 3½ ounces brandy
- 1½ ounces sherry vinegar
- 6½ cups beef broth
- 2½ ounces Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry
- Sourdough croutons, as needed
- Comte cheese, grated, as needed
- Marrow bones, halved lengthwise per order, smoked
- Oxtail ragout and smoked marrow bones, your recipe, as needed
- Toasted garlic slices, as needed
- Chives or tarragon, chiffonade, as needed

Heat duck fat and saute garlic. Add onions to deeply caramelize. Add bay leaf, thyme, black pepper and butter and continue to cook. Add brandy, sherry vinegar and beef stock; bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes for flavors to combine. Remove from the heat and season with sherry; adjust seasonings.

Preheat broiler. In small oven-resistant crock soup bowls, add the soup up to ¾ of level and top up with croutons and grated cheese. Place on a sheet pan and broil until golden brown, about 60 to 90 seconds. Place ragout on top of marrow bones followed by garlic slices and herbs. Serve with soup. Makes 4 to 6 servings. ■



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COVER STORY

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Dupes gain
leverage as
center-of-
the-plate
options

By Amber Gibson
Photography by Iain Bagwell
Food Styling by D'mytrek Brown
Prop Styling by Mindi Shapiro

PHOTOGRAPHY BY IDONI RICCARDI



Scan the QR
code to get
the recipe for
this roasted
beet burger.



The spread of plant and cell-based protein

alternatives shows no signs of slowing down, as they're impacting menus in an unexpected way. Chefs are getting more creative and leaning heavier into produce as center-of-the-plate dupes. Think dupes for steak, burgers, seafood, pork and even pasta for the carb-conscious.

Such interest is driven by a variety of factors, including the desire for less processed food. The target audience, however, is undeniable: flexitarians and social omnivores—consumers who go meatless, particularly when they dine out with others—but don't adhere to any strict eating habits. When it comes to dupes, chefs also know that it's all about taste; no one wants an alternative to meat if it doesn't taste good. And if there's a wow factor, expect a runaway success.

Taking a dupe to a meaty level relies heavily on heft, texture, umami and spices without

masking flavor. However, the dupe can be a sponge like tofu. At State Bird Provisions in San Francisco, chef/owners Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski swap in yuba sheets as a gluten-free substitute for pasta, which also offers the protein benefits of tofu. The possible variations are endless. At AbcV in New York City, Jean-Georges Vongerichten serves housemade silky tofu with yuba in a sour chili broth accompanied by peanuts and cilantro.

» Dupe for steak

Cauliflower steak has become as ubiquitous as formidable options when it's well-seasoned and grilled with a crispy char. But celeriac is moving in. The horseradish-crusted celeriac steak at Kindling in Chicago takes the approach to another level.

"I love slow-cooking this savory root vegetable on the rotisserie," says Chef/partner Jonathan Sawyer. "All of the starches transform to sweet celery flavors, and it yields an amazing

Horseradish Crusted Celery Root Steaks with Mustard Sauce and Parsley Salad

*Executive Chef Jonathan Sawyer
Kindling, Chicago*

2 1-pound celery roots
Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed
Kosher salt, as needed
2 teaspoons sugar
1 cup panko
¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
⅓ cup horseradish, prepared
2 tablespoons Parmigiano Reggiano, grated
1 lemon, juice and zest, divided use
Black pepper, as needed
Mustard sauce, recipe follows
Parsley, leaves only, as needed

Coat celery roots in oil, salt and sugar. Roast on rotisserie or indirectly over a wood fire on low for up to 2 hours. Cool, peel and slice into 1-inch thick "steak" disks; set aside.

Meanwhile, combine panko, butter, horseradish, cheese, ½ of the lemon juice, and zest and salt and pepper to taste. Place in parchment and roll into a tube; chill and slice into 1-inch-thick pieces.

At service, season celeriac steaks with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil in saute pan and sear steaks over medium-high heat, about 3 minutes. Turn over, remove from heat and top with a disk of butter. Place under the broiler to brown butter crust and render some butter through the celeriac.

To plate, spoon mustard sauce onto a plate and top with 1 or 2 steaks. Toss parsley with remaining lemon and some olive oil, salt and pepper and serve with steaks.

To make mustard sauce: Combine 1 cup sour cream, 1 cup Dijon, ½ cup mayonnaise, 2 tablespoons mustard powder and 1 ounce lemon juice. Let rest for 24 hours for mustard powder to fully absorb.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PUNDA PANDA

At Kindling, the recently opened steakhouse in Chicago, celeriac is slow-roasted on a rotisserie. See recipe, opposite page.



Scan the QR code to get the recipe for Jackfruit Wet Burrito.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEILA MELHADO

texture totally different from raw or just roasted or smashed.”

Sawyer presents it as a hefty steak-sized 8-ounce disc with a zippy Parmesan panko horseradish crust and classic mustard sauce. In lieu of a rotisserie, Sawyer recommends roasting indirectly over a wood fire low and slow for two hours, or in the oven.

» **Dupe for pork**

Shredded jackfruit carnitas are a dead ringer for pork at Gracias Madre in West Hollywood, California, marinated with tomato, chipotle, smoked paprika and cumin. It’s then stuffed into a sturdy wet burrito that’s attracted the likes of Willow Smith and Woody Harrelson. Executive Chef Diana Briscoe marinades jackfruit just like pork but rinses it thoroughly to remove acidity. “The flakiness and the tenderness of pork carnitas have the same mouthfeel as braised jackfruit, and they are both great sources of protein,” Briscoe says.

» **Dupe for raw meat**

At The Mary Lane in New York’s West Village, executive chef Andrew Sutin serves a king trumpet mushroom tartare with truffle Dijon aioli and fingerling potato chips as a satisfyingly savory but lighter alternative to beef tartare.

“The mushroom replaces the beef, with the richness, body, earthiness and just the right texture that you expect from beef,” Sutin says. He’s experimented with carrots, radishes and turnips, but royal king trumpet mushrooms reign supreme when it comes to mimicking the raw meat texture. For the best texture, use firm, dense and slightly older mushrooms.

» **Dupe for burgers**

Grain-prominent burgers or protein-packed, soy-based and black bean burgers are still abundant, but chefs are zeroing in on vegetable-forward versions. Shake Shack



spent two years perfecting its vegetable burger, specifically to eschew highly processed cell-based meat and wheat gluten. Launched this year at nearly 500 U.S. locations, the Veggie Shack has landed solid reviews of its mushroom, sweet potato, carrot, farro and quinoa patty topped with American cheese, fried onions, pickles and Shack Sauce.

At sports bar The Fifty/50, the Mother Earth burger features sauted carrots, sweet potato and celery with black beans, brown rice and lentils for a thick 8-ounce patty that co-owner Scott Weiner says is one of the few items left unchanged from their original menu.

“The idea was not to make it taste like meat, but to have the texture of a burger with umami flavor,” he says. “We give it a heavy sear to create that caramelization on the exterior.”

Beets are the star ingredient in Chef/owner Halle VanNatta-Torkelsen’s luscious magenta burger at Flourish Plant-Based Kitchen in Portland, Oregon.

“The roasted beets provide a tender and juicy texture, while the lentils and walnuts add a hearty and slightly chewy element,” she says of her burger that also includes beet skins to minimize food waste. “A subtle nuttiness from the walnuts creates a unique and savory flavor profile.” It’s then topped with pickled cucumbers, housemade cashew mozzarella, fried shallots and chimichurri sauce. “Each bite is a messy yet satiating experience,” she says. “Our aim is to create the grown-up version of our perfect burger with all the salty, fatty, hot and acidic elements we haphazardly stumbled upon when we were kids.”



Yuba “All’amatriciana” with Tomatoes, Chanterelles and Jowl Bacon

Chef/owners Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski
State Bird Provisions, San Francisco

8 ounces yuba (preferably Hodo Soy brand), sheets unfolded and sliced into 7 ½-inch strips
2 ounces jowl bacon, thinly sliced into 1-inch pieces
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces
1 medium garlic clove, thinly sliced
4 ounces fresh golden chanterelle mushrooms, trimmed, cleaned, and cut into ¼-inch slices
¼ teaspoon red chili flakes
10 turns freshly ground black pepper
Kosher salt
3 ounces aged pecorino, finely grated, plus more for garnish
12 large basil leaves

10 cherry and grape tomatoes, preferably a variety of colors and shapes, halved
Fresh tomato sauce, recipe follows
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Rinse and drain the yuba, gently squeezing to remove any excess liquid; set aside.

Combine the guanciale, 1 tablespoon butter and the garlic in a large saute pan, set over medium-high heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until the guanciale has rendered some of its fat and just begun to brown at the edges, about 3 minutes.

Add the mushrooms, chili flakes and 5 turns pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms have softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the yuba, 1 tablespoon butter and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring constantly, until the edges of the yuba brown slightly, about 3 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and remaining 1 tablespoon butter and cook, stirring frequently, until the sauce reduces and

coats the noodles, but the mixture is still slightly saucy, 30 to 60 seconds. Sprinkle with the pecorino and ½ teaspoon salt, stir well, and cook for 30 seconds more.

Remove the pan from the heat, season with salt and stir in the basil. Sprinkle with the cherry tomatoes and remaining 5 turns pepper, drizzle with the olive oil and garnish with more pecorino. Twirl with a large fork and plate, spooning ingredients around the yuba.

To make tomato sauce: On a box grater, grate the cut sides of a pound of sweet-tart heirloom tomatoes halved; discard core and skin. Add 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar, 1 teaspoon kosher salt and 5 turns of freshly ground black pepper. Mix to combine.

Adapted from “State Bird Provisions” by Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski, Ten Speed Press.

Yuba can do what pasta does and more as chefs use the ingredient from tofu production as a less-processed protein alternative.





Watermelon nigiri from MILA in Miami that uses fruits and vegetables as protein alternatives.

Dupe for fried chicken

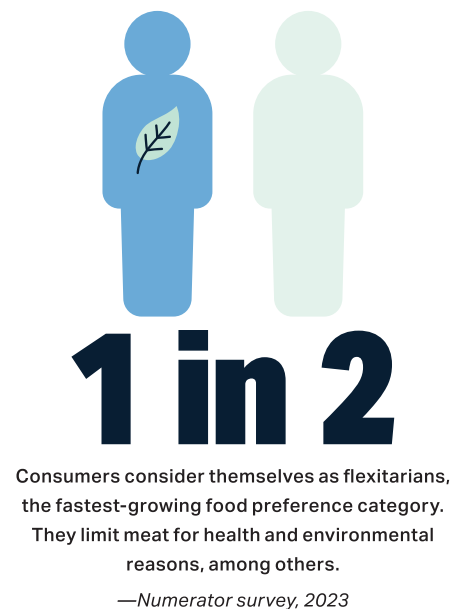
Sometimes riffing off a sure thing can be the smartest route. Whole cauliflower is making its way into quick service by riding the coattails of the crispy chicken sandwich. In the test markets of Denver and North and South Carolina, Chik-Fil-A rolled out its first nonchicken sandwich using a hunk of cauliflower prepped and presented the same way as its iconic crispy chicken sandwich. Dave's Hot Chicken in June followed suit, choosing six locations in Portland, Oregon, to try out crispy fried cauliflower as a sandwich and as cauliflower bites. Influencers on TikTok and other social media platforms lit up over both.

Dupe for seafood

MILA Omakase in Miami launched a Tuesday vegan omakase menu earlier this year

with notable results: it consistently sells out. Nigiri riffs include roasted watermelon "ahi tuna" and eggplant "unagi" pieces brushed with teriyaki sauce that Chef Reiji Yoshizawa says some guests mistake for eel. "We sear the eggplant in vegan miso butter and finish with lime to balance the richness," he says. VanNatta-Torkelsen also serves a shiitake "unagi" sushi burrito at Flourish that's wrapped in nori seaweed.

A similar take on produce is the cornerstone of Miami-based Planta, which opened its first location in 2016. Each of the 11 restaurants in cities such as New York City, Chicago and Miami (with 10 more expected by year's end) features one of three approaches (Asian, Latin American or multi-cuisines), but they are all plant-forward with hearts of palm as a dupe for



ceviche that includes avocado, pineapple, leche de pina, cilantro and corn nuts. There's also "chick'n" fried mushrooms bao sliders with hoisin and pickled cucumbers, and beetroot tuna as a dupe for the fish with pine nuts, capers, citrus soy, sesame, cilantro and taro chips at Planta Queen in Chicago.

While the restaurants do not feature any animal products, most diners are flexitarians or those just interested in the experience.

"We're not trying to force activism of plant-based dining on any diner," founder and CEO Steven Salm told Forbes. "We want to be a global leader in plant-based hospitality and have a basis of employees and suppliers that are committed to our ongoing success." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MILA OMAKASE



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Earl Grey-infused tequila with verju, bergamot and grapefruit is dispensed in seconds from a tap at Double Chicken Please.

LET THE DRAFT IN

How to run booze from money-making taps

By Lesley Balla
Photography by Iain Bagwell
Food Styling by D'mytrek Brown
Prop Styling by Mindi Shapiro

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GN CHAN AND EMMANUEL ROSARIO

Double Chicken Please in New York City serves more than a dozen cocktails on tap.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY GN CHAN AND EMMANUEL ROSARIO

When Dave Purcell

took over as beverage director for two Los Angeles-area restaurants, he needed to develop different programs that catered to varied and demanding customers. He also didn't want to overload his staff but had to mind the bottom line.

He turned to draft cocktails, which hit all the notes.

"Every single item from the bar needs to take the same amount of time," Purcell says of The Waterfront Venice and Winston House. "We were looking at like \$6 per second, so it didn't matter if we were pouring beer, wine or cocktails. It all needed to be equally fast."

At The Waterfront, a busy beach bar on the Venice boardwalk that serves up to 2,500 guests during prime sunset hours, drinks must be efficient and consistent from concept to customer. Serving draft cocktails along with other tap beverages made sense from an economical and operational standpoint—especially when there's a labor crunch.

With the many logistics to consider for a strong draft cocktail program, there's a learning curve. But done well, it can be a money-generator for venues of any volume. A checklist for getting it right:

Evaluate space and equipment

Space is required for prep, storing the cocktail kegs and the dispensing equipment. Purcell dedicated a temperature-controlled fridge for Waterfront's cocktail program. It houses the kegs, 20-liter containers for base mixes prepped and ready for when a keg needs to be replaced, and other ingredients.

Staff needs training

At least one person, if not an entire bar team, should know how to batch the cocktails, put them in the kegs and hook up the CO2 or nitrogen.

"Training is still essential," says Tako Chang, brand marketing and communications manager at Double Chicken Please in New York City which offer one of the most highly regarded bar programs in the country. Seasonally driven, its "taptails" offers 10 unique creations.

"It's not just pulling a tap handle. It's how many ice cubes, the way you pour a drink, what order to use extra ingredients. Plus, you need to know how to serve a packed room efficiently."

Keep it clean

Regular tap line cleaning and maintenance is a must; just make sure service companies and suppliers are reliable. Always have a backup plan.



Serving cocktails on tap at Double Chicken Please saves time and draws customers with their unique flavors.



Seasonal drinks on tap at Double Chicken Please include apple brandy, pomegranate and ginger ale. This take is garnished with pomegranate gummies for a playful twist.



Know how to troubleshoot

“Learn how to fix and clean lines and pipes, how to read the gas meters; if the CO2 is gone, make sure everyone knows who to call,” Chang says. “That can make or break any busy night.”

Understand the ingredients

Know how spirits interact with sugar, mixers and other ingredients and how they’ll pour out of a tap. Batched cocktails differ from individually crafted ones. Avoid using pulp-heavy citrus or other fruit that could clog the tap lines. Egg whites or dairy aren’t good for consistency.

Treat it right

If a batched cocktail separates in a keg, it needs to be shaken during a shift. A draft cocktail served over ice dilutes differently than one made by hand, so that water needs to be compensated for in a recipe.

Substituting works

Purcell doesn’t use fresh citrus for Waterfront margaritas because the quantity of lime juice is too great. It also requires labor to squeeze and has a shorter shelf life, which can lead to more waste. The workaround: Perricone juice, a lime acid solution and calamansi for textural elements and flavor.

Experiment but factor in time for testing

Research and development can take up to two months before a new drink hits the menu, Chang says. Even something simple like an old fashioned or Manhattan needs tweaking. A bad batch of an entire keg is costly.

Keep messaging clear

Some customers may think a premade drink might be watered down or not prepared as well.

Flipping the script on perception takes a bit of nuance and a lot of education: Knowing ingredients of each drink, how the system works, educating the staff to use the right language and keeping cool.

“There are trigger words we try to avoid,” says Purcell. “We might say ‘fully composed’ cocktails, or we ‘pre-articulated’ this drink. Sometimes it works if you just say it in a nicer way.”

If done right, draft cocktails are good for business. There’s less spillage, since the cocktails are already measured and mixed. Customers can sample a drink before they order, so there’s less likelihood they’ll send it back for something else. Consistency increases repeat visits.

“If you’re accurate, it’s so cost-effective,” says Purcell. “If you’re measuring the product, managing the lines, staff is trained to pour the correct amount, your bottom line is simpler. Inventory systems can more accurately account for those things.” ■

“If you’re accurate, it’s so cost effective. If you’re measuring the product, managing the lines, staff is trained to pour the correct amount, your bottom line is simpler.”

—Dave Purcell, beverage director, *The Waterfront Venice and Winston House*

Tequila, Cocchi Americano and Bergamot grapefruit

Double Chicken Please, New York City

2160 ml tequila
360 ml Earl Grey tea infused tequila*
1440 ml Italicus
1080 ml Verjus blanc
720 ml Cocchi Americano
4320 ml grapefruit soda
2.5 grams kosher salt

Combine all ingredients and place in tap. Serve with or without ice.

***To make Earl Grey tea-infused tequila:** Combine 35 grams of Earl Grey tea with 1750 ml tequila and slow cook at 60 C for 2 hours.



Aperol, Passion fruit, Sparkling Wine and Soda

Double Chicken Please, New York City

6000 ml sparkling wine
3000 ml Aperol
2000 ml soda water
1000 ml Chinola passion fruit liqueur
Dehydrated pineapple for garnish

Combine ingredients and place on tap. Serve over ice and garnish if desired.

TREND TRACKER

ON THE RADAR



Pearls of wisdom.

Tonburi “field caviar” (dried summer cypress seeds that pop) has been a favorite vegan caviar dupe seen at Eleven Madison Park and Jungsik in New York, but now Cavi-art enters the market with clean, briny vegan caviar seaweed pearls created by Danish Chef Jens Møller.



Sexy stemware.

Investing in quality stemware helps sell wine pairings and premium bottles of wine. Glasvin’s lightweight hand-blown glasses are on par with Zalto, Grassl and Sophienwald for a fraction of the price. Michelin-starred restaurants like Gabriel Kreuther and Kato are fans.

HIGH ALERT



Playing hide and seek.

For that element of surprise, dishes are served cloaked with one ingredient.

Last seen: Rim-to-rim rhubarb granita covers a layer of yogurt mousse and strawberries while a mound of ricotta salad hides greens and its accompanying ingredients at Nashville’s Rolf and Daughters.



Getting duped.

Maybe it’s backlash from overprocessed meat replacements or just the demand for more vegetable-focused dishes. Dupes are good. See page 28.



Like a cloud

Billowy Japanese milk bread aka shokupan is the latest “it” bread, appearing with seasoned butter or as sandwiches and even French toast.

Last seen: Milk bread French toast with blueberries, caramel and mascarpone at Songbird in St. Louis.



Boozeless wines.

Non-alcoholic wines no longer taste like grape juice, but they can boost the bottom line. The flavors are complex and pair beautifully with food.

Last seen: Selections at Gucci Osteria in Los Angeles and La Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels wine bar in New York.

FADING OUT



Coming off cheap.

Yes, oysters are more plentiful than ever thanks to conservation efforts, but don’t deeply discount the bivalves to draw customers unless staff promotes high-margin items.



Sriracha as a crutch.

Just because it’s as beloved as ketchup doesn’t mean it should go on everything.

Try this instead: Salsa macha, sambal or harissa add complex heat and can set a part a dish.



Who’s got the high-end munchies?

There’s room for more than pizza and hot dogs after midnight. Hospitality groups such as Miami’s Riviera Dining Group and 50 Eggs Hospitality in Las Vegas are elevating late-night cuisine with the help of

Michelin-starred chefs like Michaël Michaeïdis and

Tetsuya Wakuda.



Not your dentist’s floss.

Pork floss has got game as chefs reimagine Asian “cotton candy” of crispy pork, shredded and seasoned with soy and sugar.

Last seen: Salty-sweet, shredded duck that generously tops Salade Lyonnaise “Canard,” a brunch dish at Obelix in Chicago.



Being a tech idiot isn’t funny anymore.

Was it ever? Profitability probably didn’t think so.

Try this instead: The Borne Report’s new Location Reporting Engine is like CarFax for restaurateurs. It’s using AI to generate a marketing planning report for cuisine feasibility and revenue projection at any potential or actual business address with fully customizable Google Slides in minutes.



Color-Changing Cocktails.

Blue to pink color-changing butterfly pea cocktails are so common now that they’ve lost any sense of magic.

Try this instead: The Coral Wig in Baltimore serves up a positively addictive MSG margarita with banana-infused tequila, banana liqueur and two dashes of MSG solution for a savory accent.

BREAD'S

What's holding it all together

SPREAD



Bread as a stand-alone starter has become a menu star, an option that diners pay for, making the dispensable free stuff a memory.

But what about bread that keeps it all together, from sandwiches to burgers? Consumers say that the protein in sandwiches and the quality of meat in a burger are the most important element, but chefs argue that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. If any components, such as cheese, spreads or other fillings, don't measure up, burgers and sandwiches aren't living up to their potential.

Consider the sandwiches from Hector Santiago, chef and owner of Latin-inspired sandwich bar El Super Pan in Atlanta where classics converge with innovation. These are iconic items like the Cubano, which combines Cuban roasted pork, ham, salami, pickles, yellow mustard, Swiss cheese and "mojo," as well as e Pan de Jamon y Queso with serrano ham, manchego cheese, almond-date spread, arugula and piquillo agridulce on Spanish focaccia.

"Every component plays a different role and all are equally important," Santiago says.

While burgers are a mainstay, unnerved by specialty diets or higher prices, sandwich consumption, according to foodservice research firm Datassential, has returned to pre-pandemic levels. And even though consumers eat sandwiches more often at home than from foodservice, the increase still presents opportunities for operators.

GET FRESH

Freshness, such as fresh-baked and longevity of freshness, and preferred brands are all top reasons why consumers will to pay more for bread, says Datassential. Following such



factors are the appeal of whole grains, organic options and sources of fiber.

The diners at Antigua's Bar & Grill in Dorado and Magnolia, Arkansas, aren't aware that the Nature's Own Perfectly Crafted Brioche Style hamburger bun holds together the burger, but manager Lili Sanchez knows that the flavor, texture and freshness all contribute to the experience. Customers say they love the burger overall but the restaurant knows each ingredient counts. If one is missing, it wouldn't be the same. Nature's Own Brioche Style hamburger buns have no artificial flavors, preservatives, or colors, no high fructose corn syrup, and they are Non-GMO Project Verified. They are soft and subtly sweet, which makes



66%

Increase of brioche on menus over the last several years

Source: Datassential

Fruit and cream sandwiches on fluffy white bread are entering the mainstream, opposite page, while brioche buns, top, remain a favorite for crispy-fried chicken sandwiches glazed with hot honey.



Riffing on fan-favorite grilled cheese sandwiches are seemingly endless. Below: provolone, cheddar and American cheese with tomato confit on white bread.



52%

Increase in sandwich sales last year

Source: Datassential

them perfect for any sandwich or burger on menus across the country.

Soft rolls have taken center stage thanks to the popularity of crispy fried chicken sandwiches.

In the last several years, brioche has grown 66% on menus, says Datassential, and it's projected to continue on a similar trajectory in part because of its rich buttery texture as well as the fact that it can be crossed-utilized. Restaurants such as Blue Moon in Seattle, use brioche for its burgers, plant-based burgers and chicken sandwiches.

SPECIAL ADVERTORIAL SECTION

LIKE A CLOUD

Japanese milk bread, the soft, pillowy slices also known as shokupan, is trending on menus, showing up as sandwiches, bread basket starters, avocado toast and even French toast. Dallas-based Sandoitchi gets some credit for popularizing the Japanese sandwich, which they had planned for 2019 but launched during the pandemic as a pop-up. Stevie Nguyen, the culinary side of the operation who has worked in the kitchens of Morimoto and Momofuku Ko in New York City, and his partners experienced overnight success as the visual appeal of his creations—white bread sandwiches halved and stacked showing the ingredients inside—exploded on social media. While ingredients such as egg salad, panko crusted chicken and even fruit and cream, are the star, the bread brings it all together, Nguyen has said.

CRISPY AND SOFT

TikTok self-made chefs like Owen Han have developed a following by giving sandwiches a glow up. Words are not spoken, music isn't played. Instead, each video is packed with the sounds of cooking and prep, from the sizzling of meat to the clinking of metal mixing bowls. But it's the crackle of crusty bread—from baguettes to ciabatta rolls—and the visual of pressing the surface to show its plush cushion that brings the sandwich to its crescendo—all in 10 to 15 seconds. With nearly 4 million followers, Han has a cookbook deal in the works due out in fall 2024.

That kind of textural sensation comes through from the jackfruit sandwich served during brunch at Baar Baar in New York City—but in the reverse. The crispy cutlet that's a dupe for pork sits on a soft potato roll with housemade barbecue sauce, chili mayo and coleslaw.

Convenience and speed draw customers to sandwiches, chefs like Santiago say. But ultimately, the bread and the filling in between keeps them a popular choice. ■

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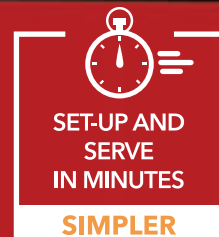
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SIGNS SAY GO

Is it time to expand?
 By Bret Thorn



Get organized to expand, Sagaria says, but expect delays.

All indicators are flashing:

Pandemic fallout has passed, inflation isn't running away anymore, the supply chain seems to be coming back under control, the cost of most goods is down and the labor crunch is still bad (it's always bad) but getting better.

Does that mean it's time to expand? It depends on individual circumstances, but Sabato Sagaria has some serious experience to help out. He was chief restaurant officer of Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group in New York City, where he oversaw the opening of nine concepts, before becoming president of casual-dining chain Bartaco, growing it from 13 to 22 restaurants. Now he's a founding partner of Apres Cru Hospitality, which invests in growing companies and provides strategic insights. Among those investments are the restaurants of Marc Forgione in New York City and Ludo Lefebvre in Los Angeles. He recently laid out his thoughts on when and how to expand.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Although there's no checklist that applies to every situation, your current restaurant must already be working, Sagaria says.

Ask yourself:

- 1 Do you have a successful blueprint that you can use to scale?
- 2 Is it financially successful?
- 3 Does it resonate with guests?
- 4 Do you have a game plan to execute it in a new space?
- 5 Why are you expanding?
- 6 Do you actually have the time and money to run another restaurant?

"Understand what your needs are, and you can use that as a filter to make sure that you're staying true to what that is," Sagaria says.

Make sure there's enough financing and other resources before shopping for real estate, "because as soon as you do find a space, the clock is ticking and time equals dollars instantly," Sagaria says.

Anticipate delays and understand that if you're not in the black within six months—ideally within three months—it might be time to reevaluate.

"To be successful (profitable quickly) is something that you need to do, but it also depends on your investors' expectations," he says.

GET ORGANIZED

If you want to open more than one restaurant at once, then things get more complicated and becomes what Sagaria calls "like playing checkers."

Ask yourself:

- 1 What do I have to get done today?
- 2 What do I have to start lining up now? In six weeks? Three months?
- 3 What permits are needed? What's the lead time? Again, anticipate delays.
- 4 Can I have staff in place within six to eight weeks from opening?
- 5 If there's a new partner, can I get the agreement in order before starting?

PHOTO COURTESY OF GLAZE

"Truly understand how those dominoes need to fall," Sagaria says. Otherwise, the process can get stalled and that gets expensive quickly.

"If you're (expanding) across multiple projects and you're not thinking ahead, it just really starts to backlog. And again, the clock is ticking," he says, adding, "Anything involving gas is also something that's going to take a lot of time and planning."

WHAT ABOUT A DIFFERENT CONCEPT?

Do you have a full-service restaurant but want to start selling chicken sandwiches in a fast-casual setting? In some ways, you'll be starting from scratch, but in other ways, you won't be, Sagaria says.

Do this:

- 1 Surround yourself with the best people from the first project.
- 2 Leverage current systems for the new one—accounting, payroll, point-of-sale, human resources.
- 3 Determine design and marketing; they will be different.
- 4 Understand a different clientele. What is somebody looking for when they're grabbing lunch to go in 20 minutes versus having a two and a half hour dinner? Those are very different expectations that you need to deliver on.
- 5 Reevaluate your tech stack. "Do you need to work with more third-party delivery companies? Ordering kiosks? It depends on how much technology you want to leverage," he says. "There's more tech opportunity in many ways for quick-service concepts."

EXPANSION WITHIN

If you want to add a bar, open a takeout window or add an event space to what you already have, you must consider other factors.

Do this:

- 1 Determine the needs for a second dining room, such as bathrooms.

"Your real bread and butter is taking care of guests within the four walls. It's important to understand the true cost of time, energy and effort as well as the dollars involved to see if it makes sense."

—Sabato Sagaria, founding partner of Apres Cru Hospitality

- 2 Figure out what approvals are needed and which city agencies need to be involved. A takeout window on the outside may entail certain parameters. A lower-level room may need different certifications for use.

EXPANDING WITH RETAIL?

It seems like every restaurant is packaging products for sale. Maybe it makes sense, but start with baby steps and reevaluate after a few months to analyze return on investment.

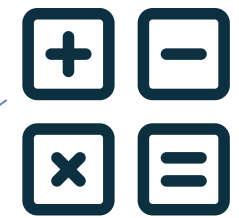
Ask yourself:

- 1 Did the new processes ease into your day-to-day workflow, or did it gum up your works?
- 2 Did you have the space to do it in?
- 3 Was it taxing? If so, consider limiting the amount and work on it during slower times. For example, prepare packages on Monday and take one trip to FedEx on Tuesday.

"Your real bread and butter is taking care of guests within the four walls," Sagaria says. "It's important to understand the true cost of time, energy and effort as well as the dollars involved to see if it makes sense." ■



THE PRICE IS RIGHT



Adjusting
the numbers



according
to demand



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better
margins

By Bret Thorn

Charging different prices for the same food and drink at different times of day might seem like a surefire way to irritate or even alienate customers.

But some restaurateurs have been successful, especially with the help of technology that can calculate when demand is the highest and even analyze which guests will respond to discounts versus those willing to pay extra.

“The margins in restaurants are too small and we work too hard,” says Shawn Walchef, founder of Cali BBQ in San Diego, which operates a restaurant, two ghost kitchens that handle delivery and two stands at Snapdragon Stadium, home of the San Diego State Aztecs football team. “There is a more profitable and sustainable way to build restaurants, and the only way to do that is to work with (tech companies).”

Among them are companies focused on dynamic pricing—calculating what to charge customers based on a restaurant’s traffic and guest demands.

The idea isn’t exactly new: Happy hours and early-bird specials have been around for generations. And in other industries, such as hotels, rideshare and airlines, dynamic pricing is expected—not to mention sports venues, live theater and even utilities. Why not charge more for a meal at 7 p.m. on a Saturday compared to one at 2 p.m. on Monday?

Walchef hasn’t applied dynamic pricing at his restaurant yet, but he is trying it with third-party delivery. Customers ordering delivery tend to be less price-sensitive and understand that the cost might be different based on the time—just as they’re familiar with surge pricing from ride-share services.

Walchef has partnered with tech company Juicer, a dynamic-pricing specialist whose cofounders previously developed pricing

algorithms for hotels that calculate guest demand for different dates and times. The software automatically adjusts pricing based on demand, following parameters set by the restaurateurs: Walchef allows a \$4 spread, so guests might pay \$15 for a pulled pork plate at the slowest times and \$19 during busy times.

“Not one customer has said anything,” he says. “What’s fascinating to me about dynamic pricing is how we can leverage it as a marketing tool when there’s low demand.” He’s particularly interested in enticing guests to order in advance by offering deals.

The biggest problem as a restaurateur, he says, is predicting customers, which would allow him to manage food and labor costs much better. “That’s why anything that is getting us a future order that incentivizes someone to buy ahead of time or buy a gift card is a much better way for us to drive revenue in the restaurant.” A lower menu price stands a good chance of building advanced sales.

Juicer analyzes at least 12 months of restaurant transaction data—menu items,

the time of day and the location—and applies the company’s algorithm to calculate optimal prices at a given moment, says Carl Orsbourn, co-founder and chief operating officer. This practice is in line with operator-set parameters, such as not allowing for fluctuations of more than 20%, “so you avoid those Taylor Swift moments” when prices can spiral out of control, he adds.

Juicer also compares competitor prices and adjusts according to operator rules agreed to upfront. Orsbourn said it would soon start factoring in other considerations, such as weather (grilled cheese and tomato soup orders go up when it’s raining) or events (pizza and wing sales surge during football games).

Dynamic pricing, Orsbourn says, is an ideal way to keep all guests happy. Those looking for a discount might happily order at 5 p.m. instead of 6 p.m., while less value-conscious customers, or those who just want what they want on a Friday night (or after a fun night out at 3 a.m.) will spend more for the convenience.

“Ultimately this is all about empowering the customer with choice,” he says.

Pricing a menu according to demand has yet to be widely adopted. But technology companies that offer the service say restaurants will eventually practice what airlines and hotels have been doing for years.

“Behaviors will change, pushing more volume to shoulder hours and reducing the need for restaurants to throttle (turn off) digital channels,” Orsbourn says. ■



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Dynamic pricing can level out margins or make them better.

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- Do the same for online ordering according to demand.



HOLIDAY BOUNTY

16 ways to get sales popping

By Heather Sennett

Illustration by Christine Rösch

One minute, fall foliage is lining the streets again, and the next, the unstoppable roller coaster ride from Thanksgiving to New Year's is starting.

Anybody who has ever tried to play Thanksgiving host, Christmas morning Santa and New Year's Eve party planner knows the holiday season is a hectic time. People, understandably, are desperate for a helping hand.

That's what makes the festive winter holidays a golden opportunity for restaurants to drive as much traffic as possible.

In fact, 77% of consumers depend on restaurants to prepare at least some part of their holiday meals, according to a 2022 survey from the National Restaurant Association.

So here are 16 trusted tips to make the holidays the most wonderful time of the year for your bottom line.

01 HIT UP THE HOTELS

Do a "concierge run" as soon as possible, dropping off goodie bags with small treats like cake or a bottle of wine. Don't forget corporations. Include your banquet and holiday menus. It may not reap immediate rewards, but the efforts should plant the seeds for future referrals to your restaurant, says Chef/owner Rob Lam of Perle in Oakland, California.

02 MARKET EARLY; MARKET OFTEN

Executive Chef Steve Chiappetti of the Albert Chicago starts ebcasts, check inserts, press releases and digital ads for the holiday season "the minute Labor Day is over"—and sometimes sooner, for corporate holiday party pitches. "Even if you book just 10 guests three months before Thanksgiving or Christmas, that's 10 guests you might not have otherwise seen," Chiappetti says.

03 THINK ALL OCCASIONS AND ALL CHANNELS

If it wasn't a certainty before 2020, the pandemic proved without a doubt that a restaurant occasion can extend beyond the four walls of the dining room. Prepare a robust offering for off-premise dining with holiday takeout specials, catering options for all sizes and pickup packages for at-home celebrating. Don't forget gift cards and offer incentives, such as \$10 extra for every \$100 purchased.

04 PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS AND CUSTOMER NEEDS

If you already serve a killer roast chicken, apply the same technique to turkey. Same goes for favorite side dishes. Solve home cooking challenges, such as making jus, gravy and even stock for sauces, by offering them for purchase.

05 BE THE MIDDLEMAN

Your customers typically don't have direct access to your purveyors, whether it's seafood, aged meat, par-baked rolls or desserts. This is the time of year to offer them, prepped with instructions.



06 PREP THE POS SYSTEM

Be sure you're ready to take holiday orders online. Save recipient contact information for your email lists and be sure to follow up with thank yous and surveys on improving selection and service.

07 DECK THE HALLS

The holidays are a magical time, and the dining room should reflect that spirit. (Just be mindful to fit the vibe with your concept.) A festive pop-up, such as Rudolph's Holiday Rooftop traditionally held atop LondonHouse Chicago, draws crowds with seasonal cocktails, private igloos and plenty of social media photo ops.

08 CATER TO EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Cracker Barrel, the 660-unit casual dining chain, has long been known as an off-the-highway pit stop. But the chain recently charged hard into catering, seeing big jumps in sales and reporting that it's on track to turn it into a \$100 million annual sales

channel. Cracker Barrel has found catering success by offering a wide range of choices (from a 10-person breakfast to holiday limited-time offerings and party platters). It's a moneymaker that succeeds only if kitchen operations are well-oiled and efficient.

09 DAY DRINKING, ANYONE?

Minneapolis-based steakhouse The Butcher's Tale offers a discount for companies to host office holiday parties during the day, bringing in big business during a potentially slow time. It might be a hard sell for some customers but nudging them with (slightly) lower prices and the promise of undivided staff attention could produce results.

10 CONSIDER THE GUEST'S HOLIDAY PREP LIST

Chiappetti likes to put the kitchen to work during down time producing and packaging bulk items. Create pretty holiday cookies, pies or cakes for purchase that diners can take home after the



meal. “There is always someone who needs a last-minute hostess gift or holiday party food contribution,” he says.

11 DON'T GET TOO CREATIVE

The busy holiday season is a time to play on your restaurant's strengths, not necessarily try something new. Longtime chef Rose Elliot will never forget the “Frosty Fiasco” of more than two decades ago when she decided to serve a new holiday ice cream recipe that swiftly turned to a “sea of festive soup” on diners' plates.

12 BUT RIFFS ON SIGNATURE DISHES ARE A-OK

Velvet Taco, the 35-unit taco chain known for its 52 limited-time Weekly Taco Features (WTFs) each year, drove traffic last November with its “Dinner at the Rockwells” creation filled with turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, cranberries and gravy folded into

a flour tortilla. See what you can build with existing SKUs to keep costs in check.

13 MAKE IT MINI

No one likes waste but just about everyone loves an assortment, which is why offering miniature or bite-sized desserts can be profitable, especially when they're holiday versions of their full-sized counterparts. Think pecan tarts, cheesecake, apple pie and pumpkin squares.

14 OFFER LEFTOVERS

Those who dine out for Thanksgiving miss out on a holiday ritual: leftovers. Attract diners by offering an additional portion of turkey, stuffing, gravy and sides, but adjust your costs accordingly.

15 DON'T FORGET THE BAR

The holidays are nothing if not celebratory, which means plenty of toasts and rounds of drinks. Come

up with holiday-appropriate libations, including nonalcoholic choices. Seasonal ingredients are a draw, especially at this time of year, so think ingredients and garnishes. At Steam Pub in Southampton, Pennsylvania, holiday beverages focus on cranberries, citrus, warm spices and chestnuts (such as a Chestnut Puree Espresso Martini).

16 KEEP STAFF INVIGORATED

The holidays can be stressful for everybody, so look for ways to increase staff retention. Neighborhood upscale counter-service spot Birdie's in Austin, Texas, tacks a 3.5% health-and-wellness fee onto each check to help pay for four weeks of paid vacation per year (including two weeks in the winter around Christmastime), as well as subsidized mental health care and paid parental leave. Taking care not to alienate diners, Birdie's explains the added charge and its streamlined service model in detail on its website. ■

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HOUSTON LIGHTS

Space city
restaurants
that shine

By Dimitra Kriticos



A close-up photograph of several golden-brown Pillsbury biscuits. A blue banner with the Pillsbury logo and the text 'LOW-LABOR, BIG FLAVOR' is centered. Below it, the word 'biscuits' is written in a cursive font. Arrows point from descriptive text to the biscuits: 'Texture SOFT, FLUFFY & LIGHT' points to a biscuit on the left, 'Perfect Bite CRISP OUTSIDE, MOIST INSIDE' points to a biscuit on the right, and 'Quality Ingredients' points to a biscuit at the bottom.

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Hamachi Koshi is among the artful plates from Tobiuo Sushi Bar.

› Houston's food scene is a cultural experience,

making the space city ideal for menu inspiration. In recent years, options have skyrocketed inside and outside the interstate 610 Loop. If 2023 James Beard Foundation nominees and winners are any indication, Houston is on fire. Benchawan Jabthong Painter of Street to Kitchen won Best Chef, Texas for elevating Thai classics, while Tatemó earned a finalist nod for Best New Restaurant with its take on Mexican cooking.

Without question, the diversity of Houston's food population extends across the globe. Be forewarned: A meaningful exploration may require multiple lunches and dinners—sometimes in a day. Here's a start, in addition to the JBF-anointed.



Nothing inspires and refuels like checking out a buzzy restaurant, whether it's new or a longtime favorite. For fall, Food Fanatics Chef Dimitra Kriticos shares some of her hometown favorites.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DRAGANA HARRIS

● NOBIE'S

Husband and wife duo Chef Martin and Sara Stayer are finding success with their vision of a new American restaurant: a house party vibe, vinyl spinning during service and an ever-changing menu that plays on words (Aww Shucks Oysters; Come Quail Away; Don't Worry, Brie Happy; and HOV Lane to describe shareable entrees). They've also compiled an extensive wine and spirits list as well as creative and traditional cocktails. The restaurant's namesake, Martin Stayer's grandmother Nobie, also inspires in Nonno's housemade tagliatelle with a simple yet complex Bolognese. Whole pies (\$48) and olive oil cake (\$72) that customers can order in advance add to the bottom line and extend their brand.

● TOBIUO SUSHI & BAR

Since 2019, Chef/owner Sherman Yeung (formerly of Uchi and Yauatcha) has gained a following with his striking presentation of globally-sourced raw fish, a steakhouse-esque aging program and small plates that blend East with West. Yeung offers an a la carte menu of hot dishes, such as U10 scallops with corn and bok choy and wagyu hot stone for an interactive table experience. There's also a nine-course \$110 tasting menu that helps control food costs and a creative nod to beverages via elevated craft and nonalcoholic cocktails. Pastry Chef Jio Dingayan draws his inspiration from his Asian heritage, childhood experiences and nature. The ube churro with ube ice cream, mango cake, miso caramel and ube-infused sugar measures high on the wow factor for flavor and color.

Clockwise from top right: Sashimi from Tobiuo followed by Winner Winner Chicken dinner and Dilly bread from Nobie's.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIVIAN LEBEA





● HARRY’S

Launched by a Greek and Ecuadorian couple in the early 1990s, this Houston institution has maintained a loyal following through consistency—a benefit of a family-run operation. The Platsas family offers Mediterranean and Latin influences that run through the otherwise traditional American selections. Dishes include Baklava French Toast (honey and nuts layered between slices of challah bread dipped in a batter, grilled and finished with two scoops of Greek-style frozen yogurt). On the savory side: Chilaquiles Divorciados (crispy corn tortillas simmered in two “divorced” salsas, daily made ranchera and salsa verde, queso fresco, crema fresca, pickled red onions, refried beans and two eggs).

● ROSIE CANNONBALL

With an open kitchen equipped with a wood-burning grill, this restaurant checks all the boxes, from the inviting decor to a menu that reflects just about every current trend: a section devoted to vegetables; hearty salads; a pasta program that includes buckwheat ravioli; grilled whole fish; cacio e pepe pizza; and a steak that benefits from the smokiness of the wood. If diners want to splurge, they can order caviar service. Good Thyme Farm Honey Cake proves dessert is not an afterthought but a way to boost sales. Ditto on the five nonalcoholic cocktails that rival the flavor of their booze-charged counterparts, priced at \$10.

Served at Rosie’s Cannonball, clockwise from top left: Blistered bean salad with pea shoots, shallots, fresno chilies, olives and candied almonds followed by Basque cheesecake, tortellini in brodo (mortadella and prosciutto-filled pasta in broth with Parmigiano Reggiano) and anchovies, boquerones, green apples and garlic.

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● FLORA

Big Vibe Group has added Flora to its portfolio—a modern take on Mexican cuisine with a Texan sensibility. By surrounding the interiors with floor-to-ceiling windows, cobalt blue chairs and more than 40 chandeliers, Big Vibe has created a glass tree house of sorts. The menu has built an audience with a raw bar that includes a shareable Gratify Ceviche (red snapper, shrimp and octopus served over a mango habanero reduction and layers of avocado, red onion, serrano, radish and cucumber), solid fish offerings (whole snapper two ways) and a margarita menu. The restaurant prides itself on stellar service and making diners feel welcomed.

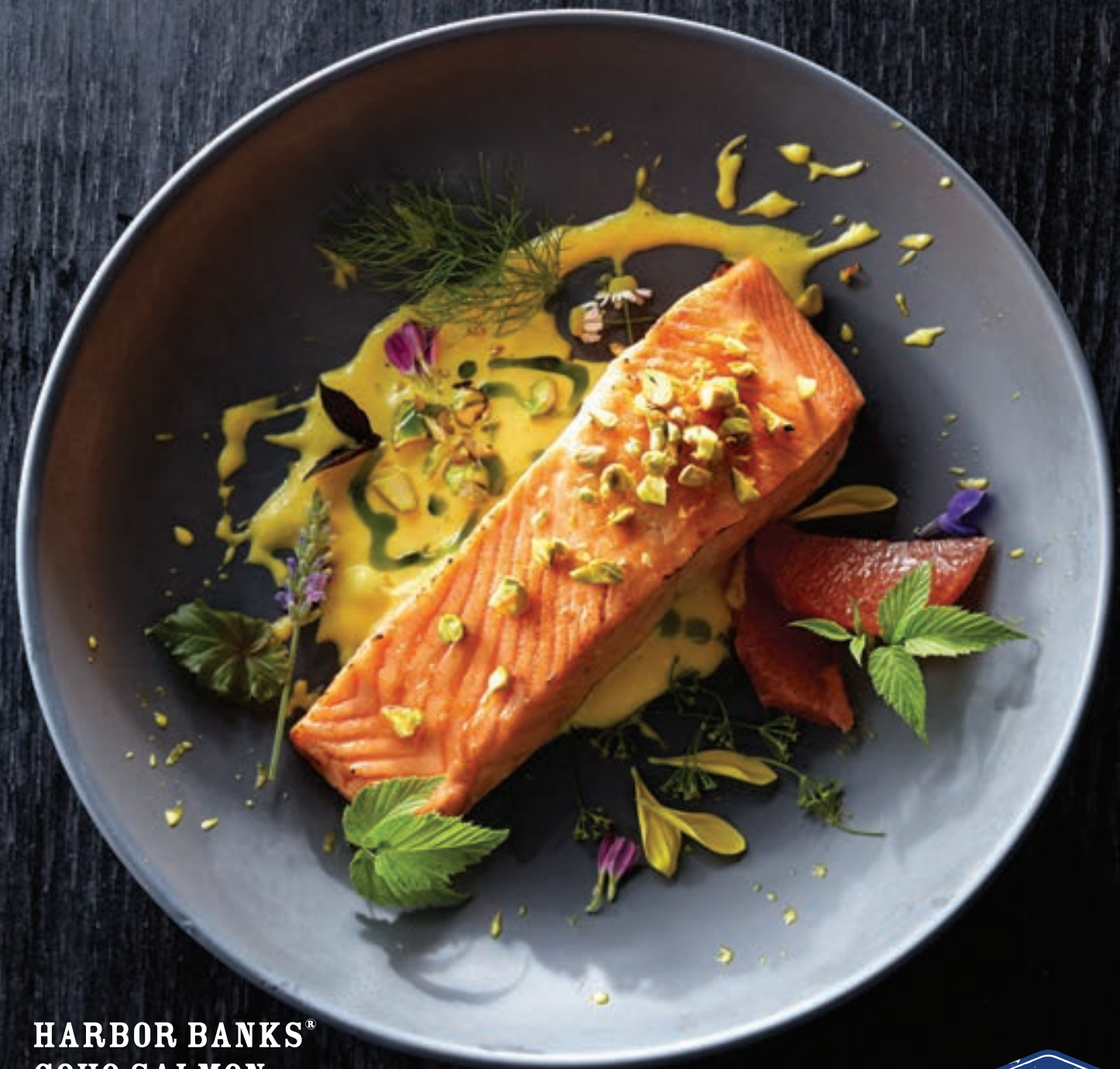
● MAHESH'S KITCHEN

Shubhangi Musale and her brother Mahesh Puranik had a long-held goal of opening a restaurant together. But when he died unexpectedly, Musale and her husband, Neelesh, fulfilled that dream by opening Mahesh's Kitchen in his honor. The menu is not tied to a particular region of India, but rather offers modern interpretations of the country as a whole. There are traditional favorites as well, including a tikka masala eager to be swept up with buttery naan. They focus on consistency, local ingredients, attentive service and a committed team to create an impressive dining experience—one that keeps diners returning. ■

At Flora, clockwise from top: the dining room, Jacy cocktail and ceviche, tacos and tostado spread.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRSTEN GILLIAM

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WEIGHING IN

Taking control of
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it's too late

By Abigail Covington
Photography by Frank Lawlor



Chicago chef and restaurateur **Jimmy Bannos** knows all about the good life.

For decades, he embraced the quintessential “work hard, play hard” chef lifestyle, over-indulging in luxurious meals in New York and New Orleans with colleagues and friends. “If I was with three people,” says Bannos, “I would say, ‘Give me the whole left side of the menu, and then give me half of the other side of the menu.’”

Each night out helped Bannos refine his palate and develop ideas for Chicago’s first notable Cajun restaurant, Heaven on Seven. But time caught up with him. When Bannos was diagnosed at 50 with Type 2 diabetes, he knew he needed to make some drastic changes. In the last several years, he has taken control of his health and weight and now adheres to a more modern and mindful approach. Bannos, who helped popularize Cajun cuisine beyond New Orleans, reflects on recent life-saving changes and offers advice on avoiding the road to ruin. Spoiler alert: “It’s all about balance.”



After a successful career in restaurants, Jimmy Bannos is helping others get up and running, which includes advice on balancing work, taking care of your health and the importance of family.



Bannos sharing cooking and kitchen management tips with staff at Trogo Kitchen and Market.



Q. What has your approach to mental and physical health looked like throughout your career?

A. This is a rough business. You have to love it, otherwise you'll get burnt out. I never was a burnt-out kind of guy. When I owned my own restaurant, I would work 14 to 18 hours a day. It was successful, and I wanted to keep it that way. But you have to have balance. My balance was putting my family first. That's why Heaven on Seven wasn't open for dinner. I'd be at home by 7 or 8 p.m. every night, right when my friends were going through dinner service. I tell the kids coming up today, "If you have to go to a play or go see your daughter's dance recital, you need to make time to do that." I feel that you have to have that balance. It can't be all restaurant; it can't be all play; it can't always be all family either. You need a little bit of everything.



LIFE CHANGES

1967

At age 9, Bannos starts working in his father's diner on Chicago's South Side. He immediately knows he wants to be a chef.

1985

A year after Bannos' first child is born, the legendary Cajun Chef Paul Prudhomme invites him to visit New Orleans, where he eats and visits Commander's Palace and meets a young chef named Emeril Lagasse. He forges a lifelong friendship with the famous chef.

1986–1987

Bannos brings everything he learned in New Orleans to his Chicago restaurant, which features new American Jewish cuisine. The Midwest gets legit gumbo and po'boys for the first time and Heaven on Seven is born.

2020

Heaven on Seven closes; Bannos consults on concepts and helps with his son's restaurant, The Purple Pig.



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Q. When did you decide to take your health more seriously?

A. I used to weigh 320 pounds. Diabetes runs rampant in my family. My dad passed away at 74. My brother passed away at 65 from a massive heart attack due to diabetes. After that, I started carefully watching what I ate. I started working out, too. I would swim 150 laps every day, and it started working. But I had carpal tunnel syndrome by the time I was 30. I had to get back surgery soon after that. Between ages 50 and 55, I was diagnosed with diabetes, tore a meniscus in both my knees and got two hip replacements. So I just said, “Okay, I’ve got to keep on losing weight.” I’m about 230 pounds right now, and I want to get down a little bit more, but I feel great. I’ve lost close to a hundred pounds.

Q. What advice would you give to avoid health issues that could have easily cut your life short?

A. You have to start working out or do something that you enjoy. How many times have you been in the kitchen, and then all of a sudden, you’re starving, so you grab a cheeseburger, or you make something that maybe you shouldn’t eat? That’s the problem that a lot of chefs have, but the younger generation watches what they eat. I’m consulting for a restaurant right now where one of the owners is experimenting with vegan options. We’re doing a Greek spin on some of the stuff. I figured it wouldn’t taste good, but it’s tremendous. You have to watch what you put in your mouth.

Q. Do restaurant owners have a responsibility to create a healthy culture, such as sponsor a gym membership for their employees?

A. If the restaurant can afford to do that, then I would say it’s almost like insurance. Anything that could help our industry, I’m for it. ■

“I’ve learned just as much outside of the kitchen from Jimmy as I have in front of the stove. His positive outlook makes such a huge impact.”

—Lolita Sereleas, co-owner of Trogo Kitchen and Market, on the advice Bannos has given



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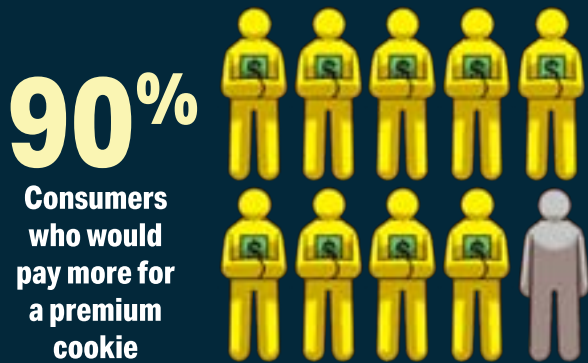
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