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FOOD FANATICS
SUMMER 2022

Sharing the Love of Food—Inspiring Business Success

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Replacing the familiar with something new or offset is sure to turn heads, like a pink acid, courtesy of puréed beets. See story on page 29.

1. Mars, chocolate category 2 years, IRI2019
2. IRI360, Custom study 2019

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SUMMER IS BACK
Welcome to the summer edition of Food Fanatics® magazine!
A new season is here, and everyone is hungry to bring in more revenue and delightful dinners with fresh recipes and ideas.

In this edition, we celebrate the joy of returning to a bit of normalcy. As customers head back to restaurants—whether it’s to eat indoors or alfresco—we’re seeing new trends toward explosive flavors and distinctive dining experiences. Dive in to find tips on impressing guests of all kinds, from casual diners to foodies.

In Menu Must-Haves, the cover story brings the unusual to the table. From savory to sweet, there is something to surprise and delight everyone. Plus, learn how restaurants across the country are including canine companions in the dining experience! The Money Moves section reveals resourceful tips to help guard your bottom line. Find forward-thinking solutions for navigating supply chain uncertainty and building compelling and immensely popular subscription programs.

In Meeting the Moment, we introduce you to a restaurant entrepreneur who is providing employees with a second chance, plus ownership in the business. Also, discover unique concepts that are sprouting up in small towns and revitalizing the local communities. Hear from Lauren Fernandez, founder/CEO of a restaurant development and investment firm, who advocates for—and invests in women- and minority-owned restaurant concepts.

We hope this edition of Food Fanatics sparks some inspiration and helps you make it—all summer long!

Thanks for reading,

Andrew Iacobucci
Interim Chief Executive Officer, US Foods®

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HUMMUS ALONG

The multi-purpose dip has legs that go the distance.
AVOCADO HUMMUS
At new all-day eatery Tommy’s in Beverly Hills, avocado gets the hummus treatment, blended with charred poblano peppers, tahini, lime, garlic, yogurt and white wine. Executive chef Vartan Abagyan creates a deep well in the center for salsa macha—a blend of smoky, parsley and arbol chilies with sunflower, sesame and pumpkin seeds, peanuts, lemon zest and salt. This Mexican twist on hummus is a far cry from guacamole, and rather something entirely new, garnished with sprigs of cilantro and served with crispy charred flour tortillas.

FAVA BEAN HUMMUS
Zoobe is a fast-casual restaurant in New York specializing in modern Egyptian street food. Executive chef Montafah Refsay says that in Egypt, fava bean hummus is more common than the chickpea variety known stateside. “In Egypt, we call it beans and it’s an old dish that dates to more than 1,000 years ago,” Refsay says. “It comes in different variations, often with coriander, male leaves or sometimes lentils.” Zoobe’s fava bean hummus is lighter than traditional chickpea hummus, a sauce green that works well for summer. Refsay serves it as an appetizer or side dish, topped with a handful of crunchy toasted fava beans with baladi—a whole wheat, house-made pita—for dipping. It’s also used as a condiment in salads and sandwiches, including an Egyptian falafel salad alongside roasted eggplant, shredded carrots and lightly pickled beets. “It’s often described as being very creamy, tangy and balanced,” he says. “Customers love it.”
BLACK GARLIC HUMMUS

When chef Raymond Li was looking for a more creative version of hummus for AarvMiami, a Mediterranean and Asian fusion restaurant, he turned to black garlic for its distinctive sweet and pungent flavor. He blends a 3:1 ratio of a gingery black garlic base to tahini and beans and finishes this popular appetizer by garnishing it with pumpkin seed furikake and chili sesame oil.

“Black garlic provides an added depth and funk to the hummus,” Li says. “The crunch from the toasted pumpkin and sesame seeds plus the slight heat from the chili oil really complement one another. Guests are loving the uniqueness.” Li goes through so much hummus, pictured below, that batches are made daily, but it can last two weeks vacuum-sealed.

RED LENTIL HUMMUS

Dips, spreads, and condiments are important features of the shared plates menu at Little Saint, a new farm-forward, plant-based restaurant, café and wine shop in Healdsburg, California, by Kyle and Katrina Connaughton of SingleThread. One of chef de cuisine Bryan Oliver’s favorite dips is a red lentil hummus served alongside housemade flatbread and raw vegetables from their Little Saint Farm.

“I prefer hummus to be smooth and creamy without being overly thick,” he says. “This recipe’s tahini ratio adds a well-rounded fattiness to the hummus while still letting the flavor of the red lentils shine.” Oliver creates a well in the center of the hummus and adds harissa almond oil with coarsely chopped almonds for a spicier, crunchy accent. It’s also an opportunity to cross-utilize harissa paste, which he’s already making from scratch using peppers from their farm.

Red Lentil Hummus with Harissa and Toasted Almonds
Chef de Cuisine Bryan Oliver
Little Saint, Healdsburg, California

1 cup split red lentils, cooked
¼ cup tahini
2 tablespoons coriander, toasted and ground
1 tablespoon cumin, toasted and ground
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 lemon, juiced
½ cup olive oil
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons salt

Recipe follows:

Combine lentils, tahini, coriander, cumin, garlic, lemon juice, water, olive oil and salt in a high-powered blender or food processor and puree until smooth.

To plate, scoop the hummus into a wide bowl, using the back of a spoon to create a circular well. Add harissa-almond oil. Serve with vegetables. Makes about 1 liter.

To make Harissa almond oil: Combine ⅛ cup toasted and coarsely chopped almonds, 1 tablespoon harissa paste, ⅛ cup olive oil, zest of 1 lemon, 1 teaspoon kosher salt and 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds.

Check out the recipe for this red lentil hummus on the opposite page.
**PROBIOTIC BEET TAHINI**

Cafe Gratitude's Ellis also serves a vibrant, velvety smooth purple and red beet tahini. "Color is always an important element of selling any kind of plant-based food," he says. "You want the best tahini to be very forward, as the tahini is really only a binder that gives the dip a healthy fat component. Too much tahini can overpower the flavor." The probiotic element comes in with the addition of kimchi and sauerkraut, which add a splash of tangy acid and help preserve the tahini for a couple extra days. "Tahini sauce in itself can be too fat forward, so the acid from the kimchi and sauerkraut balances it out," says Ellis. At Cafe Gratitude, beet tahini is served with a flash-fried romanesco dish in winter, but for summer, try it as a colorful and creamy salad dressing.

**ZUCCHINI CILANTRO HUMMUS**

At vegan haven Cafe Gratitude in Southern California, zucchini cilantro hummus has been on the menu for more than a decade, served with a raw falafel plate, slathered on a summer falafel burger and alongside muhammara on a Mediterranean appetizer sampler with crusty and homemade sprouted buckwheat flatbreads. "Don't be afraid to get creative because all sorts of veggies can create delicious hummus," says executive chef Sietsan Dreux Ellis. "Good hummus can be made of just about anything, but make sure that it's not too dense by adding some liquid to it. And don't overdo the oil because it's not as tasty or appealing if the dip is too heavy and fatty." Ellis prefers to leave this hummus with a little more texture as you can see green specks from the zucchini.

---

**Zucchini Cilantro Hummus**

Executive chef Sietsan Dreux Ellis
Cafe Gratitude, Los Angeles

4 cups zucchini, rough-chopped
4 cups seeded and sliced sunflowers
1/4 cup cilantro
2 teaspoon chopped garlic
1/4 cup lemon juice
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup cilantro, leaves and stems, roughly chopped

Combine all ingredients except olive oil in a high-speed blender and run on a low speed.

When all ingredients are well blended, keep the machine running and add 1/2 cup olive oil. Blend until well-emulsified. Makes 4 cups.
The benefits of pups on patios

Restaurants serving companions

The Right Size

A Place to Spill Around

A Place to Sniff Around

Play It Safe

Converses come naturally, fulfilling the need for social interaction. Dogs love to snuggle and be together, whether it's a quiet nap on the couch or an adventure outside. They enjoy being a part of the family and love their human companions.

But it's not just about companionship. Many dogs also enjoy engaging in activities like playtime, which helps them burn off excess energy and stay mentally stimulated. This can include anything from fetch and tug-of-war to obedience training.

Dogs are often known for their loyalty and love. They are great at providing unconditional love and can greatly improve the quality of life for their owners. They are also great for helping people deal with stress and anxiety.

In conclusion, dogs make great companions, offering love, affection, and endless opportunities for fun and exercise. If you're thinking about getting a dog, be sure to do your research and choose the right breed and personality match for your lifestyle.
“IT LED TO THIS WHOLE NEW NICHE FOR OUR COMPANY THAT RESULTED IN MORE PEOPLE KNOWING US AS A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANT.”

—Luke Sorensen, co-owner of Craft & Crew Hospitality

Join a Pack
Offering their Paninis as event space for local pet rescue has helped Craft & Crew further connect with the community. Collaborations extend to sales of services and merchandise, too. The Wilson has partnered on events with Bond Vet and Paw Originals Pet Supplies. At Tin Shed Garden Cafe in Portland, Oregon, proceeds from signature dog bandannas benefited Street Dog Hero—a nearby rescue—while offering customers 50% off their next dog menu purchase.

“Dog parents are very vocal,” says Sorensen. “When they find something that they truly love for their dogs, they tell everybody. And then you’ve got them.”

Bark Up the Right Tree
Craft & Crew celebrated serving 80,000 dog meals last winter by consistently leaving into fan enthusiasm on social media. The Wilson reposts guest Instagram posts with links to their dog menu. Norm’s Bakery and The Tin Shed Garden Cafe also post and repeat—especially when a dog influencer comes to their table. “Then you’ve got more people reaching out to see what you’re doing,” says Sorensen.

Pup Cream
Craft & Crew Hospitality
Minneapolis and surrounding area

64 ounces bananas, peeled, sliced and frozen
6 ounces of peanut butter
6 to 8 cups of coconut oil
Whipped cream, as needed
Peanut butter dog biscuits, recipe follows

Add bananas, peanut butter and coconut oil in a blender and blend well.
Pour into 4-ounce cups or molds and freeze.
To serve, unmold and place in a dog bowl. Top with whipped cream and peanut butter dog biscuit. Makes about 24 servings.

To make peanut butter dog biscuits: combine 1 cup flour or one super peanut butter with 1 egg, ⅛ cup water and 2 tablespoons honey. Add 2 cups whole wheat flour or rice flour to form, adding more if needed. Transfer to a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough about ⅛ inch thick. Use a dog or other shaped biscuit to create shapes. Bake in a 350°F oven for 18 to 20 minutes, until lightly browned; cool. Makes about 36 cookies depending on size.

Pups go crazy for the frozen Pup Cream at Craft & Crew restaurants.

the dog menu,” Sorensen says. “It’s helped all of our brands continue to grow even in the winter months when similar concepts see a large drop-off.”

Small touches make an impact, too. Set by the ocean in Northern California, Moss Beach Distillery’s patio pencils pet friends onto flinty dog beds. The staff at Mayfeld in Asheville, North Carolina, are known for being extra loving with dog customers, bringing them water bowls. And at Lucy’s in New Orleans, staff takes canines inside—not just on the patio—and cool down hot dogs by giving them bowls of crushed ice water.

Make it Special
Staff at Craft & Crew are trained to care for the dogs on par with their human guests. Each location has a designated dog ambassador to ensure they’re well stocked and ready to welcome.

Most dog-friendly operations host dog birthdays complete with cakes and singing. But celebrations can carry further. At the Watering Bowl in Denver, customers receive “Bark Mishwah” and dog weddings. The Wilson hosts a popular Puppy Bowl in January and a Santa Paws Brunch complete with a Santa for pup photos and treats.

@thegolden.paw and Pup Cream from Instagram.
Dogs Don’t Always Rule
Sanitation may seem obvious but what about customers who don’t want to sit near tail-wagging, friendly but overactive Rover? And dog fights handled? Operations say it begins with a plan and protocols for staff and guests that include preventing and remediating problems. That would include removing unruly dogs immediately, designating a part of the patio for dog diners only and clearly communicating to customers on the website, social media and on the menu that the restaurant allows dogs on the patio. It’s also imperative, Delisi says, that dog owners understand that their pet demonstrates good manners. “Honestly, dog owners don’t bring their pet with them if they can’t socialize properly so we don’t typically have such problems,” he said.

K9 Chicken and Rice
Craft & Crew Hospitality
Minneapolis and surrounding areas

4 cups brown rice
24 chicken breasts
4 cups celery, diced
4 cups carrots, diced
4 cups sweet potatoes, diced
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup parsley, chopped

Cook brown rice in 8 cups water; set aside.
Grill chicken breasts; set aside to rest. Saute vegetables with oil until soft, add parsley.
Saute for a few more minutes; cool.

Add cooked rice to vegetable mixture and combine well. Slice breasts, positioning 1 breast per serving. Place 6 ounces rice mixture in bowl and fan out chicken over the top. Makes 24 servings.

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THE MANY ROADS TO SINGAPORE

As chefs blur the lines that separate one country’s food from another, Singaporean cuisine is poised to gain ground. It’s the ultimate amalgam of Asian cooking.

Singapore’s history as a significant historical trade hub led British, Portuguese, Chinese, Malay, Indonesian, Indian, and others to layer their traditions in Singaporean culture, which is reflected in the country’s cuisine today.

“Being such a small country, the one thing that is truly Singaporean is the food,” says Said Mehta, the chef at Singapore in New York City. “Because that truly represents everything—that melting of cultures, the marriage of flavors.”

Yet Singaporean cuisine can be nearly impossible to define, the ingredients and preparations are shared by so many countries. “You see some Malay ingredients, some influence from Chinese techniques, things like that,” says Amy Pryke, founder of Native Noodles in New York City.

That seemingly negative aspect, however, can be positive. Asian ingredients are so ubiquitous, rolling from a native Singaporean component or exotic dish is an easy way to insert excitement onto any menu.
**Laksa Noodles**

*Founder Amy/View*

**Native Noodle, Washington Heights, New York**

76 grams lemongrass, white part only
46 grams balabon shrimp paste, broomed
36 grams sugar
25 grams shallots, minced
22 grams curry powder
22 grams ginger, peeled and chopped
22 grams galangal, peeled and chopped
10 dried chilies, soaked in hot water, most seeds removed
7 ounces dried shrimp, ground into powder
3 ounces fried onions
8 ounces candlenut or macadamia
2 ounces garlic cloves, chopped
2 teaspoons turmeric
5 grams kosher salt
8 ounces vegetable oil
1 tablespoon chicken bouillon, dissolved in 1 cup water
20 ounces coconut milk
16 ounces rice thin thick rice noodles
16 ounces cooked shrimp
4 to 5 ounces bean sprouts
8 sliced tofu puffs, quartered
Rau rau, chopped, to garnish

Combine lemongrass, shrimp paste, sugar, shallots, curry, ginger, galangal, chilies, dried shrimp, fried onions, nuts, garlic, turmeric and salt in a food processor to create a smooth paste. Heat oil in a large saucepan and add paste, stirring until fragrant.

Add bouillon liquid and coconut milk, bring to a boil and simmer 18 minutes, adding more liquid if desired consistency. Adjust seasoning with salt.

Cook noodles per package instructions, drain. To plate, place about 8 to 10 ounces noodles in a bowl, top with a shrimp and tofu puffs. Ladle sauce over center so that it does not cover shrimp and garnish with bean sprouts and raw herbs. Makes 6 servings.

**MAIN INGREDIENTS:**
- Coconut rice, roasted nuts, egg, cucumbers, dried anchovies, sambal

**ORIGINS:** Malaysia

One of Malaysia’s national dishes, this “fatty rice” is incredibly popular across Singaporean hawker culture. In Malaysia, fragrant coconut rice, salty anchovies, egg and sometimes chicken curry or vegetables are served with spicy sambal. In Singapore, the sambal is served both spicy and sweet.-Farangs are as likely to use basmati rice as jasmine and add anything from crispy fried chicken, sweet chili, sausages or fried fish.

**MAIN INGREDIENTS:**
- Lemon grass, shrimp paste, sugar, shallots, curry, ginger, galangal, chilies, dried shrimp, fried onions, nuts, garlic, turmeric and salt

**ORIGINS:** Malaysia

Many variations of this soup are well loved in Southeast Asia and India. In Malaysia, rice noodles (Chinese), and spicy shrimp curry paste (Melayu) are most popular dishes. In Singaporean cuisine, Pratek can’t get enough of the particularly coconut and chocolatey“Nyonya laksa” she loves in New York and dubbed her menu with this: “But different styles have grown in popularity in Singapore over the past few years, with businesses creating ‘dry’ versions that are stir-fried or sauce-based,” she says. Keeping up with evolution, she now offers both versions on her menu.

**MAIN INGREDIENTS:**
- Wide rice noodles, shrimp paste, dark soy sauce, hot chili paste

**ORIGINS:** Malaysia, China, Indonesia

In Malaysian char kuey teow, rice noodles are stir-fried with coconut, Chinese sausage, eggs, bean sprouts and soy sauce. In Singapore, hawkers fry the same components with kacang manis—a thick and sweet caramelized soy sauce from Indonesia—and plenty of shrimp paste. Fried with the Chinese wok technique, it comes together in sweet, salty, smoky satisfaction.

**MAIN INGREDIENTS:**
- Rice noodles, peanut sauce, squid, sprouts, chicken

**ORIGINS:** Malaysia, Java, Teochow (Chinese)

This niche Singaporean dish is credited to various Teochow hawkers who combine fragrant satay peanut sauce, vermicelli noodles and fish. “It looks like a heap of something on your plate—it can be a little hard to relate to,” says Pratek. For her take, Pratek chose the thick egg noodles that are often found in pan Asian (e.g. Korean, Japanese) noodle dishes and opted out of the fish. “You want there to be some element of accessibility,” she says of hoping customers explore from there.

**MAIN INGREDIENTS:**
- Rice noodles, peanut sauce, squid, sprouts, chicken

**ORIGINS:** Malaysia, Indonesia

In traditional Indonesian char kuey teow, rice noodles are stir-fried with coconut, Chinese sausage, eggs, bean sprouts and soy sauce. In Singapore, hawkers fry the same components with kacang manis—a thick and sweet caramelized soy sauce from Indonesia—and plenty of shrimp paste. Fried with the Chinese wok technique, it comes together in sweet, salty, smoky satisfaction.
HAINANESE-CHICKEN

1 MAIN INGREDIENTS: Poached chicken, ginger, scallions, rice and accompaniments

1 ORIGINS: Hainan, China, Malaysia

Originating from southern Chinese settlers, this ginger-poached chicken and rice dish has traveled across almost every Asian country. In Hong Kong, it’s served with a dipping mix of five spices, monosodium glutamate, salt and sugar. In Thailand, it’s served with tamarind, a soybean sauce mixed with garlic and cilantro. In Singapore, it’s served with fiery hot sauce to contrast the fragrant ginger. “Hainanese chicken would probably be the one dish that Singapore perfected,” says Matha.

Hainanese Chicken
Chef Sail Matta
Singapore, New York City

3- to 4-pound white chicken
Kocher salt, as needed
7 slices ginger, peeled, divided use
1 bunch green onion, trimmed
8 scallions, divided use
4 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
1-inch piece of ginger, peeled and sliced
4 cloves garlic, peeled
2 cups jasmine rice, rinsed
5 pandan leaves
2 tablespoons powdered chicken bouillon
Hainanese soy sauce, recipe follows
Hainanese chili sauce, recipe follows
Cilantro, to garnish
Sliced cucumber, to garnish
Minced ginger, garlic, recipe follows
Carrots, spiralized, to garnish

Rub chicken with salt and rinse. Season again with salt; rest 30 minutes. Bring water to boil in a pot and add 8 slices ginger, green onion and 3 scallions, halved. Add chicken, cover and cook for 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let the chicken poach for another 10 minutes. Cool in liquid, debone with skin intact. Reserve stock.

Heat sesame oil in a saucepan remaining 6 scallions, chopped, and garlic until golden. Transfer to a rice cooker and add rice. 2 cups reserved stock, pandan leaves, bouillon powder and remaining ginger slices. Cook, adjusting stock to rice cooker.

Arrange chicken on a platter. Serve with soy sauce, chili sauce, cilantro and sliced cucumber along with a bowl of heated broth. Mound rice and top with the ginger garnish and carrot.

To make Hainanese Soy Sauce: Heat 2 tablespoons sesame oil to sizzle 2 shallots, 8 slices ginger and 4 minced cloves garlic until golden brown. Add 3 cups chicken stock, 4 tablespoons soy sauce. 2 tablespoons oyster sauce, 4 tablespoons sugar, 2 tablespoons Shaoxing wine and 2 tablespoons dark caramel soy sauce and cook for 15 minutes on medium. Strain and transfer to a bowl.

To make Hainanese Chili Sauce: Combine 3 or 4 red chili peppers, 8 slices peeled ginger, 3 cloves minced garlic, 2 cup sugar, 1 cup chicken stock and juice from 2 limes in a blender. Pulse until the mixture reaches a chunky consistency, add salt to taste and set aside in a small bowl.

To make minced ginger topping: Heat 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil and 2 tablespoons oil until smoking hot and saute 3-inch piece peeled and minced ginger until golden. Cool and stir in 1 teaspoon green sauce, mostly white part, minced and salt to taste.

SANDWICH FOR SINGAPORE NOODLES

1 MAIN INGREDIENTS: vermicelli noodles, soy sauce, vegetables, scallions

1 ORIGINS: China, Hong Kong

In Singapore, hawkers fry bee hoon, vermicelli noodles, with vegetables and fish or serve it for breakfast with Scotch eggs. But the dish has roots in China, where noodles are fried with soy sauce and vegetables. “Then came immigrants to Hong Kong and fried it with curry powder. Others immigrated to Singapore and did it without. And immigrants from Hong Kong moved to the U.S. and started to put it on menus as Singapore Noodles,” says Fyffe of the curry-heavy version. “It’s an example of how people have different interpretations.”
Singaporean Chili Crab
Chef Zu Mei

Ingredients:
- 2½ pounds mud crab or similar crustacean
- 8 chiles de arbol, stemmed
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped
- 4 Holland chiles, stemmed and roughly chopped
- 3 small shallots, peeled and roughly chopped
- 4 tablespoons tomato sauce, soy bean paste
- 1 ¼-inch piece ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- ½ cup sake or dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon balanced shrimp paste
- 8 ounces tomato puree
- ½ cup sweet chili sauce
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- Sugar, to taste
- Cilantro, to garnish

Steps:
1. Remove the crab from the crab wash, scrub, and remove the lungs. Break the crab down into parts. Refrigerate until ready to use.
2. Rehydrate the chiles de arbol. Add to a food processor and puree with garlic, Holland chiles, shallots, sauce and ginger.
3. Heat all in a wok over medium-high. Add belachan and cook, breaking it up into a paste, until fragrant and toasted. Add garlic paste and cook, 3 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook, about 4 minutes. Add crab, chili sauce and 2½ cups water and stir to combine. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook about 7 to 8 minutes.
4. Drop egg in the sauce and slowly stir in. Serve with the vinegar and sugar. Transfer to a plate and garnish with the cilantro and scallions. Serve with the steamed buns. Makes 2 to 4 servings.

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STRANGE BUT TRUE

BALANCED

OFF-THE-WALL TAKES ON THE MENU CAN DRIVE SALES

By Amber Gibson
Photography by Matt Armendariz
Food styling by Adrien Pearson
Prop styling by Christina Weiss
There's no playing to save anymore. Like the design of a restaurant, consumers want food that excites their senses in a way that's unexpected or unusual and prompts a double-take. When that happens, the item has social media muscle, driving engagement thanks to FOMO, and it makes consumers want to try the "next best thing."

The spectrum for odd is wide, varied and subjective, making it suitable for any restaurant. Just be sure that the end result always tastes good and that it’s not weird for weird’s sake, those operators say.

**Bean Jello in Red Chili Sauce**

These chilled white noodles with the consistency of gelatin are a popular dish that originated in northern Sichuan during the late Qing Dynasty. At Z & Y Restaurant in San Francisco, executive chef Lajun Han prepares the tender noodles by stirring thickened green bean or pea starch quickly in simmering water until the paste becomes transparent. Sweet potato starch also can be used as a substitute. Once the suspension sets in the refrigerator for several hours, thin noodles are cut and tossed in a chili- and sesame oil-based sauce, which can be easily adjusted to taste, including for milder palates. As a final garnish, he adds crushed peanuts for a sweet crunch.

“Topped & Loaded Fries
Easy & elevated
75% of consumers are interested in ordering topped & loaded French fry dishes”

75% of consumers are interested in ordering topped & loaded French fry dishes.

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**Foie Gras Dipping Dots**

At Jettie, in Miami’s Wynwood neighborhood, chef Henry Hân uses a squeezy bottle and liquid nitrogen to turn foie gras into nostalgic Dipping Dots, served as a shareable appetizer with mango and papaya. “I wanted to create a fun and nostalgic take on the typical foie gras terrine,” Hân says. “Typically, when working with liquid nitrogen, heavy, for-hire ingredients lend themselves very well to being frozen and not losing any of their flavor profile characteristics.” The dish has quickly become one of their bestsellers and most commonly posted on social media.

**Tartare Grains**

Sometimes you don’t need a new recipe, but just a new presentation to refresh a menu. Reimagine a tired tartare as a tartare cigar by rolling it in tobacco dust brick pastry or phyllo dough for a playful but sophisticated finger food. At The Green Room in Burbank, California, rolled brick pastry is filled with steak tartare with a dollop of caviar on the end to resemble a cigar. The dish is served in a crystal ashtray with burnt onion ash and a smoky-filled cigar box for tableside pomp. Similarly, the tuna cigars at Crenshaw in Beverly Hills are also presented in a smoky cigar box. This easy-to-shareable version of tartare ensures diners get the perfect ratio of tuna to crouty brick pastry in each bite.

**What You See Is Not What You Get (But in a Good Way)**

Pastry chef Cedric Grolet has inspired countess peers with his hyper-realistic fruit desserts—lemons, apples, figs and strawberries—that are carefully composed engravements with layers of praline, mousses and cake, all encased in a glossy chocolate shell or glaze.

The optical illusion is known as trompe-l’œil in the art world—trick of the eye. Grolet’s Instagram stories, @cedricgrolet, and reels show how he assembles these vivid creations and chefs in North America are learning from the Parisian pastry master. At Aria in Miami, chef Michael Beltran serves an “orange” inspired by Florida citrus made of chicken mousse and duck sour orange pate served over crumbly sweet chocolate dirt with a leaf of white bread for spreading (see above photo). The crowning glory at Park Hyatt Toronto’s modern afternoon tea service is a glossy larger-than-life cherry that encapsulates the flavor of black forest cake in each bite: chocolate sponge cake, whipped cream and a macerated cherry center, finished with a chocolate stem.

**Pink Aioli**

Serving a familiar food in a bright and unexpected hue is sure to turn heads across the dining room. Much like Starbucks famous “pink drink,” one of the most popular sides at Spark in Oklahoma City is simply called “pink fries.” The eye-catching tale of crinkly-cut fries is piled high with Parmesan cheese, fresh parsley and Spark’s pink sauce, made by folding beet puree into a crème fraîche-based aioli for a sweet and savory condiment with a garlicky punch.

“Guests are more curious about our pink fries than anything else on the menu,” says Kyle Toma, director of operations. “They are a ‘must try’ item to see what all the hype is about.” People order them for the first time for the Instagram post, then keep coming back for more.” To keep up with demand, Spark makes batches of their pink sauce daily to top the fries piping hot from the fryer.

**Spark Pink Fries**

Spark, Oklahoma City

1 cup canned beets, drained
2 cloves of garlic smashed
1 cup mayo
32 ounces frozen crinkle-cut or regular French fries
Kosher salt, as needed
Parmesan cheese, grated, as needed
Parsley, finely chopped, as needed
Combine beets and garlic in a blender and process until smooth. Add mayonnaise and blend until smooth.
Cook fries in oil heated to 350°F for about 3 minutes until golden brown. Drain, toss with salt, drizzle with pink aioli, and garnish with Parmesan and parsley.
Deep-Dish Toasted Black Sesame Cheesecake Brownie
Chef澶总价Jessie Smith
St. Braxus, Portland, Oregon

FOR BROWNIE:
- 154 grams unsalted butter
- 112 grams sugar
- 325 grams dark cocoa
- 2 tablespoons vanilla
- 8 eggs
- 200 grams gluten-free flour
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt

FOR CHEESECAKE:
- 2 pounds cream cheese, room temperature
- 4 cup black sesame seeds, toasted and ground
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 cup cornstarch

To make brownie: In a large pot, melt butter and slowly add sugar until mostly dissolved; cool slightly. Transfer to a bowl and whisk in cocoa. When cool, whisk eggs in one at a time; add vanilla. Combine flour and salt and fold into mixture until no streaks remain. Pour into a greased and parchment-lined 12x12-inch pan or 11x13-inch deep dish pan. Level brownie batter with offset spatula; chill.

To make cheesecake: In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine cream cheese and toasted black sesame seed and beat for 3 minutes. Slowly add sugar and beat for 10 minutes; add eggs, one at a time. Slowly add a stream of cream and vanilla, scraping down the bowl with each addition. Stir in cornstarch lastly and fold.

Spread cheesecake over chilled brownie batter and bake in a heated 600°F oven for 20 minutes; reduce temperature to 350°F for 20 more minutes. Turn off oven and cool 10 minutes. Chill cheesecake until set. Cut as desired and plate with sesame seeds and raspberries.
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CLIMATE CHANGE has touched every wine region in the world. Heat waves and unusually heavy rains in France debilitated whole swaths of grapes in Champagne, Alsace and Beaujolais while extreme weather in Italy cut wine production by almost 10% in 2021. In the U.S., massive wildfires and drought have affected vineyards up and down California.

For their own survival along with the planet’s, many wineries are making noteworthy strides in adopting more eco-friendly practices, from how they’re growing grapes and powering equipment to the types of shipping materials.

To capture the climate-conscious audience, many restaurateurs are changing their beverage programs based on what young wine drinkers expect to see and sip.

“This trend is going strong and will continue well beyond 2022,” says Los Angeles-based Belle Bermudez, wine consultant and founder of wineshompact.com. “For those actively seeking out ways to make an impact with their disposable income, we’re helping curate wine lists that feature small-production, sustainably farmed wines. It’s one way to make a small dent in a huge problem while attracting a crowd willing to spend money.”

For restaurateurs, wine experts say it’s not as simple as offering a few sustainably farmed wines. It’s taking a holistic view of the wineries featured, both large and small, from the vine to the bottle. To get started, here are sought-after brands making a difference in their regions, according to sommeliers.

FESS PARKER, LOS OLIVOS, CALIFORNIA

ABOUT: Founded in 1989 by actor Fess Parker, this pioneering Santa Barbara County winery is known for consistent and highly rated pinot noir, chardonnay, and Rhone-style reds and whites. Understanding that the longevity of the family-owned winery relies on a healthy planet, the Parker family has made significant eco-conscious changes over the last decade.

METHODS: Grapes are sourced from STP (Sustainability in Practice) certified vineyards, including its own estate Rodney’s Vineyard. The strict certification standards cover everything from soil and pest control to recycling and treatment of workers. The Santa Maria production facility recently installed a solar power system as another step toward conservation.

RESULTS: By improving the natural ecosystems to produce healthy grapes, Rodney’s Vineyard, a source for the Fess Parker and Ripplnshy labels, has earned a stellar reputation for their quality Rhone varieties.

ETUDE, CARNEROS, CALIFORNIA

ABOUT: Established in 1982, founding winemaker Tony Roter set his sights on the cool-climate Carneros region that straddles Napa and Sonoma counties to produce world-class pinot noir. Etude is certified by various groups such as the Fish Friendly Farming Environmental Certification Program and New Green.

METHODS: Etude participates in holistic farming practices, such as grazing sheep to keep tractors out of the vineyards, using recycled water to reduce reliance on local groundwater and installing solar panels to generate energy at the winery.

RESULTS: Whether sourcing from vineyards in southern Sonoma or along the Central Coast for Etude’s highly rated pinot noir, senior winemaker Jon Priest relies on the grapes first. “We first take care of our soil and native ecosystem, intervening in the land as little as possible, so that the unique nature of our vineyards shines through in the final result.”

What is Earth-friendly?

For a wine to be considered sustainable, winemaking must protect the environment and support social responsibility. Words like organic, natural, and biodynamic are often used interchangeably along with sustainable with wine. And while nuanced differences exist, the fundamentals are the same. Winemakers and viticulturalists care for the long-term health and wellbeing of the farm and winery; they encourage and implement biodiversity measures to ensure the soil is healthy and stable; conservation of water and energy is paramount as it is protecting the welfare of workers and the community.
WINE FOR THE PEOPLE.
AUSTIN, TEXAS

ABOUT: Wine consultant-turned-winemaker Rae Wilson makes 100% Texas fruit to showcase the breadth of the state’s terroir. Widely known for her first bottling, Dundy Road, she’s now making about 2,500 cases a year, including recently released, limited-production La Valentina wines.

METHODS: Wilson works with growers who use low-impact farming methods such as natural insect predators to combat pests, amending the soil with compost to cultivate a natural balance in the vineyard and vine training methods to allow natural airflow and maximize the use of Sunglo lights.

RESULTS: “This allows the vines to deepen their root system, making them more resilient through weather changes, and produce lower yields of high-quality fruit,” Wilson says. “The longevity of the vine and complexity of the fruit is what makes the difference between a good wine and a great wine.”

AMARI WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

ABOUT: Producing more than 10,000 cases a year, Amari (pictured above) is a legacy brand that understands the need to take climate-friendly measures more seriously and started implementing new practices in 2009.

METHODS: Amari is certified annually by LIVE, which supports environmentally and socially responsible wine growth throughout the Pacific Northwest. Efforts include forgoing herbicides and enhancing biodiversity throughout their properties. More than 60% of the winery is solar-powered.

RESULTS: “I can definitely see that our vines are harder, very hot summers and very cold winters much better than some of our neighbors who farm conventionally,” says Jean-Promyco Pilet, director of winemaking. “I believe our wine quality is becoming more precise, intense and complex.”

How to Uncork the Environmental Missive

Restaurateurs, sommeliers and wine directors want to promote their climate-conscious wines on their lists, but don’t want to be heavy-handed. Three experts weigh in on getting the message right.

“We make the farming practices of each wine on the wine list. I personally think it’s important to put it out there upfront.”
—Caroline Stipe, co-founder and wine director of A.O.C., Los Angeles

“Upon introducing a new wine to the staff, I take them through a thorough tasting and description of the wine, the farming practices and why they chose it for the list. The staff then relays this to the guest at the table.”
—Katie Holmes, wine consultant for Good Provisions, Charleston, South Carolina

“The by-the-glass program has added more ‘natural’ wines over the last few years, which has given us more opportunity to interact with guests and talk about the growing natural wine industry.”
—Neal McCarthy, general manager, sommelier and owner of Miller Union Restaurant, Atlanta

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ON THE RADAR

Breakfast of Champions.
Imagine repurposing croissant dough scraps into crunchy cereal. Gallery Pastry in Indianapolis did, tossing it in cinnamon sugar and serving it with steamed milk, housemade preserves and candied pecans.

Korean Steaks Its Claim.
Twists on banh chào are the latest steakhouse iteration. Just check out high-end AB Steak by Chef Abira Bak in Los Angeles.

HIGH ALERT

Where Food Sings.
No wonder the people of Singapore are so food happy. Eating is a national pastime, a vibrant amalgamation of Malaysian, Indian, Chinese and Peranakan cuisine. See page 18 for more.

Double Down on Veggies.
Not just the center of the plate or a side anymore, vegetables are dessert bound. Pastry chef Erika Chan pair English pea cheesecake with shiro and mint granita at Rustic Canyon in Santa Monica, California.

BURN BUTTER BURN.
Elevating bread service is as simple as brushing butter or an upscale as the brown rice, pea butter with pecorino and rosemary cornmeal at Bruno Restaurant in Richmond, British Columbia.

FADING OUT

Egg Foo Young’s.
A new generation of Chinese-American chefs are the reimagining classics that boomers grew up eating. TRY THIS INSTEAD: Modernizing dishes, such as sweet and sour can be as simple as using fresh fruit and higher quality proteins.

Hummus-ing the Same.
When it’s served in airplane snack packs, it’s no longer a menu-worthy item. TRY THIS INSTEAD: Riff on plain hummus with black garlic, red lentils and fava beans. See page 5 for details.

Dull Ice.
Now that popping cocktails has become a tableside show unto itself, ice cubes are expected to do more. TRY THIS INSTEAD: Add some flair with stamped ice that reflects your restaurant’s brand, like the stylized pictures of leaves at Eleven Madison Park in New York.

BETTING ON NFTS.
Non-fungible tokens, cryptocurrency and the metaverse are descending on the restaurant world. Can you say cryptobistroiah.com?

PATIENCE IS NO LONGER A VIRTUE.
The goodwill from diners dealing with slowed service has evaporated.
TRY THIS INSTEAD: Help diners understand why gaps in service and mixups are happening. Use the opportunity to earn loyalty via complimentary desserts, promo codes for takeout or any form of appreciation.

Fine Dining Flights Back.
Younger chefs eager to show off their culinary chops aren’t willing to let coronavirus crush their dreams. Just ask Kate chef Jen Yau in Los Angeles or Benjamin Mbayeakov of Dakar Nola in New Orleans.

Dressing Up Dressing.
Vinaigrettes are fab but full-bodied, umami-packed dressings are making their moves with ingredients such as anchovies, soy sauce, Dijon and Worcestershire.
EGGS AND POTATOES

are breakfast and brunch winners, especially for the protein-obsessed and gluten-avoiding diners. They’re mainstays that present opportunity—blank canvases ready for riffing and embellishing the flavors of just about any cuisine.

This dayout is ideal now for increasing the bottom line. Chefs across the country say brunch is back. Workers are returning to offices at a time when customers are increasingly more comfortable dining out.

“People want to be out, and as much as we may not want to be back in the shop after a busy night, it makes sense,” says Michael Tronton, executive chef at Chicago’s East Bank Club. “You’re still paying for utilities and the space whether you’re open for business or not.”

While the popularity of eggs is stable, potatoes show a 4% increase over the past three years, according to research firm Datassential. But factor in preparation, presentation and ingredients—from global flavors to plant-based proteins—and the numbers soar.

EGGS ONE WAY

Soft scrambled eggs dominate menus. In Santa Monica, California, chef Ben Eastland and Gerrit Underwood recently revamped their Milo & Olive breakfast menu with the likes of prosciutto soft scrambled eggs on cheesy bread with fontina cream, aged Parmesan and arugula. At Lula Cafe in Chicago, soft scrambled eggs are folded with smoked trout, arugula, dill and cream cheese on toasted sourdough while High Street Philly in Philadelphia serves them with kale, Swiss cheese, pickled mushrooms and mushroom mornay.

BOWLED OVER

Bowls continue to be an appealing vehicle, making inroads through the morning dayout with grains. Italian-inspired USP in Venice, California, serves a grain bowl with farro, cucumber, spicy eggplant, zucchini, radish and poached eggs. In Brooklyn, New York, Glover Hill serves a ben egg poached or fried on farro, shiitake mushrooms and a sherry sabayon.

WHAT’S ON FIRST?

Eggs Benedict remains popular but is no longer partial to the English muffin. At Merchants in San Francisco, super cradle carrot, spinach and a poached egg drizzled with chilli spiked hollandaise sauce. Nasturtium garnish the plate.

For those who pass on gluten, hash browns do the job. They hold together scrambled eggs, avocado mash and wild arugula-tossed greens at the East Bank Club.
A TOAST TO TOAST
At Café Lift in Philadelphia, toasted sourdough is slathered with garlic aioli, topped with spring peas, truffle oil mushrooms, shaved pecorino, crispy shallots and poached eggs. The menu also features avocado toast, also on sourdough with blistered cherry tomato, asparagus, poached eggs, caper salad and olive oil drizzle. When Datassential reports that avocado toast is expected to increase 66.6% over the next three years, it’s safe to say that pairing it with eggs and other ingredients is a smart bet.

PORK’S FUTURE
Hams is on 43.8% of menus but is projected for a 12% decline over the next three years, says Datassential. Pork belly, however, is the pork to watch. At Watson’s Counter in Seattle, Egg’s Benny features pork belly, sliced belladonna, green onion and k-poppers. The protein appears again on the same menu but on an English muffin with a fried egg, green onion and sautéed, an umami-filled Korean condiment.

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Planning for the unexpected is just as important as planning a menu—especially in 2022.

Inflation is driving food prices to an all-time high, conflict in Europe is causing ingredient shortages, and the coronavirus continues to circulate around the world, causing restaurant traffic to fluctuate drastically month to month.

“Sometimes the situation is just beyond your control,” says restaurateur Robin Wertheimer. “But that’s when you have to pivot.” Together with her husband, chef Thomas Frelsch, Wertheimer owns and operates Werkstatt, a casual Viennese restaurant in Brooklyn, New York.

Recent supply chain issues have wreaked havoc on Werkstatt’s day-to-day operations, according to Wertheimer. As part of their ode to Austrian cuisine, the couple primarily serves imported, European beer. When her usual order of Hofbräu Original was delayed for months, stuck on the shipping container jammed in the Suez Canal, Wertheimer says she learned an invaluable lesson: “Stock up on non-perishable items whenever you can.” Now, Wertheimer stores extra bags of the ultra-popular brew just in case a U.S.-bound shipping container gets stuck mid-voyage again.

Stocking up on non-perishable goods is one of a few tried-and-true strategies Frelsch, Wertheimer and other exec operators use to guard their bottom line against unpredictable challenges like inflation or supply chain shortages. Here are others:

1. **Know your audience**
Every restaurant has its regulars and its crowd-pleasing dishes, and every chef should know what they are. If you’re new to the game, study the numbers. What are you routinely selling out of? What isn’t catching on with diners like you thought it would? Learn your people’s **soft spots** so that you anticipate your **quick-selling items** and you’ll have immediate access to the information for planning with maximum profits in mind. If you’ve been in the industry for a few decades like Wertheimer and Frelsch, you can rely on your instincts too. “You get a pretty good idea over the years of what your days look like,” says Wertheimer.

2. **Get smarter about ordering**
“Your first step towards profit is how you do your ordering,” says Wertheimer. “If you’re not good at ordering, then your restaurant’s losing money from the get-go.” To avoid losses, prioritize dishes that are versatile and can be parceled out to many different guests. For Frelsch, that means buying beef, which isn’t a traditional element of Viennese cuisine, but yes to Brussels sprouts as an appetizer and a side dish. It also means knowing what to do with an ingredient that’s got age on it. When tomatoes for a special menu item begin to brown, he quickly poached and used the remainder of his order to make a red sauce.

3. **Make friends with your purveyors**
For small, independent operators, it pays to be close to purveyors. They often have information about product forecasting, crop yields and international agricultural output that you meant to research before menu planning got in the way. At Werkstatt, chef Frelsch’s full-time suppliers, whom he has worked with for decades, let him know what’s coming down the pike and what may not be available for a while. Better yet, they fill him in on potential innovative aspects of the ingredients he currently sources to account accordingly well into the future.

4. **Save splurging for specials**
If you want to use highly perishable ingredients, save them for the section of your menu that’s based on what’s available seasonally. And when you’re putting together an order for a delicate, expensive ingredient like truffles for your menu, as with any perishable item, “Waste is the worst thing you can do in a restaurant,” says Wertheimer. Worst case scenario: Not

“TALK TO OTHER OPERATORS IN THE AREA ABOUT THEIR MENUS AND TRY TO STAY WITHIN THE BIG CREPE OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD’S AVERAGE PRICES.”
—Restauranter Robin Wertheimer of Werkstatt

“SOMETIMES THE SITUATION IS JUST BEYOND YOUR CONTROL, BUT THAT’S WHEN YOU HAVE TO PIVOT.”
—Restauranter Robin Wertheimer of Werkstatt
Check refrigeration

“One thing I didn’t understand until I ran a restaurant is how long something will hold if it’s refrigerated properly,” says Wothheimer. “That’s why the health department exists.” State health inspectors typically follow FDA guidelines, which require refrigerators to be set at or below 40°F, but Wothheimer says commercial operators should set walk-ins to 38°F and freezers to 0°F. To ensure your ingredients stay fresh as long as possible, put them in the refrigerator immediately. “The faster they are sent down,” says Wothheimer, “the better they maintain.”

It’s worth shelling out a few extra dollars for top-of-the-line cold storage because an unreliable walk-in will cost you in the form of spoiled ingredients. Also, since almost anything can be frozen, make sure cold storage is large enough to fit your needs, and when in doubt, size up.

Don’t skimp on quality ingredients

If out of nowhere the price of the organic chicken quadraples, don’t immediately start shopping for a cheaper alternative. “You’ll lose more money if you try to compensate by ordering a cheaper product,” warns Wothheimer. “Others, especially regulators, can demand that food, especially any ingredients from better restaurants, instead of trying to recreate the exact dish, see if you can use other proteins like pork loin to come up with a similar profile. If not, consider switching out the menu item entirely and replacing it with a more affordable, high-quality ingredient.

When all else fails, pass the cost onto your customers

When inflation is on a tear and the price of everything is going up, there’s only so much you can do. “Sometimes you have to pass the cost on, says Wothheimer, offering the reminder operators know all too well. “The profit margin in a restaurant is so slim. If you’ve tightened your operations and your costs are still on the brink of breaking 30%, it’s time to raise your prices.”

Your most loyal customers will understand and new ones will shelve in who cares about the differences. Cut out the dish and charge what needs to be charged. Most importantly, “just keep going,” says Wothheimer.
SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

If there’s one thing businesses can bet on, it’s their customers who want to feel special. Subscription/membership programs fill that need, providing benefits, access and a sense of belonging for the diner. For the operator, they help build the restaurant’s brand while providing another source of revenue.

While the concept is not new, it’s ever-changing, reflective of the shifting culture of the pandemic-influenced landscape. Daniel Azarman, owner of San Francisco-based El Loro says the move toward his current subscription model has been “definitely fueled by the pandemic,” the likes of which have morphed from a distorted revenue-making program into a more contemporary dine-in membership.

Today’s subscription programs typically offer a range of amenities. For example, a wine-tasting-led membership may go beyond its selling point and offer a delivery, personalization or gifting option as well as the opportunity for a tasting class, bringing in new tiers to their service and varying revenue. Here, five restaurants provide a snapshot of the subscription program they’ve integrated into their business strategies.

Type: Take Out

Soul & Smoke, Evanston, Illinois

HOW IT WORKS Run through Table 22, the restaurant’s Meat of the Month subscription program offers a monthly, fully prepped meal for takeout but only for subscribers. All a member has to do is heat it up at home.

SUCCESSFUL? “The program keeps growing every month,” says co-owner Heather Bublik, adding that it has become a solid source of revenue. Table 22 is easy to use and helps with controlling inventory and costs, she says. “We get the orders well in advance for ordering and prep, so it’s easy to plan for our kitchen.”

BOTTOM LINE: CHEF D’ANDRE CARTER CAN GET MORE CREATIVE, WHICH LEADS TO A MORE SATISFYING EXPERIENCE FOR CUSTOMERS.
**Type: Wine Club or Cocktails**

Salt Collective, San Francisco
(Restaurant group includes Dominique Crenn’s concept, Humphry Slocombe ice cream shops and Lazy Susan)

**HOW IT WORKS** For $120 per month, subscribers can choose between the Wine Collective (four bottles of wine, a bountiful cocktail or evening snacks and a similar bottle of a pick), Salt Collective (two bottles of wine, a bountiful cocktail or evening snacks), or a similar bottle of a pick. Subscribers are also offered, depending on the menu, bi-monthly or quarterly memberships. Monthly Zoom tastings hosted by experts, such as sommeliers, bartenders and winemakers, are also offered.

**SUCCESSFUL** Despite modest goals, the program has been a success considering the "fun monthly get-together exploring select labels of attractively priced wine," says Hansen Li, founder of Salt Partners Group.

**How to start**

Third-party partners can make subscription programs simpler than launching your own. Resources such as Table 22, Third Place and Summertime Supper Club work closely with restaurants to customize, accounting for personalized plans that increase exposure and diversify revenue streams.

Don’t forget that you’ll need ways to broadcast such efforts, such as a robust social media presence, a strong website and a solid email marketing list.

**Type: Events/Cooking classes**

Vimala’s Curryblossom Cafe, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**HOW IT WORKS** Inspired by pre-pandemic in-person cooking classes, a virtual online course is offered monthly. Recipes and ingredient kits that includes potentially hard-to-locate Indian spices and herbs accompany the course, making the program highly accessible. Alternatively, subscribers may opt for a fully prepared takeaway meal each month.

**SUCCESSFUL** “It’s been very well received and has given us a big chunk of revenue each month,” says executive chef Vimala Rajendran. “It also provided some needed extra hours for many of our employees.” The restaurant fulfills around 100 member subscriptions each month, creating as much revenue in one week as several of their major catering jobs.

**How to start**

Despite its success, the program is labor intensive, but Rajendran still plans on growth. Rajendran hopes to continue the program by expanding the menu for the cooking courses and by marketing to a larger audience. “We would love to be able to make these lessons available to people worldwide.”

**Type: Dine-in**

El Lopo, San Francisco

**HOW IT WORKS** Subscribers to the restaurant’s Take Care of Me Club choose between two tiers, paying $39 per month for a redeemable $100 food and beverage credit and $79 per month for a $200 credit redeemable in house. Based on an ongoing, personalized record of each member’s palate, staff at El Lopo craft dishes and drinks specific to each subscriber.

**SUCCESSFUL** The restaurant would like more than its current 25 members but believes it has built loyalty. They dine in more, some as often as three times a week. Most of the time, they exceed their monthly credits.

**Bottom line** Beyond the expected perks, other benefits include: Pitting free drinks to other guests, serving glasses of wine from the strictly curated bottle list and guaranteed seating. Azarkan has high hopes for programs, citing financial stability as a main catalyst for his vision. “I would love to see subscription programs normalized,” he says. “Hospitality businesses are bogged down by unpredictable sales volume. Having a substantial portion of our revenue come through subscriptions would make a huge difference.”

**Type: Meal Kit**

Monteverde, Chicago

**HOW IT WORKS** Subscribers to Pasta & Provisions receive a monthly easy-to-make pasta kit fit with an ever-changing pasta sauce, pasta and select proteins, such as oils, spices and cheeses, from the restaurant’s favorite purveyors. Tips on using the products and notes from staff about the ingredients are also included. The restaurant also offers a wine program of curated bottles and personalized notes. Delivery and pickup are offered.

**SUCCESSFUL** The subscription has reeled in over 100 members within the first few months.

**Bottom line** Monteverde partner Rob Mosher is cautiously optimistic because of labor challenges. Saying “the jury is still out,” Mosher cites challenges including returning to normal service, regulating staff levels and continuing to get delivery services while maintaining Monteverde’s level of quality. “It’s a bandwidth question. Will there continue to be enough time, space and staff in the existing restaurant space to get back to what we’ve always done (pre-pandemic) and add on incremental new businesses?”

54 FOOD FANATICS / SUMMER 2022
For years, environmentalists have been sounding the alarm on plastics destroying the environment. And many restaurants have responded with compostable takeout packaging, some because of state mandates and others out of responsibility to the Earth.

But an option has grown as less confusion thanks to the labeling and terminology on the products. Prices may be lower but compostable aren’t necessarily an eco-smart solution to single-use plastic.

WHY THIS MATTERS: While pricing has become more competitive, smaller restaurants, because of volume, usually pay more for compostables, but not all takeout packaging is created equal.

Depending on the material, some degrade at slower rates, breaking down no better than plastic, while other compostables are showing up in waterways.

Most cities lack the infrastructure to collect compostable food-service packaging.

Even in municipalities that collect food waste, compost facilities reject food-service packaging, including plant-based containers made from cornstarch and sugar beets because the two cannot be processed together.

As a consequence, compostable foodware ends up in a landfill because they require certain conditions to break down.

Few operators, let alone customers, are aware the containers are contributing to the growing amount of waste not reducing it.

THE BIG PICTURE: Customers are willing to pay more for earth-friendly products, including 64% of all respondents and 75% of millennial respondents in a 2021 McKinsey Co. survey last year.

More states and municipalities will regulate single-use plastics and more will continue to ban Styrofoam like California has.

WHERE IT STANDS: Expect organizations that support a cleaner planet to step up while earth-friendly packaging continues to improve.

The Center for the Circular Economy at Closed Loop Partners has launched a composting consortium that includes big brands, such as McDonald’s and Starbucks. To create a plan for a sustainable composting infrastructure that can accommodate organic food waste alongside compostable packaging. The end result would be to ultimately create compost that will nurture soil and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

“Technology is always changing and new products enter the market as a result,” says Todd Juran, senior director of non-food and packaging science for US Foods.

“THE SEARCH IS ALWAYS FOR THE BEST POLYMER. NO ONE HAS LANDED ON THE ULTIMATE YET, BUT IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY WILL ULTIMATELY MAKE THEM CHEAPER AND MORE AFFORDABLE.”

—Todd Juran of US Foods
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Eco-friendly food service disposables are the clear choice with our new compostable CPLA Fork, Knife and Spoon Refill Bundles for your WeGo Utensil Dispensers. Commit to sustainability and sanitation your customers can see.

BREAKING BARRIERS

How ownership addresses retention and social equity

By Abigail Cunningham
Photography by Frank Lemon

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Weekly pizza night outings with his dad led entrepreneur-turned-philanthropist Peter Kadens to open a restaurant rooted in correcting inequality.

“We talked about having empathy for other people. We talked about suffering in the world,” Kadens says of his father Michael Kadens. “He just taught me a lot of stuff in those Monday night discussions at pizza parlors.”

Those one-on-one outings put him on a path to addressing social equity. In 2020, he paid full tuition for a senior high school class in Toledo, Ohio. Last September, to reframe the narrative on the restaurant industry, Kadens opened Poppy’s Social in Glenwood, Illinois, an upscale suburb of Chicago.

The restaurant’s model is aimed at giving the less advantaged, such as the previously incarcerated or those with a spotty work history, a second chance while providing a livable wage and equity in the business. All full-time workers are offered health insurance and earn at least $20 per hour.

“The people who work in my restaurant are smart, capable people. They’re just different from me in terms of their privilege and where they come from, but they’re worthy of being invited in,” says Kadens, who amortized his fortune in cannabis, fully aware that the war on drugs has disproportionately impacted people of color.

Poppy’s Social, which serves pizza, wings and other American comfort food, is part of a growing movement of socially conscious restaurants forging the industry’s traditional top-down structure in favor of more inclusive models like worker-owned co-ops and employee stock ownership plans. According to the Democracy at Work Institute, the trend is a part of the ongoing disruption caused by Covid-19, which illuminated just how precarious the lives of restaurant workers tend to be.

Membership and ownership models are seen as a potential solution to that precariousness, as well as a tool for wealth distribution, employee empowerment and
Tallying with his dad, Michael, inspired Peter Kadens, left, to reframe the narrative on the restaurant industry.

retention. Advocates say the logic behind these models is as sound as it is simple: if you give workers a say in how a restaurant is run, they will care more, work harder and stick around longer—no matter their background or circumstances.

“What I’m going to prove is that if you treat people with respect and you pay them fairly, you can still make money,” says Kadens.

► On the mechanics of ownership
Kadens invested about $3 million into this restaurant, allocating 30% to employee ownership. Because the 30% is acquired over time, only 12% of the restaurant is currently owned by employees. “But I’ve allocated another 18% so that as people grow and perform and stay with the restaurant, I can give them more and more equity,” he said.

After 90 days, workers start to earn equity as long as no criminal or disciplinary actions are pending. Instead of the customary two- to three-year vesting cycles, Poppy’s is 6 and 12 months for equity. It’s shorter, Kadens says, as it can be used as a hiring and retention tool.

“Typically in a startup, the people who invest their money in the beginning, get their money back first,” he said. “I didn’t want to do that,” Kadens says. “Rather than having everybody wait for two or three or four years, I decided to start distributing after the first year because usually, the first year in a business is pretty tough. We’re just getting to break-even now. We’ll be making money in 2023 based upon the growth and the proceeds, and I’ll start taking distributions then.”

► On how ownership benefits the business
Poppy’s Social isn’t suffering from the typical 75% industry turnover rate. Kadens believes a direct correlation exists between ownership and retention. “People have been fired because they haven’t performed or they aren’t team players or they did something stupid, but I’ve had only one person leave voluntarily [in seven months],” he says. Naryaver told Kadens he’d be out of business in 6 months, but instead Poppy’s Social is headed to breaking even and making money. “It’s illustrative that you can treat people fairly, pay them well, give them benefits and still create value as a restaurant owner.”

► On whether the model is scalable
Kadens admits that some restaurateurs may not be able to pay similar wages or offer quality benefits. But in the long term, Kadens believes he will lose fewer people. “If you treat people right and if you give them opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise receive at another restaurant, you will lose far fewer people. As a result, you will make more money because turnover management is a cost driver. If restaurant owners could stop back and say, ‘I want to save money by retaining people, but in the process, I need to spend a little up front,’ they’d get it.”

► On what employees think of it
“This is the first restaurant job they really feel at home at. It’s the first restaurant job where they feel like they’re a community. It’s the first restaurant job where they enjoy and they look forward to coming to work.”

“They are very appreciative and they show their appreciation by sticking around,” Kadens says. “I think they’re genuinely happy.”

“If it’s perfect? No, it never is. Is there drama in every restaurant? There is. Have we had a couple of troublemakers? Yes, we have.”

► On how ownership impacts the culture
“When you walk into Poppy’s and you open the door, I guarantee you someone will say hi to you with a smile on their face,” Kadens says.

“We never told people to do that. It’s not some sort of dainty blurry thing that I instilled. It’s just part of our culture, and it’s a function of how happy our employees are. It happens because people like being there and they feel at home. It’s amazing.”

“When you treat people well and you treat your owners, guess what? They act well and they act like owners. I always say to our patrons, ‘Hey, if a server comes up to you and they act like they own the place, it’s because they do.’”

I ALWAYS SAY TO OUR PATRONS, ‘HEY, IF A SERVER COMES UP TO YOU AND THEY ACT LIKE THEY OWN THE PLACE, IT’S BECAUSE THEY DO.’”

—PETER KADENS OF POPPY’S SOCIAL

MORE OWNERSHIP MODELS
Member-owned restaurants and establishments transitioning to employee-first models are putting a dent in turnover.

Hell’s Kitchen, Minneapolis
Hell’s Kitchen reopened as an employee-owned restaurant in 2020. Thanks to an employee stock ownership program, workers at the former Minneapolis-based burger joint are now shareholders. Nearly a dozen staff members have worked at Hell’s Kitchen for more than a decade.

Joe Squared, Baltimore
When Joe Squared founder Joe Edwardson pivoted to a worker-owned model last year, he invested 33% of the restaurant’s profits back into the business and distributed the rest evenly among the worker-owners. Now, 13 employees own and operate the beloved Baltimore pizza joint.

Phoenix Coffee, Cleveland
Phoenix Coffee is an employee-owned coffee company with five locations across the city and a wholesale roaster and bakery downtown. In addition to membership, Phoenix Coffee offers employees reimbursement for health insurance and profit-sharing.
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Welcome to a road trip through Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota.

These states are vast, and although many stops along the path from the Black Hills over to Yellowstone National Park and Big Sky are old-time, long-time mom and pop, innovation is thriving. Many of these routes lead to seasonal businesses, but as people leave big-city life for cleaner air, stunning surroundings and the allure of small mountain town life, more businesses are opening year-round. Restaurateurs are doing the same, reviving old buildings, closed storefronts and even a defunct hotel. Menus are becoming more than chicken-fried steak and all things deep-fried. Each of these businesses has a noteworthy story that demonstrates a commitment to building a strong staff and a menu driven by sound business practices. But look at the seven establishments that made the 2022 semifinalists and finalist lists for the 2022 James Beard Awards, from The Marble Table in Billings, Montana, for Best New Restaurant to Rainbow Ranch Lodge in Gallatin Gateway, Montana, for Outstanding Wine Program. These concepts are especially unique: Newcomers have uprooted to be here specifically for a better quality of life while locals are energized by the excitement of a growing community.
Bozeman, Montana

Located downtown in a historic building destroyed by a 2009 gas explosion but rebuilt to capture its 19th-century, Brigade has the most innovative, vegetable forward menu in the state with dishes like edamame hummus and cauliflower steak with confit garlic and heirloom melon.

Its restaurant group, The Okay Cool Group is lighting up downtown with other concepts, such as Happy Box, an Asian street food and kaiseki concept; Kitty Warren, a speakeasy featuring fun cocktails and small bites; and Main Street Market, a wine bar, breakfast and lunch cafe.

You’ll also find Wild Crumb, a bakery opened by Caroline Schneider and Lauren Heemstra, finalists for the 2022 James Beard Outstanding Baker Award. Their croissants, eclairough and desserts are outstanding. Like Schneider and Heemstra, Troy McPail—James Beard Best Chef runner and former executive chef at legendary Commander’s Palace in New Orleans—also relocated to the mountain community for its beauty and slower-paced way of life. He’s overseeing and mentoring staff at Jam!, Dave’s Sushi and Revelry.

How it shows: High-quality, on-trend food. Think plant-based and global flavors, friendly service and entertainment draw diners while flexible schedules, mission-based company culture, superior training and great communication retain workers.
Lewistown, Montana
An old mercantile building is the new home for Central Food Grilling Co., a restaurant and games venue that shares space with Big Spring Brewery. A venture among longtime friends and family, the business aims to share stories and food based on a company culture of Montana hospitality and quality food.

How it shows: The business has clocked impressive retention rates after creating a supportive and caring environment that understands staff needs so they want to come to work.

LIVINGSTON, MONTANA
How do Josh Adams and his partners get it right at Campione Roman Kitchen? They traveled to Italy, giving them the tools to prepare and present their dishes, and world foods authentically, which matches their commitment to service and community involvement.

How it shows: By putting staff needs before their own, such as taking shifts themselves if a worker calls off, workers feel appreciated. The same messaging flows to their social media, where their strong presence reinforces the brand.

LEAD, SOUTH DAKOTA
An open, fully closed hotel along a main thoroughfare to Yellowstone National Park is on its way to restoring its glory day. The Stampmill Restaurant, Saloon and Victorian Suites offers a simple but elevated menu with the help of on-trend sauces and seasonings. It’s currently one of the few year-round restaurants, staying open past the tourist season.

How it shows: Restaurants can drive traffic, during the off-season with smart marketing and streamlined operations while relying on local

Helena, Montana
The first certified green restaurant in Montana, Wasserkeller Dinner House & Pub is located on a hot springs and restored farmhouse, which also features a greenhouse and local artist shop. Regional specialties and up-to-date favorites such as charred Brussels sprouts with smoked bacon, Tuscan lentils all and shaved Parmesan and grilled bleu with spinach and blackberries and sage pesto all turn newcomers into regulars.

How it shows: The owners balance innovation with tradition, from the kitchen to the front of the house, by treating customers, staff and vendors with respect and kindness. The efforts, they say, return to them tenfold.

Big Horn, Wyoming
Once a failing old saloon, Just Ledeux at Saloon and Steakout is now a go-to spot for locally crafted spirits and an elevated Western menu. It’s also a distillery and a music venue with a sequestered saddle dance ball, making it much sought after spot.

How it shows: While people are eager to be out and enjoying themselves again, restaurants need to be smart about technology. The restaurant leverages it to sell tickets online, handle waitlists and manage table turns for the best possible profitability.
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Want to start a new concept or expand big time?

Everyone with the dream of starting a restaurant also has a dream of money falling from the sky to get those doors open.

Lauren Fernandez, founder and CEO of Full Course, an Atlanta-based restaurant development and investment firm, knows her job is to shake off some of the starch.

Fernandez says the company’s “sweet spot” is emerging fast casual dining, but they also incubate product lines, licensing and franchise startups. Her role comes with everything from “cheerleader and coach to confidante,” and she has particular interest in supporting and elevating women, people of color and immigrants.

No support from the company’s investment fund comes without a deep dive into the operator’s vision for their restaurant, a receptiveness to the realities of the business and the commitment to a solid strategy. Here’s more, in her own words.

Q. What’s your typical first impression of the clients who come to you?

A. The vast majority of people have no idea of the myriad ways to grow their business. You’d be shocked at how many people are uninformed and lack a strategy. The most common thing I see is a knee-jerk, “I’m going to franchise.” I have clients with that squirmed expression. With all of our clients, we ask, “What’s your end goal?” It always comes back to serving your goal.

Q. So, you have to tone down the enthusiasm a little?

A. I want to hear all their crazy ideas. But we have to focus on what the real agenda is. We work with them on a five-year plan. There are many people out there with a dream but maybe it’s the wrong horns in the wrong race.

Q. What are some of the mistakes people make right from the beginning?

A. I find that they make a lot of decisions without thinking of questions they should have asked. In choosing real estate, for example. This is arguably one of the hardest things to undo. They like the way the building looks, the intersection it’s located on. But they haven’t done the research to really understand who their customer is, where they live or work and at what time of day they’re usually going out. Oftentimes, the client’s focus is on the stuff that’s fun. The design. The logo.

Q. Are there distinct challenges for women and people of color?

A. We started our LAUNCH program after discovering many women and minority entrepreneurs are struggling to even open their first restaurant. When dealing with brands that are culturally representative there needs to be sensitivity to how it’s introduced into the market, and a lot of them don’t get the funding they need. It has never felt more glaringly obvious, with my gender and Hispanic background, that private equity is primarily a male-dominated environment. We need to invest in the early stage of growing diverse brands to succeed. Not to just coach them.

Q. How important is technology to the business?

A. New restaurants start with the easiest to use and the cheapest, not thinking about all the ways they need to scale. The most obvious one is if they choose a POS system that doesn’t integrate with sales, catering, loyalty programs. It’s a huge problem if you choose tech platforms that don’t integrate with each other. For small businesses, maybe it only becomes a really big problem down the road, but the earlier you catch these issues in tech, the easier and cheaper it is to fix.

Q. What’s the key to sustainable success?

A. A strong team is the most important thing. One of the biggest risks of failure is people trying to wear too many hats. You have to learn delegation and role definition and a chain of command. I tell people the goal is getting you out of the business so you can focus on the business. Define the brand, the mission and shape its culture because that flows into everything. It’s just not about paying more for your employee but them wanting to come to you and keep working for you.

Q. How hard is it to get people to pull back from more locations to grow sustainably instead?

A. It’s like an onion; it will make you cry at first but you’ll feel better in the end.

The menu, culture and management style are just a few factors considered for expansion of a concept.

What’s It All About?

The voice of experience:

Lauren Fernandez spent decades in corporate roles from international mergers, trademarks, and intellectual property to developing supply chains for food companies and growing multi-unit franchises after working as general counsel for FOCUS brands, the parent company of Carvel and Cinabbon.

What’s on the menu: Her company, Full Course, covers a wide range, from restaurant growth, licensing, franchise and product development consulting to investing through their FC Polaris Fund.

Price tag: Packages range from educational courses at $99 to full consulting support at $9,000.
BY THE NUMBERS

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Brown rice 7.4%

SAY CHEESE

Colby 3.5% 
Cheddar 4.3% 
Smoked cheddar 4.4% 
White cheddar 4.5% 
Burrata 4.3%

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

Turmeric 3.23% 
Red wine 1.12% 
Chipotle gown 1.05% 
Tamarind 1.85% 
Garlic sauce 1.65%

FRUIT FORWARD!

Cheesecake 2.0% 
Tropical coconut 2.2% 
Green smoothie 1.3% 
Berries 1.7% 
Yuzu 1.4%

PRO PROTEIN

Plant-based meat Infinitely few 
Ancient grains 4.16% 
Tofu 3.33% 
Chicken thigh 8.8% 
Pulled pork 3.65%

GO GREENS

Cilantro 1.53% 
Microgreens 3.33% 
Brussels sprouts 2.25% 
Spring mix 2.25% 
Lettuce 3.20%

EAT YOUR VEGGIES

Sauteed pepper 4.16% 
Papadum pepper 4.16% 
Watermelon radish 0.25% 
Mango 2.25% 
Beet vegetables 6.5%

TOP Toppings

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Source: Okanagan, growth from 2021 to 2022

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