



2023 Food & Flavor Outlook



“As we become more connected, our world gets smaller—presenting an opportunity to understand how and why dishes came to be. If you dive deep into any particular cuisine, you'll find that traditions, seasonality and storytelling are just as important as the ingredients themselves.”

- Chef Mark Serice
Vice President Global Culinary, Custom Culinary®

A year of optimism, growth and new culinary experiences.

The obstacles have been relentless and the road is long, but the food industry has continued to demonstrate the ability to rebound and grow in the face of challenges. And that's why we're thrilled to share our 2023 Food & Flavor Outlook with you—it's all about the energy and excitement we're seeing around the culinary world.

Our global market research experts and chefs are here to share our vision for the year ahead, with trends and culinary platforms that can serve as the basis for innovation—whether that's new products, new menu items or new flavor delivery solutions.

We curated this list through the lens of FlavorIQ®, our uniquely tailored approach to the creation of product, menu and flavor delivery systems. It's how we turn insights and culinary inspiration into actionable business solutions, considering both the current state of the industry and our predictions for the future.

Join us to learn “what's next” for these exceptional foods and flavors. Get inspired to discover new opportunities as we create better together.





Rise and Shine!

Chef tip: Serving up the perfect poached egg is a “must” for a successful breakfast or brunch menu—but it doesn’t have to be an arduous task. Bring water and vinegar to a boil, stir and quickly crack the eggs into the swirling water. Once cooked, they can be placed in room-temperature water and sit for up to an hour before serving. A quick dip in boiling water will reheat them perfectly!

It's time to revisit the morning daypart, with exciting new dishes and products.

After a decline in recent years, breakfast is back with new flavors, new formats and a stronger focus on convenience. Variety and value are essential, with sandwiches, bowls and portable snacks in high demand. Offerings are becoming more diverse, too, with muesli, liège waffles and congee finding new audiences around the globe. A mix of decadent and better-for-you options abounds as consumers straddle the line between healthy and indulgent.

Thanks to flexible schedules, many people are meeting up with colleagues on weekday mornings rather than taking the classic “working lunch.” This is great news for operators, who are serving up memorable brunch dishes to keep the momentum going. They’re also trying new strategies, such as bundling coffee, breakfast and lunch in to-go-friendly kits. And speaking of coffee, the beloved bean is popping up in new applications. From dry rubs to marinades and sauces, coffee is moving out of the cup and onto the plate.



Chicken Takes Flight



Chef tip: Looking for the secret to signature chicken? Start by brining your chicken, then briefly poach and quickly chill in ice water to tighten the skin. Pat the chicken dry, lightly season and roast at a high temperature for the ultimate roasted chicken—perfectly crispy skin and juicy, flavorful meat that will keep customers coming back for more.

Let's find ways to revolutionize chicken, the wildly popular and beloved protein.

Whether it's grilled or roasted, smoked or stewed, consumers simply can't get enough chicken. As one of the most versatile proteins, chicken continues to soar across restaurants and retail offerings even as the cost of food continues to increase. The ever-popular fried chicken sandwich has also opened the doors to creative global exploration of chicken dishes. Riding the wave of success brought on by Nashville hot and Korean fried chicken, mouthwatering preparations such as Taiwanese popcorn chicken, Indian chicken 65 and Peruvian pollo a la brasa are primed to make an impact in the year ahead.

Beyond flavor, a growing focus on environmentally friendly agricultural methods means that sustainability will become a larger part of the chicken story. And while we may not have an answer to the question of what came first—meatless chicken or plant-based eggs—we do know that alternative proteins are bringing even more diversity and innovation to the category.





A World of Barbecue

Chef tip: It's not just about the meat. Barbecue techniques can be applied to the preparation of pineapple, pears, peaches or plums, resulting in grilled fruit that adds flavor, texture and overall interest to barbecued meat entrées. Grilled fruit also makes for an excellent dessert, especially when paired with spice-infused cream.

Nothing brings the heat quite like the intense, robust flavors of barbecue.

Despite being the oldest cooking method in the world, barbecue is a culinary art form that constantly reinvents itself. Pitmasters are adapting traditional techniques to move with the times, mixing and matching wood types, fuels, proteins, seasonings and sauces in creative, delicious ways. Even health trends, such as sugar reduction and the plant-forward movement, are being incorporated into appealing new dishes. But this innovation is rooted in authentic methods and recipes that can be found around the globe, including Japanese yakitori, Indonesian satay, South African braai and Argentinian gaucho asado.

So, what makes these recipes so universal? Barbecue is often prepared and served outdoors—and live-fire cooking means time for families and friends to bond over a shared food experience. Whether smoke-roasted low and slow or directly grilled over an open flame, barbecued meats, seafood, vegetables and fruit showcase the bounty and beauty of ingredients and influence from all over the world.





A Taste of Mexico


Chef tip: Nothing beats the taste and texture of salsa prepared with a traditional molcajete (mortar) and tejolote (pestle). Be sure to dry roast dried chilies, garlic, onion and tomatoes in a hot pan without additional fat to enhance the depth of their flavors.

Delicious, authentic cuisine from Mexico is primed to make a worldwide impact.

With its time-honored techniques, colorful ingredients and bold flavors, there's no shortage of excitement surrounding Mexican fare. Globally, the desire for authentic meals is growing—especially among younger generations—presenting an opportunity to dive into what makes each of the seven Mexican cuisine regions so special. Geography, agriculture and history work in tandem, resulting in the creation of local Mexican specialties with unique culinary identities.

Mexican cuisine is also making a worldwide impact thanks to the power of the internet. Birria, a traditional goat stew from Jalisco, inspired the creation of quesabirria (a quesadilla-taco mashup) in Tijuana. From there, the crispy, cheesy, dippable tacos have taken over menus and the social media feeds of food lovers worldwide—just one example of the mass appeal of Mexican cuisine. Ingredients with contrasting textures complement harmonious blends of savory, spicy and acidic flavors—elevating dishes on restaurant menus and retail shelves alike.





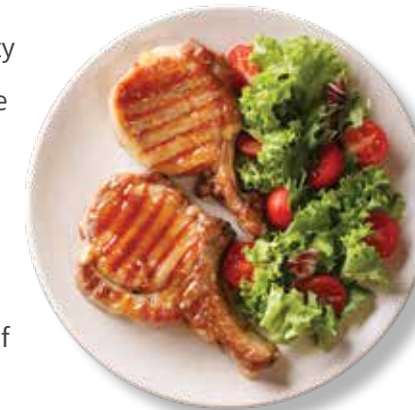
The Buzz on Honey

Chef tip: Spice-infused honey adds the perfect finishing touch to any savory dish. Simmer warm spices together with honey, considering such combinations as ginger and lavender, cumin and black pepper or black cardamom and star anise.

Sustainable honey is the refined sugar alternative with an appealing healthy halo.

Demand for honey is flying past expectations, with consumption at an all-time high. The natural sweetener's hive-to-table story aligns with the mindset of today's eco-conscious consumers, bringing awareness to the safety of pollinator populations and how our food decisions impact the planet. Some suppliers have pledged to source ingredients from bee-friendly farms, while tech startups are creating lab-based honey using plant science and fermentation to bypass bees entirely.

As consumers look to reduce refined sugar in their daily diets, suppliers and operators can benefit from honey's inherent health halo. Baked goods, cereal, yogurt, condiments, dry seasonings and pizza sauces are just some of the retail, protein and foodservice categories showing an increased use of honey as a sweetener. There's even a subset of consumers who normally avoid animal products but are willing to make an exception for honey. This "beegan" movement showcases plant-based dishes that find the sweet spot between flavor and sustainability.





Recipes Reimagined

Chef tip: Creating a mashup of two authentic dishes, such as Sichuan mapo tofu and Canadian poutine, can bring a flavor experience to new heights. In this case, swap the french fries for crispy polenta sticks and top with spicy, mouth-numbing mapo tofu instead of gravy and cheese curds. This reimagined take will set your menu apart.

Today, culinary evolution means taking new flavors into unexpected formats.

In today's accelerated trend cycle, classic dishes can serve as a jumping-off point for new flavor profiles. This evolution of "dishes as flavors" represents a playful approach to innovation, blurring the lines between entrées, snacks, beverages and desserts. Consider the birthday cake, which is no longer just an annual baked treat. Birthday cake flavor descriptors can be found on ice cream, jelly beans, popcorn, graham crackers, peanut butter and more.

Another way the trend is playing out is through cuisine mashups. Desire for authenticity combined with interest in fusion fare has opened the door to global inspiration, introducing new flavors into familiar formats. Take a dish like chicken tikka masala, which is now being found as a pizza topping, burrito filling or mac and cheese mix-in. Or, imagine cacio e pepe without the pasta, as a sauce for potatoes, a cracker seasoning or a flavored salt. A little experimentation can yield delicious results!





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of culinary innovation!



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