

trending now

EMERGING FLAVORS



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 **Ventura Foods**[®]

Insights & Category Management Department

In This Issue

Complex Heat

Flower Power

Going Nutty

Modern Japanese

Bitter and Earthy



Complex Heat

The demand for heat has created greater interest in complex spicy flavor combinations. Spicy flavors paired with sweet or savory flavors offer the broadest appeal, according to Technomic's *Flavor Consumer Trend Report*, but other flavor combos are trending up on menus and are particularly popular among younger consumers. Chile-based sauces and condiments with varied flavor notes from around the globe are thus seeing momentum on U.S. menus, namely muhammara (a Syrian red pepper and walnut dip), finadene (a Chamorran spicy, salty condiment), palapa (a Philippine condiment of coconut, garlic and chile), Tajin (a Mexican seasoning blend of chile, lime and salt),

pilacca (an Italian fried chile pepper sauce), jaew bong (a Laos chile paste), chile crisp (a Chinese spicy, crunchy condiment) and chamoy (a Mexican sauce of pickled fruit with chile).

Look for:

- Sauces with complex heat that have already entered top chains—such as Sriracha, harissa and gochujang—to pave the way for the above flavors and others to grow on menus
- Operators to find new and innovative ways to add complex heat to menus

43%

of 18- to 34-year-olds would like more restaurants to offer foods featuring a combination of flavors



Gochujang

Flower Power

Floral flavors have really gained momentum on menus in the past year. Once just a garnish, flowers now are often the go-to ingredient to amp up a dish or beverage's bitter and/or sweet flavor, depending on the variety. Lavender, for example, has fared well as a flavor enhancement to beers and cocktails, hibiscus lemonades and mocktails have made momentum, and elderflower-flavored liqueurs are all over specialty beverage menus. Beyond beverages, desserts are another menu category showcasing the power of flowers. Other florals showing up in the independent restaurant space in innovative

applications include lilies, osmanthus, dandelions and daisies.

Look for:

- Coffee cafe operators to experiment more with coffee beverages highlighting florals as a pairing of bitter and sweet
- Florals to increasingly pop up in entrees and appetizers

Lavender butter

18.1%

**increase of
lavender mentions
on menus in the
past year**



Going Nutty

Like florals, nutty flavors were once solely seen as a type of garnish or last-minute enhancement to a food or drink. However, operators are now looking to nutty flavors beyond their traditional preparations and using them as the spotlight, especially in beverages. This has been noted especially with nut milks (or mylks), which are often touted as a dairy alternative in coffee cafes. Almond milk has paved the way for other emerging nutty milks, such as pecan milk, pistachio milk, macadamia nut milk, cashew nut milk and hazelnut milk, to enter the

fold. Expect these trends to start in the retail space then eventually work their way onto restaurant menus.

Look for:

- Kids menus to feature these milk alternatives, touted especially for those with dairy allergies or intolerances
- Other nondairy milks finding favor, including oat milk, hemp milk and other seed milks, such as sunflower seed milk



20.6%
increase of almond
milk mentions on
menus in the past
year, making it one
of the fastest-
growing
ingredients

Modern Japanese

Emerging ethnic flavor trends are often cyclical: They're here today, gone tomorrow, then return again. Let's break down Asia: Most recently, flavors from Southeast Asia and the Asian islands have been all the rage; before that, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese flavors had a moment. But up first was Chinese and Japanese, and that cycle has returned: Emerging on the scene today are more modern interpretations of Japanese flavors. Sushi and ramen have been getting a reboot with new flavors and formats. And on the independent restaurant front, new emerging ingredients on the horizon include mitsuba (wild parsley), condiments such as furikake and gomashio, myoga

(gingery herb), ume (plum-like fruit), sudachi (Japanese citrus), yuzukosho (paste of yuzu rind, chiles and salt), katsu sando (pork cutlet sandwich) and Japanese spirits.

Look for:

- The trend to also encompass Chinese flavors, with creative applications of traditional Chinese dishes, such as General Tso and Kung Pao, popping up in chains
- Emerging flavors from other global regions around the world beyond Asia to have a cyclical nature, such as Latin and Mediterranean

45%

of consumers find ethnic flavors appealing



Katsu sando

Bitter and Earthy

Consumers today are increasingly interested in seeing bitter and earthy flavors in interesting ways on menus. These flavors may have gotten a bad rap in years past, but many operators today are noting the depth of flavor they can add to a beverage or dish. For example, herbs such as sorrel and dandelion have started to expand beyond independent restaurants. Pungent spices such as turmeric and cardamom have especially been trending in nonalcohol and adult beverages. Alcohol components such as Sfumato and Aperol have also seen momentum. And cannabis has been on many lists as *the* trend to watch in

2019—CBD oil's earthy flavor, in particular, can add complexity to a drink.

Look for:

- Cannabis to continue to make waves in independent concepts over the coming year as acceptance grows
- Operators to continue turning to ingredients and flavors with bitter tinges and bright colors (such as turmeric and Aperol) to appeal to young consumers through social media

*Salad with
dandelion greens*



2x

**Younger consumers
are twice as likely
as older consumers
to find bitter flavors
appealing**

Key Takeaways

1

- As diversification of the US continues, flavor experience continues to drive craveability and distinctiveness on menu's.
- Complex Heat centers around the need for a multi-sensorial experience that has a heat component but marries it with a sweet, savory, floral note to create balance and interest.
- Sauce Craft is a great example of how to develop a layered flavor that delivers these components to Operators.

2

- Use of floral notes in creating a new flavor has been on the rise in cocktails and is now moving into main dishes.
- Leveraging these components delivers on a unique experience and an ethnic experience – rose used in Middle Eastern cuisine, jasmine used in Asian cuisine.
- Adding these types of flavors to dishes elevates the consumer experience and provides a unique experience.

3

- Flavor trends are moving ever faster with the use of social media.
- Regional and ethnic flavors are cyclical and provide an ongoing cadence of emerging flavors that evolve with each new iteration.
- Look to leverage and develop flavors by providing +1 opportunities for dressings, sauces and BBQ that could emulate the current ethnic trend.
- Leveraging a +1 strategy maximizes the pantry for the Operator, creates a new experience for the consumer and keeps the menu fresh.