

CONFIDENCE  
IN EVERY CASE.



## SPRING - 2021

The weather is warming, vaccinations are rolling out faster, and hope is in the air, especially for the restaurant industry.

One thing is for sure, our businesses have had to pivot and evolve, but ultimately everyone has learned new ways of doing business.

Customers are anxious to get back out into the dining world—and we are here to ensure you are ready.

# Trends

SPRING - 2021

## Springing Back

With Covid-19 numbers finally falling and frigid temperatures starting to thaw, foodservice operators are excited to bring their own special brand of hospitality back to customers.

- Business will possibly never go back to pre-pandemic ways, so remaining nimble and incorporating all we've learned over the past year will be critical to success.
- Masks, social distancing, and accelerated safety measures are here to stay—at least in the near term. Accommodate your customers and staff so they feel confident patronizing you.
- Outdoor eating will continue to be a preferred method of dining for most customers. Is it comfortable? Easy for staff to maneuver?
- Delivery, curbside pick-up, and meal kit services saved many operations. Savvy restaurateurs will continue innovating in these arenas.
- Get the word out through local media and social platforms; be sure your customers know you are back in action through enticing food and beverage photos, special events, seasonal specials, and LTOs (when possible).
- Although overall safety has become the top concern of patrons, quality and hospitality remain critical to return visits. Delicious food and warm service never go out of style.
- New perspective: remember that nothing is assured even when all restrictions are lifted, so budget well, reinforce your supplier relationships, strengthen your employee teams, and continue to build customer loyalty. Above all, be ready for anything in the new normal.

## Customer Favorites

### + New Flavors

This year has been all about comfort foods like pizza, burgers, mac and cheese, ice cream, rice bowls, and pasta, but distinguishing your dish goes beyond quality. Streamlined menus add variation

to these customer faves with innovative presentation, unique flavor additions, and plenty of global condiments.

- The nostalgia of creamy mac and cheese might lure them in, but the craveable additions like charred broccolini, bruléed cheese, caramelized onions, even jalapeno poppers with Cheetos will keep them ordering again.
- Thai tea, ginger, and matcha add dimension to frozen desserts and creamy custards.
- Pizza will always reign supreme in the delivery segment. Some have gone molto autentico with heirloom tomatoes, roasted eggplant, fresh basil, and the perfect crust, while others have gone fusion fabulous by adding unlikely toppings such as kimchi, mashed potatoes, or mangos with chile peppers.
- Pimiento cheese, that old-school Southern classic, has boomed! Use real roasted red bell peppers and quality cheese. Try add-ins like pickle juice, spicy chiles, roasted garlic, or charred green onions.
- Try melding American-Chinese flavors such as kung pao, General Tso's, and sweet & sour into side dishes (especially with cauliflower, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, waffles/pancakes, salad dressings, and dips).
- Burger and chicken sandwiches, whether plant- or meat-based continue to be blank slates—pile on the produce!





# Trends

SPRING - 2021



## Evolving Definition of the Restaurant

The new challenges of Covid-19 shook up and reorganized how foodservice businesses think, act, and operate. Moving forward, the industry has many new opportunities to improve upon what works, transform pain points, and create new, untraditional revenue streams.

- Delivery is not new, but now it's ubiquitous. Streamlining and upgrading is a must and not just in the transportation portion. Pre-cut and value-added produce items, strong supplier relationships, sustainable packaging, and virtual/ghost kitchens are all part of the new normal.
- Curated grocery boxes allow diners to put together your venue's recipes by combining specialty ingredients and chef instructions. Subscription services have soared.
- A restaurant's responsibility to community now extends beyond in-house/delivery guests. Partnering in community outreach organizations, hospital and nursing home programs, and education services creates new business while contributing to the greater good.

## The Hot List

- Brazilian Flavors
- Creative To-Go Food
- Adventurous Condiments
- Mushrooms
- Health-Centric Cocktails
- Hemp Alternatives
- Eco-Friendly Packaging
- Chef-Driven Virtual Classes
- Foods of the African Diaspora
- Mezcal
- Cruciferous Veg Hummus
- Political Advocacy
- Steamed Rice Noodle Wraps
- Collard Greens
- Special Occasion Experiences
- Sweet Potatoes
- Equitable Employment
- Fava Beans
- Ghost Kitchens 2.0
- Basque Burnt Cheesecakes
- Small Group Dining
- Kelp
- Waste-Conscious Menus
- Big Breakfasts
- Heritage Cooking
- Microgreens
- Anything-Goes Charcuterie Boards
- Domestic Destination Restaurants
- Biscuits
- Haitian Epis
- Restaurant Meal Boxes
- Mindful Nutrition
- Guilty Pleasures (Especially Vegan!)
- Veg-Focused Entrees
- Spicy Flavors
- Tik Tok
- Pickled Everything
- Classic Recipes

## Get Connected!

Sign up to receive these reports exclusively from markon.com:

- **Fresh Crop**—a weekly rundown of the fresh produce market including prices, supply levels, and quality.
- **Trends**—forecasts what is on the culinary horizon four times per year.

## Meeting Post-Pandemic Expectations

A lot has changed over the past year, especially customers' wants and needs. The foodservice industry is poised for a comeback—and those that have evolved will be primed for the most success.

- 70% of people surveyed think eating out will help them feel normal again. Foster a sense of festivity within your safe space.
- Nobody wants to walk into a crowded lobby. According to *Seven Rooms*, 83% of consumers would avoid a packed waiting room. Stagger reservations and ensure enough outdoor space is reserved for this purpose.
- Contactless menus and payment methods will remain the preferred transaction modes. If you haven't set these up, now is the time. QR codes, website links, and digital reservations are mainstream now. When reservations won't work for your operation, try virtual waitlists that can be joined at home or in the parking lot to avoid hostess stand clustering.
- Overcommunicate: reach out to your customer base via email and social media with polls and questionnaires to gauge what your particular guests require to dine with you, then respond and follow through where possible.
- Include your branding messages and safety protocol through all virtual platforms and delivery inserts popped into take out bags as well as educational signage on-site (indoor and outdoor).
- First and foremost, make sure they know you are open!

### Sources:

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