



Hand-held and packed with healthy fruits, these Ricotta-spread bites were first made famous at L.A.'s Sqrl. Now they're seen on menus across the country.

WINTER 2019 TRENDS AT A GLANCE

- Move over eggs & bacon...avo toast and acai bowls are taking over breakfast.
- Fast casual format serving foodie fare = higher profits.
- Sauces move to the forefront of flavor.
- 75% vegetarian/25% meat: the future of eating.
- Sour trumps sweet.
- Plant-based snacks rock the menu!

Trends

WINTER 2019

Millennial Brekkie

The younger set (including Gen Z) likes to eat what would formally be deemed breakfast items throughout the day and night. Not only do they want this daypart expanded, but they have revolutionized what to order. Bowls, topped toasts, burritos, and savory waffles are replacing the old standards as quickly as you can whip up a smoothie.

- Many people are on the go and want hand-held options to get their day started. Protein-packed burritos, panini, and wraps fit the bill.
- Energy-boosters, like fresh-pressed juices, smoothies, and fruit bowls (especially with added bee pollen, wheatgrass, or turmeric) are extremely popular.
- Avo toast isn't the only topped bread treat popular at breakfast. Try slathering house-made Ricotta on toasted slices of fig bread; top with tropical fruits such as papaya, yellow dragon fruit, and passion fruit (see photo at left).



So Saucy!

Sauces have never been more important to menus. Gone is the blandness of simple mother sauces, replaced by bold flavors, rich colors, and global origins that increase the profitability of the dish.

- Herbal, garlicky chimichurri balances the smoky, bitterness of rainbow chard, adds complexity to heirloom beans, and complements the umami of seared beef (see photo at left).
- North African harissa is a smoky, spicy paste that combines hot chile peppers, garlic, saffron, cumin, caraway, rose, coriander, and olive oil. It adds kick to hummus, salad dressings, roasted vegetables, and tagines.
- Asian gochujang is a hot, yet slightly sweet sauce that consists of fermented soy, glutinous rice, chile peppers, and salt. Use it to flavor meats, stews, even french fries!

Earth & Turf

Flexitarians love their produce, but that doesn't mean completely plant-based recipes. Instead, many diners are in search of veg-heavy dishes with meat accents.

Upscale Fast Casual

Walk-ups like Chipotle, Noodles & Company, and Panera have made this segment the one to watch, but tight budgets combined with high food and labor costs keep margins thin. Newer-thinking fast casuals are serving chef-caliber foods at higher price points, while skipping most of the labor and overhead costs to boost the bottom line.

- The old days saw bacon bits as the de rigeur salad topper. Today's chefs are using other crunchy meats like crisped prosciutto, lardons, and salmon jerky.
 - Sautéed vegetables like Brussels sprouts, green beans, and sweet baby broccoli get hits of fat and acid from sauces made with salumi.
 - Holiday latkes are deliciously crunchy potato pancakes that can be made even more craveable with the addition of schmaltz.
 - Heirloom beans—whether as sides or soups, can benefit from salted pork or chorizo.
 - Bump up the flavor in gratins, pizzas, flatbreads, and casseroles that are loaded with produce like squash, potatoes, onions, and tomatoes with the addition of pancetta or crumbled chicken sausage.
- Average checks in typical fast casuals range from \$12-\$14...by adding craft beers and signature cocktails, sophisticated sauces and condiments, and global ingredients, some savvy operators can charge from \$60-\$90.
 - Less square footage is needed (lower rent!) when many of the orders are take out.
 - Some are even doing scaled-down tasting menus: four courses for \$50 anyone?



Trends

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Vegan Fast Food

Vegan foods are so much more than salads and fake meats. The best plant-based recipes focus on flavor and texture—and many are hand-held and snack-based.

- Spicy jackfruit mimics pulled pork without all of the fat and cholesterol. Top these on-trend tacos with crunchy, creamy Ready-Set-Serve® Heart-Y Slaw for the perfect hand-held treat. (see photo above).
- Ditch the bones! Buffalo cauliflower is a deep-fried treat served with celery sticks and blue cheese dressing.
- Animal-style fries can easily be converted by topping oven-baked potatoes with caramelized onions and a special sauce consisting of vegan mayo, ketchup, Medjool dates, and pickled relish (add sriracha for a kick).
- Carrot hot dogs, made by poaching this nutritious root with herbs and spices until fork tender, are so much more delicious than the mystery meat traditionally served in a bun.
- Make onion rings by dipping in almond milk, flour, and paprika, then panko breadcrumbs—fry or bake!

The Hot List

- Baltic Cuisine
- Oat Milk
- Robot Takeover
- Global Mashups
- Braised Vegetables
- Layered Heat
- Mainstream Marijuana
- Chestnuts
- Katsu Reinvented
- War on Plastic
- Motherless Meat
- Khachapuri
- Chinese Street Food
- Twice-Dressed Salads
- Ube Ice Cream
- Activist Chefs
- Lotus Roots
- Modern Salad Garnishes
- Fashion-Inspired Interiors
- Eel Sauce
- Convenience Stores 2.0
- Pulses
- Digital Marketing
- Next Level Texture
- Blended Burgers
- Evolving Cold Brew Coffee
- Fish Sauce Caramel
- Late-Night Eats
- Butterfly Pea Flower
- Daypart Agnostic
- Aquafaba
- Sushi Donuts

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Pucker Up!

Sour flavors, from kimchi, to exotic citrus, to vinegar braises, were once far from popular. Traditionally, North Americans preferred sweeter foods and felt an aversion to bitter notes. But modern tastes have evolved and matured to be much more adventurous—putting these flavors in the spotlight.

- Many Korean and Filipino dishes have a bitter or sour flavor profile that balances well with the umami in their main ingredients (like beef, mushrooms, and soy beans). Try gochujang on cabbage kimchi or briny pork adobo with okra.
- Kombucha started as a niche beverage, but its unique flavor has exploded into the mainstream, popular with yoga moms, sports enthusiasts, and college kids. The addition of flavors such as ginger, lemongrass, berries, and celery have further expanded this gut-healthy drink.
- The pickle craze started with classic cucumbers, but quickly moved on to all types of vegetables (cauliflower, carrots, jalapenos, beets...) to be served as appetizer crudites, to garnish cocktails, to top tacos, and to balance sandwiches like banh mi.
- Tamarind is a common Indian staple that wakes up mellow ingredients like potatoes, cauliflower, and paneer.
- Chefs are reaching beyond lemons and limes to include yuzu, crab apples, and sour cherries, as well as the concentrated, powdered zests of grapefruits and tangerines.

Resources:

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| Flavor & the Menu | QSRWeb.com |
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