

CONFIDENCE
IN EVERY CASE.



Move over pumpkin spice! This fall, menus are using apples to flavor everything from hot beverages, to salads, to sides, to entrees, and of course desserts.

FALL - 2021 TRENDS AT A GLANCE

- Has pumpkin spice jumped the shark? Many operations are opting for the more natural flavors of fall apples.
- Smoky, sweet, caramelized flavor can be easily achieved by roasting.
- Feeling down? Boost mental health with the right foods.
- Vaccinations are up and group dining is returning: welcome back sharable options.

Trends

FALL - 2021

Apple Everything!

Fresh, crisp apples have been a staple of fall cooking for centuries, but the past 20 years have been dominated by the ever-trendy pumpkin spice. This season, operators at all levels are looking at this seasonal fruit with renewed inspiration.

- A certain famous coffee chain was largely responsible for the proliferation of pumpkin spice everything—but even they are highlighting apple-focused beverages this season, both warm and cold.
- Hot apple cider has a health halo similar to that of herbal tea. Offering fresh-pressed juices with sliced fruit garnishes and cinnamon sticks meets wellness crowd needs (see top left photo).
- Add texture, color, and healthy vitamins and fiber to breakfast bowls made with crunchy granola and/or creamy ancient grains; accent with spices such as cinnamon, allspice, cloves, cardamom, and ginger.
- Raw apples give crunch to green and fruit salads. Great combos include kale and Granny Smith, romaine and Red Delicious, arugula with Fuji, and spinach with Gala.
- Global foods can be given the fall treatment too: add skin-on Granny Smith chunks to stewed Indian dal, thin slices of Golden Delicious to German schnitzel and gravy, and Gala chunks to Eastern European matzo ball soup.
- Poultry and pork pair well with tart and sweet apple varieties; bake or roast with quartered apples, shallots, onions, mushrooms, thyme, rosemary, and lemon.
- Comfort food with a twist—that's what customers crave, so the classic tarte tatin made with juicy apples and caramel is a sure hit this autumn.

Seasonal Technique: Roasting

After a hot summer of ceviche, salads, and grilling, the chilly temperatures of autumn make roasting the ideal manner to intensify flavors and add both crunch and tenderness to vegetables and fruits, not just meats!



- Adding roasted ingredients such as beets, fennel, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and whole tomatoes to the heartier salads of fall, pumps up the flavor and makes them more craveable.
- Roast potatoes, mushrooms, parsnips, and carrots to give puréed soups smoky-sweet depth (photo at left).
- Smooth, subtly sweet, yet zesty roasted garlic is an important tool to have in any chef's cooking arsenal. Mix it into dishes across the menu to intensify vinaigrettes, mashed potatoes, salsas, creamy soups, pasta sauces, appetizer dips, and marinades.
- This method enhances the natural sugars of Acorn squash rounds while mellowing the bitterness of radicchio leaves; toss both with Feta cheese and serve aside roasted, bone-in chicken or game hens.
- Blackened and peeled red and yellow bell peppers can lend smoky-ness and intense sugars to deli sandwiches, tacos, green salads, pasta, and pizzas.
- Even green vegetables such as broccoli, sweet baby broccoli, green beans, and cabbage benefit from the high heat of the oven; it gives them crispy outer bits, toothsome inner texture, and the primal aroma of fire. Drizzle with global sauces such as XO, zhug, chili crisp, tahini, or harissa.
- Roast fruits such as figs, apples, pears, berries, and pineapples; serve as is for a simple, healthy dessert, or top with house-made gelato and high-quality balsamic syrup for decadence.



Trends

FALL - 2021



Mood Boosters

The wellness field continues to attract fans in the dining arena. Running neck and neck with immunity enhancing ingredients are foods that aid mental health and improve state of mind. After more than a year of pandemic stress, many customers are looking to their diets to help them feel positive and stay healthy.

- The emerging field of nutritional psychiatry suggests that reaching for comfort foods such as ice cream, candies, and pastries when experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression may be counterproductive and eating whole fruits and vegetables, may help more.
- Healthy gut equals sound mind: fermented foods such as pickles, kimchi, and sauerkraut, as well as probiotic yogurt and kombucha drinks all aid in digestion and promote healthy bacteria, sending neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine to the brain.
- People who ate more nutrient-dense fresh produce on a regular basis reported greater levels of happiness according to a recent study.

The Hot List

- Tight Labor Pool
- Mainstream Boba Drinks
- Vertical Growing
- Plant Jerky
- Carb Alternatives
- Leeks
- Global Comfort Food
- In-House Delivery Systems
- Jute
- Sophisticated Takeout
- Digital Passports
- Guava
- Fermented Beverages
- Robotic Pizza Makers
- Minimum Wage Hikes
- Indian Cheeses
- Roasted Roots
- Birria Tacos
- Chef Leadership Reform
- Low Waste Ingredients
- Hot Cocktails
- Reduced Menus
- Climatarianism
- Mask Mandates
- Filipino BBQ
- Spreads & Butters
- Drive-In Dinners
- Creative Tater Tots
- Korean BBQ Cauliflower
- Fluid Staffing
- Apple Everything
- Mood Enhancing Foods
- Menu Price Adjustments
- Creative Condiments
- Heirloom Grains for Breakfast
- Non-Traditional Locations
- Tamarind
- Customer Lifetime Value

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Shareables Return

Pre-2020, group dining, meaning tapas, family-style, and grazing meals were at the height of popularity, particularly with the Millennial and Gen Z age groups. COVID-19 brought much of that to a grinding halt through the past year, forcing many operations to reconfigure menus, seating arrangements (hello patio dining!), and to-go portioning. Now that vaccinations have increased and indoor dining is back in most areas, sharing small plates is making a comeback—with a few adjustments.

- Although groups that arrive (and possibly live) together feel safe sharing plates, social distancing rules are holding fast. Most have expressed apprehension in sitting closely to strangers. More room between tables and eliminating long communal sitting are smart moves.
- Eater has reported a 98% increase in tapas bars, 123% more diners at fondue spots, and 49% additional orders for hot pots.
- Large format dishes such as carne asada, whole fish, and Greek dip spreads are reappearing on menus in all parts of the country.
- Shareables foster community and nostalgia, meaning that many customers aren't willing to forgo them even in the face of a pandemic.
- Smaller tables—two- and four-tops—seem to dominate reservations, suggesting these numbers feel safer to diners.
- The rules for dining (indeed for living) continue to change due to new variants, varying levels of vaccinated populations, and other factors, so above all it's important for operators to remain nimble in this area and all others.

Sources:

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