



# TRENDS

WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER

**MODERN NOSTALGIA  
BIOME-BOOSTING DIETS  
MENUS FOR ALL  
TECH INTEGRATION**



**WINTER 2026**

# — AT A GLANCE



## CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

This chilly season calls for meals that evoke emotional comfort, authenticity, and family celebrations.



## MIND + BODY

Research shows a connection between the gut and brain—making probiotic foods more popular than ever.



## ALL IN ONE PLACE

Earn loyalty by meeting your customers' unique dietary preferences.



## CHEF TECH

AI is here to stay—how to harness its power for good.



**MOCKTAILS GET HEALTHY  
WITH FERMENTED ADD-INS  
LIKE KOMBUCHA AND APPLE  
CIDER VINEGAR**



# MODERNIZED TRADITION

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT MEALS

In these economically uncertain times, customers are increasingly cautious of overly processed foods—instead looking to nostalgic, authentic dishes made with whole fruits, vegetables, and meats that are dependably delicious.



- **Sweetgreen** emphasizes "real food" with a seasonal, plant-forward menu. Dishes like the Harvest Bowl with sweet potatoes and apples and the Chicken Pesto Parm Bowl with spicy broccoli and garlic breadcrumbs are comforting and healthy—very on-trend.
- **True Food Kitchen** offers seasonal soups such as creamy roasted butternut as well as sourdough pizzas that focus on toppings like roasted mushrooms, caramelized onions, and fresh herbs rather than processed meats.
- **Earl's** uses only real avocado in their chunky guacamole, then updates it with charred corn and the popular spice blend Tajin.
- **Urban Plates** pairs grass-fed chimichurri steak with garlicky mashed potatoes, charred Brussels sprouts, and grilled rustic bread. Simple yet sophisticated.

## FAMILY RECIPES 2.0



#### SIDES

KIMCHI  
SAUERKRAUT  
PICKLED MUSHROOMS  
PICKLED RED ONIONS

#### CONDIMENTS

DILL PICKLES  
SOY SAUCE  
GOCHUJANG  
FISH SAUCE

#### BEVERAGES

KOMBUCHA  
BEET JUICE  
GINGER TEA  
KEFIR

#### MAINS

MISO-GLAZED  
SALMON  
PROBIOTIC RICE  
BOWLS  
TEMPEH STIR-FRY  
CABBAGE ROLLS

#### SALADS

SMASHED  
CUCUMBERS  
CHOW CHOW  
VINAIGRETTE POTATO  
SALAD  
THREE-BEAN SALAD

#### DESSERTS

SKYR WITH BERRIES  
GREEK YOGURT  
CHEESECAKE  
KEFIR PARFAIT  
CREME FRAICHE  
PANNA COTTA

Help customers kick off  
a healthy new year with  
delicious dishes full of fiber-  
rich, probiotic ingredients  
that increase satiety and  
taste great.

# GUT HEALTH ERA



# INCLUSIVE EATING

## MENUS TO MEET EVERY DIET

Today's customers have a multitude of needs and desires. Whether it's GLP-1, gluten-free, vegan, kosher, halal, low salt/sugar, or eschewing alcohol...it's critical to offer a variety of choices for everyone at the table.



- Vegan and vegetarian diners used to be rare, but numbers have increased, especially for those that aren't strict and just focus on plant-based ingredients. Including meat-free options can increase customer traffic and repeat business/loyalty.
- Easy-to-substitute ingredients that can make recipes gluten-free include cauliflower rice, almond flour, lettuce wraps, rice noodles, and corn tortillas.
- GLP-1 dieters prioritize lean proteins and load up on fiber-rich, whole produce. Smaller portions and healthy fats like avocados are also key.
- Gen Z drinks less alcohol than any previous age group, making mocktails a profit opportunity. Thoughtful combinations with social media appeal layer sour, bitter, spicy, and savory notes with fruit juices, fresh herbs, edible flowers, and house-made shrubs.

**SOMETHING  
FOR EVERYONE**



# SMART KITCHEN TECH

AI: TO HELP, NOT REPLACE

Labor shortages, rising operational costs, and global supply issues...AI can help reduce a wide range of problems, allowing chefs to get creative and restaurants to operate more profitably without replacing the human workforce.



## OPERATIONS

STAFF SCHEDULING  
RESERVATIONS  
PERSONALIZED  
MARKETING  
TABLE TURNOVER

## MENUS

SEASONALITY  
ON-TREND  
INGREDIENTS  
INNOVATIVE  
PAIRINGS  
CUSTOMER  
PREFERENCES

## WASTE REDUCTION

REAL-TIME  
INVENTORY  
PREDICTIVE  
DEMAND  
CROSS  
UTILIZATION IDEAS  
PORTION CONTROL



# THE HOT LIST



- Crunch & tang
- Better-for-you cocktails
- Late-night comeback
- High fiber & protein-rich
- Laotian cuisine
- Snackable options
- Banana milk
- C-store breakfasts
- Texture
- Fast food value meals
- Berbere
- Zero-waste initiatives
- Global flavors
- Vegan charcuterie boards
- Sourdough pizzas
- Sea greens
- Beef tallow
- Caper berries
- LTO collabs
- Dill pickle everything

- Saba
- Subscription packages
- Local sourcing
- Savory pastries
- Hybrid venues
- Indigenous ingredients
- Giardiniera
- Reinvented buffets
- Complex chile flavors
- Dubai chocolate
- "Forgotten" vegetables
- Pop ups
- Streamlined menus
- Sudachi citrus fruits
- International steakhouses
- Kabocha squash
- Healthy Greek food
- Mushroom garum
- Smaller pizza sizes
- Mood food therapy



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## 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.

## SOURCES

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