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FOODBYTES

YOUR FREE DATASSENTIAL
TREND REPORT

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...
2022
TRENDS
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FUTURE FOOD

THE RESTAURANT & SUPERMARKET OF THE FUTURE,
LONG-TERM COVID IMPACTS, THE METAVERSE,
LIMITLESS PLANT-BASED INNOVATION, & MORE

Think big.

If 2020 was about survival, and 2021 was about coming out of the pandemic with new ideas that got consumers excited again (and, let's be honest, it was also about continued survival in the face of new variants, inflation, and supply and worker shortages), then 2022 is about looking far into the future and being prepared for a very different landscape. It's time to embrace big ideas again.

That's partly because we *have* to start thinking big again. The past year and a half has been so impactful that we'll be feeling the effects for generations. Indeed, we start off this issue by looking at the "COVID Generation," which is analogous to previous generations who were impacted by global events like wars and depressions. When thinking big, we also cover big topics like mind health and food, a future where designer meats go beyond mimicking animal proteins, and how generational preferences for global flavors are shifting (move over Italian cuisine...). And there may be no bigger topic than the metaverse, an all-encompassing vision of the future that promises to both reinvent the internet and embed it into our real lives in ways that have yet to be imagined. Find out what it means for the food industry in the pages ahead.

We also gathered together Datassential's most futuristic and creative thinkers to design their own visions of the future. In this issue you'll find their Restaurant of the Future and Market of the Future, 2 possible concepts that could exist in the year 2050.

Of course, we also dive into the trends that are immediately relevant to the food industry, from the cuisines to watch to the evolution of plant-based foods to delivery trends. As always, we end with the 10 forward-thinking flavors, ingredients, and dishes that we think should be on your radar in the years ahead.

This free issue of Datassential's *FoodBytes* is just a taste of the full 2022 Trends deck that will release exclusively in our Report Pro smart library in January 2022. Packed with well over 200 slides of data and research, this deck dives even deeper into the trends covered in the pages ahead, all in both PDF and PowerPoint formats. Report Pro users will also have exclusive access to our Big Picture Factors report, also releasing in January, which covers the macro trends you need to watch for in 2022 in areas like politics, economics, demographics, health and wellness, and more. If you want to be sure you have access to these unparalleled resources in 2022, send us an email at hello@datassential.com.

This is just a small sample of what we have in store for you in 2022. With hundreds of reports releasing in Report Pro, major updates to essential databases like MenuTrends, enhancements to our incomparable custom research capabilities, new research shared during our bi-weekly webinar series, and even a few surprises in store, you can be sure that Datassential has you covered in the year ahead.

In other words, we're thinking big.



"I doubt I will ever go to a buffet again."

"I have learned I am a better cook than I realized, so I plan to eat out less to save money."

"I got very used to having foods delivered to me, so I will probably continue to do that constantly."

"I have started to cook more as well as grow my own food in small quantities."

"Food will never be the same."

Those are just a few of the responses we received from consumers when we asked them how the pandemic — nearly two years of restrictions, restaurant closures, wearing masks, product shortages, and learning new skills — may have permanently changed how they eat. While we have spent much of that time in reaction mode, focusing on the immediate impacts and pivoting to survive, in the year and years ahead we'll start to grapple more with the long-term implications of the pandemic.

And it's impossible to overstate just how wide-ranging and impactful the pandemic may be on the next generations of consumers. Many of the responses to our question mirror changes that consumers noted after recessions, depressions, and wars, which have had long-lasting impacts on the way we eat. After the past year and a half, consumers told us they had developed life-long skills like cooking and gardening, that they now keep non-perishable foods stocked, and that they have been reconsidering what is meaningful to them and how they spend their time, answers that were echoed in the aftermath of past global crises.

Some consumers reported that they don't know if they'll ever feel completely comfortable and safe again, with some noting that they may never dine at buffets again, that they'll always be cognizant of cleanliness and sanitation, or that they may never even eat out again. Many consumers said that they are trying to eat healthier and permanently incorporate more immune-boosting and plant-based foods into their diets. That's not surprising when you consider that **67% of consumers think there will be another pandemic of the same scale as the COVID-19 pandemic — or larger — in the future**, according to recent research we fielded.

Where and how we work has changed permanently. While some jobs can't be remote, and other workers are heading back to offices at least part-time, remote work will continue to be a part of the employment landscape at an unprecedented scale, impacting both at-home and away-from-home eating patterns. The pandemic also impacted how workers think about their jobs, prompting many to seek better-paying jobs, look for more meaningful work, start their own businesses, and demand better working conditions. The workers of the future will have very different experiences, mindsets, and expectations.

The restaurants and supermarket locations being built today, which will be with us for decades, often feature amenities that directly result from the past year and a half: double drive-thru lanes, dedicated ghost kitchen spaces, pickup cubbies, large outdoor spaces, more technology, revamped sanitation practices, etc. At the same time, a flurry of innovation is likely to develop in the next few years aimed at enticing consumers to venture out again: new eatertainment options,

innovative dishes, more "third places" for consumers to hang out, and a celebration of hospitality.

When you consider the long-term impacts of the pandemic and the next generation, think about the experiences they had: they may have learned virtually for over a year, they are undoubtedly comfortable connecting on screens, they likely spent more time with their immediate families, they may think differently about what a restaurant can be, they may have gotten supermarket food delivered for over a year, they've likely been worrying about their health and the health of their loved ones for nearly two years, they may have dealt with anxiety and mental health issues, and they experienced food and supply shortages and price inflation.

As you think about the consumers of the future, consider how this background can impact how they make decisions and live their lives, and what it may mean for your brand. Individual consumer experiences and reactions are by no means universal, either — while some consumers told us they have felt anxious and fearful, others enjoyed having time to slow down and reconnect with family or develop new hobbies and skills.

In fact, there is reason to be optimistic about the future. When we asked consumers for one word to describe the year ahead, one word came up more than any other: hope.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU It's time to start considering some of the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behavior. This is the type of global, all-consuming event that can define a generation, affecting their food choices for the rest of their lives in the same way that previous pandemics, recessions, and even wars impacted consumer eating patterns. As you start to think about your future employees, consumer base, products, spaces, and the demographics you hope to reach, consider how the pandemic has created a new COVID generation.



For many years, when creating health-driven foods, the food industry focused primarily on physical health, offering up menu options and products that promised to help consumers lose weight or, in more recent years, give them enough protein and energy to power through a workout. Recently, however, that focus is shifting, as consumers increasingly look for functional foods that are specifically focused on mental health and well-being. In fact, according to our *New Foundations in Health Keynote Report*, **today an equal number of consumers — 92% — consider both emotional/mental health and physical health to be important to creating an overall sense of well-being.**

That shift to putting mental health top-of-mind, so to speak, has only become more pronounced in the past year and a half, as consumers continue to report higher levels of anxiety and depression. The pandemic, compounded by a lack of social outlets, unhealthy diets, job losses, interrupted routines, and economic uncertainty, has created a mental health crisis across a range of demographics.

But it has also opened up new options that prioritize mental health, while younger generations continue to emphasize a culture where there is less stigma in talking about mental health issues. Consumers today are opting for virtual therapy services, receiving medications through pharmacy subscriptions, and engaging in a range of practices that promote self-care.

This focus on mind health and well-being is spilling over to the food industry, and products that promote stress relief (adaptogens), relaxation,

sleep, and other aspects of mental health will take up even more shelf space in the future, while foodservice operators will design menus and experiences that speak to these needs. Some brands are already taking a holistic view of their role in consumers' mental health, with beauty brand Lush recently making news for deactivating its accounts on four of the most popular social media platforms after it was reported that Instagram could worsen body image issues.

According to our research, **87% of consumers say they would be at least somewhat likely to purchase foods and beverages that are specifically designed to improve mental health and well-being, with well over half saying they are very or extremely likely to purchase them.** While the food industry isn't going to single-handedly solve issues like anxiety, consumers increasingly believe that food can function as medicine and that it has an overall impact on health, **with 23% of consumers already saying they treat their existing conditions through diet.** Many foods and ingredients associated with mental health are already growing on menus, **with CBD growing 1,248% on menus in the past 4 years, lion's mane mushrooms up 249%, and chaga growing 150% (MenuTrends).**

The focus on mental health and well-being also impacts workers in the food industry and beyond, with the recent "great resignation" being partly linked to mental health and workers' changing priorities. The hospitality industry has been hit particularly hard by workers quitting, leading many foodservice and retail companies to reprioritize work stability, work/life balance, family needs,

health benefits, and economic security for employees. "It's a new era for mental health at work," exclaimed the *Harvard Business Review* in October, which also noted that younger workers and historically underrepresented groups were struggling the most.

The focus on mental health and well-being also goes beyond the short-term impacts, particularly as the population continues to age. Concerns about mental health for seniors, brain function, memory, loneliness, and mental deterioration/neurological illnesses will continue to play a larger role in the functional needs that consumers want from food products and experiences. Food manufacturers, foodservice brands, and retailers will need to consider the changing needs of the aging population. That means both understanding the role that functional ingredients play in aging and mental health, and also the role that food plays in one's culture, social experiences, and memory, and how those roles can and do change with each generation.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU Consumers' focus on mind health and mental well-being is only going to increase in the future, prompting new demands for products that meet these needs. As you develop new products and menu items focused on health, consider a more holistic view of the term that takes into account consumers' changing definition of what it means to be healthy. That can mean consumers' immediate needs related to anxiety or a need to relax, more long-term needs like brain health and memory, as well as the mental health needs of the workers within our industry.

If you ask consumers, there are few foods more delicious than bacon. According to our FLAVOR database, 82% of consumers love or like bacon, and it scores in the 99th percentile or above for every demographic group except those who limit meat in some way (although even 11% of vegans and vegetarians say they love bacon).

It's rich. It's salty. It's fatty. It's everything we've evolved to love as humans, and we've figured out a way to put it on seemingly every food imaginable. So how could you possibly make bacon better?

While it may sound outlandish, the advent of "designer" meat, both plant-based and traditional, means that scientists are no longer limited to simply recreating existing proteins. While initially many companies were simply aiming to mimic the meats that consumers know and love as faithfully as possible, now they are thinking to the future, where they can make meats that are even tastier or juicier than the animal-based counterparts.

Impossible Foods already advertises its new product as being "better than ground pork from pigs," while *America's Test Kitchen* called the same company's "chicken" nuggets "better

than the real thing." Numerous companies are using machine learning engines to test new combinations of proteins that can produce meats that are more tender or nutritious, without any of the physiological limits or environmental issues associated with whole animals.

These new meats can also be coupled with other technological advances. This year researchers at Columbia University 3D printed chicken breast cutlets and used lasers to cook them simultaneously. Using a laser means the team could cook proteins with millimeter-scale precision, even cooking a burger in a checkerboard pattern of rare and well-done portions.

While these advances may sound fantastic now, they aren't so unrealistic on a long enough timeline, as new generations grow up eating and preferring different foods. It's a shift we've already seen with milk. According to our research, 42% of Gen Z consumers say they rarely or never drink traditional dairy milk, while nearly the same percentage (41%) say they drink alternative milks either weekly or daily, a shift that would have been surprising a few decades ago.

These generational changes mean that there could be a time in the future when consumers barely remember some current cuts of meat, or think back to when chicken or beef was less juicy or flavorful. Some consumers may never purchase meats with bones or gristle in the future, or they may forget that meat wasn't always marbled in a perfect checkerboard pattern. These changes won't happen overnight, particularly in a category like meats and proteins, which form the basis of so many meals, but they could happen gradually, and in many ways are already in motion.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU Food history is littered with brands and foods that have been disrupted out of existence, replaced by new trends and ideas. While a future where meat is fundamentally different from what we think of as meat today may seem a bit "out there," that's the story that welcomes every new idea. Our current landscape, where QSRs and major retailers sell plant-based alternatives alongside the traditional option, seemed ridiculous just a few decades ago. As you think about changes in generational preferences over time, get ready for the changes that will impact proteins.



It's hard to imagine a time when options like burgers or pizza weren't the norm on American menus. But not only were they brand new to U.S. consumers at one point, there are even consumers alive today who may remember when they were first introduced. The hamburger was first mentioned in *The New York Times* in 1938, and they were still saying "the combination of beef with cheese and tomatoes, which sometimes are used, may seem bizarre" a decade later. Fast forward a decade and the paper's same writer said that "pizza could become as popular a snack as the hamburger if Americans only knew more about it."

Hopefully that writer bought stock in pizza, which now appears on a third of American menus and ranks as America's third favorite food overall (after fruit and ice cream, according to FLAVOR). In fact Italian cuisine has long been America's favorite global cuisine. Even if you don't serve predominantly Italian food at a restaurant or don't focus on Italian foods in your product line, you likely wouldn't bat an eye putting a pizza or pasta dish on the menu or in the lineup. It's simply what American consumers eat today.

But if that's how we eat today, how will we eat tomorrow? There is evidence that consumer preferences are changing when it comes to America's favorite foods, and the standard offerings on menus and in product lines in the future may look very different.

Because, while Italian cuisine may be American consumers' favorite global cuisine overall, there is a lot of nuance among each generation. 90% of Baby Boomers, for instance, love or like Italian cuisine, while 86% of Gen X says the same thing. Millennials, however, are the first recent generation to prefer Mexican cuisine over Italian, and in fact Italian cuisine falls to third place for them, with Chinese cuisine coming in second. Gen Z has followed that path, also saying they love or like Mexican cuisine more than Italian food.

The differences are even more pronounced when we asked consumers what they would choose if they could only eat foods from one cuisine for the rest of their lives: Italian, Latin/Mexican, or Asian/Chinese. While 47% of Baby Boomers said they would choose Italian cuisine, compared to 22%

who chose Latin/Mexican, those numbers were nearly flipped for Gen Z, with 45% saying they would eat Latin/Mexican cuisine for the rest of their lives, while only 26% chose Italian cuisine.

As we noted in last year's trend report, numerous Latin and Asian foods and flavors skew towards younger generations. Gen Z is far more likely to prefer foods like ramen, boba, horchata, and mochi than the average consumer, while Millennials are more likely to choose sushi, queso blanco, and Korean BBQ than the total population.

Preferences are changing for a variety of reasons, from the ethnic makeup of the generations themselves to the wider range of foods that consumers have access to. So while pizza is more common than tacos on menus today, the generational differences and trend lines for each option show that there will likely be a time when the reverse is true.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU These changing tastes and preferences have implications for both the near- and long-term future. In the immediate future, food brands will need to strategize differently when developing globally-influenced dishes and products aimed at particular generations. In the years and decades ahead, the industry will need to reconsider the brands they invest in, concepts they open, composition of the menu, entire product lines, and what's on store shelves — the foods that generations of the future prefer are far more likely to be Latin and Asian.



Any discussion of the metaverse begins with a question: What is the metaverse? And what does it have to do with the food industry?

Currently the metaverse is just an idea for what the future could look like, with an ever-changing array of definitions depending on who you ask. Generally, most agree that the metaverse involves a series of virtual environments that users can inhabit: they can socialize, build things, and purchase goods. While these types of spaces already exist in some capacity — think games like *Fortnite* or *Second Life* — in the future some believe they could be more omnipresent, hyper-realistic, engaged with the real world, and even replace what we currently consider to be the internet.

Facebook, which arguably introduced the average consumer to the concept of the metaverse when its parent company changed its name to Meta this year, is going all in on the concept, betting that it will be the future of how we interact. The company will create its own space in the overall metaverse that users can "visit," while other companies are working on their own spaces. Instead of consuming content on a 2D screen, users will inhabit the spaces using avatars, allowing them to visit a virtual store and try on clothes, or attend a concert and dance alongside friends around the world. Many of these experiences rely on advances

in virtual reality technology, but they'll also impact everything from mobile devices to augmented reality wearables like glasses to digital currency.

So what does this have to do with the food industry? If the metaverse comes to pass, almost every brand will have a space or spaces within the metaverse, in the same way they have a social media presence today. This is already happening to some degree: this year Chipotle opened a "restaurant" in the game Roblox, which could be considered an early version of a virtual space or metaverse. When players visited the restaurant, they could receive a code for a free burrito to use in the real world.

In the future, food brands could use the metaverse to hold events and meetings, market their products, make at-home food experiences more exciting, and create futuristic dining experiences not possible in the real world, like dining in space. Users may also access the metaverse from restaurants in the same way they check their email or get work done now, allowing them to eat with friends or coworkers around the world. Buying goods in the metaverse may unlock them in the real world, and vice versa.

While this may seem far-fetched, the comfort that younger consumers have inhabiting virtual

spaces can't be overstated. As *Time* magazine noted, kids are already holding virtual birthday parties in games like the aforementioned Roblox in place of real-life parties. Consumers overall got a lot more comfortable with virtual events and meetings in the past year, with metaverse proponents noting that future iterations will alleviate some of the pain points current users have with these systems, with experiences that are so lifelike they'll feel natural, without any screen fatigue.

The metaverse could also look completely different from how it is envisioned today, with use cases that we never imagined. That's because almost everything related to the metaverse is theoretical right now. As that changes, technology advances, and more companies release their own virtual spaces and more users inhabit them, the future could look very different, in the same way that the internet or cell phones have fundamentally changed the way we live in ways we never imagined.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU While much of the discussion about the metaverse is just an idea right now, there is a lot of money and energy being dedicated to making it a reality. There is no doubt that technology will advance to support many of these futuristic concepts, but there are a lot of arguments about who will control these spaces, how they will operate, and what they will mean for the lives we live. In the same way that the food industry had to adapt to consumers using the internet, social media, and mobile technology, the industry will have to prepare for the possibility of this next evolution in technology.

What will the restaurant of the future look like? With the pandemic either speeding up or even completely redefining future trends like technology advancements and food delivery, now is the time to start reconsidering what foodservice can look like and begin preparing for that future now. To do that, we gathered Datassential's most futuristic thinkers to consider what life will look like in 2050. Together, the team outlined 20 assumptions about the world of 2050, ultimately creating a vision of the restaurant that would exist in that world. Some of those assumptions include the fact that technology will replace more workers in the future, the population will be far more diverse, food prices will increase, more food will be grown in greenhouses and through other alternative methods, all payments will be contactless, and drone deliveries will be the norm. For the full list of our assumptions about life in the future, subscribe to Report Pro and get the full 2022 Trends deck in January 2022.

So what does the restaurant that exists in 2050 look like? Let's take a tour.

As you walk up to the restaurant, you notice drones are taking off from dedicated docking stations, while autonomous vehicles are queuing up at the drive-thru. Some vehicles are filled with passengers, who sit around a table in the backseat, enjoying a plated meal and cocktail (they aren't driving, after all). Other unmanned delivery refrigerator/oven vehicles gather meals and bring them to central delivery spots, with smaller robotic vehicles or drones completing the final leg of the journey to the customer's door.

Inside the restaurant, a virtual avatar of the chef greets you by name. Syncing with your calendar, it knows you are on your lunch break and suggests a quick Asian-inspired bowl. You tell the chef that

you are also picking up a bowl for a colleague who is on a "mind health" diet. A machine learning engine, using data from the restaurant's culinary team, quickly suggests a personalized "focus" bowl. At the end of your order, the screen displays the sustainability score for your entire meal and asks if you want to swap in drought-resistant almonds for an additional dollar off as part of a government subsidy initiative. Meanwhile, at the screen next to you, the virtual chef is suggesting a breakfast option for a remote worker who opts to work different hours and starts their day later.

You decide to eat at one of the dedicated "solo diner" tables. Some other customers are having virtual lunches with friends or coworkers on ultra-realistic screens, but instead your screen auto-populates with your preferred digital services and you choose to pop into the metaverse. To your left are modular dining tables, which have been moved together to accommodate a large, multi-generational family that lives together.

Meanwhile, back-of-house, some elements of your order were already being prepared before you even entered the restaurant, powered by the brand's predictive analytics. Chefs and robotic arms work in tandem with each other, with human chefs wearing augmented reality glasses that guide their actions, lighting up the correct ingredients for customized requests. Chefs use voice recognition technology to interact with every aspect of the kitchen, from clarifying what goes into a dish to requesting that a micro-dose of a particular flavor be added to a sauce. "Can I get an assist on that sandwich?" one chef asks, referring to a dish on the new hyper-local ghost kitchen menu that launched last week based on local trends. Meanwhile, autonomous vehicles arrive with new inventory that has been automatically ordered based on predictive supply analytics, taking account of

everything from the season to a new local regulation that limits sugar intake. Across the world, in a virtual command center, managers make the final decision on AI recommendations, sending a worker home and adding a one-day LTO to the menu to celebrate a local soccer win.

A robotic server brings the bowl to you, noting that a human server will stop by in a few moments to check in. Above you, sensors monitor your meal, alerting the kitchen if your drink begins to run low or you aren't eating a particular ingredient, taking that into account when it makes recommendations for what to order in the future. When the server arrives, they are relaxed and spend time talking to you as the robot does the "dirty work," a hospitality feature not found in the less expensive QSRs with fewer human employees.

As you leave, you first stop into the restroom, which automatically continues playing the song you were listening to before you walked in. Meanwhile, a smart commode automatically tests whether an employee has a foodborne illness in order to allow them to return to work. You also stop into the retail area on your way out, picking up some THC-infused chocolates to enjoy later that night, and it's all charged to your card as you walk out the door.

This is just a small glimpse of what the restaurant of the future could look like. For the full view, stay tuned to Datassential's Report Pro smart library in January for the 2022 Trends deck.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU It's hard to believe how far technology has come in a relatively short amount of time, with the first iPhone being released 14 years ago, less than half the amount of time that will surpass between now and when you visit our Restaurant of the Future. At the same time, 2050 will be here before we know it: this is the restaurant that Gen Z will take their children to. It's never too early to start thinking about the future, both to unlock near-term creative ideas and to prepare for the changes that will make or break brands.



We couldn't create the Restaurant of the Future without also creating the Market of the Future. Datassential's team of futurists took those same assumptions we had about what life could look like in 2050 and applied them to the supermarket. What would a retailer that existed in that world need to have to meet future consumer needs? Let's step inside.

Before you even walk in, you notice the drones leaving docking stations to deliver small orders to local consumers, even dropping them off on condo balconies, while larger autonomous vehicles are being deployed to deliver bigger orders. Other unmanned vehicles are returning, bringing back reusable containers from customers and delivering them directly to the washing department. From a large garage in the back of the store, large autonomous market vehicles — a roving mini-mart — have been resupplied and are being deployed to key delivery areas, while smaller "snack cart" vehicles are deployed to workplaces and apartment buildings.

Inside, the customer-facing area is notably smaller than today's megastores — most consumers are getting their groceries delivered from the massive attached "dark store" that runs 24 hours a day. For those who want to stop in, however, there is a mix of essentials, innovative products, prepared foods, and experiential offerings that encourage customers to visit and interact with the brand.

You grab a smart shopping cart with a large screen, which auto-populates with items you had previously added to your shopping list and where to find them. As you shop, you ask the virtual assistant on the screen for recommendations, call up a family member to ask if they like a particular product, and monitor your spending and sustainability score.

As you walk the aisles, your augmented reality glasses light up products that meet your personalized diet goals, while also displaying sale information. In the wine section, all of the dry white wines — your preferred style — light up, and you select an option from Canada's western coast, the world's hot new wine region. Stopping by the butcher counter, you tell the virtual butcher you want to make Indian butter chicken bowls for dinner and 3D printers begin printing chicken cubes with the optimal amount of fat, juiciness, and salt levels for the dish. As you shop, larger inventory robots roam the aisles, replacing out-of-stock items and answering questions from customers shopping with baskets, which don't have the screen your cart has.

You stop by the fresh produce area, where robotic arms are restocking lettuce from the on-site hydroponics farm. As you put some climate-friendly romaine into your cart, sensors above track your purchase and, combined with sensors that monitor what you have in your refrigerator and pantry, recommend two more products that can, in total, create a recipe for a salad bowl.

Those two products are found in the "dark store" inventory, so they'll be waiting for you when you are ready to leave. To round out your shopping experience, you stop by the personalized "virtual" shelves, which display products not found on the main sales floor customized to what you are purchasing, your tastes, and the season as you stand in front of them. You scroll through the products on the screen, purchasing an anniversary meal bundle recommended by the AI engine that syncs with your calendar and buying habits — you had forgotten your anniversary was only a few days away — which the warehouse robots will pick and deliver to the front of the store.

Finally, you stop at the prepared foods section for something quick to serve for dinner. With so many customers preferring to have their orders delivered, this store is working extra hard to entice you to visit and experience the brand. The prepared foods section features many of the enhancements found in the Restaurant of the Future, like AI ordering avatars and cooks working alongside robots, but with an additional benefit: at the market you can mix and match your favorite CPG brands with your meal. The AI takes into account what you have in your cart and suggests a plant-based enhanced pork meal.

The predictive analytics technology notes that you are likely finishing up your shopping, so it delivers the additional items from the dark section of the store, plus your custom 3D-printed chicken, to holding areas at the front. You pick them up and walk out with all of your groceries, your account automatically charged.

Like the previously mentioned Restaurant of the Future, this is just a small example of what you'll find in our Market of the Future: 2050. For a more in-depth look, get ready for the 2022 Trends deck to release in Report Pro in January 2022.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU Whether it's our Restaurant of the Future or Market of the Future, thinking about what lies ahead for the food industry can not only make you more creative right now, but also get your team thinking about ways to build "future-thinking" into every innovation. In fact, many of the technologies and enhancements mentioned above are available today, and could be widespread well before 2050.

PLANT-BASED
TREND TO WATCH

VEGGIE HEROES

For many trends, there is often some pushback or an opposite reaction, whether it's fusion foods and mashups driving a renewed interest in "authentic" foods or the rise of meal delivery services driving growth in over-the-top eatertainment experiences to coax consumers out of their homes. While plant-based meat replacements have gotten a lot of attention in recent years, it has also driven some consumers to embrace and celebrate simple fruits or vegetables on their own merits, often making statements like, "I don't need my peas to pretend to be a hamburger." According to our recent research, 60% of consumers say they prefer "plant-based foods that showcase the fruit or vegetable instead of mimicking another food," compared to 40% who prefer plant-based options that replace traditional foods like beef or milk. While there is room for both to coexist, even in the same meal, expect to see more options that proudly celebrate their use of natural, whole fruits and vegetables in the year ahead.



CUISINE TO WATCH

EASTERN EUROPEAN

According to the Pew Research Center, both the mid-19th century and early 20th century U.S. immigration waves consisted almost entirely of European immigrants, and by 1960, 84% of immigrants living in the U.S. were born in Europe, Canada, or other North American countries, not including Mexico. While more recent patterns have changed, those early numbers mean there is a large population of second- and third-generation chefs who grew up in a family with a European or partly European background. As those chefs tap into their heritage and traditions, and look for new-yet-comforting foods and flavors to excite consumers, they are increasingly turning to Eastern European (and nearby) cuisines. While previously these cuisines may have been found in small pockets of regional America, they are now filtering out to a wider audience (and, as we noted in last year's trend report, consumers are increasingly interested in America's regional cuisines and foods). It's not uncommon to find pierogi on a brewpub menu today, and next-level options like ajvar, kolache, burek, and cevapi are also showing up on menus. Find them on menus at restaurants like Agi's Counter in Brooklyn, which serves up Hungarian-inspired breakfast and lunch food, or the "experimental pierogi" concept Rogi operating around Washington, D.C.



MENU TREND
TO WATCH

CRAVE DRIVERS

After another tough year, wouldn't it be nice to discover some easy wins that resonate with consumers? It's easy to do with Datassential's SCORES database, which features consumer ratings for every major chain LTO and new menu introduction. We crunched the numbers on all of these dishes to discover the ingredients, flavors, and descriptors that drive high Purchase Intent scores across a range of menu categories. If you're looking for a menu winner, consider:

- While bacon is an obvious crave driver on breakfast menus, don't forget ham, particularly Black Forest ham, which drives high Purchase Intent scores in breakfast sandwiches. Premium carriers, particularly croissants (it helps to call them "flaky"), also drive high scores.
- If you are working on a new pizza offering, go over the top. "Stuffed" pizza options, like stuffed crusts, drove the highest average Purchase Intent scores, as did pizzas that used the word "ultimate."
- If you don't have lemonade on your beverage menu, you should. The top three non-alcoholic beverages for average Purchase Intent are all lemonade flavors: strawberry, raspberry, and watermelon. Better yet, turn them into lemonade slushies: slushies also drive some of the highest Purchase Intent scores on beverage menus.
- Classic, nostalgic desserts score with consumers, with options like apple crisps, New York cheesecakes, and lava cakes driving high Purchase Intent scores, while comfort food flavors like peanut butter cup and cookie dough also score with consumers.

While we don't have room for every crave driver here, stay tuned for the full 2022 Trends report in January to see crave drivers that will increase your Purchase Intent scores across a wide range of categories.

DELIVERY TREND TO WATCH

HOSPITALITY AT HOME

Operators came up with a lot of creative ideas to recreate the hospitality experience that consumers expect from restaurants at home in the past year and a half. They created Spotify playlists that recreated the sounds of the dining room, offered up virtual cooking classes, and made elaborate cocktails for pickup and delivery. While not all of those ideas will stick around, some resonated with consumers and could be key ways to connect with them as delivery and takeout continue to play an important role in consumer dining options. In fact, delivery and takeout are forcing many operators to get even more creative when it comes to offering a hospitality-driven dining experience at home. Last year Pizza Hut recreated the experience of playing arcade games at their restaurants by turning the pizza box into an augmented reality Pac-Man game consumers could play in the comfort of their own homes. Meanwhile, the LA-based Codename Burg3r concept aims to deliver eatertainment to consumers' homes by unlocking an augmented reality escape room-style mission with every order. The mission, which comes from the "Bureau of the Unexplained," takes 60-90 minutes to play and users can even earn prizes. "It's creating those magic moments around food delivery that makes this really special," one of the founders told *Restaurant Hospitality*. In the year ahead, expect to see more brands creating unique at-home experiences that put the "house" in "house-pitality."

SOCIAL MEDIA TREND TO WATCH

MICRO-INFLUENCERS

In last year's trend report, we noted that consumers were increasingly turning to social media personalities for food knowledge, ideas, and trends, **with over half of Gen Z defining a celebrity chef as a chef on social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok.** According to our most recent data, **70% of Gen Z says they follow a food-driven personality on social media, which is nearly twice the number of Millennials that say they follow one.** Now social media personalities have their own virtual brands (Mr. Beast Burger) and are partnering with major manufacturers to release branded products (Tabitha Brown's McCormick Sunshine Seasoning).

As more of our lives happen online and algorithms get better, young consumers are increasingly finding their own tribes in the virtual space, embracing "micro-influencers" who they identify with and trust. While previously food personalities may have been nationally known, today a consumer may learn about a new menu item or cooking product from a micro-influencer who has a small but dedicated audience. These influencers may focus on a particular health diet, home in on a town or city, have a very specific job, or embrace a niche hobby. Today a consumer may follow a chef who cooks on a yacht for a few months, or a business owner opening a ghost kitchen, or a home cook who focuses on keto-friendly camping meals. They may have a smaller audience, but that specific lens, coupled with the rise of short-form video platforms like TikTok or Instagram reels, means they are forging more personal connections. Micro-influencers can even be small brands themselves, which use the platforms to sell products and reach consumers. In the year ahead, expect to see more food brands working with micro-influencers and creating more robust micro-influencer strategies.



Often used to give plant-based "egg" dishes that distinctly sulfurous taste, chefs are now celebrating **black salt's** unique flavor profile in its own right on menus.



Sikil pak is a Mayan pumpkin seed dip that could be the next hummus or guacamole.



Tiny **chilepin peppers** are the only wild peppers native to North America.



Historical evidence points to Asia being the birthplace of rum, and now new distillers are celebrating a modern age of **Asian rums.**



As new alternative milk and dairy options continue to trend, look for **next-level non-dairy ice creams** to show up at retail.



Indian pizza chains and menu items are popping up across the country.

As always, we bring you Datassential's 10 flavors, ingredients, and spices to watch in the years ahead. These are always early-stage trends that are just starting to make their mark on menus and at retail, but they are on our radar because of their potential growth opportunities. From proteins to spicy peppers to desserts to drinks, there's a little bit of everything on this year's list. When you encounter them in the future, you can say you learned it here first.



Shashlik meat kebabs are showing up on menus with more traditional Central Asian and Russian flavors.



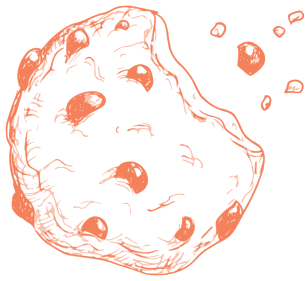
Hearts of palm are making a comeback as plant-based seafood replacements and in a range of Latin-inspired dishes.



Yuba noodles made from tofu skin are a plant-based option for bowls, stir fries, and soups showing up on menus and at retail.



India's favorite savory spiced street snack and crunchy topper, **chaat**, is seeing renewed interest in the U.S.



A FEW FINAL TREND BITES

While Datassential has been covering food trends for decades — MenuTrends turns 20 years old this year (first published in printed books, if you can believe it) — we've been publishing our annual trend prediction issues of *FoodBytes* since 2014. Below, look back at some of the trends we have covered over the years. And get ready for the full 2022 Trends deck to release in Report Pro next January, diving into everything from this issue with even more depth and data.

2014 FOOD HALLS & SUSHI BURRITOS

In our very first *FoodBytes* issue covering our trend predictions, we noted that mocktails "were being mixed with the same creativity" found in the craft cocktail movement, covered food halls before they exploded across the country, and noted that options like sushi burritos were ushering in a new era of ethnic mashups that went beyond fusion foods.



2018 MACHINE LEARNING

In 2018, we looked at machine learning engines that were crunching the numbers for the food industry and introduced Haiku, our own machine learning trend prediction engine. We also looked at how the lines between food and industries like beauty and fashion were breaking down, and covered the rise of bright, boho-chic restaurant design.

2015 FUNCTIONAL FOODS

We introduced "Healthy 3.0" in our 2015 issue of *FoodBytes*, with its focus on functional foods like protein and superfoods. We covered Millennials' love of sweet, over-the-top foods, which now Gen Z has embraced, and featured flavors and ingredients like gochujang, yuzu, and za'atar in our "flavors to watch."



2019 ASHWAGANDHA & CHAMOY

In 2019, we zeroed in on some of the most trend-forward flavors and ingredients we've ever covered. Introduced just a few short years ago, these flavors and ingredients are still pretty new today, but options like donburi bowls, fermented and tangy yuzu kosho, functional ashwagandha, and intense chamoy are still adding excitement to menus and products.

2016 THE RISE OF DELIVERY

In our 2016 issue, we homed in on the shift to delivery, noting that plenty of investment capital was flowing into delivery startups. We also covered the rise of alternatives like nut butters and non-dairy milks disrupting long-standing categories and included turmeric on our trends to watch, when it was still on less than 2% of menus.



2020 CLIMATE CRISIS & GHOST KITCHENS

If only we had known what 2020 had in store for us when we released our 2020 predictions issue in late 2019. But we still covered many things that came to pass, including the blurring of the lines between our digital and real lives, growing concerns over how the climate impacts food, and ghost kitchens calling into question how we define a restaurant.

2017 PLANT-BASED MEAT

In 2017, we noted that options like the Impossible Burger were "just starting to hit restaurants around the country," checked in on autonomous driving and delivery technology, and said that chains will create foods "specifically for their social media appeal."



WHAT'S COMING UP NEXT MONTH?

As we head into January 2022, many consumers will be thinking about their values and making new year's resolutions. But what do consumers value today? In next month's issue of *FoodBytes*, we'll look at the data from our *New Food Values Keynote Report*, which looks at the values that impact what consumers eat and purchase. We'll also look at the values that people want to see brands promote — if any — and dive into operator values and how they impact how they run their operations. From healthcare to human rights, food insecurity to politics, this report helps you make sense of the range of values and issues that can be important to consumers, or a potential minefield.



HUNGRY FOR MORE TRENDS? Check out these recent TS issues!



FB: The Holiday Issue
Check out how consumers and operators are celebrating this year.

In our November issue of *FoodBytes*, we looked at the holiday season, from the latest consumer data on how they celebrate the holidays to holiday-themed chain LTOs that scored big. We looked at the wide range of holidays celebrated in Q4, from Friendsgiving to Diwali to Day of the Dead, and checked in on plant-based options for seasonal celebrations this year.



CC: Next-Gen Casual Dining
See how casual dining operators continue to pivot in the middle of a pandemic.

It's no secret that the casual dining segment has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, so in this issue of *Creative Concepts*, we looked at casual operators who can be a source of inspiration. We uncovered some of the most interesting independent operators across the country, checked in on how eatertainment concepts plan to return, and zeroed in on casual operators that specialize in global cuisines.




TW: Asian Trends
Asian trends like mandu and brown sugar drinks are bubbling up.

In this issue of *Trend Watch*, we looked at a number of Asian-inspired trends making waves in the U.S., including mandu dumplings, drinks that feature brown sugar as a flavoring, and salted egg yolk. We also checked in on veggie steaks, discovered how butterfish is being menued, and dove into that Southern specialty, Tasso ham, which isn't technically a ham at all.




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