

SAVORPOINT™

EVERY BITE COUNTS


Delicious Territories
From Louisville
to NYC
to Dallas

Fiber

Fiber is gaining popularity in food products as consumers emphasize digestive health and overall wellness.

SWAVORY

Pork

The versatility of pork makes it ideal for crafting a wide range of flavorful dishes that reflect diverse culinary trends and cultures.

INSPIRED BY BOURBON

RACING TO THE FINISH

The race to developing the next trending product

The Human Touch

From Maeve Webster & Mike Kostyo - Adding your personal stamp...

Edible Content

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Explore [TIC]2, where we introduce you to Territories, Trends, Insights, Ideation, Concepts, and Creation!

"Food trends at the Derby blend tradition and innovation,"



The Kentucky Derby: A Celebration of Culture and Cuisine

*Jason Behrends, Ph.D., CCS
SavorPoint Founder, President*

The Kentucky Derby is more than a prestigious horse race; it's a vibrant celebration of Southern culture and cuisine amid the beauty of spring. Attendees, dressed in their finest with intricate hats, enjoy traditional foods and beverages. Pulled pork stands out with its smoky, tender flavor, while the mint julep, a bourbon, mint, and sugar cocktail, offers a refreshing break from the excitement and warmth. The day ends sweetly with Derby Pie, a rich dessert of chocolate and nuts, leaving a lasting impression of both taste and tradition.

Food trends at the Derby blend tradition and innovation, reflecting Southern hospitality with creative twists on classic flavors. Chefs now experiment with traditional dishes, adding surprising elements that delight the palate. Artisanal pulled pork might include unexpected spices, and mint juleps could feature exotic fruits or herbs, offering a new perspective on old favorites. As horses race, attendees enjoy a culinary adventure that mirrors the Derby's sophistication and excitement, all set against spring's vibrant renewal. This fusion of the old and new ensures that the culinary experience at the Derby remains as memorable as the race itself.



SP

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WHY WE CREATE!

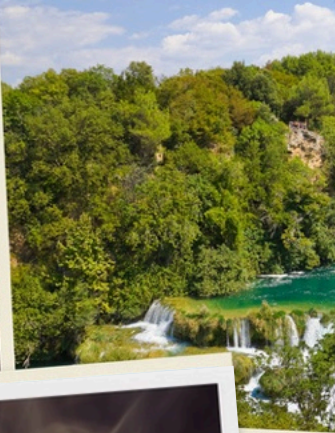


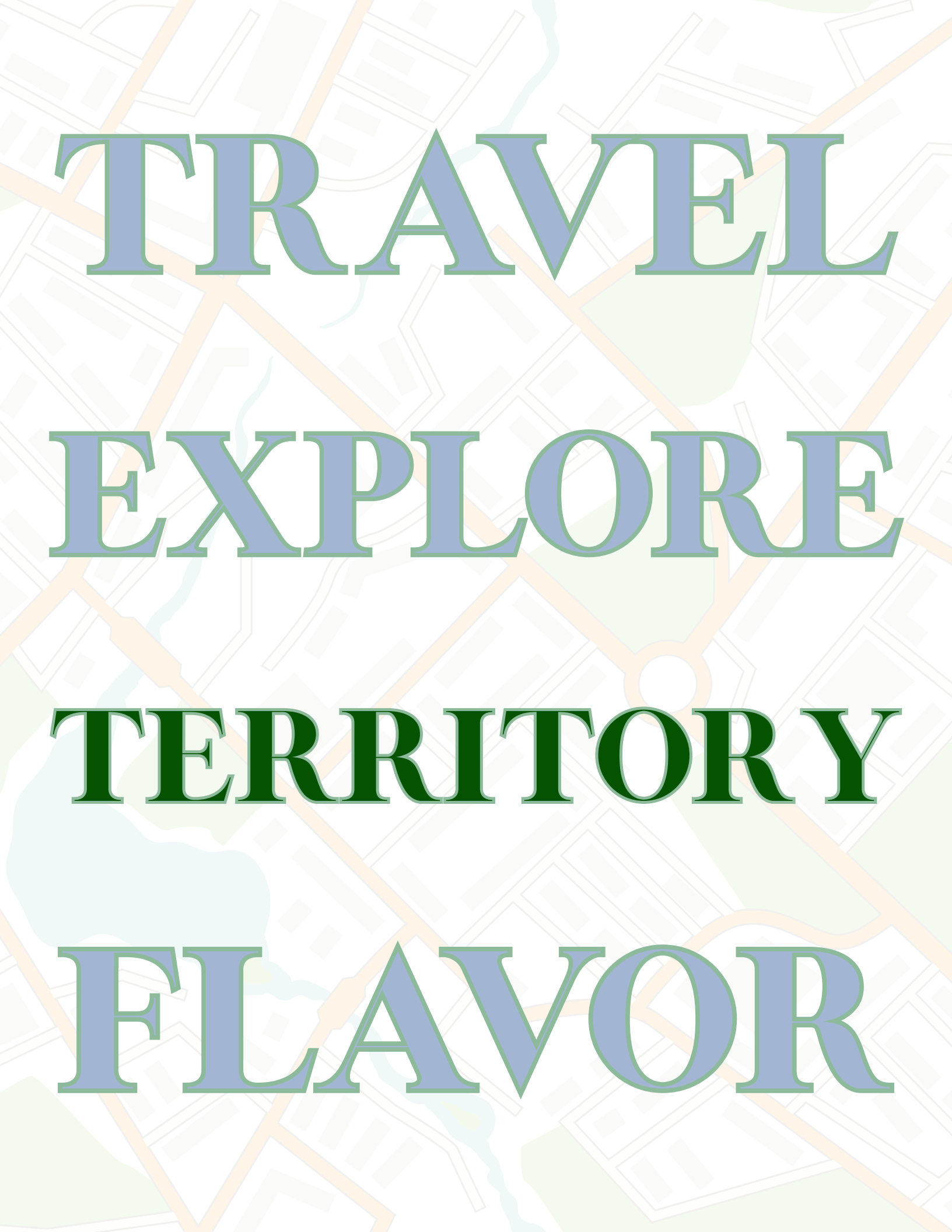
NEW
PRODUCT
LAUNCH

Innovation propels product developers to craft new ideas by merging ingredients, cultures, and flavors. Food developers, scientists, chefs, and culinologists are driven to invent and refine food and beverage products to meet the evolving preferences, desires, and needs of consumers.

In our fast-paced world, people are becoming more knowledgeable and conscious of their choices, actively seeking healthier options, sustainable practices, and unique flavors. This quest for innovation is fueled by a dedication to addressing these requirements, including functional foods and various culinary traditions.

Through ongoing experimentation with fresh ingredients and techniques, these culinary experts aim to create offerings that not only delight the palate but also align with modern trends and consumer expectations. This vibrant process of creation serves to connect with individuals, offering them exciting culinary experiences that reflect their values and aspirations.





TRAVEL
EXPLORE
TERRITORY
FLAVOR

Territories

About the Territories



Some of our favorite places and dishes to explore and pin for your next trip to these territories.

Louisville



Picture inspired by dish

The Gemelli mushroom pasta at **Proof on Main** features wild mushrooms, savory ramps, and a is finished with pink popcorn and pecorino toscano cheese. Plus, Proof is filled with art, which adds to the experience.

NYC



Dumpling N' Dips in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, brings us Thai-inspired homemade dumplings. The Signature sampler is a must try for us.

Dallas



Billy Can Can has a Whipped Pimento Dip that is a must. A twist on traditional with ricotta, longhorn cheddar, smoked tomato, roasted red pepper, wild arugula, aleppo, served with ciabatta. Yes, please!

Territories to Watch

“Territories play a vital role in driving food trends...”

In the ever-evolving culinary world, food trends are heavily influenced by territories—distinct cultural, geographical, or conceptual areas that shape consumer preferences and drive innovation. Territories serve as a fertile ground for inspiration, providing a rich tapestry of flavors, traditions, and narratives that form the backbone of emerging food trends. By clearly defining your territory during the innovation process, you can cater to consumer demands, ensuring products resonate with the desired audience.

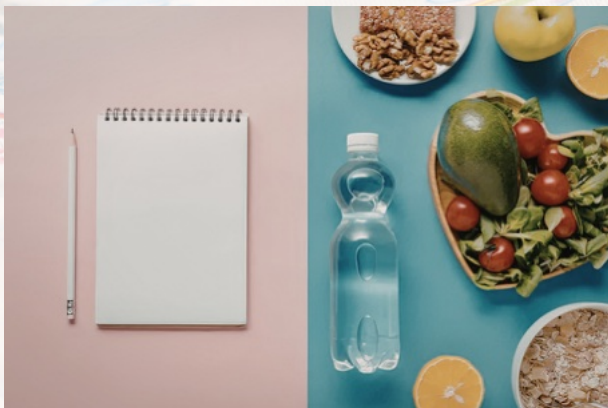
One of the most popular territories influencing food trends is **Thai cuisine**. Known for its complex flavor profiles, Thai food combines sweet, sour, salty, and spicy elements, creating dishes that are both vibrant and balanced. This territory's influence can be seen in the rising popularity of ingredients like lemongrass, galangal, and kaffir lime leaves, which are being incorporated into a variety of products, from ready-made meals to gourmet snacks. By tapping into the Thai territory, product developers can introduce consumers to exotic flavors while telling a story of tradition and culture, thus meeting the growing demand for authentic and adventurous dining experiences.

Another significant territory is **nostalgia**, which taps into the emotional connection people have with food from their past. This territory often sees the resurgence of classic dishes or ingredients, reimagined with a modern twist. For example, the revival of childhood favorites like mac and cheese or pot pies in gourmet versions reflects a desire for comfort and familiarity amidst a fast-paced world. By defining nostalgia as a territory in product development, brands can evoke a sense of belonging and warmth, appealing to consumers' emotions and creating a compelling narrative.

Barbecue, with its roots in American culinary traditions, has expanded globally, influencing a wide range of products from sauces and marinades to snacks. This territory is characterized by its emphasis on smoky, savory flavors and communal cooking experiences. By aligning with the BBQ territory, innovators can harness the universal appeal of grilled foods and the cultural significance of barbecue gatherings, providing products that promise both flavor and social connection.

Health and Wellness is another pivotal territory that continues to shape food trends. As consumers become more health-conscious, there is a growing demand for products that support wellness goals, such as plant-based foods, functional ingredients, and low-calorie options. This territory is driven by the desire for longevity, vitality, and overall well-being. By focusing on Health and Wellness, product developers can create offerings that not only satisfy taste buds but also contribute to a healthier lifestyle, thus aligning with consumer aspirations for holistic health.

Defining your territory in the innovation process is crucial for developing products that meet consumer demands. It allows brands to create a cohesive narrative and story around their offerings, making them more compelling and relatable. By understanding the cultural and emotional drivers behind each territory, companies can tailor their marketing strategies to highlight the unique attributes and benefits of their products.

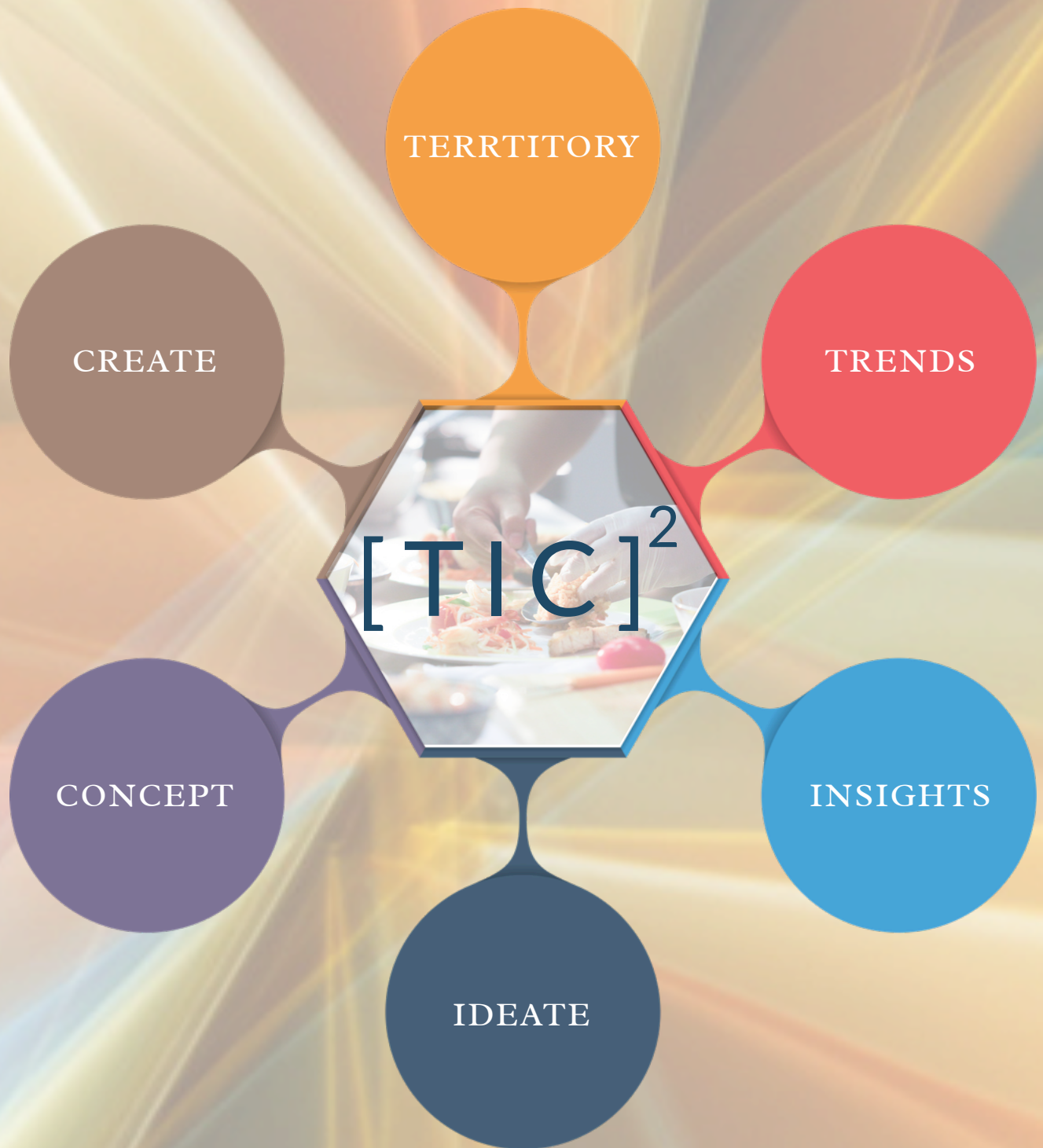


Having a clear line of sight to popular territories helps in staying ahead of trends, ensuring that product development efforts are aligned with consumer interests and market shifts. Whether it's embracing the bold flavors of Thai cuisine, the comforting allure of nostalgia, the communal spirit of BBQ, or the health-driven focus of Wellness, defining your territory provides a strategic advantage in the competitive food industry.

Territories play a vital role in driving food trends, offering a framework for innovation and storytelling that meets consumer demands. By strategically defining and leveraging these territories, brands can create meaningful connections with their audience, delivering products that are not only trendy but also culturally resonant and emotionally engaging.

These are just a few hot territories, but each brand should consider which territory resonates with their consumer and the current trends that align with that territory. It's essential to evaluate which elements will strike a chord with your audience, ensuring that your brand remains relevant and appealing. Tailoring your approach to fit the unique preferences and values of your consumer base can lead to stronger brand loyalty and success in the ever-evolving market.

SavorPoint™ Innovation for Success



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This isn't just a sample
- It's a fully interactive
experience built for
product developers,
culinary teams, and
flavor innovators
ready to PLAY!

NuSpice
custom blending solutions

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ND S

FIBER

Fiber

Recently, fiber has become a pivotal ingredient in the food and beverage industry, with more sectors incorporating it into their products. This trend is fueled by rising consumer awareness of the health benefits of a high-fiber diet, including improved digestion, weight management, and reduced risk of chronic diseases. Consequently, fiber has moved from being a nutritional footnote to a prominent feature on packaging, indicating a healthier choice to consumers.

Fiber incorporation is notably evident in snack foods, cereals, beverages, and dairy alternatives. Snack makers are adding fiber to chips, bars, and crackers, turning them into guilt-free indulgences. Breakfast cereals, traditionally a fiber source, are being reformulated with more fiber from whole grains and seeds. Beverage companies innovate with fiber-enriched drinks, from smoothies to fortified waters, promising hydration and digestive benefits. Even plant-based dairy alternatives like almond or oat milk are fortified with fiber to enhance their nutritional profiles.

Fiber...

The prominence of fiber on packaging is part of a broader trend toward transparency and health-focused marketing. By highlighting fiber content, companies tap into the "halo effect," where products perceived as healthy boost brand image and consumer loyalty. This is particularly effective among consumers seeking products that align with whole foods and "better-for-you" options.

Adding fiber strategically requires considering the type of fiber used, as different fibers offer varied health benefits and functional properties. Soluble fibers, such as inulin and pectin, have prebiotic benefits and improve gut health, while insoluble fibers, found in whole grains and vegetables, support digestive regularity. A balanced formulation may incorporate both types to maximize health benefits.

Product developers should prioritize nutrient-dense ingredients naturally high in fiber, like fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. This boosts fiber content and enhances overall nutritional value, meeting consumer demands for whole foods while providing a convenient fiber source.

“Adding fiber strategically requires considering the type of fiber used,..”

Ensuring that added fiber doesn't compromise taste or texture is crucial, as consumers are unlikely to sacrifice flavor for health. The challenge lies in integrating fiber seamlessly without detracting from the sensory experience. Advances in food technology and ingredient innovation are making this balance easier to achieve, enabling the creation of products that are both nutritious and enjoyable.

The halo effect of fiber extends beyond immediate health benefits, positioning brands as responsible and forward-thinking market players. This positive association can increase brand loyalty and provide a competitive edge in a crowded market.

The trend of adding fiber to food and beverage products is reshaping the industry, driven by consumer demand for healthier options. By strategically incorporating fiber and highlighting its presence on packaging, companies can capitalize on the health halo effect, enhance their brand image, and meet the growing demand for nutrient-dense, whole food products. As this trend evolves, it presents an exciting opportunity for product developers to innovate and lead in creating products that not only taste good but also contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

Swavory

Sweet and Savory Collide!

In recent years, the culinary world has witnessed an intriguing trend that has caught the attention of both food enthusiasts and industry experts alike: "swavory." This term, a clever blend of "sweet" and "savory," represents a growing movement in food and beverage that has captivated palates across the globe. As consumers become more adventurous in their tastes, the swavory trend continues to expand, offering a unique fusion of flavors that challenges traditional boundaries.

At the core of the swavory movement is the innovative blending of sweet and savory elements in a single dish or product. This trend has been driven by a desire for novelty and a break from the conventional flavor profiles. It caters to the modern consumer's craving for complexity and unexpected taste combinations. As a result, product developers are eager to capitalize on this trend, experimenting with new ingredients and techniques to create offerings that surprise and delight.

One of the most notable developments in the retail sector is the introduction of swavory snacks. Brands are launching products like chocolate-covered pretzels with a hint of sea salt, bacon-infused maple donuts, and savory cheese paired with sweet fruit preserves. These products appeal to consumers looking for a quick snack that satisfies multiple taste cravings simultaneously.

In the food service sector, chefs are embracing the swavory trend with enthusiasm, incorporating it into menus in innovative ways. Dishes such as sweet corn and jalapeño ice cream, miso caramel brownies, and balsamic strawberry pizza are making appearances at trendy restaurants and eateries. The inclusion of swavory elements on menus not only attracts curious diners but also allows chefs to showcase their creativity and culinary prowess.

*"...inclusion of swavory elements
on menus not only attracts
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creativity..."*

When it comes to pairing flavors, certain combinations have risen to prominence. Salted caramel, for example, has become a staple in the dessert world, offering a perfect balance of sweetness and saltiness that enhances the overall taste experience. Similarly, the marriage of chocolate and chili creates a rich, spicy flavor profile that intrigues and satisfies. Other successful pairings include honey and goat cheese, mango and chili, as well as fig and prosciutto.

Looking ahead, the swavory trend is poised to continue its upward trajectory over the next year or two. As consumers increasingly seek out unique and memorable food experiences, the demand for novel flavor combinations will likely grow. We can expect to see more swavory offerings in both the retail and food service sectors, as brands and chefs strive to differentiate themselves in a competitive market.



The swavory trend is likely to influence other areas of the food industry, such as beverages. Craft cocktails featuring swavory elements, like a spicy honey margarita or a maple bacon old-fashioned, are already gaining popularity in bars and lounges. This crossover into the beverage sector opens up new opportunities for innovation and consumer engagement.

The swavory trend represents a fascinating evolution in the culinary landscape, pushing the boundaries of traditional flavor profiles and enticing consumers with its bold and unexpected combinations. As product developers and chefs continue to explore the possibilities of sweet and savory blends, the trend shows no signs of slowing down. Whether in retail products or on restaurant menus, swavory is likely to remain a significant and exciting aspect of the food industry in the coming years.



PORK!



The Power fo Pork and Cultural Influence

Pork, renowned as the most consumed protein worldwide, steadily garners popularity for its versatility and cost-effectiveness. Even amidst rising meat prices, pork continues to be an affordable choice for many families. From pork tenderloin, to pork shoulder, to savory pork sausages, this protein offers an extensive array of culinary possibilities.

Whether you're firing up the grill for a summer barbecue or slow roasting for a rich, flavorful pulled pork, the unique tastes of pork can be savored in countless dishes. Its remarkable ability to adapt to various cooking styles and flavor profiles firmly establishes pork as a staple in kitchens around the globe.

One of the standout features of pork is its ability to absorb flavors, making it an ideal canvas for a multitude of spices and marinades. This attribute allows chefs and home cooks alike to experiment with different cultural cuisines, from Asian-inspired sweet and sour pork to spicy Mexican carnitas. The adaptability of pork ensures that it can easily fit into any meal plan, whether you're looking for a quick weeknight dinner or an elaborate weekend feast.

Pork is not only versatile in terms of flavor but also in the cuts available. Each cut offers a unique texture and taste, catering to different preferences and cooking methods. For instance, pork belly, with its rich layers of fat, is perfect for slow-cooking, resulting in tender, melt-in-your-mouth bites. On the other hand, pork chops can be quickly grilled or pan-seared for a fast and satisfying meal. This versatility extends to dietary preferences as well, with lean cuts like pork tenderloin offering a healthier option for those mindful of calorie intake.

The global appeal of pork is undeniable, with each culture embracing it in its own unique way. In Europe, pork is a key ingredient in traditional dishes like German schnitzel or Italian porchetta. Meanwhile, in Asia, it's a staple in numerous delicacies, such as Chinese char siu or Japanese tonkatsu. This widespread acceptance and integration into various cuisines speak to the universal love for pork and its ability to bring people together through food.

In addition to its culinary benefits, pork stands out as a valuable option for consumers looking for affordable protein. According to data from the USDA, pork has experienced lower inflation rates compared to other meats like beef and chicken, making it a more cost-effective choice in times of economic strain. For example, while beef and chicken prices have surged by an average of 10% over the past year, pork prices have increased by around 3%, offering a more budget-friendly option.



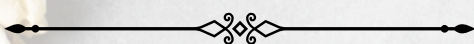
Chefs and product developers are increasingly exploring the versatility of pork, recognizing its potential not only in the foodservice industry but also in the retail sector. This adaptable protein offers countless opportunities for innovation, making it a favorite among culinary professionals. Whether creating new dishes or enhancing existing menus, pork's ability to be incorporated into a wide range of cuisines is unmatched. Retail markets also capitalize on this versatility, offering consumers diverse product lines that showcase pork's adaptability and appeal.

Pork's versatility and affordability make it an indispensable protein option that seamlessly adapts to a myriad of flavors and cooking styles. Its integral role in various cultural cuisines highlights its global appeal, while its economic contributions underscore its importance in the market. Pork will remain a cherished choice for both families and culinary experts, maintaining its status as a go-to ingredient across the world.

Snacking

Spring Snacking: When Small Bites Eat Like Meals

By NuSpice



Spring has a way of resetting the way we eat. As days grow longer and routines become more active, appetites shift toward foods that feel lighter, brighter, and more flexible. Yet even as consumers reach for freshness, the desire for satisfaction does not disappear. Instead of traditional three-meal structures, spring eating increasingly lives in between, where snacks step in to do the work of meals.

Today's snacking landscape is no longer defined by convenience alone. Snacks have evolved into intentional eating moments built to nourish, energize, and satisfy. In spring especially, those smaller bites are expected to deliver the same culinary impact as a full plate.

The Rise of the Intentional Snack

Spring signals change not just in weather, but in mindset. Consumers emerge from heavier winter eating patterns seeking foods that feel clean, balanced, and crave-worthy. Snacks respond by becoming more purposeful, less about impulse and more about choice.

Rather than indulgent or empty, spring snacks lean into brighter, herbaceous flavor profiles, citrus-forward notes paired with gentle heat, savory satisfaction without heaviness, and clean, recognizable ingredients. This shift is about replacing bulk with balance. A snack does not need to be large to be fulfilling, it needs to feel complete. Flavor becomes the primary driver of that perception.

When Snacks Start Thinking Like Meals

At the same time, the line between snacks and meals continues to blur. Midday eating is increasingly fragmented, with consumers grazing between meetings, workouts, school pickups, and social plans. Snacks often replace lunch, stand in for a lighter dinner, or bridge long gaps between meals.

Snackification is not about downsizing, it is about restructuring. Smaller formats now carry layered flavor experiences, texture contrast, and umami and richness traditionally associated with entrées. Handhelds, dippables, snack bowls, and portable protein-forward bites all benefit from seasoning systems that provide structure and staying power. When done right, these foods eat like meals, even when their portion size says otherwise.

Spring Flavor's Role in Satisfaction

Spring flavor profiles play a critical role in making meal-minded snacks successful. Freshness alone is not enough. Snacks that rely only on light or delicate flavors risk falling flat, especially when consumers expect satiety.

This is where smart seasoning strategies come in. Spring-appropriate snacks often balance green and citrus notes such as lemon, lime, dill, parsley, or basil with warm savory backbones like garlic, onion, and toasted spices. Controlled sweetness or gentle sweet-heat elements add roundness and depth. These layers allow snacks to taste vibrant while still delivering richness. The goal is not to overpower the product, but to give it a flavor framework that feels intentional and complete.

Smaller Formats, Bigger Expectations

As snacks take on a bigger role, expectations grow. Consumers want foods that align with their wellness goals without sacrificing enjoyment. They want portability without compromise. And in spring, they want everything to feel a little lighter, without feeling lacking.

Seasoning systems do much of the heavy lifting here. In compact formats, flavor must work harder to provide a sense of fullness, compensate for reduced fat or sodium, and maintain consistency from bite to bite. Well-designed seasoning allows snacks to satisfy across multiple eating occasions, from fuel-forward afternoon bites to social sharing moments, without losing their seasonal appeal.

What This Means for Product Development

For brands and operators, spring snacking opens the door to innovation. The most successful products understand that snacks are no longer just secondary items, they are central players in how people eat. That means considering flavor efficiency in smaller portions, seasonality without sacrificing crave, and systems that translate across formats. When snacks are designed with meal-level thinking, they meet consumers exactly where spring puts them, active, flexible, and looking for experience as much as nourishment.

A Lighter Season, A Smarter Bite

Spring does not ask us to eat less, it asks us to eat differently. Snacking has risen to the challenge, transforming into a meaningful, satisfying, and highly creative eating moment. When freshness meets structure and lighter flavors are supported by thoughtful seasoning, small bites become something more.

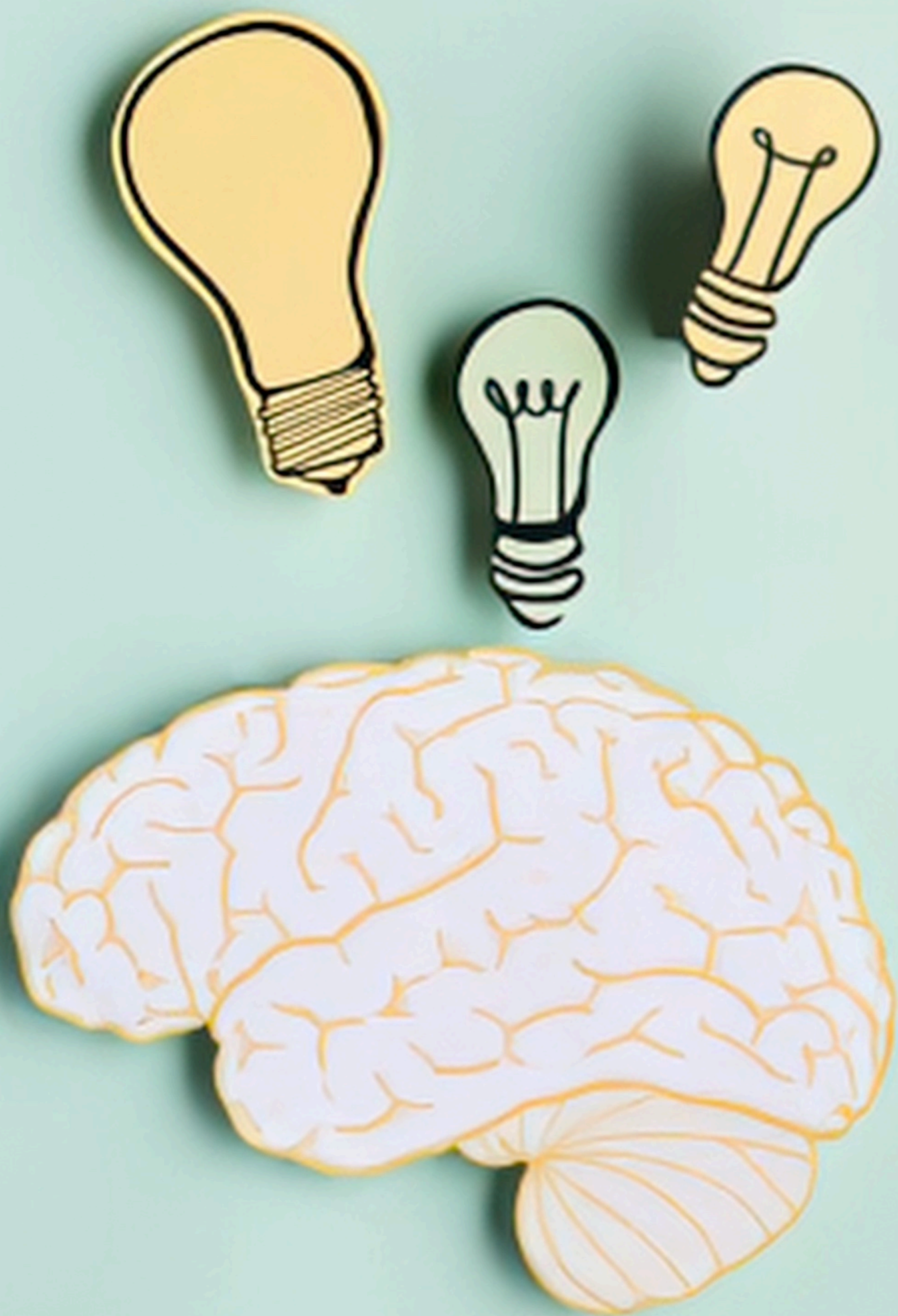
They become meals, reimagined for the season.



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THE HUMAN TOUCH

In the age of AI, adding your personal stamp matters more than ever.

*Maeve Webster, President
Mike Kostyo, Vice President
Menu Matters*



For an event centered on horses, the Kentucky Derby is remarkably focused on people. It arguably spends more time celebrating human stories – their talent, effort, creativity – than the horses themselves.

Take the hats. Attendees spend weeks – and often hundreds or even thousands of dollars – crafting and perfecting them. Wide brims adorned with flowers and feathers, sleek fascinators worthy of a royal wedding, even proudly eccentric options that feel closer to art pieces than haberdashery. In a world where people are often hesitant to stand out for fear of being “cringe,” these hats become a visible expression of personality and individuality.

The same dynamic plays out in the broadcast. The coverage focuses on the humans behind the race – the owners, trainers, jockeys – and their stories of persistence, struggles, and ambition leading up to their moment at Churchill Downs.

And then there are the horse names. Ask a casual bettor how they choose, and most will tell you it comes down to the name that feels the most personal: a favorite band, a meaningful place, a name of a friend or family member.

What does this have to do with the food industry? It's all a reminder that, at the end of the day, our choices and purchases often come down to that human, emotional connection.

We're in a period of extraordinary technological innovation. While there isn't a path forward for our industry without tech and AI, they're also creating a simultaneous demand for something real. The more synthetic our world becomes, the more people start looking for what's real. .



“...give them something real...”



That's showing up in numerous ways. Customers are paying more attention to where their food comes from and who is behind it. They're questioning ingredients and process, from seed oils to ultra-processed foods. And at the same time, they're looking for experiences that feel more personal, grounded, and tangible – that cut through the noise of everything competing for their attention.

That's why our research recently has led us to a central, overarching need that food brands need to meet when it comes to serving the ultimate customer: give them something real.

You can start by showcasing the people behind your brand. According to our research, well over half (56%) of people say seeing the face behind a product (the chef, the farmer, etc.) makes them more likely to buy a product. In an age of giant, faceless corporations, knowing there are real people behind a product or menu item can make all the difference. It transforms a “product” into a human meal infused with passion, knowledge, history, and skill.

Here's an easy exercise you can do right now. If you scroll through your website or social channels, how long does it take before you reach an image of an actual human being? "If the answer is "longer than it probably should," there's an opportunity there. In the age of AI, showcasing the people behind your brand or product makes a difference.

But there's also the other side of the equation. It's not only about showing your own humanity, it's about giving customers space to express theirs.

Whether it's a fear of cringe culture that's keeping young people from expressing themselves or it's algorithms pushing the same ideas and trends over and over again, we now live in an age of same-ification. Movies are all prequels and sequels, books have the same cover designs, even menus and products are infused with the same flavors and ingredients.

"...food has long been a way to showcase our unique personality and identity..."



Yet food has long been a way we showcase our unique personality and identity. We excitedly tell people our favorite foods and flavors, our friends and family buy us our favorite brands of snacks and candy for our birthday or holidays, we make meals for others showcasing our heritage or background. The question for brands is how much room you're creating for your customers to infuse this type of expression into a food experience.

It goes beyond simply customizing a sandwich or burrito. Consider the steakhouse that brings out a chest of knives for the guest to choose from, from the elegant French steak knife to the violent cleaver, each with its own color and aesthetic. It's a simple solution that allows the guest to infuse the meal with a little of their own personality and style before the meal even begins.

In the age of tech and AI, the human layer is only going to matter more. From marketing and branding to culinary ideation and launches, ask yourself how you can infuse more humanity – both in how you present your brand and in how your customers experience it – into every step of the process.

Menu Matters

ESTB



2015

Menu Matters is a consulting firm specializing in human-centric, data-backed solutions for the food industry. You can find out more information about them at menumatters.com.

What's next for Food Service?

The food service industry is constantly evolving, driven by changing consumer preferences and advancements in technology. As we look ahead, several trends are shaping the future of menus across all types of dining establishments, from fine dining to quick service restaurants.

Menu Trends and Innovations

Consumers today are more adventurous and willing to explore new cuisines. This curiosity is leading to the incorporation of bold spices and lesser-known international dishes into mainstream menus. Ingredients like za'atar, gochujang, and harissa are being used to add depth and complexity to dishes, drawing influence from Middle Eastern, Korean, and North African cuisines, respectively. Chefs are also experimenting with fusion dishes that blend culinary traditions in novel and exciting ways.

The significance of these global flavor trends extends beyond merely adding new tastes to the table. They reflect a growing cultural interconnectedness. By embracing global flavors, restaurants can attract a wider audience and cater to the diverse palate of modern consumers. Introducing these flavors can elevate a dining experience, offering customers not just a meal, but a culinary journey that transports them to different parts of the world.



Differences in Dining Formats

While these trends are influencing menus across the board, the way they are implemented varies by dining format—fine dining, casual dining, and quick service restaurants each have unique approaches.

Fine dining, the emphasis is on creating an exceptional culinary experience. Chefs in these establishments often push the boundaries of traditional cooking, experimenting with avant-garde techniques and presentation styles. Fine dining menus may feature rare ingredients and bespoke dishes that highlight culinary artistry. The focus is on quality and innovation, with a keen eye on current trends that can be reinterpreted into exclusive offerings.

Casual dining establishments, on the other hand, aim to balance innovation with accessibility. These restaurants are incorporating trends in a way that appeals to a broad audience, often through familiar dishes with a trendy twist. For example, a casual dining restaurant might offer a classic burger but with a spicy harissa aioli. The goal is to introduce diners to new flavors without overwhelming them. Casual dining is also where we see a significant push towards incorporating allergen-friendly and health-conscious options, catering to dietary restrictions.

Quick service restaurants (QSRs) are rapidly adapting to consumer demands for convenience without sacrificing quality. In the realm of QSRs, menu trends lean towards items that can be prepared quickly while still offering a taste of the latest culinary innovations. Expect to see more options that are globally inspired packing a flavor punch in every bite. QSRs are also embracing technology, using apps and kiosks to allow for customization, giving customers the ability to personalize their orders to match their dietary preferences or adventurous palates.

Culinologists & Product Development

The role of culinologists—professionals who blend culinary arts with food science—is becoming increasingly vital as these trends take shape.



They are at the forefront of developing new products that meet the demands of both chefs and consumers. By understanding the science behind flavors and textures, culinologists can create products that not only taste great but also meet consumers' needs. This might involve developing new products that capture the essence of a specific cuisine.

Product developers are focusing on enhancing the sensory experience of food. This involves everything from improving the visual appeal of packaged foods to ensuring that flavors remain vibrant throughout their shelf life. The challenge is to maintain quality while meeting the logistical demands of distribution and storage.

*“The future of food service
is exciting and dynamic,
with a strong emphasis on
innovation...”*

The future of food service is exciting and dynamic, with a strong emphasis on innovation. As consumers become more informed and adventurous, restaurants across all formats must adapt by offering menus that reflect these preferences. From the artistry of fine dining to the accessibility of quick service, the industry is poised to deliver diverse and flavorful experiences that cater to every palate. With the expertise of chefs, product developers, and culinologists, the next wave of menu offerings promises to be both delicious and responsible, setting the stage for a new era in dining.



II



EATE

All the Food & Beverage

Ideas You Need to Know

Spring 2026

As spring unfolds in 2026, the culinary world is abuzz with vibrant flavors that celebrate the season's renewal. This year, the spotlight is on floral and citrus notes, with lavender, elderflower, and bergamot taking center stage. These flavors are being creatively infused in both sweet and savory dishes, bringing a refreshing twist to traditional spring menus. Additionally, exotic spices like saffron and cardamom are making a comeback, adding warmth and depth to meals while enhancing the natural essence of spring ingredients.

Food Trends for 2026

In 2026, spring food trends are all about localization and sustainability. Chefs and home cooks alike are turning to hyper-local produce and foraged ingredients to reduce carbon footprints while supporting local agriculture. This movement is bringing lesser-known vegetables and herbs into the limelight, encouraging adventurous eating. Another trend gaining traction is fermentation, with pickled and preserved foods becoming staples in kitchens. This not only boosts flavor but also aligns with the growing interest in gut health. Moreover, fusion cuisine continues to evolve, blending global flavors in unexpected ways to create a multicultural feast for the senses.

Beverage Trends 2026

The beverage scene in spring 2026 is characterized by creativity and sophistication. Botanical infusions are leading the charge, with drinks featuring herbs and flowers like rosemary, chamomile, and hibiscus, offering aromatic experiences. Meanwhile, low-alcohol and alcohol-free options are gaining popularity as consumers seek healthier lifestyles without compromising on taste. These beverages often include innovative mixers and garnishes, making them visually appealing while staying refreshing. Additionally, the trend of personalized drinks is on the rise, with customizable cocktails and mocktails that cater to individual preferences, ensuring a unique experience for every palate.

Nutrition Trends for 2026

This spring, nutrition trends are emphasizing holistic health and personalized nutrition. There's a growing interest in micronutrients, with consumers seeking foods rich in vitamins and minerals tailored to their specific needs. Functional foods, such as those fortified with adaptogens and prebiotics, are becoming essential in daily diets, promoting wellness from the inside out. Moreover, the concept of intuitive eating is gaining momentum, encouraging individuals to listen to their bodies and make food choices based on personal cues rather than external guidelines. As people become more informed about their nutritional needs, the focus is on eating patterns that support long-term health and well-being.

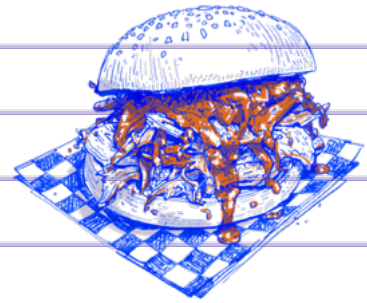
IDEATE



Bourbon - Kentucky Derby



BBQ - Pulled Pork



Flavor of the season - Citrus,
Bergamot, lime,



Nutrition emphasis, clean labels, what
does that mean... Still has to have **FLAVOR!**
Micro-nutrients...

Beverages - Botanical,
flavor forward,
experience, possibly non-
alcoholic...



ideas

CONFEIT

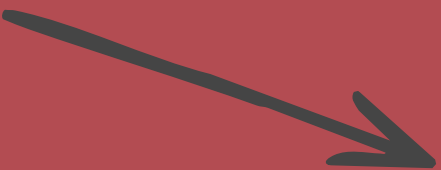
DELICIOUS



HEIRLOOM
TOMATO



AVOCADO



SEASONED TO
PERFECTION



PECAN SMOKED
BACON



CHILI CRISP





HEIRLOOM
TOMATO

JUICY

PRETZEL
BUN

GOCHUJANG
BOURBON AIOLI

CARMELIZED
ONIONS

CHEDDAR

WAGYU

BUTTER
LETTUCE

Inspired by Bourbon

Bourbon, with its rich history and distinct flavor profile, offers a wealth of culinary inspiration. This iconic American whiskey, famous for its vanilla, caramel, and oak notes, opens numerous possibilities in food and beverage innovation.



“Bourbon pairings offer another intriguing exploration avenue.. “

Concepts in bourbon-infused menu, where each dish incorporates bourbon to elevate its taste can be intriguing to consumers. Picture a bourbon-glazed salmon, where the whiskey's sweetness complements the fish's richness. The glaze, made with bourbon, brown sugar, and soy sauce, creates a caramelized exterior that pairs beautifully with flaky salmon. Similarly, bourbon can enhance classic barbecue by adding depth to sauces and marinades, transforming ribs or pulled pork into gourmet experiences.

In desserts, bourbon's versatility shines. A bourbon pecan pie elevates a traditional Southern favorite, enhancing the nutty pecans and adding complexity to the filling.

Likewise, a bourbon-infused chocolate mousse offers a decadent treat, where the whiskey's notes meld with rich, dark chocolate for an unforgettable experience.

Bourbon's influence on beverages, sparking innovative cocktails. Classics like the Old Fashioned can receive modern twists, with bartenders infusing whiskey with fruits or spices for unique flavors. Bourbon's robust character also suits craft beer collaborations, where breweries age stouts or porters in bourbon barrels, imparting distinct whiskey aromas and smooth finishes. Or a simple bourbon Lemonade is perfect for Spring.

Bourbon pairings offer another intriguing exploration avenue, with tasting flights accompanied by small bites crafted to complement the whiskey's flavors, creating sensory experiences. Restaurants and bars can host bourbon-themed dining events, pairing courses with bourbon cocktails or neat pours, including educational components on bourbon's history and distillation.

Bourbon's rich flavor and cultural significance inspire endless food and beverage concepts. Its ability to enhance flavors and create memorable dining ensures bourbon remains a beloved staple in culinary exploration.





Ready for the Kentucky Derby

In the heart of Derby season, an innovative dessert emerges to captivate both food lovers and race enthusiasts alike: the Kentucky Derby Cheesecake. This indulgent creation begins with a buttery graham cracker crust, providing the perfect foundation for the layers above. The first layer is a rich, bourbon-infused pecan caramel, reminiscent of the Southern charm that defines the Kentucky Derby itself. This layer adds a hint of smokiness and a touch of sophistication, perfectly complementing the event's festive spirit.

Next, the star ingredient takes center stage—a smooth, decadent vanilla cheesecake.

Its creamy texture and subtle sweetness create a harmonious balance with the bold flavors below. To crown this masterpiece, a luxurious drizzle of dulce de leche cascades over the top, adding a silky finish that is both visually stunning and irresistibly delicious.

To capture the essence of the Derby, candied mint leaves are delicately placed as a garnish, adding a fresh, vibrant contrast. This innovative dessert not only pays homage to the Derby's rich traditions but also introduces a modern twist that delights the palate, ensuring it takes its rightful place as a timeless classic in the world of indulgent treats.



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RACING TO THE FINISH

In the fast-paced world of food and beverage product development, the race to the finish line is both exhilarating and challenging. The journey from concept to market-ready product is a complex one, fraught with numerous hurdles that require strategic navigation. The timeline for getting a product to market is critical, often dictated by the need to capitalize on emerging trends, seasonal opportunities, and consumer demands.

One of the primary challenges in product development is managing product changes and ingredient restrictions. As consumer preferences evolve and regulatory landscapes shift, developers must be agile, adapting formulations to meet new dietary trends and compliance standards. For instance, the increasing demand for allergen-free products can necessitate a complete overhaul of a product's ingredients, impacting both the timeline and cost.

Trends play a significant role in shaping product development timelines. A trend can catapult a product to success if timed correctly, but it can also become a pitfall if missed. Launch timing is crucial; a product must be ready to hit the shelves when consumer interest is at its peak. This timing is often influenced by seasons and holidays, which can dictate the best window for launching certain products. For example, a spiced pumpkin beverage might see significant success when introduced in the fall, aligning with consumer cravings for seasonal flavors.



Project lead changes can also disrupt the development process. A shift in leadership may bring new perspectives and strategies, but it can also lead to delays as new leaders familiarize themselves with ongoing projects. Similarly, changes in customer direction, such as a shift in target demographics or branding strategy, can necessitate a reevaluation of the product's attributes, further complicating the development timeline.

Pricing is another critical factor. The cost of ingredients, production, and distribution must be carefully balanced against the product's market position and consumer affordability. Missteps in pricing can lead to products being too expensive for the target market or not profitable enough to justify continued production.

To effectively manage these complexities, many companies utilize a roadmap supported by a stage-gate process. This structured approach segments the project into distinct stages, each separated by a gate where project viability is assessed. The stage-gate process helps ensure that only viable products proceed to the next stage, minimizing wasted resources and effort. It provides a framework for identifying potential issues early, allowing for timely interventions.

The application of the stage-gate process differs between consumer packaged goods (CPG) and food service product development. For CPG, the focus is often on scalability and shelf stability, requiring extensive testing and iterations. The stage-gate process in this context emphasizes market research, packaging design, and distribution logistics to ensure the product can be mass-produced and widely available.

In contrast, food service product development often prioritizes flavor profiles and immediate consumer feedback. The stage-gate process here may focus more on taste testing, menu integration, and chef collaborations. The timelines can differ, given that food service products may not require the same level of packaging and shelf-life considerations as CPG products.

Despite the differences, the stage-gate process remains a valuable tool across both sectors, providing a disciplined approach to navigating the myriad challenges of product development. It ensures that each project step is carefully evaluated, helping developers stay on track despite the inevitable twists and turns of the journey.

The race to bring food and beverage products to market is a dynamic and demanding process. Developers must juggle numerous variables, from ingredient restrictions and pricing to consumer trends and leadership changes. By leveraging structured processes like the stage-gate system, companies can better manage these complexities, ultimately delivering successful products that meet consumer expectations and drive business growth.

The quote is centered within a white rectangular box. The background of the entire image is a blurred, artistic shot of what appears to be a kitchen or food preparation area, with warm orange and yellow tones on the left and darker, greenish tones on the right. The quote itself is written in a black, italicized serif font.

“The race to bring food and beverage products to market is a dynamic and demanding process...”

— Create

PULLED PORK

Ingredients

- 1 pork shoulder (approximately 5-6 lbs)
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1 Tbsp black pepper
- 1 Tbsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 2 Tbsp smoked paprika
- ½ Cup apple cider vinegar

Instructions

1. Preheat your smoker to 225°F.
2. In a small bowl, combine the salt, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, and smoked paprika to create your seasoning mix.
3. Rub the pork shoulder with olive oil to help the seasoning adhere.
4. Generously coat the pork shoulder with the seasoning mix, ensuring all sides are covered.
5. Place the pork shoulder in the smoker and cook for approximately 6-8 hours,
6. Wrap the pork shoulder with foil at 170°F adding the ½ cup of apple cider vinegar.
7. Cook until the internal temperature reaches 200°F.
8. Remove the pork shoulder from the smoker and let it rest for 30 minutes before shredding.
9. Serve and enjoy your perfectly smoked pork shoulder!



Mint Julep

Ingredients

- 2 oz bourbon
- 1 oz simple syrup
- Fresh mint leaves (about 6-8 leaves)
- Crushed ice
- Mint sprig for garnish

Instructions

1. In a julep cup or a glass, gently muddle the mint leaves with the simple syrup to release the mint's oils. Be careful not to tear the leaves.
2. Add the bourbon to the cup.
3. Fill the cup with crushed ice and stir well until the outside of the cup is frosty.
4. Top with more crushed ice to form a mound above the rim of the cup.
5. Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint, gently slapping it on your hand before adding to release the aroma.
6. Serve with a straw and enjoy your refreshing mint julep!



A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a hand sprinkling fine white salt crystals over a gourmet dish. The dish features golden-brown, seared pieces of food, possibly fish or vegetables, garnished with fresh green herbs and small red berries. The background is dark and blurred, emphasizing the salt and the food.

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