

ISSUE 05

FALL 2026

SAVORPOINT™

EVERY BITE COUNTS

THE SPICE OF LIFE

WHY WE CREATE FROM
VP OF NUSPICE

TRENDS

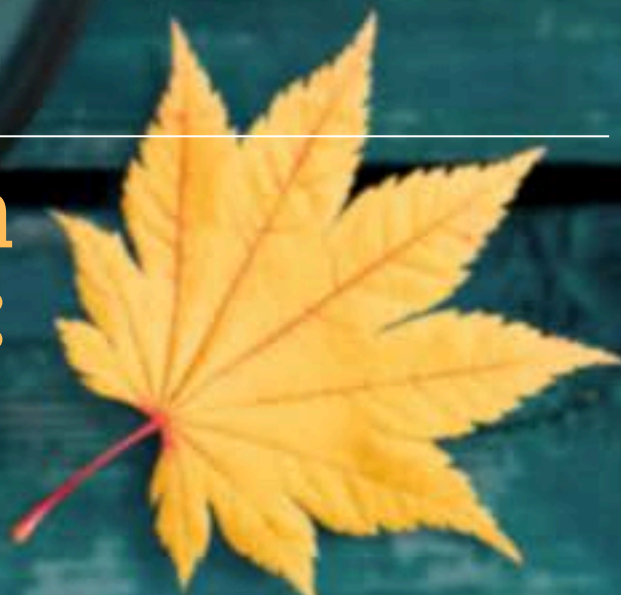
Trend-spotting
DATASSENTIAL

Trends Shaping the Next Meat Product

AMERICAN MEAT SCIENCE
ASSOCIATION

Fall in Love with Pumpkin Again:

FROM MENU MATTERS





Edible Content

Intro

The Road to Innovation	03
The Spice of Life	05

Territory

Territories - Pumpkin	09
Pumpkin	10

Trends

Trends are a Journey	13
Trend-Spotting	15
Meal Ready	20
Layers	24
Trend Shaping	28
Braising	32

Insights

insights	37
Fall in Love with Pumpkin Again	39
Al The Good, The Bad, The Ugly	44

Ideate

Ideate	49
Flavor with Attitude	50
A Chefs Story	52

Concept

Building Concepts	56
Pumpkin Cheesecake Bites	59

Create

Cost vs Quality	61
Braised Shortibs with Pumpkin	62
Spiced Pear & Smoked Maple	
Bourbon Sour	63

The Road to Innovation



Welcome to the latest issue of SavorPoint - Every Bite Counts Magazine! As fall envelops us in its vibrant hues, we invite you to explore the road of rich flavors this season offers.

In this issue, we delve into the latest insights from Datassential, which explores what's on the menu this fall.

Menu Matters takes a closer look at creative ways to reinvent the iconic pumpkin. They explore how chefs and food enthusiasts are pushing boundaries by experimenting with global spices, unexpected pairings, and new preparation techniques.

While pumpkin takes center stage, we also highlight opportunities to expand your palate with flavors like butternut squash and other seasonal vegetables, promising delightful culinary experiences.

Fall is synonymous with warmth and comfort. To enhance those cozy moments by the fire, we've included a couple of recipes perfect for savoring the tranquility of the season.

As you gather with loved ones this autumn, we celebrate the table as a symbol of togetherness and tradition. Enjoy the issue!

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



Stay inspired
"Never stop creating!"



www.savorpoint.com

—— Why we create

THE SPICE OF LIFE

Jessica Goldstein
Vice President, NuSpice

Originally penned by English poet William Cowper, “Variety’s the spice of life, That gives it all its flavor” has been repeated in some anecdotal sense since its publishing back in 1785. In the original poem, *The Task*, the phrase describes how changing our routines and experiences can provide new perspectives and discoveries, keeping life far from boring - much like how spices create a multitude of flavor possibilities in food.

Like most historical sayings that somehow remain timeless, this one hits particularly close to home. At NuSpice, we create custom products for a variety of food companies, which means part of my job is staying trend-relevant, developing unique flavor systems and helping our customers create delicious finished products. We live in a world where creative people are supposed to stay inspired to then be creative, but the reality is: innovation rarely begins at my desk.

We live in a world shaped by other people's imaginations. Poets, chefs, muralists, musicians, architects and countless other creative people have left pieces of their visions all around us. Sometimes we actively seek them out; other times we stumble into them without realizing they'll become useful later. I have found that the more I experience - a new city, a museum exhibit, a concert, a restaurant, an obscure Reddit rabbit hole - the larger my mental flavor library becomes. And that library follows me everywhere.

I travel as often as I can, and admittedly, I am a sucker for the touristy stuff. Put me in a museum filled with artifacts from an ancient civilization and I am happy for hours. Last summer, that curiosity brought me to Pompeii and Herculaneum, where I became fascinated not only by what people ate nearly 2,000 years ago, but by how surprisingly familiar their relationship with food felt.

“We live in a world shaped by other people's imaginations.”

That is the kind of experience that sticks with me. I don't come home from Italy and immediately develop a "Pompeii Seasoning." Inspiration doesn't usually work that literally. Instead, these experiences become reference points: how cultures use ingredients, how food intersects with economics and convenience, how flavors migrate. Are those same ingredients available today? How have they changed? And how often is something we consider a modern trend actually an extremely old idea wearing better branding?

But inspiration doesn't always come from something quite as grand as an ancient Roman city.

A recent weekend brought me out to Deep Creek Lake, a place I had never heard of and certainly couldn't have pointed to on a map. All I knew was I'd fly into Pittsburgh and my friend would handle it from there. On our return, we figured we'd mosey our way north, stopping at some local spots along the way.

That brought us to a diner tucked behind an antiques shop. After lunch, we wandered through old spice canisters, antique china, toy horses and decades of other people's things. Mixed among them were hand-painted rocks from a local artist, covered in silly sayings and still being created and sold today. The old and the new were quite literally sitting next to each other.

“...inspiration is everywhere all the time.”

From there, we followed the rolling rivers and hills toward Kentuck Knob, a Frank Lloyd Wright house tucked into the landscape. My friend and I found ourselves talking about how extensively Wright traveled during his lifetime and how remarkable that must have been for the time. What did he see? What did he bring home with him? What found its way, consciously or otherwise, into the next thing he designed?

Standing outside Kentuck Knob, those questions felt particularly relevant. Wright had an incredible understanding of nature and engineering, creating structures that somehow feel as though they belong exactly where they were built. The landscape wasn't simply where he put the house; it was part of the inspiration for the house.

In the span of a few hours, I had gone from old spice canisters and someone's hand-painted rocks to one of America's most celebrated architects. The day had absolutely nothing to do with food innovation, and I wasn't out looking for inspiration- but that's exactly the point: inspiration is everywhere all the time.

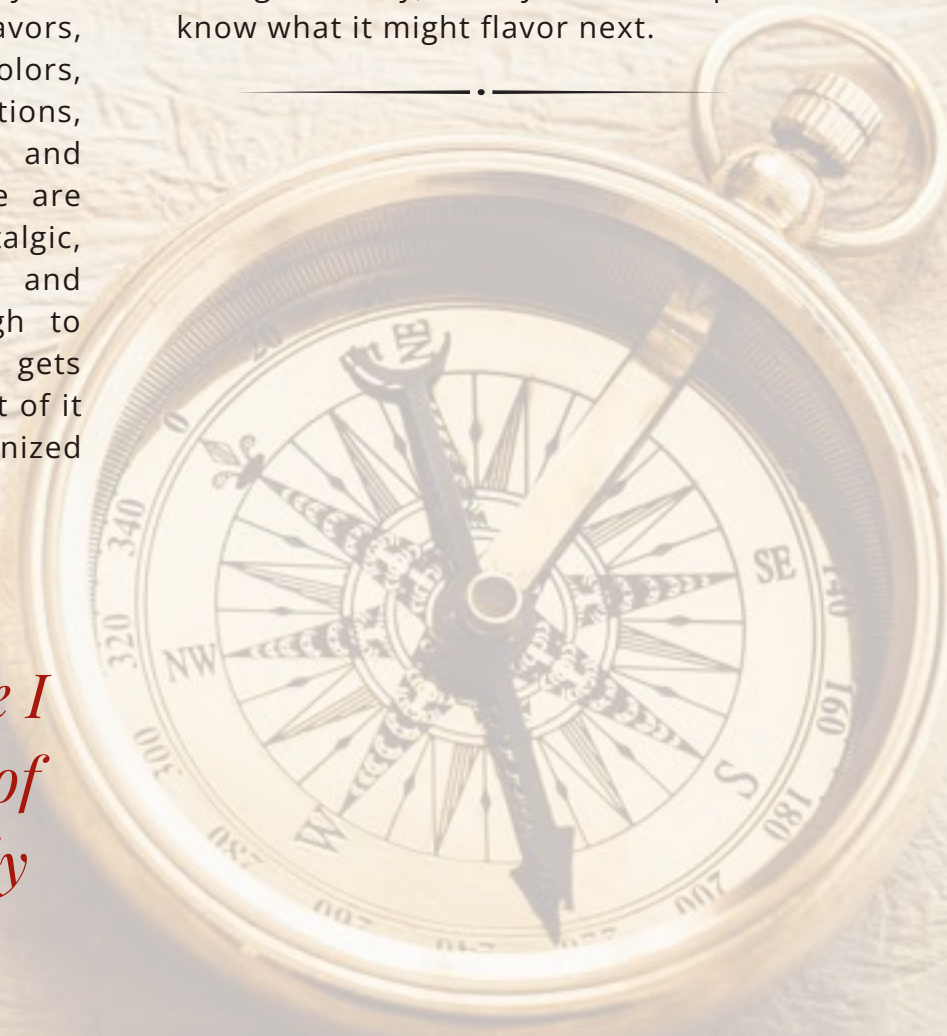
It's in the things people created hundreds of years ago and the creations someone painted last month. It's in a building designed around the land beneath it, the mural you walk past on the way to dinner, the song that sends you down a completely different musical rabbit hole, or the restaurant dish that makes everyone at the table stop talking for a second. It's in places we intentionally travel thousands of miles to see and in the weird little shop we wandered into because we had time to kill.

The more I pay attention, the more I realize how much of creativity is simply collecting. I collect flavors, obviously, but I also collect colors, textures, experiences, conversations, combinations, memories and questions. I notice what people are excited about, what feels nostalgic, what suddenly feels new again and what makes me curious enough to want to know more. Some of it gets used immediately- although, most of it doesn't. Somehow it all gets organized into that mental library.

“The more I pay attention, the more I realize how much of creativity is simply collecting.”

Eventually, some of it does make its way back to my desk. A customer asks for something new, a conversation with R&D gets an idea moving, or something I experienced months ago suddenly becomes relevant. We develop it, taste it, change it, question it - and sometimes realize there's still a piece missing.

So, innovation rarely begins at my desk. It might pick up somewhere in the middle there, but I've learned that sometimes I have to get back out into the world to figure out how the story ends. Nearly 250 years later, I think Cowper's point still holds: give yourself enough variety, and you never quite know what it might flavor next.



TERRITORY

*TERRITORIES INSPIRE FOOD INNOVATION BY
ENCAPSULATING UNIQUE CULTURAL,
ENVIRONMENTAL, AND AGRICULTURAL TRAITS,
ALLOWING COMPANIES TO CREATE PRODUCTS THAT
RESONATE LOCALLY AND STAND OUT GLOBALLY.*



Territories

Pumpkin



Yes, Pumpkin can be a territory. Pumpkin is a menu driver in the fall and as we innovate we should keep an eye open for creative ways chefs are using or reinventing pumpkin as an ingredient.

Beverage



As autumn arrives, pumpkin spice lattes become a quintessential symbol of the season. Coffee shops offer this beloved drink, blending cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves with pumpkin's comforting taste. This seasonal treat has a loyal following.

Soup



As leaves turn, pumpkin soup becomes a must-try this fall. With its creamy texture and comforting warmth, it's the epitome of autumn indulgence. This year, creative twists are making waves, from spicy Thai versions to vegan options with coconut milk.

Dessert



This fall, pumpkin desserts are taking center stage, adding cozy warmth to the season. From classic pumpkin pies to innovative cheesecakes and muffins, these treats capture autumn's essence. The comforting aroma of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves mingling with pumpkin is irresistible.

Pumpkin



As the crisp air of fall rolls in, so does the allure of pumpkin flavor, a seasonal favorite that has become synonymous with autumn itself. The vibrant orange hue and distinct taste of pumpkin have carved a niche in the culinary world, beckoning developers and innovators to explore its potential and create new, exciting products for the fall season.

Pumpkin's versatility is a territory ripe for discovery. Traditionally associated with pies and lattes, this humble squash is now being reimagined in various culinary forms from sweet to savory, offering a canvas for creativity. The annual surge in demand for pumpkin-flavored products indicates not just a fleeting trend, but a deep-rooted affinity that consumers have for this comforting taste. As the leaves turn and the days grow shorter, pumpkin becomes more than a flavor—it's an experience, evoking a sense of warmth and nostalgia.



“The fall season is a playground for developers, a time to experiment and redefine what pumpkin can be....”

For developers in the food industry, the challenge lies in balancing tradition with innovation. The familiar taste of pumpkin spice, with its blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, offers a starting point. However, the real opportunity lies in pushing beyond these boundaries. Imagine pumpkin salsa with a hint of chili, or a savory pumpkin pasta sauce that pairs perfectly with a cool autumn evening. These are just glimpses into the possibilities awaiting exploration.

In recent years, the expansion of pumpkin-flavored products has extended beyond the culinary realm. The beauty and wellness industries have also embraced pumpkin, recognizing its rich antioxidant properties and its appeal as a seasonal scent. From pumpkin-infused skincare products to aromatherapy candles, the breadth of pumpkin's influence continues to grow.

Developers are also tasked with considering the growing consumer demand for health-conscious and sustainable options. Pumpkin, being rich in vitamins and low in calories, fits well into the narrative of healthier eating. Innovators are finding ways to incorporate pumpkin into gluten-free, vegan, and organic products, appealing to a wider audience seeking both indulgence and nutrition.

The fall season is a playground for developers, a time to experiment and redefine what pumpkin can be. As we continue to embrace this beloved autumn flavor, the potential for innovation is boundless. Pumpkin stands as a testament to the idea that with a touch of creativity, even the most traditional flavors can be transformed into something entirely new and exciting.



TRENDS

*TRENDS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN NEW FOOD PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT BY GUIDING INNOVATION AND
ENSURING PRODUCTS MEET CONSUMER DEMANDS.*



TRENDS ARE A JOURNEY



As a product developer, seeing the products I helped create on the shelf is one of the most rewarding experiences. The journey from trends, to concept to completion is an unforgettable adventure, filled with excitement and satisfaction. Each product represents a piece of creativity and hard work, making the entire development process truly fulfilling.

Food and beverage trends evolve constantly, influenced by changing consumer preferences, health awareness, and cultural shifts. For marketers and developers, these trends offer opportunities and challenges. Understanding trends like functional foods is crucial. Marketers craft narratives that resonate with consumers, while developers create appealing, feasible, and scalable products.

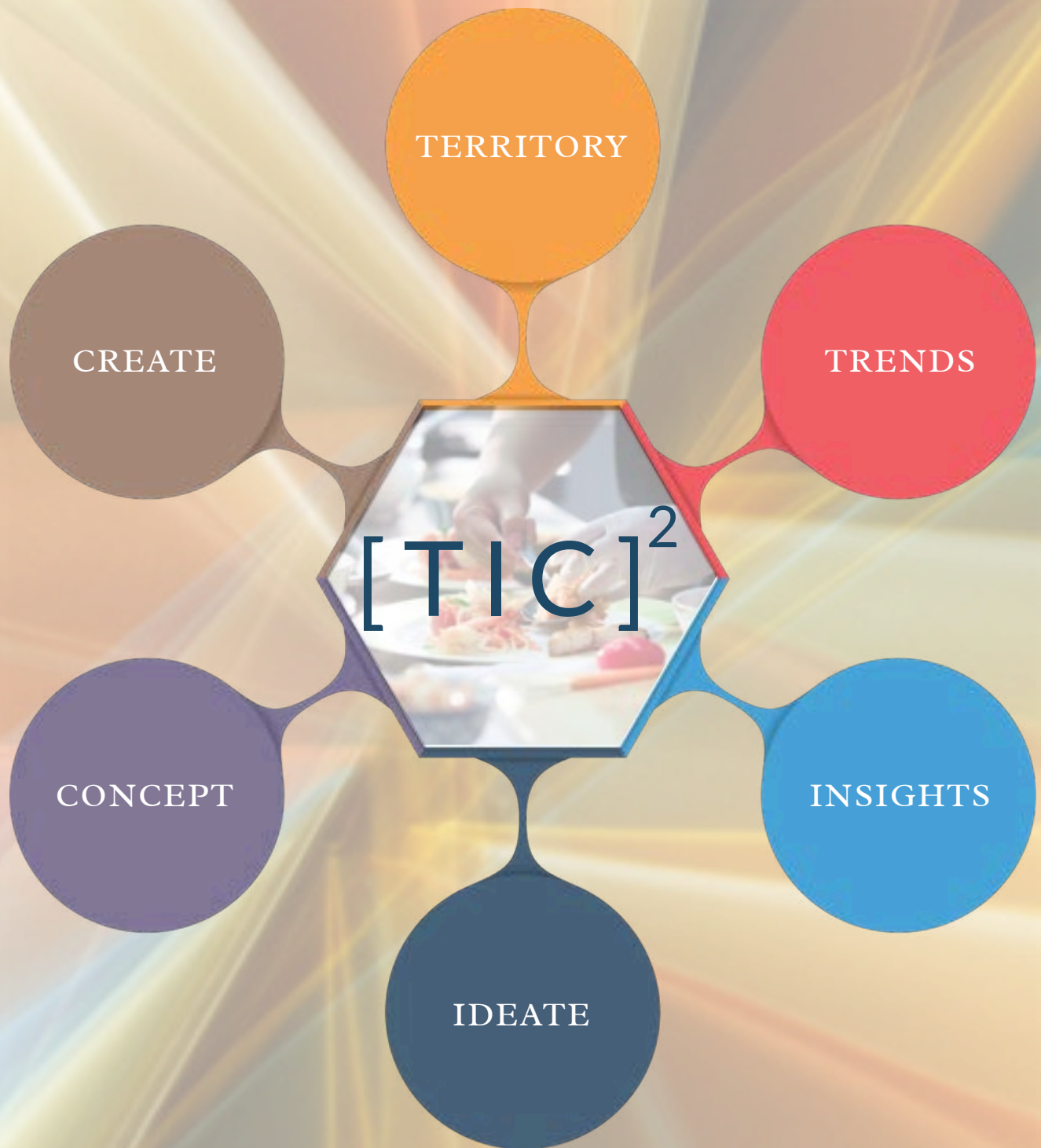
Success requires continuous research, experimentation, and adaptation. Marketers use data analytics and social media insights for targeted campaigns. Developers work with scientists and nutritionists to innovate products aligning with market trends.

Collaboration between marketing and development is vital. Open communication and a shared vision help companies respond to trends and deliver captivating products. Agility and creativity are essential to remain relevant in this competitive, ever-changing industry.

Developing food and beverages is a rewarding experience. We always prioritize consumer demands and ensure the highest standards of food safety.



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The Trend-Spotting Framework Behind Food & Beverage's Biggest Calls

PROVIDED BY DATASSENTIAL

Every R&D team has faced the same 2 a.m. question: is this the next big flavor trend, or the next fad that fizzles out before the ink dries on the new menus? Getting that call right, and getting it early, can mean the difference between owning a category before competitors notice and chasing it once the moment has already passed.

Datassential has built its reputation on calling food and beverage trends early and correctly, often years ahead of the mainstream. The company's new Trend or Fad? report lays out the framework behind that track record: a practical checklist for separating foods and beverages with real staying power from the ones that are mostly hype.

A true trend, according to Datassential experts, experiences steady growth over time, rather than a spike-and-crash pattern; ties into a larger consumer or industry need; works across dayparts and categories; and keeps finding new life well into later stages of the Menu Adoption Cycle. A fad, by contrast, tends to be social media-driven; hard to scale; or simply too niche or polarizing. The catch is that fads are not always dismissible. Dalgona coffee never became a menu staple, but it pointed to the broader foam and texture-forward beverage trends that followed and are ongoing. Watching fads closely is often how the next real trend gets spotted first.



We called it...

At Datassential, we're known for our accuracy in predicting trends. It's all powered by our best-in-class AI with 98% accuracy predicting up to 4 years of menu penetration due to millions of menu items and 10 years of consistent coding. See below for a few of the larger food, flavor, beverage, and broader industry trends Datassential called early on in their life cycle. Imagine what you could have done if you had known gochujang, for instance, was going to be big from the jump.



An example of Datassential's trend prediction framework in action: Gochujang (sweet and spicy paste that is a staple seasoning sauce in Korean cuisine) was only on 1% of U.S. restaurant menus back in 2017 and has since climbed to 3%. It's also predicted to grow another 43% on menus over the next 4 years. Hojicha (a type of Japanese green tea originating from Kyoto made from bancha tea leaves that have been roasted at a high temperature) is following a similar path: 30% of consumers were interested in trying it in 2024, and by 2026 it's "on fire" in Datassential's Consumer Preferences platform, meaning consumer awareness is rising fast. Birria also went from appearing on only 0.8% of menus in 2021 to 4% in 2026, with 79% of consumers who have tried it saying they love or like it (Datassential Consumer Preference).

Datassential's most recent Fall & Winter Trends webinar puts that same framework to work on the season directly ahead. Consumer interest in fall LTOs is at 61%, the highest of any season, with butternut squash leading the fall savory item index ahead of stuffing and cranberry sauce on fall 2025 chain menus. Datassential experts also featured a trend worth watching closely: pumpkin spice launches are happening primarily at the end of summer, not in the fall. August accounted for 30 major chain launches in 2024, 31 in 2025, and 69 in 2026, while October and November have nearly emptied out. Pumpkin spice is not fading. It is simply maturing, and brands that wait until September to launch are increasingly showing up after the party has already started.

“Consumer interest in fall LTOs is at 61%, the highest of any season, with butternut squash leading the fall savory item index...”



“Pumpkin spice is not fading. It is simply maturing...”





Consumer interest in winter LTOs, on the other hand, is at 51%, and Cajun and bourbon were at the top of the season's savory flavor index for major chains in winter 2025. The bigger signal, though, is protein: When thinking about their health in 2026, 52% of consumers said increasing protein intake was important to them — and protein ranked among the top-indexing sweet flavors on winter 2025 chain menus.

Whether you're looking to build out seasonal menus or planning innovation strategies for 2027 and beyond, Datassential's AI-powered food and beverage intelligence can help you predict and create what's next through data-driven validation before you commit menu real estate, shelf space, or marketing dollars.

Want all the insights?
Get the full Trend or Fad? report - Scan here!



And stay tuned! Join Datassential's 2027 Trends Event, held November 12, 2026 at 12 pm C.T., part of the monthly Simply Smarter webinar series, where the team will go deeper into the must-know foods, flavors, formats, and beverages to know for the years ahead.

About Datassential

The Global Authority in Food & Beverage Intelligence

Datassential is the global authority for food and beverage intelligence, helping brands, operators, and retailers make confident decisions in a complex and fast-changing industry. Founded in 2001, the company delivers trusted food intelligence through its all-in-one platform, Datassential One, which brings together menu, consumer, and sales intelligence alongside AI-powered analysis. More than 90% of the leading foodservice and consumer packaged goods companies rely on Datassential to understand market change and stay ahead of what's next.





DATAESSENTIAL

2027 Trends Event

**Discover the must-know foods,
flavors, and beverages for 2027
and beyond.**

November 12, 2026

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Meal Ready

The Rise of Meal-Ready Solutions: Convenience Meets Health and Diversity

In today's fast-paced world, time is a precious commodity, and for many, the daily ritual of preparing a meal from scratch is a luxury they can rarely afford. Enter meal-ready solutions—a booming industry that offers a simple answer to the complexities of modern living. From ready-to-cook, ready-to-eat, to ready-to-assemble meals, these solutions are reshaping the way we think about food preparation, consumption, and lifestyle.

The Convenience Factor

The appeal of meal-ready solutions lies primarily in their convenience. As more people juggle demanding work schedules, family responsibilities, and social commitments, the need for quick and easy meal options has never been greater. According to a report by Market Research Future, the global meal kit delivery services market size is projected to reach USD 20 billion by 2025 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.0% from 2025 to 2030. Companies like HEB with their Meal Simple range and subscription services like Factor have tapped into this demand by providing meals that require minimal preparation time.

HEB's Meal Simple offers a variety of ready-to-cook meals that are designed to be both delicious and time-efficient. From marinated meats to pre-seasoned vegetables, these offerings allow consumers to enjoy a home-cooked meal without the hassle of planning and preparation. Similarly, Factor delivers fresh, dietitian-designed meals directly to consumers' doors, catering specifically to those seeking healthy, ready-to-eat options.

Catering to Health-Conscious Consumers

A significant trend within the meal-ready industry is the growing emphasis on health and wellness. As consumers become more health-conscious, the demand for meals that align with specific dietary preferences and restrictions has surged. Data from the National Restaurant Association indicates that by 2026, 40% of U.S. consumers will consider health the most important factor when purchasing food products. Whether it's gluten-free, keto, vegan, or paleo, meal-ready solutions are increasingly tailored to meet these diverse dietary needs.

Factor, for instance, offers a variety of meal plans focusing on different health goals, such as weight loss or increased energy. Their meals are crafted to be nutritionally balanced and use high-quality ingredients, appealing to those who prioritize health in their dietary choices. This focus on healthy options is a critical factor driving the growth of the meal-ready industry, as consumers are no longer willing to sacrifice nutrition for convenience.

“Commissaries allow for centralized production...”



“This focus on healthy options is a critical factor driving the growth of the meal-ready industry...”

Regional Opportunities and Expansion

The meal-ready industry is not only growing in urban centers but is also expanding into regional markets. This growth is facilitated by the use of commissaries—large-scale kitchens where meals are prepared and then distributed to various grocery stores and outlets. Commissaries allow for centralized production, ensuring consistency in quality and taste while reducing costs.

This model opens up regional opportunities, allowing companies to reach consumers in areas where traditional meal prep services may not be feasible. By leveraging commissaries, businesses can efficiently supply a wide range of meal solutions to grocery chains across different regions, catering to local tastes and preferences.

The Subscription Surge

Another driving force behind the meal-ready trend is the rise of subscription services. Subscriptions offer a seamless experience with meals curated to individual tastes and delivered regularly. This model not only provides convenience but also adds an element of personalization that attracts consumers.



Factor's subscription service, for example, allows customers to select meals based on dietary preferences and receive them weekly. This approach eliminates the guesswork in meal planning, allowing people to enjoy diverse and healthy meals without stepping foot in a grocery store.

Future Trends and Innovations

Looking ahead, the meal-ready industry shows no signs of slowing down. Innovations in packaging, such as eco-friendly materials and improved shelf life, are likely to enhance the appeal of these solutions further. Additionally, as technology evolves, we can expect more personalized meal options, possibly incorporating AI and machine learning to predict and cater to individual dietary needs and taste preferences.

As consumers continue to prioritize sustainability and ethical sourcing, meal-ready companies will need to adapt by ensuring transparency in their supply chains and sourcing practices. This shift not only aligns with consumer values but also presents an opportunity for brands to differentiate themselves in a crowded market.

Conclusion

The meal-ready industry is a testament to the changing dynamics of consumer lifestyles and preferences. With a focus on convenience, health, and personalization, these solutions provide a practical alternative to traditional meal preparation. As companies continue to innovate and expand their offerings, meal-ready solutions are poised to become an integral part of our daily lives, seamlessly blending

“The meal-ready industry is a testament to the changing dynamics of consumer lifestyles and preference.”

the demand for speed with the desire for quality and nutrition. Whether it's a busy professional looking for a quick dinner or a health-conscious individual seeking tailored meal plans, the future of dining is indeed ready—meal-ready.

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— Trends

Layers

The Art of Layers



The Art of Layers: A Trend Transforming Culinary Creations:

In the ever-evolving world of gastronomy, trends emerge that redefine how we experience food. One such compelling trend is the art of layers, which has transcended the realm of desserts and permeated into entrées, taking center stage in kitchens worldwide. The concept of layering, with its focus on texture and flavor, has become a hallmark of modern culinary innovation, offering a multi-sensory dining experience that captivates both the palate and the eye.

Dessert Layers: A Symphony of Sweetness

The fascination with layers in desserts is not new, but recent trends have pushed the boundaries of creativity and taste. From the classic mille-feuille to the more contemporary tiramisu, the structure of layered desserts allows for a delightful interplay of flavors and textures. Each layer can introduce a new dimension—be it a burst of sweetness, a hint of bitterness, or a touch of tartness.

Textures play a crucial role in layered desserts, where contrasts are key. Consider the modern-day trifle: the softness of sponge cake juxtaposed with the smoothness of custard, the freshness of fruit, and the crunch of nuts or biscuits. The textural diversity not only enhances the eating experience but also elevates the flavors, allowing each element to shine while contributing to a cohesive whole.

“Textures play a crucial role in layered desserts, where contrasts are key...”

“...layering is about orchestrating flavors and textures in a harmonious balance...”

Flavor layering in desserts often involves the strategic use of complementary and contrasting elements. Classic combinations like chocolate and hazelnut or lemon and raspberry have been taken to new heights with the use of exotic ingredients such as yuzu or matcha, adding complexity and intrigue to traditional profiles.

Entrée Layers: The New Culinary Canvas

While layering is a familiar concept in desserts, it has recently gained popularity in savory dishes, transforming the way we perceive entrées. Chefs are embracing layers as a means to build depth and intrigue in dishes, merging diverse ingredients and techniques to create something extraordinary.

In the realm of savory foods, layering is about orchestrating flavors and textures in a harmonious balance. Take, for instance, the modern lasagna. Beyond the basic components of pasta, meat, and cheese, today's chefs might incorporate roasted vegetables, béchamel sauces infused with truffle oil, or layers of spicy sausage to add complexity and excitement.

Texture is just as pivotal in savory layers. A perfectly constructed lasagna will feature the silky smoothness of cheese and sauce, the al dente bite of pasta, and the tender richness of a slow-cooked ragu. This interplay of textures ensures that each bite is a unique experience, engaging the senses and providing satisfaction on multiple levels.

Global Inspirations and Innovations

The trend of layers in both desserts and entrées is not confined by geography; it is a global phenomenon that draws inspiration from diverse culinary traditions. Consider the Turkish baklava, a dessert that showcases layers of flaky pastry, nuts, and honey. This age-old treat has inspired variations across the globe, with chefs experimenting with different nuts, spices, and even savory versions.

Similarly, the French terrine—a dish traditionally made with layers of meat or fish—has seen modern interpretations that incorporate vegetables, herbs, and even fruit. These innovations reflect a broader trend of breaking down boundaries between sweet and savory, leading to dishes that challenge conventional perceptions of flavor.

“Understanding the science behind layering is crucial...”

The Science Behind Layering

Understanding the science behind layering is crucial for chefs aspiring to master this trend. Layers in food serve not only to create visual appeal but also to enhance the sensory experience. The order in which ingredients are layered can significantly impact the perception of flavors and textures. For instance, placing a crunchy element between two soft layers can elevate the dish by adding an unexpected textural contrast.



*“The trend of layers
in culinary arts is a
testament to the
constant evolution of
food.”*

The temperature and density of layers are critical considerations. A hot layer nestled within cooler components can create a thermal contrast that accentuates the flavors and textures, while the density of each layer affects how flavors meld or remain distinct.

The Future of Layers in Culinary Arts

As chefs continue to experiment with layers, the possibilities seem endless. The trend shows no signs of waning, with new innovations emerging regularly. Molecular gastronomy, for instance, has opened up new avenues for creating layers that defy conventional expectations, such as using gels, foams, and emulsions to build intricate, flavorful structures.

The trend of layers in culinary arts is a testament to the constant evolution of food. Whether in a delicate dessert or a robust entrée, layers offer a canvas for chefs to explore and express their creativity, resulting in dishes that are as exciting to eat as they are to behold. As we look to the future, the art of layers promises to remain at the forefront of culinary innovation, continually reshaping our dining experiences.



— Trends

THE TRENDS SHAPING THE NEXT MEAT PRODUCT

Christi Calhoun, Ph.D.

*Scientific Communications Resource Officer
American Meat Science Association*



Food trends often appear as consumer language: protein-packed, simple ingredients, ready in minutes or restaurant-inspired. Behind each phrase is a product-development challenge. Consumers do not experience nutrition, preparation and eating quality separately; they experience one bite. The opportunity is to design the complete product with that bite in mind.

Protein demand continues to grow. The 2025 IFIC protein survey found that one in three Americans increased intake, eight in ten prioritized protein during at least one daily eating occasion, and meat, eggs and seafood were preferred sources. Taste and price remained the leading choice factors. The opportunity is protein that delivers value and a satisfying eating experience.





convenience performance

Nutrition guidance makes the opportunity more specific. The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines frame 1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily as a minimum range expected to meet most needs, with individual needs potentially higher, while keeping saturated fat below 10% of calories. Many fresh meat cuts and appropriately formulated meat products fit that criteria, providing complete, highly digestible protein along with iron, zinc, vitamin B12 and more, in portions consumers already know and enjoy.

Ingredient familiarity also matters, but simplicity is not just a shorter list. Salt contributes flavor, protein functionality and preservation. Other ingredients support water binding, color stability, microbial safety or texture. Removing one can change how a product processes, cooks, reheats and tastes. Reformulation begins by identifying the function to replace, then considering formulation, process, packaging and preparation together.

Discussion around highly processed foods is making processing more visible. Grinding, curing, cooking, fermentation, freezing and packaging create flavor, tenderness and convenience while supporting safety and shelf life. The question is whether each process delivers a useful, explainable benefit.

Convenience is becoming more culinary. Consumers want less preparation but still expect aroma, browning, juiciness and fresh-prepared texture. Fully cooked and air-fryer-ready formats succeed only if they perform from opening through reheating and the final bite.

Flavor remains the invitation. Global profiles, regional barbecue traditions and updated comfort foods can make familiar proteins feel new. Yet cut, fat level, cooking and reheating still determine how spices bloom and whether flavor remains balanced.

strongest concept

Texture preference has more structure than a tender-versus-tough scale. One study identified four Mouth Behavior® groups: “chewers” seek continued chewing; “crunchers” prefer forceful biting and fracture; “smooshers” press food between the tongue and palate; and “suckers” hold food to release flavor and moisture. A later ground-beef study found that these groups responded differently to patties varying in fat level, processing method, firmness, cohesiveness, juiciness and chewiness. The implication is practical: developers cannot design around one assumed consumer preference. Liking and acceptance are highly individualized, and the choice of one food, meat cut or product over another may partly reflect how well its texture fits a person’s preferred Mouth Behavior®.

Savvy product developers have long understood that no single measure tells the whole story. What continues to evolve is the number and precision of tools in a developer’s “toolbox”. Consumer acceptance shows whether diners like a product, descriptive analysis identifies which attributes changed, and slice shear force or texture profile analysis quantifies physical differences. The 2026 AMSA Research Guidelines for Cookery, Sensory Evaluation, and Instrumental Tenderness Measurements of Meat provide common procedures for sample preparation and cooking, holding and serving, test selection, and texture measurement. Using the same documented conditions, including endpoint temperature, holding time, sample dimensions and test settings, makes it possible to compare results among processing plants, laboratories and development rounds. Consistency turns individual tests into evidence a team can use.

Nutrition guidance, label information and ingredient concerns will continue to influence product briefs, but they are design inputs rather than the finished product. Meat science helps developers respond without losing safety, functionality, shelf life or eating quality.

The strongest concepts will unite nutrient density, understandable ingredients, purposeful processing, convenience and a memorable eating experience. That is where culinary creativity and meat science do their best work.

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The American Meat Science Association (AMSA) is a professional association dedicated to advancing the science of meat and animal protein through research, education, and collaboration across academia, industry, and government. Learn more at meatscience.org and explore technical resources at [The Meat Locker](#)



Learn more at meatscience.org and explore technical resources at themeatlocker.org.

Braising

Fall, a perfect time
for braising!





A time for braising...

Braising is returning to the forefront of autumn dining, evolving from a traditional slow-cooking method into one of the most exciting, globally influenced culinary movements of 2025 and 2026. As temperatures drop, both home cooks and restaurant chefs are dusting off heavy Dutch ovens to coax rich textures and complex aromatics out of humble meats and seasonal fall produce.

Why Fall Is the Perfect Time of Year for Braising

Autumn provides the ultimate natural setting for low-and-slow cooking. During summer, keeping an oven running at 300°F (150°C) for several hours is unappealing. In contrast, crisp autumn air invites the radiant warmth of an oven and the comforting aromas of simmering aromatics.

Culinary braising combines initial dry-heat browning with gentle, slow simmering inside a sealed vessel. This process breaks down stubborn collagen into gelatin, converting tough connective tissues into a velvety, spoon-coating sauce. Fall harvest crops naturally align with this method: robust root vegetables, dense brassicas, and hearty squashes thrive under slow braising, providing comforting meals precisely when diners crave warmth.

Recent Trends in Braising

Braising has shifted considerably over 2025 and 2026, shaped by new flavor forecasts, sustainability priorities, and a taste for bold global ingredients:

- Layered Heat and "Swicy" Profiles: The Institute of Food Technologists highlights the rapid growth of layered sweet-heat ("swicy") combinations. Pairing tart fruit reductions like orchard apple cider or pomegranate molasses with fermented pastes such as gochujang, Calabrian chile, or harissa has replaced simple, one-dimensional pan gravies.
- Preserved and Fermented Braising Liquids: According to recent culinary reporting by MICHELIN Guide Inspectors, fermented elements are defining modern savory cooking. Braising broths spiked with koji, white miso, black vinegar, and aged soy sauces build deep umami without relying on heavy doses of butter or cream.
- Heritage Cuts and the Return of Red Meat: Food & Wine's 2026 Trend Analysis points to renewed consumer demand for whole-muscle cuts, heritage pork, and lamb shanks. Cooks are seeking out nutrient-dense, bone-in cuts that reward patience over fast-cooking, lean proteins.





- **Vegetables as Centerpiece Braises:** Plant-forward dining has evolved beyond processed meat substitutes into celebrating whole produce. Sturdy brassicas and whole root vegetables are cooked with the same care as traditional pot roasts, yielding luxurious main dishes.

Best Cuts of Meat for Braising

Braising demands cuts loaded with collagen, connective tissues, and marbling. Lean meats quickly dry out, while tougher cuts become fork-tender:

- **Beef Short Ribs & Chuck Roast:** The gold standard of braising. Bone-in short ribs melt into rich, silky portions, while chuck roast yields tender shreds suitable for autumnal ragùs.
- **Lamb Shanks & Neck:** Naturally earthy, lamb shanks turn tender as their marrow and collagen enrich the cooking liquid, matching well with Mediterranean herbs and warm spices.
- **Pork Shoulder (Boston Butt):** Generous marbling keeps pork shoulder moist throughout a long simmer, making it ideal for cider braises or savory fall tacos.

“Beef Short Ribs & Chuck Roast: The gold standard of braising...”

- **Bone-In Chicken Thighs & Duck Legs:** For a quicker braise under an hour, dark-meat poultry delivers rich pan drippings without turning stringy.

Best Vegetables to Braise

Dense, fibrous vegetables that hold their structure under prolonged heat yield the best results:

- **Root Vegetables (Parsnips, Carrots, Celery Root):** Autumn roots soften gradually, soaking up seasoned broth without turning mushy.
- **Dense Brassicas (Green Cabbage, Endive, Radicchio):** Cabbage wedges and whole endives mellow dramatically when braised, exchanging sharp bitterness for sweet, savory depth.
- **Fennel Bulbs:** Braised fennel sheds its raw anise bite, transforming into a silky, mellow vegetable that cuts through fatty meats.

- **Hearty Mushrooms (King Oyster & Maitake):** Meaty mushrooms absorb savory broths like sponges, offering a rich texture and earthy aroma.

“...braising captures the very spirit of autumn...”

Emerging Fall Flavor Trends

To modernize your autumn pot, consider these trending flavor combinations:

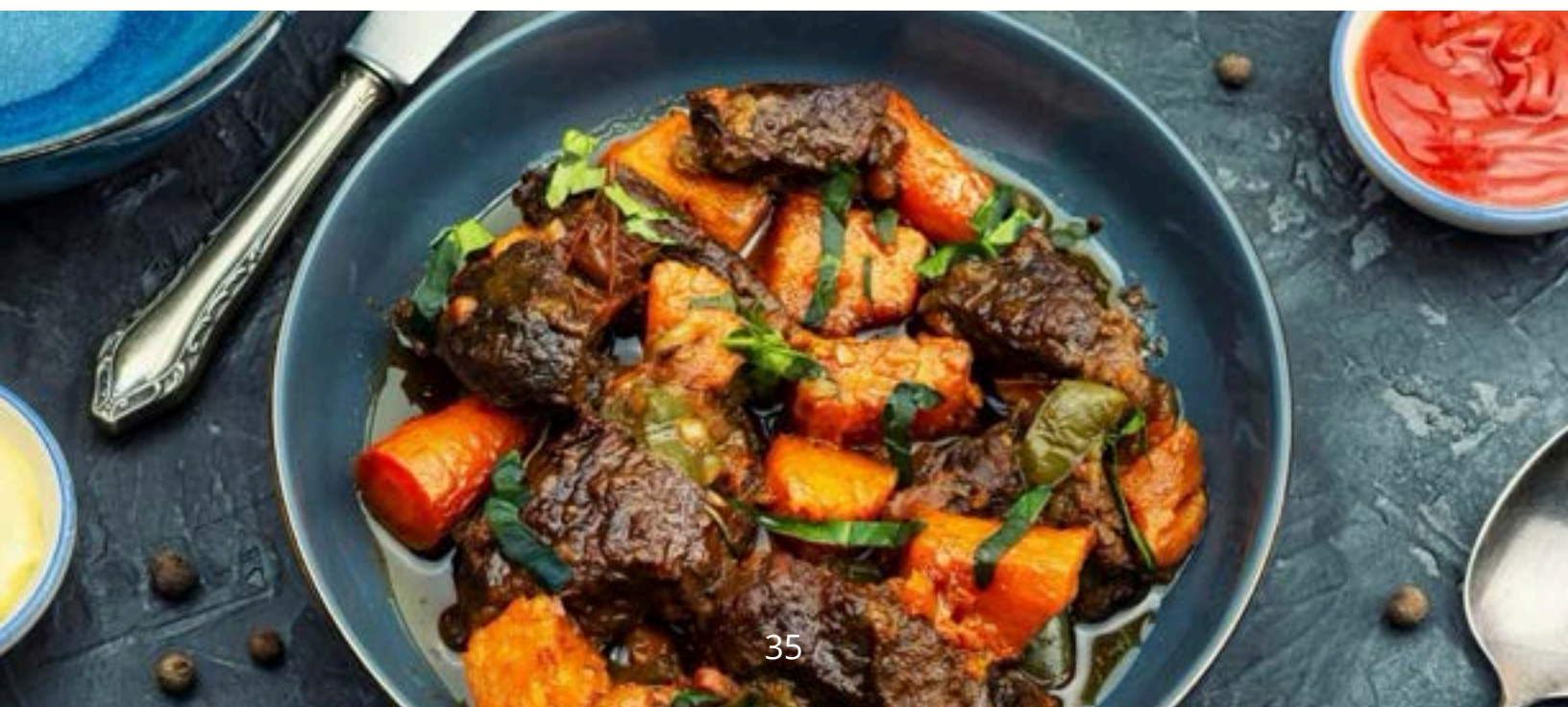
- **Brown Butter & Orchard Cider:** Deglazing fond with crisp hard cider and finishing the sauce with nutty browned butter yields an irresistible glaze for chicken or pork.
- **Miso & Smoked Garlic:** Stirring fermented miso into aromatic broths injects modern savory complexity into classic pot roasts.
- **Warm Woodsy Spices:** Accents of cracked allspice, star anise, smoked cinnamon, and toasted coriander add fragrance to long-simmering fall stews.

Embracing the Ritual of the Autumn Braise

Ultimately, braising captures the very spirit of autumn dining by turning simple, deliberate kitchen patience into culinary comfort. By blending time-honored slow-cooking principles with modern innovations—such as pungent fermented broths, balanced heat profiles, and plant-forward centerpieces—this classic technique remains as vital in 2026 as ever. As the crisp weather settles in, filling your home with the lingering, aromatic depth of a gently simmering pot is more than just dinner preparation; it is a seasonal tradition that celebrates rich harvest flavors and slow, nourishing food at its absolute finest.

References

- *Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), Outlook 2026: Flavor Trends (2026).*
- *MICHELIN Guide, 7 Big Food Trends of 2026, According to Our Inspectors (2026).*
- *Food & Wine, 2026 Food Trends May Bring Back Red Meat, Blue Drinks, and Big Flavors (2025/2026).*



INSIGHTS

*A DYNAMIC APPROACH THAT SPARKS
INNOVATION AND FRESH CULINARY CONCEPTS.*



The best way to predict the future is to understand the data...

INSIGHTS DRIVE BRAND DEVELOPMENT & IMPACT.

WHY IT MATTERS

FALL 2026 FOOD AND BEVERAGE LANDSCAPE IS DEFINED BY A DISTINCT SHIFT TOWARD FUNCTIONAL WELLNESS, COMFORT HERITAGE, "SWAVORY" FLAVOR PROFILES, AND RELAXED SOCIAL SETTINGS.

DINING, SOCIAL, & BEVERAGE TRENDS



RELAXED SOCIABILITY & "THIRD SPACES"

Formal, nighttime gatherings are giving way to more casual, flexible daytime socialization.

Reference: [Innova Market Insights Global Trends](#)



THE ALCOHOL-FREE BOOM

Driven largely by younger generations balancing wellness with social enjoyment.

Reference: [Finn Partners F&B Report](#)



"SLOW BURN" INGREDIENTS

Several unique items are steadily picking up long-term momentum this season: Limoncello, Orgeat, Nopales

Reference: [Datassential 2026 Food & Beverage Trends](#)

RETRO REJUVENATION & ANCESTRAL PRACTICES:



In a fast-paced world, consumers are seeking comfort in trusted traditions.



Brands acting as "cultural custodians" by using heritage ingredients, ancient medicines, and ancestral practices like fermentation and seasonal eating are highly respected.

Reference: [Mintel 2026 Global Food & Drink Predictions](#)

Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of food.

PUMPKIN AT A GLANCE



The "LTO" Foot-Traffic Surge

Placer.ai data tracked by Restaurant Business noted that launch of 2026 Starbucks fall lineup drove a 25.7% spike in foot traffic over last year



The "Impulse Buy" Anchor

Pumpkin functions as a high-margin impulse trigger. Market research shows 42.5% of pumpkin-flavored purchases are unplanned.



"Summer-Creep" Extensions

Foodservice is successfully engineering a longer autumn sales window. By launching pumpkin menus earlier each year (mid-to-late August)

START TODAY

Checklist for Identifying Food and Beverage Insights

- Market Trends: Track current trends and preferences to spot emerging consumption patterns.
- Competitor Analysis: Evaluate competitors to find successful strategies and potential opportunities.
- Customer Feedback: Review feedback and ratings to understand product satisfaction and improvement areas.
- Sales Data: Identify top products and demand shifts through sales analysis.
- Innovation Tracking: Monitor new products and innovations to assess their market impact.

Insights lead to success

The "Swavory" Flavor Forward: Traditional flavor boundaries continue to blur. Menus and product launches are dominating with sweet-meets-savory ("swavory") profiles, such as miso caramel, tahini soft serve, and chili glazes.

Reference: [Gordon Food Service \(GFS\) 2026 Forecast](#)

Menu Matters

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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.



FALL IN LOVE WITH PUMPKIN AGAIN: 5 FLAVOR IDEAS FOR THE MENU

Maeve Webster, President
Mike Kostyo, Vice President
Menu Matters

Pumpkin spice is an annual fall favorite at this point. It has a loyal group of super fans who count down to its return every year, and it's become part of the seasonal lexicon, much like peppermint in the winter.

It's also big business. NielsenIQ reported that U.S. sales of pumpkin spice-flavored products reached \$802.5 million in the 52 weeks ending July 2023. But like any flavor, particularly now, when we tend to go overboard on every trend (just try to find a coffee menu without banana on it this year), pumpkin could use some fresh ideas.

And there are signs people are ready for them. Pumpkin spice appears to be plateauing on menus and retail shelves. McDonald's didn't add a pumpkin spice latte to the fall menu at all this year, the first time in a decade.

To shake up their offerings, many chains are pairing pumpkin with flavors like chai, matcha, marshmallow, and every flavor of cold foam imaginable. Others are turning to fruit instead. Fall menus now launch in August, when it's still hot out, so fruit flavors like apple and cranberry work well in iced drinks. They're showing up on fall menus alongside pumpkin, and in some cases in place of it.



At Menu Matters, we look at a flavor like pumpkin through both a culinary lens and a data lens. What are chefs cooking? What does our research say people want? And what's moving in neighboring categories that could spill over?

So where does pumpkin go from here? Here are five ideas for keeping it interesting on the menu:

1. Take pumpkin savory, focus on the seeds, and pair it with peppers. Pumpkin has deep roots in Mexican cooking, where it shows up in far more than dessert. Pipián, a mole thickened with ground pumpkin seeds, is a natural place to start, and it puts the seed to work as a sauce base instead of a garnish. Picture a pumpkin mole with ancho and toasted pepitas over roasted pork, a pumpkin-seed salsa macha on squash tacos, or a pepita “tahini” spread under charred wedges of squash. Chile heat also cuts through the sweetness that makes so many pumpkin items feel cloying.

Example: Empellón in New York pairs pumpkin seed cappelletti with achiote and honeynut squash juice.

2. Use classic pumpkin dishes as a flavor system. We've all seen a pumpkin spice latte, but what does a pumpkin bread latte look like? Baked-good references are all over beverage menus right now (banana bread is the obvious one this year), and pumpkin has plenty of classic dishes to borrow from. And those dishes can be broken into parts that travel across the menu. Take a pumpkin roll, the spiced cake rolled around cream cheese filling. The cake could become a crumble on top of a latte, the filling could become a cold foam over cold brew, and the whole thing could be baked into a breakfast pastry. Pumpkin pie works the same way, with the spiced custard as a shake base and the crust as a crunchy topping, finished with a torched meringue. In short, a single dish can turn into a whole family of menu items.

Example: Gusto Bread, the Long Beach, California, panadería, has served a Calabaza en Tacha Latte made with heirloom calabaza slow-braised in piloncillo, and it has used the same candied pumpkin to fill its turnovers.



3. Call out the squash. Most canned pumpkin in the U.S. comes from the Dickinson pumpkin, a type of squash more closely related to butternut than to the field pumpkins we carve for Halloween. The line between pumpkin and squash is blurrier than most people realize, so there's no need to stop at pumpkin. Honeynut, developed by Cornell plant breeder Michael Mazourek and chef Dan Barber, is a smaller, denser take on butternut that gets sweeter as it roasts. Kabocha, delicata, and koginut each bring their own texture and sweetness. A honeynut pie, a kabocha custard, or a delicata doughnut gives guests something new to try, and naming the variety adds the kind of provenance cue people already look for in coffee origins and wine regions.

Example: Vicia in St. Louis turned delicata into an éclair-style dessert filled with popcorn pastry cream, taking advantage of the squash's very sweet flesh and fully edible skin.

4. Change the texture and technique. Pumpkin usually shows up as a smooth purée. But look at what's happening with potatoes, which get roasted, puréed, and creamed in many of the same ways. Chefs are parboiling potatoes and then smashing and roasting them hard for crackly edges and a creamy center, or ricing and sieving them for an ultra-smooth mash. Pumpkin can follow the same path: twice-cooked pumpkin wedges with crisp edges, a roasted pumpkin slab under a brittle seed crust, or smoked and charred pumpkin. Fermentation is another opportunity. Pumpkin kimchi has a place in Korean cooking, but fermented pumpkin hasn't made it onto many U.S. menus yet. And one batch of roasted pumpkin can have a second life as a savory waffle, a dumpling filling, or a flatbread, the way leftover mashed potatoes turn into pancakes.

Example: BATA in Tucson makes house misos from squash.



5. Borrow from global pumpkin traditions. Other cultures have been using pumpkin in ways we still haven't adopted here. In Austria and Slovenia, dark green pumpkin seed oil is a prized ingredient, and it's often drizzled over vanilla ice cream for a nutty finish. In Turkey, kabak tatlısı is pumpkin cooked in sugar and topped with tahini and walnuts. Thailand's sangkhaya fak thong is coconut custard steamed inside a whole kabocha. Korea has hobakjuk, a sweet pumpkin porridge. Peru has picarones, squash and sweet potato doughnuts in a spiced syrup. And Afghan kaddo borani pairs sweet braised pumpkin with garlicky yogurt. Any of these could inspire a new combination: pumpkin with tahini and walnut, pumpkin with coconut and pandan, or pumpkin with yogurt, garlic, and mint.

Example: Ice Cream Window in Ridgewood, Queens, blends Styrian pumpkin seed oil and pine nuts into its ice cream base, a flavor it created for the neighborhood's longtime Central European families.

Bonus: Skip pumpkin and create your own lane. Here's one more option: you don't have to do pumpkin at all. Pumpkin spice started as a single seasonal latte back in 2003 and grew into its own category. The next flavor like it will probably come from a brand that picks an ingredient with similar qualities: a clear tie to the season, a bit of nostalgia, an attractive color, and the flexibility to work hot or iced, sweet or savory. Sweet potato, chestnut, persimmon, maple, black walnut, and quince could all fit that description, and each has room to grow on U.S. menus.

Example: Honolulu Coffee in Vancouver gave pumpkin a break last fall, launching a Sweet Potato Latte and a Chestnut Cinnamon Latte inspired by roasting chestnuts and making sweet potato desserts at home.

The menus that keep fall interesting will probably be the ones that give customers somewhere new to go after that first pumpkin spice latte of the season, whether that's a savory dish with some heat, a named squash, a crisp new texture, a flavor borrowed from another country's kitchen, or a seasonal favorite of your own.

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*Menu Matters is a consulting firm that pairs culinary expertise with consumer research, data, and trend analysis to deliver human-centric solutions for the food industry.
Learn more at menumatters.com.*

AI

THE GOOD THE BAD THE UGLY

IT'S HERE, AND YES THIS ARTICLE HAD HELP FROM AI...

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the food and beverage industry, offering a range of benefits while also presenting significant challenges. From enhancing efficiency in production to personalizing consumer experiences, AI holds the potential to transform how food is produced, processed, and delivered. However, as with any technology, there are both positive aspects and drawbacks that need to be considered carefully.

The Good

AI-driven innovations have brought significant improvements in the food and beverage industry. One of the most notable benefits is the optimization of supply chain logistics. AI algorithms can predict demand more accurately, helping companies reduce waste and manage inventory more effectively. For example, machine learning models analyze historical sales data and external factors like weather patterns to forecast future demand. This leads to more efficient resource allocation, minimizing both costs and environmental impact.

Another significant advantage is in quality control. AI systems equipped with computer vision can inspect products more quickly and accurately than human workers. These systems can detect defects, ensure consistency, and maintain high standards, thus enhancing product quality and safety. Additionally, AI facilitates innovation in product development. By analyzing consumer preferences and market trends, AI can help companies create new flavors and products tailored to specific tastes, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction.

AI also plays a crucial role in personalized marketing strategies. By analyzing consumer data, companies can tailor their offerings to meet individual preferences, thereby improving customer engagement and loyalty. This level of personalization was previously unattainable with traditional marketing methods.

*“By analyzing consumer data,
companies can tailor their offerings to
meet individual preferences...”*

The Bad

Despite its benefits, AI also poses certain risks and challenges. One major concern is the potential for job displacement. As AI systems become more capable, there is a risk that jobs traditionally held by human workers may be automated. While AI can perform repetitive tasks more efficiently, it can lead to reduced employment opportunities in certain sectors.

Another challenge is the high cost of implementing AI technology. Smaller companies may struggle to afford the initial investment required for AI systems, potentially widening the gap between large corporations and small businesses. Additionally, the complexity of AI systems requires skilled personnel to manage and maintain them, which can further increase operational costs.



“AI systems are only as good as the data they are trained on...”



The Ugly

The darker side of AI in the food and beverage industry involves issues related to data privacy and security. AI systems rely heavily on large datasets, often containing sensitive consumer information. Without proper regulations, there is a risk of data breaches and misuse, potentially leading to a loss of consumer trust.

Furthermore, AI systems are only as good as the data they are trained on. If AI models are fed biased or inaccurate data, they can produce flawed outcomes. This is particularly concerning in areas like quality control and consumer analytics, where faulty data can lead to significant errors and misjudgments.

Regulations and the Lack Thereof

Regulation of AI in the food and beverage industry is still in its infancy. While there are general data protection regulations like the GDPR in Europe, specific guidelines for AI's use in this industry are not well-defined. This lack of clear regulatory frameworks can lead to inconsistent standards and practices, making it challenging to ensure that AI technologies are used responsibly and ethically.

The absence of robust regulations can result in companies prioritizing profit over consumer welfare, potentially leading to exploitative practices. It is crucial for industry stakeholders and regulators to collaborate and develop comprehensive guidelines that address issues of transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI applications.



*“...poor data can
have tangible
consequences.”*

How AI Learns and the Risks of Bad Data

AI systems learn through a process called machine learning, where algorithms identify patterns and make decisions based on data inputs. Over time, AI can refine its models by continuously learning from new data. However, this process is highly dependent on the quality of the data provided. If the input data is flawed or biased, the AI system can perpetuate these errors, leading to incorrect conclusions and actions.

In the food and beverage industry, poor data can have tangible consequences. For instance, if an AI system uses outdated or inaccurate sales data, it might forecast demand incorrectly, leading to overproduction or stock shortages. Similarly, biased data could skew personalized marketing efforts, resulting in ineffective campaigns that fail to resonate with consumers.

While AI offers numerous advantages to the food and beverage industry, it also presents significant challenges that must be addressed. Balancing technological innovation with ethical considerations is crucial to ensuring AI's positive impact. As the industry continues to evolve, the establishment of clear regulations and the emphasis on data quality will be essential to harnessing AI's full potential while mitigating its risks.

IDEATE

*CREATIVE PROCESS THAT FOSTERS
INNOVATION AND BUILDING FRESH IDEAS.*



The process of ideation in food innovation begins with understanding consumer needs and current market trends. This involves gathering insights through market research, customer feedback, and industry analysis to identify gaps and opportunities. Once these insights are collected, brainstorming sessions are conducted, often with interdisciplinary teams that bring diverse perspectives to the table. This collaborative environment fosters creativity and encourages the generation of unique ideas that can address unmet needs or enhance existing products.



After generating a range of ideas, the next step involves evaluating their feasibility and potential impact. This requires assessing the practicality of each concept in terms of resources, technology, and market acceptance. Prototyping and testing are essential at this stage to refine ideas and ensure they align with consumer preferences and quality standards. Throughout the process, flexibility and adaptability are crucial, as initial ideas may evolve based on feedback and testing results, ultimately leading to innovative food products that resonate with consumers

“Throughout the process, flexibility and adaptability are crucial, as initial ideas may evolve...”

FLAVOR WITH ATTITUDE

In the realm of new product development, embracing flavors with attitude means stepping boldly into the world of spice and excitement. Spicy flavors are not just an addition; they're an adventure. They invite consumers on a journey that tingles the taste buds and ignites the senses. Imagine launching a product that doesn't just sit on the shelf but demands attention with its fiery intensity and promises an unforgettable experience from the very first bite.



**Schedule
your
[TIC]2
Session
Today**

Flavors with attitude are unapologetically bold and in your face. They challenge the conventional and push the boundaries of what a product can be. This approach to flavor development is not for the faint-hearted; it's for those who want to make a statement and leave a lasting impression.

It's about crafting a sensory experience that resonates, ensuring that the product stands out in a crowded market and captures the imagination of consumers looking for their next thrilling flavor encounter.



Global influences play a crucial role in crafting flavors that exude attitude. By incorporating exotic spices and ingredients from around the world, products can offer a passport to far-flung destinations, all from the comfort of home. This fusion of international tastes not only broadens the palette but also connects consumers to a diverse culinary landscape. It's about creating a product that speaks to the adventurous spirit of those who crave something out of the ordinary.





Flavor is more than just a taste; it's an experience that evokes emotions and memories. When flavor meets passion, it transforms into an art form, where each ingredient is carefully chosen and combined to create an unforgettable culinary masterpiece. This fusion of flavor and passion ignites creativity and innovation, inspiring chefs and food enthusiasts to push the boundaries of traditional recipes and explore new gastronomic territories.

Where Flavor Meets Passion

Understanding flavor is crucial during ideation sessions because it forms the foundation of any culinary creation. Recognizing the complexities and nuances of different flavors allows for a more informed and imaginative brainstorming process. By exploring various taste profiles, such as sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami, ideators can craft dishes that offer a balanced and harmonious experience. This understanding not only enhances the dining experience but also fosters a deeper connection between the creator and the consumer.

When passion drives the exploration of flavors, it fuels a relentless pursuit of excellence. This dedication ensures that every dish is not only delicious but also tells a story, making it memorable for those who savor it. The interplay of flavor and passion in ideation sessions inspires participants to think outside the box, leading to innovative solutions and unique culinary experiences that captivate and delight.

...flavor...



In the bustling development kitchen, a chef reflects on the early days of culinary exploration. As a young chef, there was a fascination with the endless possibilities of flavors and how they could transform a dish from ordinary to extraordinary. It became clear that flavor was not just an element of cooking; it was the essence that could evoke emotions and create unforgettable experiences for diners. This insight became the cornerstone of the chef's approach to ideation.

During the ideation phase, the chef emphasizes that flavor is the key for any new product. Understanding the balance and interplay of flavors is crucial for creating something truly unique. The creative process involves experimenting with different ingredients and combinations, always keeping in mind how each flavor will contribute to the overall experience. This meticulous attention to flavor ensures that each dish tells a story, resonating with those who savor it.

The chef often shares anecdotes from travels, where diverse flavors were discovered and served as inspiration. Each journey introduced new spices, herbs, and techniques, which were eagerly incorporated into the culinary repertoire. It was learned that flavors are not just tastes but cultural expressions that can bridge the gap between different cuisines. This understanding deepened the commitment to flavor as the foundation of culinary creations.

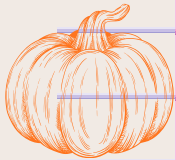
A CHEF'S STORY

Ultimately, the chef believes that flavor is the language of food, capable of conveying messages and emotions without words. During ideation, the team is encouraged to focus on flavor as a guiding principle, ensuring that each new product is not only delicious but also meaningful. The magic of flavor lies in its ability to transform a simple meal into a memorable experience, leaving a lasting impression on those who enjoy it.



IDEATE

inspire. create. delight.



Fall - all about pumpkin???

Butternut squash



THIS

pumpkin cheesecake squares



warmth - braising meats & veg

LAYERS!

layers of flavor & texture



ideas

Bourbon & spiced pear -
from summer to fall

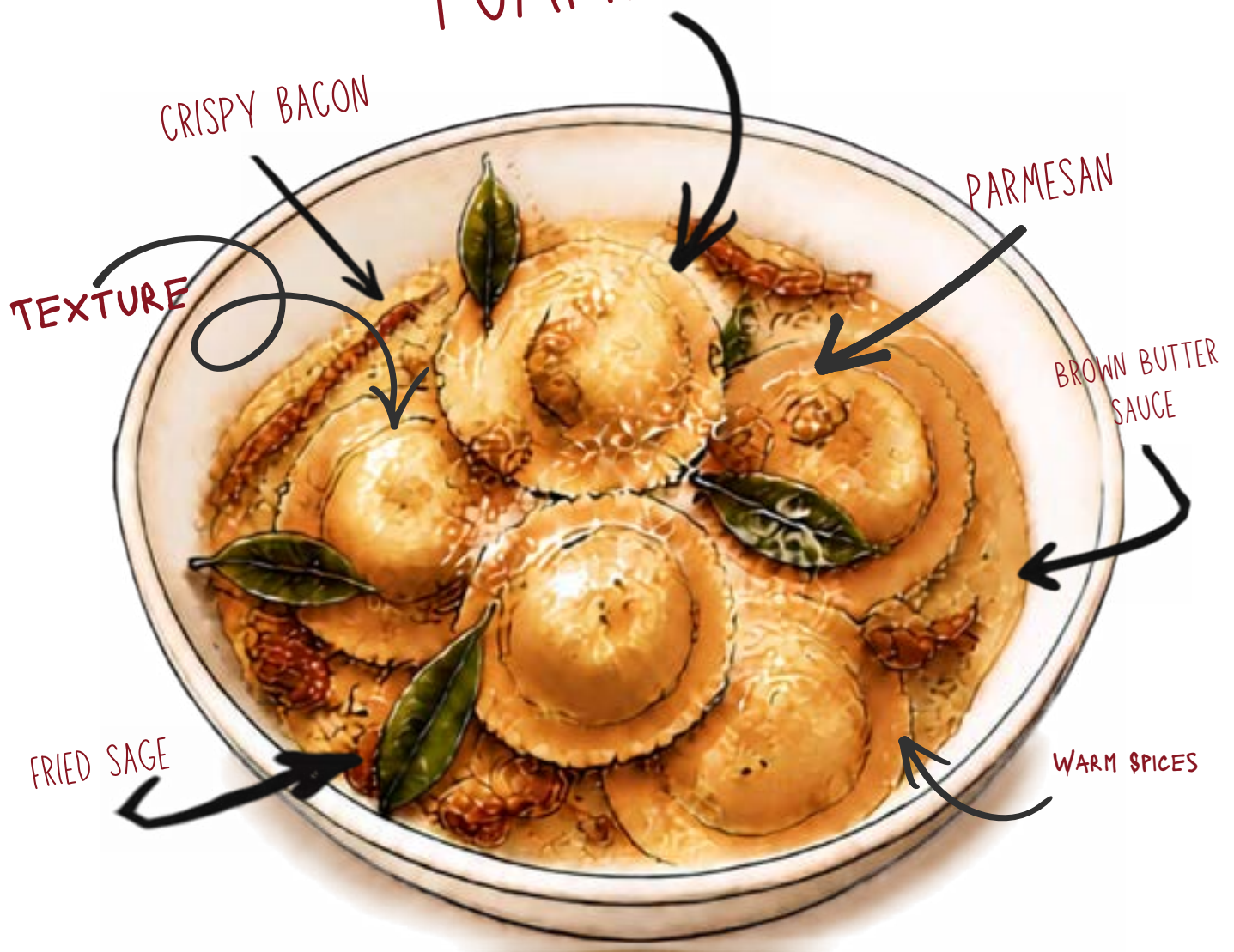


CONCEPT

*STARTING WITH A STRONG CONCEPT WILL HELP YOU
DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS THAT FULFILLS CONSUMER
NEEDS, USES INNOVATIVE INGREDIENTS, AND STANDS
OUT IN THE MARKET.*



PUMPKIN RAVIOLI



Building Concepts

Building food and beverage concepts for the fall involves a creative exploration of flavors that resonate with the season's cozy and comforting essence. The fall season is synonymous with warmth and nostalgia, often evoked through ingredients like pumpkin, pumpkin spice, and butternut squash. These ingredients serve as a foundation for creating enticing products that capture the spirit of autumn. By incorporating warm spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg, chefs and product developers can craft dishes and drinks that not only embrace seasonal flavors but also appeal to consumers' desire for comfort and familiarity.



The process of developing these concepts requires careful planning and understanding of current trends. Before diving into benchtop creations, it's crucial to have a clear vision of the concept. This involves researching and analyzing market insights to determine what flavors and ingredients are trending. For fall, ingredients like pumpkin and butternut squash have consistently shown popularity, making them ideal candidates for new product development. Understanding consumer preferences helps in crafting products that are not only innovative but also have a strong potential for success in the market.



Braising meats is another trend that fits seamlessly into fall food concepts. The technique of slow-cooking meats with rich, aromatic flavors aligns perfectly with the desire for hearty, comforting meals as the weather cools. Combining braised meats with seasonal vegetables like butternut squash creates dishes that are both satisfying and reflective of autumn's bounty. These dishes can be elevated with the addition of spices like cinnamon, which bring warmth and depth to the overall flavor profile.

“...insights and trends not only guides the flavor development but also helps in identifying potential market gaps.”

Vetting concepts against trends and insights is an essential part of the development process. This ensures that the concepts not only align with consumer expectations but also stand out in a competitive market. For instance, while pumpkin is a well-loved fall flavor, adding a unique twist such as a hint of cardamom or a touch of maple can differentiate a product. This stage of concept development allows for innovation while staying true to the traditional flavors that consumers expect during the fall season.

The importance of building out concepts before moving to benchtop creation cannot be overstated. This preliminary phase allows for the exploration of flavor combinations, potential product applications, and the overall viability of the concept. By doing so, developers can ensure that the final product is not only delicious but also market-ready. This approach minimizes the risk of costly revisions and streamlines the product development process.

Utilizing insights and trends not only guides the flavor development but also helps in identifying potential market gaps. For example, while pumpkin spice is a staple, there is room for innovation in how it is used. Exploring different applications, such as in savory dishes or as a component in beverages, can open new avenues for product offerings. This strategic approach ensures that the concept is not only trendy but also has a unique selling proposition.

The creative process of building fall food and beverage concepts is both exciting and challenging. It requires a balance of creativity, market knowledge, and consumer insights. By focusing on ingredients that evoke the warmth and comfort of fall, and by thoroughly vetting concepts against industry trends, developers can create products that resonate with consumers and stand the test of time.

Ultimately, the goal is to craft food and beverage offerings that not only celebrate the essence of fall but also cater to evolving consumer tastes. By embracing seasonal trends and thoughtfully developing concepts, brands can deliver products that delight and satisfy, ensuring a successful launch in the competitive food and beverage market.





MuSpice

custom blending solutions



Pumpkin Cheesecake bites

Imagine the perfect fall treat: pumpkin cheesecake bites. These delightful morsels start with a crumbly cookie base, providing a satisfying crunch with every bite. The cookie crust is the foundation that holds the layers of deliciousness together, offering a buttery, slightly sweet contrast to the creamy filling.

The cheesecake layer is rich and silky, a classic blend of cream cheese and sugar that melts in your mouth. Infused with a hint of vanilla, it balances the flavors beautifully, creating a smooth and indulgent experience. This layer is the heart of the bite, bringing the comforting essence of cheesecake to each morsel.

Topping off these bites is a luscious pumpkin cranberry jam. The jam adds a burst of tangy sweetness and a touch of spice, perfectly complementing the creamy cheesecake layer. The combination of pumpkin and cranberry is quintessentially autumn, evoking the cozy flavors of the season.

To finish, a light dusting of cookie crumbs adorns the top, adding a final touch of texture and sweetness. Each bite is a harmonious blend of crunch, creaminess, and sweetness, making these pumpkin cheesecake bites an irresistible fall indulgence.

CREATE

*TRANSFORMING A CONCEPT INTO A
DELICIOUS REALITY, A TIME TO CREATE*



COST VS QUALITY

When it comes to product development, the balance between cost and quality is a pivotal consideration. Consumers increasingly demand high-quality products, but they are also cost-conscious, seeking value for their money. This dynamic creates a challenge for product developers: how to maintain superior quality without inflating costs. In sectors like the food and beverage industry, where health-consciousness and clean labels are significant trends, developers must innovate to meet these demands while keeping prices competitive. This requires a strategic approach, leveraging technology and efficient supply chains to reduce costs without compromising quality.

Quality in product development is non-negotiable, as consumers equate it with safety, efficacy, and satisfaction. Sacrificing quality can lead to a loss of consumer trust and, ultimately, market share. Therefore, developers must ensure that their products meet high standards, using quality ingredients and reliable processes. However, this must be achieved within the constraints of tight budgets. By prioritizing essential quality attributes and eliminating unnecessary costs, developers can create products that offer genuine value. This might involve sourcing materials more strategically or investing in long-term supplier relationships to obtain better pricing.

Value is the intersection of cost and quality, and it plays a crucial role in product development. A product that offers excellent quality at an affordable price is more likely to succeed in the market. Developers must understand their target consumers' needs and preferences to deliver value effectively. This might mean focusing on key features that matter most to consumers rather than adding costly extras that do not enhance perceived value. By aligning product attributes with consumer expectations, developers can achieve the delicate balance of cost and quality, ultimately driving consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

In conclusion, the goal of product development should be to deliver high-quality products that offer exceptional value to consumers. This requires a thoughtful approach, balancing cost efficiency with uncompromising quality standards. By doing so, developers can not only meet consumer needs but also achieve sustainable growth in a competitive marketplace. As consumers continue to demand more for less, the ability to innovate while maintaining quality will be a key differentiator in the success of new products.



Braised Beef Shortribs and Pumpkin

Ingredients

- 4 lbs beef short ribs
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 cup red wine
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups pumpkin, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Instructions

1. Prepare the Short Ribs: Season the beef short ribs generously with salt and pepper.
2. Sear the Ribs: In a large Dutch oven or heavy pot, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the short ribs in batches and sear on all sides until browned. Remove and set aside.
3. Sauté the Vegetables: In the same pot, add the chopped onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the minced garlic and cook for another minute.
4. Deglaze the Pot: Pour in the red wine, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Let the wine reduce by half.
5. Add Broth and Seasonings: Stir in the beef broth, tomato paste, balsamic vinegar, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf. Return the short ribs to the pot, ensuring they are submerged in the liquid.
6. Simmer: Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. Cover and reduce the heat to low. Let it cook for about 2 to 2.5 hours, or until the meat is tender and falls off the bone.
7. Add the Pumpkin: About 30 minutes before the short ribs are done, add the pumpkin cubes to the pot. Continue to cook until the pumpkin is tender.
8. Finish and Serve: Remove the bay leaf and discard. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, if necessary. Garnish with fresh parsley before serving.
9. Enjoy your hearty braised beef short ribs with pumpkin!



Spiced Pear & Smoked Maple Bourbon Sour

Ingredients

- **2.0 oz (60 ml)** Bourbon (such as Maker's Mark or Woodford Reserve)
- **0.75 oz (22 ml)** Spiced pear liqueur (such as St. George Spirits Spiced Pear)
- **0.75 oz (22 ml)** Freshly squeezed lemon juice
- **0.5 oz (15 ml)** Pure Grade-A maple syrup (smoked or dark robust)
- **1 large egg white** (or 0.75 oz aquafaba for a vegan foam)
- **2 dashes** Black walnut bitters (such as Fee Brothers Black Walnut Bitters)
- **Garnish:** Fresh thyme sprig (lightly torched) and a thin slice of Bosc pear

Instructions

1. **Dry Shake:** Combine bourbon, spiced pear liqueur, lemon juice, maple syrup, egg white (or aquafaba), and black walnut bitters in a shaker without ice. Seal and shake vigorously for 15 seconds to create foam.
2. **Ice Shake:** Add ice to fill the shaker halfway. Shake hard for another 15–20 seconds until chilled and frosted.
3. **Double Strain:** Strain through a Hawthorne strainer and fine-mesh sieve into a chilled coupe or rocks glass over a large ice cube.
4. **Garnish & Serve:** Place a thin pear fan on the glass rim and a singed thyme sprig on the foam.





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