

ISSUE 4 | SUMMER 2026

SAVORPOINT™

EVERY BITE COUNTS

A 250 YEAR CELEBRATION


Delicious Territories
Small Towns

BEEF TALLOW

GRILLING

Grilling everything from meat to vegetables showcases the versatility of flavors!

How America Will Celebrate Its 250th Birthday

From Maeve Webster & Mike
Kostyo at Menu Matters

DESIGNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Art of the Rub

Enhance your barbecue with pit
master special rubs, expertly
crafted to elevate the natural
flavors

AMERICA AT 250:
PROTEIN BEYOND
THE LABEL

Edible Content

Intro

A History of Food 03

Territory

Territories - Small Towns 08

Territories - Culinary Landscape 09

Trends

Designing for Sustainability 14

Beef Tallow 18

The Art of the Rub 22

Grilling 26

Insights

How America Will Celebrate
250th Birthday - And What it
Means for Food Brands 32

America at 250: Protein Beyond
Label 36

Ideate

All the Food Ideas You Need
to Know 42

Concept

Inspired by History 46

Create

A Time to Develop 50

Smoked Pork Ribs 52

American Harvest Smash 53

A history of food



250 years have shaped our food...

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

Welcome to the fourth issue of SavorPoint, “Every Bite Counts.” In this edition, we are thrilled to celebrate the United States of America’s 250th Birthday. The journey of American cuisine is a story of transformation, from its early reliance on simple, locally-sourced ingredients to its present-day diversity, fueled by the mingling of cultures and technological advancements. This issue honors America’s innovative spirit, highlighting how creativity and progress have revolutionized our approach to food and dining.

As we delve into this culinary exploration, we’ll uncover key trends and innovations that have sculpted the American food landscape, linking each bite to the nation’s broader narrative. We’ll dive into the art of BBQ rubs and the technological evolution in grilling, reflecting a rich history of culinary creativity. We also look at small towns across the country, as amazing chefs are crafting inspired dishes that draw on the rich tapestry of American culture, merging traditional techniques with modern influences. Our friends Maeve Webster and Mike Kostyo from Menu Matters will share fascinating insights into how the nation plans to celebrate this remarkable milestone. Additionally, the American Meat Science Association will provide a detailed look at the evolution of protein consumption over the past 250 years.

Join us as we celebrate the American spirit and explore the influences that have shaped and continue to inspire American cuisine.

SP

SAVORPOINT™

Stay inspired
"Never stop creating!"



www.savorpoint.com

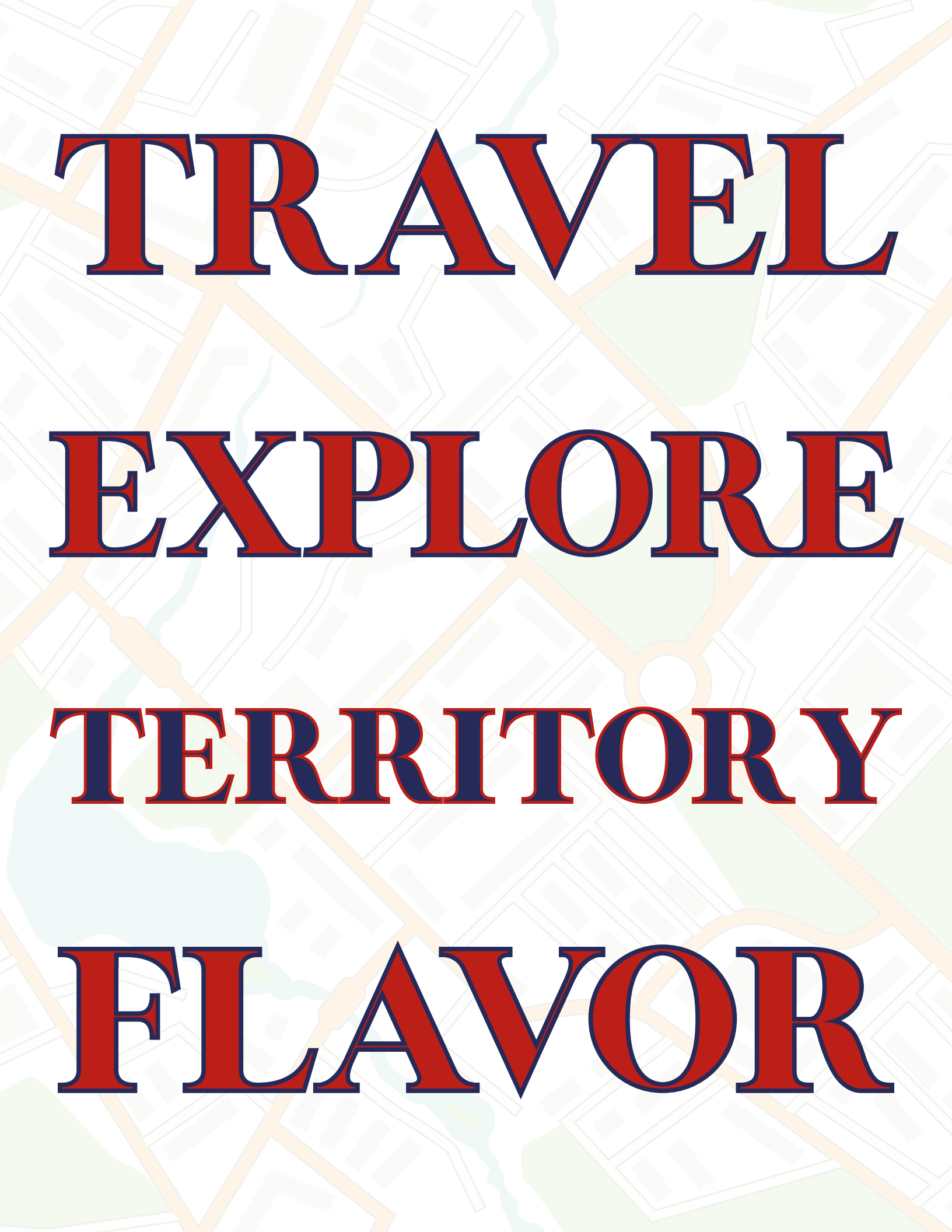
WHY WE CREATE!

For over 250 years, the United States has been a melting pot of innovation, particularly evident in the evolution of product development. This journey from the early days of the nation to the present has been marked by a relentless drive to create and improve. Innovators, chefs, food scientists, and culinologists have played a pivotal role in this evolution, channeling their creativity and expertise to craft products that resonate with both tradition and modernity. The development of new products has always been about more than just meeting consumer needs; it's about pushing boundaries and exploring new possibilities.

The ingenuity of these product developers is evident in the way they've harnessed diverse influences to shape today's culinary landscape. From the humble beginnings of local farms to the global influence of international cuisines, the past 250 years have seen a dynamic fusion of cultures that has enriched the American food scene.

This has led to the creation of iconic brands and products that are not only innovative but also deeply rooted in cultural heritage. The dedication to creating unique and memorable experiences propels these visionaries to continue refining and redefining what we consume.

Today, the legacy of these innovators is reflected in the wide array of products available, each bearing testament to the dreams and aspirations of those who dared to imagine something different. The evolution of product development in the United States is a story of creativity and perseverance, where the pursuit of excellence and originality drives continuous improvement. It is this spirit of innovation that ensures the American culinary scene remains vibrant, ever-evolving, and reflective of the diverse tapestry of influences that shape our society.



**TRAVEL
EXPLORE
TERRITORY
FLAVOR**



Territories - Small Towns

Small Towns



Discover charming eateries and delightful dishes in these small towns' vibrant food scenes. Exploring each unique location, you'll find amazing food that highlights local flavors and creativity.

Yountville, CA



photo by Chef Mario Valdovino

Owner and Chef Thomas Keller's esteemed restaurant, **The French Laundry**, ranks among the best in the world and proudly boasts multiple Michelin stars. It is located in the quaint town of Yountville, CA.

Fredericksburg, TX



photo by Jason Behrends

Hometown of SavorPoint, we had to include our small town that inspires us, with German roots, this historical small town features a growing food scene. Check out the German influenced **Otto's** when you visit. Flammkuchen is a must!

Kennebunk, ME



photo by Alex Tripp

In the charming town of Kennebunk, ME, you'll find the **White Barn Inn Restaurant**. Chef Mary Dumont became part of the team in 2025, carrying on the legacy of one of the finest dining experiences in a small-town setting.

Territories - Culinary Landscape

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

The culinary landscape of the United States is a vibrant tapestry woven from the diverse threads of its immigrant history, indigenous roots, and regional innovations. Over the past 250 years, American cuisine has evolved from a blend of Native American staples and European influences to a dynamic and diverse culinary powerhouse. As we explore the history and current trends of U.S. cuisine, we gain insight into the nation's cultural evolution and its growing role in the global food scene.

In the early days of the United States, regional cuisines were heavily influenced by the resources available locally and the cultural backgrounds of settlers. In New England, for instance, Puritan settlers adapted English cooking techniques to local ingredients, resulting in hearty dishes like clam chowder and baked beans. The Mid-Atlantic region, with its rich soils and diverse populations, became known for dishes like scrapple and shoofly pie, reflecting German and Dutch influences.

The South, with its fertile land and reliance on agriculture, developed a cuisine rich in African, French, and Spanish influences, giving rise to beloved dishes like gumbo, jambalaya, and fried chicken. Meanwhile, the Midwest's cuisine was shaped by waves of European immigrants, who introduced sausages, cheese-making, and hearty stews. The West Coast, with its abundance of fresh produce, seafood, and Asian influences, became a melting pot of flavors, leading to the popularity of dishes such as fish tacos and sushi rolls.

As the nation expanded and technology advanced, so did its culinary practices. The Industrial Revolution brought about canned goods, refrigeration, and transportation innovations, allowing for greater food distribution and preserving methods. Post-World War II, the rise of fast food reflected a shift towards convenience and efficiency, with chains like McDonald's and KFC becoming cultural icons.

In recent decades, the United States has seen a resurgence of interest in regional and traditional foods. This movement, often termed the "farm-to-table" revolution, emphasizes sustainability, local sourcing, and the celebration of regional flavors. Chefs and home cooks alike are revisiting heirloom recipes and ingredients, preserving traditional cooking methods while infusing them with modern twists.

Today, a significant trend in American cuisine is the celebration of indigenous foods and techniques. Native American chefs are gaining recognition for their efforts to revive traditional ingredients like corn, beans, and squash, often referred to as the "Three Sisters," and to spotlight indigenous cooking methods. This movement not only honors the country's first inhabitants but also provides a sustainable model for future culinary practices.

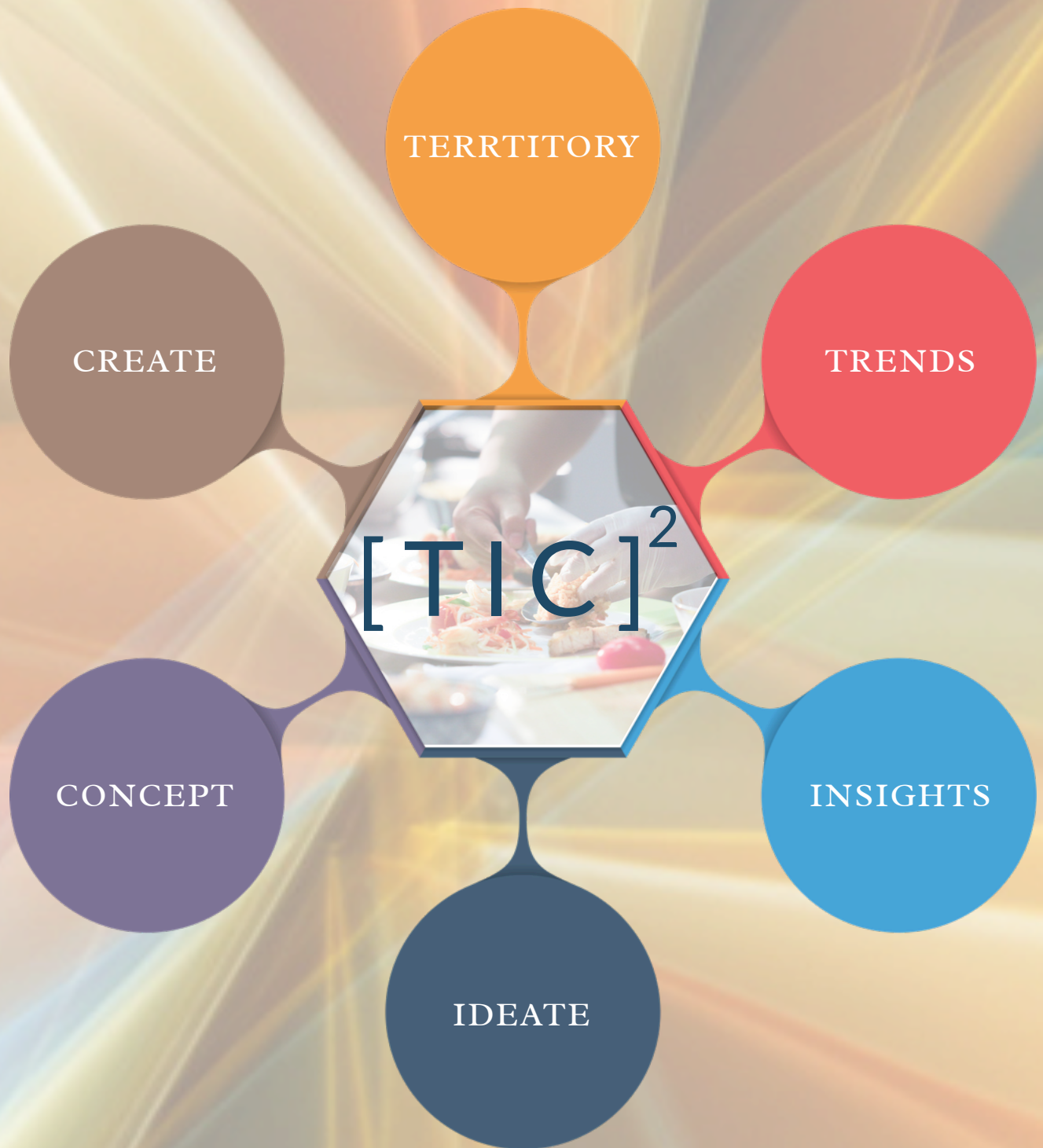
Another trend is the fusion of global flavors with American classics. This blending of culinary traditions reflects the nation's diversity and openness to new influences. Korean tacos, Indian pizza, and sushi burritos are just a few examples of how chefs are creatively combining ingredients and techniques from around the world to create innovative dishes that appeal to adventurous palates.

Moreover, technology continues to play a pivotal role in the evolution of American cuisine. Social media platforms have become powerful tools for chefs and foodies to share recipes, cooking techniques, and restaurant experiences, broadening the reach and influence of regional cuisines. Online delivery services and meal kits have also transformed how Americans dine, offering convenience and access to a diverse array of flavors from the comfort of home.

As we look to the future, the reemergence of United States cuisine is poised to continue its journey of innovation and cultural reflection. The focus on sustainability, indigenous traditions, and global fusion indicates a growing awareness of food's impact on health, society, and the environment. This evolving landscape not only honors the rich culinary heritage of the nation but also sets the stage for a vibrant and inclusive future, where food serves as a bridge across cultures and communities.

The story of American cuisine is one of adaptation, innovation, and celebration of diversity. From its regional roots to its current trends, the culinary evolution of the United States is a testament to the country's dynamic cultural landscape. As we embrace new influences and honor traditional flavors, the future of American cuisine promises to be as diverse and delicious as its past.

SavorPoint™ Innovation for Success



**Schedule your
personalized session today!**

www.savorpoint.com

TRENDS





Designing for Sustainability

The Critical Role of Research Chefs

Kimberly Schaub,
Global Lead for the Nutritious and Sustainable Portfolio
Griffith Foods

Research chefs use their knowledge of food, flavor, and techniques to set the gold standard for food products. In the food industry, they often help shape the direction of development, weighing intended use, cost, regional appeal, ingredient availability, and many other factors. Today, one consideration is rising quickly in importance: sustainability.

That includes ingredient sourcing, production, consumption, and disposal. Because chefs influence formulation decisions so directly, they should be part of product development strategies that aim to improve both social and environmental outcomes. At Griffith Foods, our culinary team works closely with product development, nutrition, and category management to create concepts that deliver strong performance while keeping nutrition and sustainability at the center.

“...chefs influence formulation decisions so directly, they should be part of product development strategies that aim to improve both social and environmental outcomes...”

Chef Mark Serice, Vice President of Culinary at Griffith Foods, writes, “As culinarians, the ingredients we choose, and how often we choose them, either reinforce today’s system or help build a better one. What we buy, menu, and scale doesn’t just affect our kitchens; it shapes supply chains, pricing, and production systems globally. Demand isn’t abstract—it’s written on every menu.”

At Griffith, embedding sustainability into concept development is a serious part of the process. Chef Ana Saenz, Regional Culinary Director for Central and South America, shared that the culinary team created concepts to highlight projects and products that move the company closer to its sustainability goals. In partnership with Regional Nutrition Manager Carla Murillo, they used Griffith’s customized nutrient density calculator to guide development.



photo provided by Griffith Foods



“...sustainability is reflected not only in the ingredients, but also in our day-to-day culinary practices.”...

Chef Daniel Roseira

Saenz says, “Carla Murillo challenged the chefs not to develop only traditionally healthy concepts for Aspiration 2—Developing a Nutritious and Sustainable Portfolio. She pushed us to design recipes that customers could easily relate to and integrate into existing menus or portfolios through small changes that could create significant impact.”

One example came from Chef Daniel Roseira, Regional Corporate Executive Chef based in Brazil. He developed a versatile seasoning blend built around sustainably sourced ingredients and designed it to work across multiple applications.

He shares, “I used a base of garlic, onion, and black pepper to season the fish, which was then breaded using a corn flour from another initiative focused on regenerative agriculture. Throughout recipe development, we also prioritized minimizing food waste in the kitchen and choosing ingredients from sustainable sources whenever possible. This approach ensures that sustainability is reflected not only in the ingredients, but also in our day-to-day culinary practices.”

“...build on the strengths of your current formulation and manufacturing process...”

This collaboration among culinary, R&D, and nutrition points to several practical principles for sustainable product development.

First, build on the strengths of your current formulation and manufacturing process. This keeps customer expectations and past experience in view while reducing concerns about operational complexity. It also draws on existing knowledge of commercialization and scale-up, reinforcing your value as a reliable development partner.

Second, consider ingredient and nutrition targets from the start, and build the gold standard with the materials that will ultimately be used in manufacturing. This creates early alignment with purchasing and helps ensure that flavor, function, and supply realities are addressed from the beginning.

Third, collaborate closely with nutrition and regulatory experts to keep the formula aligned with key targets. Continuous engagement between Carla Murillo and the chefs helped keep sustainability intentionally built into the work. As Chef Daniel Roseira explains, “Throughout development, we made adjustments to both the products and the recipes to reach our nutritional and sustainability goals. Working closely together made the process more efficient and helped us balance flavor, functionality, nutrition, and environmental impact without compromising the consumer experience.”



Griffith Foods culinary team; photo provided by Griffith Foods



photo provided by Griffith Foods

“...closer collaboration across functions is helping teams create products that can make a meaningful difference...”

Sustainable formulation depends on teamwork, transparency, and practical decision-making. At Griffith Foods, closer collaboration across functions is helping teams create products that can make a meaningful difference for customers and consumers alike. Chefs play a vital role in that effort. By helping shape products from the earliest stages, they can influence the choices that move the industry toward a more nutritious and sustainable future.

About Griffith Foods

Griffith Foods is a global product development partner helping food companies meet the evolving needs of consumers with high-quality, culinary driven, customized products. Founded in 1919 and headquartered in Alsip, Illinois, USA, Griffith Foods is a family-owned business known for collaborative innovation guided by its purpose to “Blend Care and Creativity to Nourish the World.” Operating in over 40 countries across six continents, Griffith Foods employs more than 5,000 people, including over 40 chefs and 340 food scientists, who work together to create solutions that nourish people, planet, and communities. The company’s product capabilities include seasonings, sauces, dressings, coating systems, and alternative protein solutions. Griffith Foods’ primary areas of focus include Foodservice, Food Manufacturers, Protein Processors, and Retail. For more information, visit www.griffithfoods.com



BEEF TALLOW

A RESURGENCE



In recent years, beef tallow has made an unexpected yet significant comeback in the food and beverage industry. Once overshadowed by vegetable oils and other fats considered healthier, this traditional cooking fat is experiencing a renaissance. The resurgence of beef tallow is driven by its unique attributes that appeal to both consumers and product developers. As a result, it has become a sought-after ingredient in various culinary applications.

Beef tallow, rendered from the fat of cattle, is praised for its rich flavor, high smoke point, and versatility. These characteristics make it particularly appealing in a culinary landscape increasingly focused on delivering exceptional taste and texture. Chefs and food manufacturers are leveraging these properties to create products that stand out in a competitive market. From frying to roasting, beef tallow imparts a distinct richness and depth of flavor that is hard to replicate with plant-based oils.

One of the key reasons for beef tallow's resurgence is the growing consumer interest in traditional and ancestral diets, which emphasize whole foods and natural fats. These diets often celebrate ingredients like beef tallow for their nutritional profile, which includes a balance of saturated and unsaturated fats as well as fat-soluble vitamins. This aligns with the increasing demand for clean-label products—those with recognizable, simple ingredients that consumers perceive as healthier and more transparent.

In product development, beef tallow is being used innovatively across a range of food categories. In the snack sector, it's utilized to fry potato chips and other snack foods, offering a flavor profile that is more savory and authentic compared to those fried in vegetable oils. In the realm of baked goods, beef tallow is celebrated for its ability to produce flaky pastries and tender cookies. Its stable structure at room temperature also makes it an excellent choice for pie crusts and similar applications.

“...praised for its rich flavor, high smoke point, and versatility...”

The resurgence of beef tallow is also reflected in the growing popularity of gourmet and artisanal products. Specialty food producers are using beef tallow to craft items such as artisanal sauces, condiments, and even ice creams that boast a richer, creamier texture. This trend is part of a broader movement towards premiumization, where consumers are willing to pay more for superior quality and taste.

Fast-food chains and restaurants have also taken note of beef tallow's merits. Some have reverted to using tallow for frying due to its high smoke point, which allows for better heat retention and crispier textures. This has proven particularly popular in the preparation of French fries, where beef tallow's unique flavor profile elevates the experience beyond what is typically expected from fast food.



In addition to its culinary applications, beef tallow has found a place in the cosmetic industry. Renowned for its moisturizing properties, it is being incorporated into a range of skincare products. Beef tallow is rich in fatty acids that closely resemble those found in human skin, making it an effective ingredient for creams, lotions, and balms. Its ability to create a protective barrier on the skin helps to lock in moisture, which is especially beneficial in dry and cold climates.

The rekindled interest in beef tallow can also be attributed to the broader trend of sustainability and waste reduction. As consumers become more conscious of food waste, the use of animal by-products like tallow is seen as a more sustainable choice. It supports a nose-to-tail approach to meat consumption, where every part of the animal is utilized, thus reducing waste and promoting ethical consumption practices.



Despite its growing popularity, beef tallow is not without controversy. Its high saturated fat content has been a point of concern for some health experts. However, recent studies have shown that saturated fats may not be as detrimental to heart health as once believed, leading to a gradual shift in public perception. This evolving understanding has paved the way for beef tallow's reentry into the mainstream food scene.

“As the industry continues to explore and develop new products, beef tallow's role is likely to expand...”

The resurgence of beef tallow in the food and beverage industry is a testament to the evolving preferences of consumers who are seeking authentic flavors, traditional practices, and sustainable options. Its unique properties are being harnessed in innovative ways, contributing to its renewed status as a favored ingredient. As the industry continues to explore and develop new products, beef tallow's role is likely to expand, further solidifying its place in modern culinary applications. Whether in the form of crispy, golden fries, or as a key component in luxurious skincare products, beef tallow is proving that what's old can indeed become new again.



— Trends

RUBS

The Art of the Rub
Building Flavor Before the Grill

Rachel Leto
NuSpice

When it comes to great barbecue, most people focus on the grill. The smoke. The char. The perfectly cooked protein. However, the best barbecue starts long before the grill is fired up. It starts with flavor.

Great barbecue is built through intentional flavor development, not just cooking technique. It is about creating layers of flavor that evolve from the first aroma to the final bite. Through the NuSpice Innovation Insights blog, we regularly explore trends, ingredients, and flavor science that help create memorable eating experiences. When it comes to barbecue, it is all about the rub!

Why Rubs Matter More Than Ever

Today's consumers are looking for more than traditional barbecue flavors. They want memorable taste experiences that balance familiarity with innovation. In barbecue, this has fueled growing interest in sweet-heat combinations like hot honey barbecue, maple-chipotle, and peach habanero, as well as globally inspired profiles such as Korean barbecue and Caribbean jerk.

At the same time, regional barbecue traditions continue to influence product development. Texas-style pepper-forward rubs, Kansas City sweet-and-smoky profiles, Memphis dry rubs, and Carolina vinegar-inspired flavors all provide inspiration for brands looking to deliver both authenticity and innovation.

Premium flavor experiences featuring coffee rubs, bourbon-inspired seasonings, and barrel-aged smoke notes are also helping consumers recreate restaurant-quality barbecue at home.

“A great rub does not deliver all its flavor at once.”

The National Restaurant Association's culinary trends research highlights growing interest in global flavors, bold seasonings, and restaurant-inspired experiences, reflecting a shift toward more adventurous at-home cooking. As consumers experiment with new flavor combinations, seasonings and blends have become essential tools for creating elevated meals.

Explored on the NuSpice Innovation Insights blog, the most successful barbecue seasonings are built around a careful balance of sweetness, savoriness, smokiness, heat, tanginess, and umami. When these elements work together, they create the complexity consumers crave.

Beyond flavor, rubs also contribute to the development of bark—the flavorful outer crust that forms during cooking and is often considered one of the most prized characteristics of great barbecue.

Building Flavor Layer by Layer

Great barbecue seasoning is not about adding as many spices as possible. It is about understanding how flavors interact.

A great rub does not deliver all its flavor at once. Sugar helps create caramelized notes during cooking, pepper provides immediate impact, while garlic, onion, herbs, and umami-rich ingredients continue developing throughout the cook and linger on the palate. The result is a flavor experience that evolves from first aroma to final taste.

As highlighted on the NuSpice Innovation Insights blog, creating depth of flavor is like composing a culinary symphony. Each ingredient contributes its own note while supporting the overall profile.

Consider a classic sweet-and-smoky barbecue rub. Brown sugar provides sweetness and caramelization, smoked paprika reinforces smoky notes, garlic and onion build savory depth, black pepper adds bite, and chili peppers contribute lingering heat. Together, they create a flavor profile that feels balanced, dynamic, and complete.

This focus on layered flavor reflects a larger shift in consumer preferences. According to Mintel, consumers are increasingly exploring global flavors and unique combinations that bring excitement to familiar foods. They want the comfort of tradition alongside the discovery of something new.

The Science Behind Flavor Development

One reason layered seasoning blends are so effective is their ability to enhance multiple sensory experiences at once.

Flavor is not just about taste. Aroma, mouthfeel, and the sequence in which flavors are perceived all influence the eating experience. Smoke may be detected first through aroma, followed by sweet and savory notes, with heat and lingering spices developing later. Together, these sensory cues create a more memorable barbecue experience.

Another essential element in modern barbecue flavor development is umami. Often referred to as the fifth taste, umami brings a rich savory depth that helps create a more complete flavor experience. Rather than overpowering other flavor notes, it works behind the scenes, helping sweetness, heat, smoke, and spice come together in harmony.

*“...flavor
development is
becoming more
intentional...”*

The Future of BBQ Starts Before the Grill

As barbecue continues to evolve, one thing remains clear: flavor development is becoming more intentional. Consumers want seasonings that deliver complexity, authenticity, versatility, and memorable eating experiences. Whether it is a classic smoky profile, a sweet-and-spicy combination, or a globally inspired twist, the foundation of great barbecue starts with thoughtful flavor design. Because at the end of the day, great barbecue is not defined by smoke alone. It is the careful layering of sweet, savory, smoky, spicy, and umami flavors that transforms a good cookout into a memorable eating experience.

And it all starts with the rub!





MuSpice

custom blending solutions

— Trends

Grilling

The evolution of grilling





The evolution of grilling

Grilling, a time-honored tradition that evokes images of summer gatherings and smoky flavors, has undergone significant evolution over the years. Once a simple method of cooking meat over an open flame, it has transformed into a sophisticated culinary art form, influenced by global flavors and advancing technology. Today, grilling is not just about flipping burgers and hot dogs; it's about creating gourmet meals with a focus on quality ingredients and innovative techniques.

Historically, grilling was primarily associated with charred meats, often seasoned with little more than salt and pepper. However, as culinary tastes have evolved, so too has the approach to grilling. The introduction of diverse marinade.

The introduction of diverse marinades, rubs, and exotic spices has expanded the palette of flavors, allowing chefs and home cooks alike to experiment with new taste profiles. Ingredients such as smoked paprika, sriracha, and even sweet miso have found their way onto the grill, offering a fusion of tastes that were once uncommon in traditional barbecues.

Moreover, the types of foods being grilled have diversified dramatically. While steaks and ribs remain popular, there is now a rising trend of grilling a wider variety of meats, including lamb, duck, and even seafood. The farm-to-table movement has also inspired grill enthusiasts to explore more sustainable and locally sourced options, turning away from mass-produced meats in favor of artisan and organic choices. This shift not only enhances the flavor but also supports environmentally conscious practices.





Vegetables, once relegated to side dish status, are now taking center stage in the world of grilling. Grilled vegetables like zucchini, eggplant, and bell peppers are celebrated for their ability to absorb smoky flavors while maintaining a satisfying texture. The popularity of plant-based diets has further propelled this trend, with many grill masters now experimenting with items such as cauliflower steaks and portobello mushrooms as main courses. Even fruits like peaches and pineapples are being grilled to create unique desserts and salads, showcasing the grill's versatility.

The growing interest in outdoor culinary spaces has also played a significant role in the evolution of grilling. Outdoor kitchens, equipped with state-of-the-art appliances, have become a status symbol among homeowners. These spaces often feature high-end grills, pizza ovens, and even outdoor refrigeration, allowing for a seamless cooking experience that rivals indoor kitchens. The demand for outdoor kitchens has surged, driven by a desire for al fresco dining experiences and the ability to entertain guests in an open-air setting.

Product developers have keenly observed these trends and responded with innovations that cater to the modern grill enthusiast. Today's grills are equipped with features that enhance convenience and precision. Smart grills, for instance, come with Wi-Fi connectivity and app integration, enabling users to monitor and control cooking temperatures remotely. Infrared burners and rotisserie attachments are also gaining popularity, providing even heat distribution and enhancing the cooking process.

“Today’s grills are equipped with features that enhance convenience and precision. .”

In addition to technological advancements, there is a focus on sustainability in product development. Manufacturers are now producing grills that use less energy and emit fewer pollutants, aligning with the global push towards eco-friendly products.

Portable grills, designed for those who wish to enjoy grilling on the go, have also seen increased demand, reflecting the desire for flexibility and convenience.

“Grilling has evolved from a simple cooking method into a dynamic and diverse culinary practice...”

Accessories have not been left behind in this grilling renaissance. From grill baskets and skewers to smoker boxes and cedar planks, there is a plethora of tools that allow for creative experimentation. These innovations have made grilling more accessible and enjoyable, encouraging more people to explore this culinary technique.

Grilling has evolved from a simple cooking method into a dynamic and diverse culinary practice, driven by changing tastes and lifestyle preferences. The emphasis on quality ingredients, global flavors, and cutting-edge technology reflects a broader trend towards sophisticated outdoor cooking experiences.

As the interest in grilling continues to grow, so too will the innovations that make it possible, ensuring that this beloved tradition remains relevant and exciting for generations to come. Whether you're a seasoned grill master or a novice, the world of grilling offers endless possibilities to explore and enjoy.





INSIGHTS



AMERICA A CELEBRATION

How America Will Celebrate Its
250th Birthday – And What It
Means for Food Brands

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



Across the country, cities and towns are planning their own celebrations and activities to mark America's 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence. In New York, a ball will drop in Times Square eight times, marking midnight in each of the country's time zones. In Philadelphia, a time capsule buried in 1976 will be opened, while another will be buried and stay underground until 2276, for the country's 500th anniversary.

In Washington, D.C., the country is attempting to break the world record for the largest fireworks display with more than 850,000 pyrotechnic devices launched lasting nearly 40 minutes.

But how do Americans themselves plan to celebrate?

*“...39% of people
said they’ll stay
home and cook or
grill.”*

According to a Menu Matters survey, the top activity that Americans plan to take part in is food related – cooking out and grilling at home. In fact, 39% of people said they’ll stay home and cook or grill.

In second place was watching a fireworks show or other public celebration, which a third of the country said they plan to do, while just under that (at 28%) was watching coverage of America’s birthday on television.

Those types of activities provide clear opportunities for food brands and companies. Coca-Cola is launching collectible mini-cans with designs for every state, Mountain Dew is rebranding itself as American Dew, and Cheerios released birthday cake-flavored cereal in red, white, and blue boxes.

But for many consumers, patriotic marketing needs to feel authentic. In that same survey, well over a quarter (27%) of people said that they like brands tying themselves to America’s 250th birthday celebration “as long as it feels genuine.” Younger customers were even more likely to agree, with 33% of Gen Z and 37% of Young Millennials saying these brand activations should feel authentic.

Coca-Cola, for instance, is not only releasing the collectible cans, but also set a goal to generate 250,000 volunteer hours across the country, launched a campaign to create dozens of murals with local artists, and it will sponsor local events throughout the U.S. The brand also proudly calls out its patriotism throughout American history, like when it supported American troops in World War II.

That type of engagement can mean more than just slapping red, white, and blue on a package. People today are skeptical of nearly everything, from politicians to the media to big food companies. As prices rise, buyers’ belief that every company is just out to make a quick buck grows.

While your plans to connect your brand to America’s 250th birthday celebration are likely already decided, there are lessons in this data for any brand and its marketing and culinary initiatives in the future:

- **Lead with authenticity.** At a time when buyers are skeptical of nearly every brand, being real and authentic stands out. Ask yourself if you are just jumping on a bandwagon to make a quick buck or you really believe in the message.



- **Do you have a right to play?** Have you earned your association with a group or event? A brand that has shown a clear history of supporting a particular cause or demographic will naturally earn more trust than one that doesn't.
- **Make the human connection.** People have always gravitated toward human stories, but that's particularly true in the age of AI. Showcasing your human connection to a demographic or cause resonates. Does your founder, chef, or team member have a natural affinity with the event or campaign?



“...People have always gravitated toward human stories..”

- **There's always a trade-off.** There is no cause that excites every single person across the country (we can't even agree that the middle seat is the worst option on a plane – 28% say they prefer it, according to a study by photoAiD, a passport photo company). Indeed, 11% of people said they are skeptical of marketing around the 250th, agreeing that it feels like every brand is trying to cash in, while 10% is actively annoyed by it and says they are tired of the patriotic marketing. You have to pick and choose what's worth it to you.
- **Participate.** Put your money where your mouth is. It's one thing to launch an advertising campaign or collect donations, it's another to sponsor events, donate yourself, or commit human hours toward an event or cause.

America's 250th will come and go, but the lessons outlast the fireworks and time capsules (even the ones designed to last another 250 years). People want brands to show up in a real, authentic way. Whether you are creating products or campaigns around big holidays, events, and milestones or smaller causes and local events, it's essential to earn your place at the table.

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.

AMERICA AT 250: PROTEIN BEYOND THE LABEL

*Christi Calhoun, Ph.D.
Scientific Communications Resource Officer
American Meat Science Association*

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, it is worth reflecting on how the American plate has evolved alongside advances in culinary arts, agriculture, and food science. Few food categories have remained as central to that story as protein-rich foods, particularly meat.

For centuries, protein-rich food has earned a place on the table because they delivered nourishment, flavor, satiety, and culinary experience long before consumers understood amino acids, digestibility, or nutrient utilization. Over time, advances in meat science and nutrition research helped explain many of the qualities cooks, chefs, and diners had long recognized through eating experience.

*“For centuries, protein-rich
food has earned a place on
the table ...”*

“...meat was valued for practicality and survival, but culinary innovation quickly transformed it into something more...”

Historically, meat was valued for practicality and survival, but culinary innovation quickly transformed it into something more. Traditional methods such as smoking, curing, slow cooking, and dry aging not only preserved meat but improved tenderness, flavor, and overall eating experience. Long before modern nutrition science, chefs and food artisans understood that certain protein-rich foods delivered a uniquely satisfying and sustaining meal.

Over the last century, advances in meat science and nutrition research helped explain why.

The discovery of essential amino acids fundamentally changed how scientists evaluated protein. Researchers learned that proteins differ in amino acid composition, digestibility, and how effectively the body can utilize them. Meat provides all essential amino acids in forms readily utilized by the body, while also contributing nutrients such as iron, zinc, and B vitamins that support overall health and physiological function. Further research expanded understanding beyond muscle growth and athletic performance to include satiety, healthy aging, cognitive function, and overall wellness.

Consumers today may not use scientific terminology, but their purchasing habits increasingly reflect this broader understanding of protein. Protein is no longer viewed simply as a number on a package or menu board. Diners are looking for foods that help them feel satisfied longer, provide sustained energy, and fit into balanced lifestyles without sacrificing flavor or enjoyment.

This shift is influencing menu development and product innovation across foodservice and retail.

At the same time, consumers are becoming more attentive to ingredient statements, food preparation methods, and overall product composition. Ongoing public discussion surrounding dietary guidance, ingredient transparency, and food processing has increased awareness across consumers, product developers, and foodservice professionals alike. As a result, simplicity and familiarity are gaining value. Recognizable ingredients, thoughtful seasoning systems, and authentic preparation techniques are resonating with consumers while still allowing significant room for culinary and product innovation.

Emerging research is also expanding understanding of how consumers experience protein-rich foods beyond flavor alone. Texture, chewing experience, juiciness, fat distribution, and overall mouthfeel all contribute to eating satisfaction and perception of quality.

Researchers have increasingly explored the relationship between “mouth behavior” and consumer preference. A 2022 Texas A&M University study by Kylie Burriss evaluating consumer preferences in ground beef patties found that individuals responded differently to texture attributes based on distinct mouth behavior classifications, including “chewers,” “crunchers,” “smooshers,” and “suckers.” The research demonstrated that texture perception and eating behavior influenced consumer acceptance of beef patties differing in fat level, processing method, firmness, cohesiveness, juiciness, and chewiness.

For chefs, culinologists, and product developers, this reinforces the importance of designing protein-rich foods around the complete sensory experience rather than nutritional composition alone. Preparation methods such as grinding, marination, fermentation, dry aging, thermal processing, and mechanical tenderization all influence tenderness, flavor release, particle size perception, juiciness, and overall palatability.

As protein innovation continues evolving, future opportunities will likely center on optimizing eating satisfaction through flavor, texture, ingredient familiarity, and sensory experience alongside nutritional value. Two hundred fifty years into America's culinary evolution, protein remains at the center of the conversation not because it is trendy, but because it continues to meet fundamental consumer needs through nourishment, versatility, flavor, and eating satisfaction.

References:

Burriss, K. M. (2022). Mouth behavior and consumer preferences in ground beef patties (Master's thesis, Texas A&M University). Texas A&M University Libraries. <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/54a62228-156e-4b50-8cf7-508f4fef8d08/content>



About AMSA: 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.

11D



EATE

All the Food & Beverage Ideas You Need to Know

Summer 2026 Trends

As we step into the summer of 2026, the culinary scene is set to be more vibrant and innovative than ever. This season, the emphasis is on bold, refreshing flavors that capture the essence of summer's warmth and vitality. Expect to see a fascinating fusion of traditional and modern culinary techniques, skillfully combined to highlight the freshest, most flavorful ingredients that summer has to offer. Chefs are pushing boundaries, crafting dishes that not only delight the palate but also tell a story of the season's bounty and creativity.

Food Trends for 2026

This summer, the food landscape is all about embracing bold flavors and tantalizing textures. Grilled and smoked dishes are taking center stage, with chefs experimenting with a variety of wood chips and charcoals to create complex and unique taste profiles. These smoky delights are complemented by street food-inspired dishes that are making waves, offering a casual yet gourmet dining experience that's perfect for any summer gathering. Look out for unexpected pairings, such as spicy and sweet combinations, that are sure to tantalize tastebuds and spark culinary curiosity. Additionally, there is a growing interest in integrating lesser-known grains into meals, adding both nutritional value and diversity to summer menus. These grains, often rich in nutrients, are being creatively incorporated into traditional dishes, offering a fresh twist on classics.

Beverage Trends 2026

Beverages are all about innovation and refreshment this summer, with an array of exciting options to quench your thirst. Sparkling drinks and craft sodas are gaining popularity, offering a fizzy twist to traditional soft drinks that is both nostalgic and novel. Flavored iced teas and lemonades, infused with aromatic herbs like basil and mint, are becoming the go-to refreshments for those hot summer days. Cocktails are taking a creative turn with the use of exotic fruits and aromatic spices, offering a sensory experience that enhances the summer vibe and elevates any occasion. Non-alcoholic options are also on the rise, focusing on creative mocktails that provide all the flavor without the buzz, making them perfect for everyone to enjoy.

Nutrition Trends for 2026

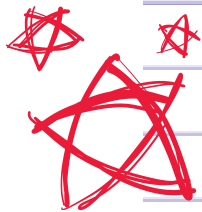
Nutritional trends this summer are focused on hydration and the smart incorporation of superfoods into everyday meals. Water-rich fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and cucumber, are being highlighted for their excellent hydrating properties, making them perfect for hot summer days. There is also a push towards nutrient-dense snacks, like nuts and seeds, which are ideal for on-the-go energy boosts and provide sustained nourishment. Probiotic-rich foods are trending, as people continue to prioritize gut health, incorporating these beneficial foods into various dishes to support digestive wellness. Lastly, there is an emphasis on balanced meals that combine proteins, healthy fats, and carbohydrates to maintain energy levels during the longer summer days, ensuring that you can enjoy all the season has to offer.



Fresh Veg from garden



Watermelon - Hydration



Grilling for the 250 years - beef, pork, chicken

RUBS!

garlic, onion powder, salt,
pepper, chipotle for a little heat.

Beverages - 4th of July,
Apple, Bourbon, Mint -
American harvest



FLAVOR SPICE AVOCADO BLACK PEPPERED SMOKED BACON

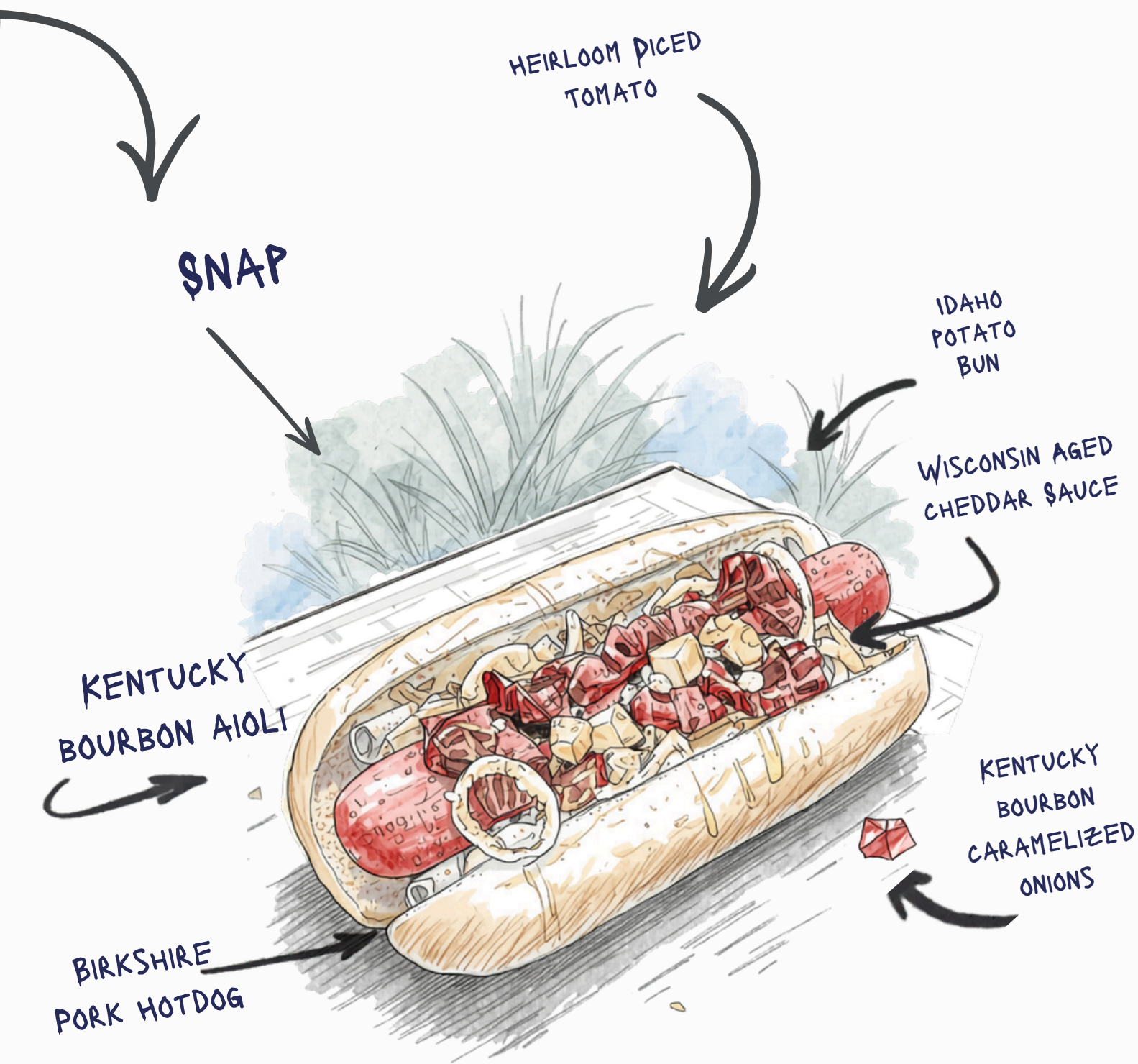
FLAVOR

SPICE

AVOCADO

SEASONED TO
PERFECTION

BLACK PEPPERED
SMOKED BACON



HEIRLOOM Piced
TOMATO

\$NAP

IDAHO
POTATO
BUN

WISCONSIN AGED
CHEDDAR \$AUCE

KENTUCKY
BOURBON AIOLI

KENTUCKY
BOURBON
CARAMELIZED
ONIONS

BIRKSHIRE
PORK HOTDOG

Inspired by History

The American hot dog is a cultural icon with a storied history that has become synonymous with American cuisine. Its origins can be traced back to the late 19th century, influenced by German immigrants who brought along their tradition of sausages. The hot dog, as we know it today, evolved from the frankfurter, a sausage named after the German city of Frankfurt. This culinary adaptation found its way to the United States, where it was embraced and transformed into a beloved staple.



The modern hot dog is typically a grilled or steamed sausage served in a soft bun, and it gained immense popularity partly due to its convenience and affordability. One of the pivotal moments in hot dog history was when it became a staple at baseball games, forever associating the food with the quintessential American pastime. This connection was cemented in the early 20th century, particularly when Nathan Handwerker, a Polish immigrant, opened Nathan's Famous hot dog stand on Coney Island in 1916. His establishment played a significant role in popularizing the hot dog across the country.

In recent years, new trends have emerged, reshaping the traditional image of the hot dog. Gourmet hot dogs have gained traction, with chefs experimenting with high-quality ingredients and inventive toppings like kimchi, avocado, or truffle oil. These innovative variations reflect changing consumer preferences and dietary trends, while food trucks and pop-up eateries are popularizing global flavors, introducing fusion hot dogs that incorporate elements from cuisines around the world.

The hot dog quickly became a symbol of American culture, celebrated for its simplicity and versatility. Over the years, it has inspired numerous regional variations, each with its unique twist on toppings and preparation methods. Among these are the Chicago-style hot dog, known for its poppy seed bun and an array of toppings like pickles and peppers, and the New York-style hot dog, often topped with sauerkraut and mustard.

Today, the hot dog continues to be a fixture at barbecues, street vendors, and sporting events, symbolizing the spirit of American ingenuity and adaptation. Its enduring popularity is a testament to its ability to bring people together, whether at a backyard cookout or a bustling city street corner.





RED, WHITE, & BLUE

Introducing the Patriotic Hot Dog, a culinary tribute to the American spirit, bursting with red, white, and blue flair. This vibrant creation begins with a classic all-beef frank, grilled to perfection to provide a smoky, savory base. Nestled in a soft, golden bun, the hot dog is adorned with a trio of toppings that embody the colors of the American flag.

The red comes in the form of a tangy, slightly spicy roasted red pepper relish, adding a burst of sweetness and heat to each bite. For the white component, a creamy dill-infused coleslaw is layered on top, offering a refreshing crunch and a hint of herbal brightness that balances the other flavors.

Finally, the blue element is introduced through a blue aioli, a surprising twist that provides a savory and slightly tangy contrast. This blue aioli is crafted from a blend of rich mayonnaise, a splash of lemon juice for acidity, and a touch of blue spirulina, which gives it its distinctive hue, as well as garlic for depth of flavor. These ingredients come together to elevate the entire flavor profile into a harmonious blend of Americana.

This hot dog not only celebrates the classic barbecue staple but also pays homage to the nation's colors in a deliciously inventive way. Whether enjoyed at a Fourth of July picnic or a casual backyard gathering, the Patriotic Hot Dog is sure to be a standout, delighting both the eyes and the palate.



CRF



ATE

A TIME TO DEVELOP

In the current economic climate, characterized by volatility and uncertainty, the food and beverage industry is at a critical juncture. This uncertainty, driven by fluctuating market conditions, rising costs, and changing consumer behaviors, presents both challenges and opportunities for product developers. Now more than ever, it is time to innovate and introduce new food and beverage products that not only satisfy consumer demands but also align with economic realities.

One of the primary reasons for developing new products in this uncertain economy is the increasing consumer preference for natural and whole foods. Consumers are becoming more health-conscious, seeking products that are not only delicious but also nutritious and free from artificial additives. This shift towards healthier options provides an opportunity for developers to create products that cater to these preferences while maintaining clean labels. Clean labels, which emphasize transparency and simplicity in ingredient lists, have become a critical component of product development. Consumers are demanding to know what is in their food, and they expect ingredients they can recognize and trust.

“...it is time to innovate and introduce new food and beverage products that not only satisfy consumer demands but also align with economic realities.”



To meet these demands, developers must focus on sourcing alternative natural ingredients that offer both health benefits and unique flavors. For instance, using plant-based proteins, natural sweeteners like stevia or monk fruit, and whole grains can enhance the nutritional profile of products while keeping them appealing to health-conscious consumers. However, the challenge lies in balancing these ingredients with cost-effectiveness. Sourcing high-quality ingredients can be expensive, but by leveraging economies of scale and exploring local sourcing options, developers can keep costs down while maintaining acceptable profit margins.

In addition to ingredient selection, flavor innovation is crucial in capturing consumer interest. Today's consumers are adventurous, seeking bold and diverse flavors that offer a unique culinary experience. This trend presents an opportunity for developers to experiment with global flavors, incorporating exotic spices and herbs into their products. By doing so, they can create a distinctive product that stands out in a crowded market while still adhering to clean label standards.

The uncertain economy has heightened consumer awareness of value. While they are willing to pay a premium for quality products, they still expect value for their dollar. This means that developers must find ways to deliver products that not only meet health and flavor expectations but also offer perceived value. Packaging innovation, for instance, can play a significant role in enhancing the perceived value of a product. Eco-friendly, resealable, and portion-controlled packaging can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers while offering convenience and perceived quality.

“Today's consumers are adventurous, seeking bold and diverse flavors...”

In this environment, strategic partnerships and collaborations can also be a valuable tool for developers. By partnering with ingredient suppliers, technology providers, and even other food brands, developers can share resources, reduce costs, and accelerate the development process. These collaborations can lead to innovative solutions that might not be possible independently, such as co-developing new ingredient blends or sharing research and development efforts.

The uncertain market conditions underscore the importance of agility and adaptability in product development. Developers must be prepared to pivot quickly in response to changing consumer preferences, regulatory updates, or supply chain disruptions. This requires a robust product development process that includes regular consumer feedback, iterative testing, and flexible production capabilities. By staying attuned to consumer trends and being willing to adapt, developers can ensure their products remain relevant and competitive.

The timing of product launches is another critical consideration in this uncertain economy. As consumer interests fluctuate, aligning product launches with peak demand periods can maximize success. For example, introducing a refreshing, natural beverage in the summer can capitalize on the seasonal demand for cool, thirst-quenching products. Similarly, launching a hearty soup in the winter can appeal to consumers seeking comfort and warmth during colder months.

The current economic uncertainty presents a unique opportunity for food and beverage developers to innovate and respond to evolving consumer demands. By focusing on natural and Whole Foods, maintaining clean labels, and delivering value, developers can create products that resonate with today's health-conscious, value-driven consumers. While challenges remain, strategic ingredient sourcing, flavor innovation, and collaborative partnerships can help developers navigate these obstacles and bring successful products to market. Now, more than ever, is the time to seize the opportunity and lead the way in food and beverage innovation.

Smoked Pork Ribs

Ingredients

What you need

- 2 racks St. Louis ribs
- Wood blend: hickory, oak, pecan
- Smoker set to 250°F

Simple Rub

- Mix together:
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp kosher salt
- 1 tbsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp Chinese five-spice
- Rub all over the ribs.

Simple Mop Sauce

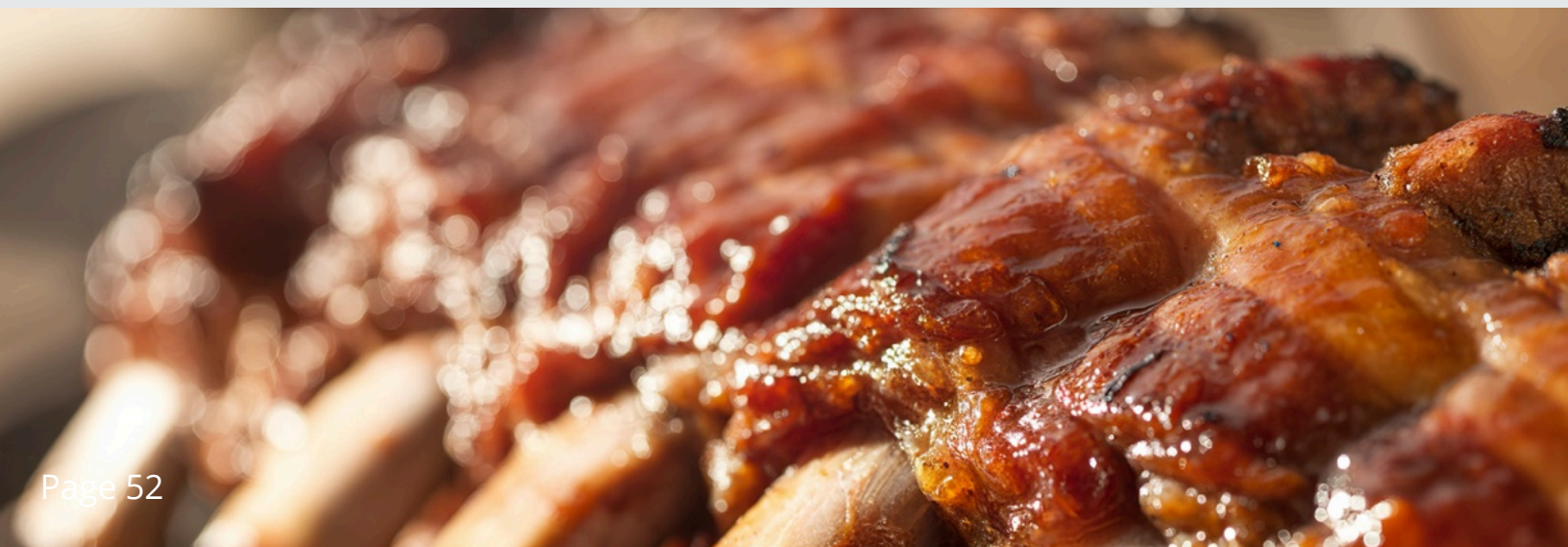
- Mix in a small pan:
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- Warm it on low heat until blended.
- Use this to mop the ribs during the cook.

Instructions

1. Preheat smoker to 250°F with hickory, oak, and pecan.
2. Rub ribs with simple rub.
3. Put ribs on the smoker bone-side down.
4. Smoke for about 3 to 4 hours, mopping with simple mop sauce every 45 minutes after the first hour.
5. Wrap the ribs when they hit 160°F to 170°F internal temp.
6. Add a little mop sauce or honey before wrapping if you want them sweeter.
7. Put the wrapped ribs back on the smoker for 1.5 to 2 hours.
8. Pull the ribs when they reach 198°F to 203°F internal temp and feel tender.
9. Rest for 10 to 15 minutes, then slice.

Quick Summary

- Smoker temp: 250°F
- Wrap temp: 160–170°F
- Pull temp: 198–203°F
- Total time: about 5 to 6 hours





AMERICAN HARVEST SMASH

Ingredients

2 oz bourbon

1 oz maple syrup

1 oz fresh apple cider

2 dashes aromatic bitters

Crushed ice

6-8 fresh mint leaves

Apple slice & mint sprig for garnish

Instructions

1. Muddle mint leaves with maple syrup in a rocks glass.
2. Add bourbon and apple cider.
3. Stir gently to combine.
4. Fill glass with crushed ice.
5. Stir again until glass is frosty.
6. Top with more crushed ice.
7. Garnish with apple slice and mint sprig.
8. Add 2 dashes of bitters on top.

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a gourmet dish. In the foreground, several seared scallops with a golden-brown crust are garnished with fresh green herbs and small red berries. A hand in the upper right corner is sprinkling a fine white powder, likely salt, over the dish, creating a dynamic spray of particles. The background is dark and blurred, emphasizing the food and the action of seasoning.

SP

SAVORPOINT™

www.savorpoint.com