

Address lifestyle trends

Staying Power Across Target Markets and Shifting Opinions - Develop a menu with foods and beverages consumers' routines demand.



Appealing to families, children, and customers of different generations is a balancing act. However, one constant is that food trends follow lifestyle trends. In addition to introducing on-trend flavors to the menu, some operators add innovative touches by tapping into lifestyle trends, tweaking their service styles, and making menu changes that appeal to their target audiences.

Drinks are a bevy of opportunity

Snacking and beverage-only occasions are most common among Millennials and Gen Z customers.¹ For their away-from-home snacks, 52% choose something other than traditional snacks,² such as entrees, desserts, or sides. Beverages can energize menus with creative juice hybrids or added flavorings such as turmeric or ginger. For coffee drinks, specialized milks or seasonal flavorings add boosts of flavor and protein. Alternative milks also appeal to health-conscious customers. Since 2011, alternative milks – including hazelnut, almond and rice milk – have experienced 60% menu growth.³

Make healthier menu options available

Gen Y customers (27%) have the most affinity for grab-and-go food and drinks.¹ When it comes to snacks, 15% of customers opt for more healthful away-from-home snack choices and 22% go for a balance of indulgence and better-for-you offerings.² When parents buy a new food, 75% of them are looking for options that work well on the go.⁴ Whether it's takeout from a restaurant or a convenience store, better-for-you snacks are an effective way to capture busy customers.

Capture their attention with technology

Digital menus make it easy to add menu items, promote specials, and feature images of promotable foods and drinks. In-store and drive-thru consumers express a strong interest in digital screens that confirm their orders.⁵ Additionally, up-to-date menu boards, ordering systems, and mobile payment options offer competitive advantages. Operators are considering tech-heavy menus: 46% say they are interested in adding digital screens with changing menu images and information, 41% are interested in apps that send menus to patrons' cell phones, and 35% are interested in mobile payment options.⁵

37% of Millennial consumers and 31% of Gen X consumers have used a mobile app to find a place to eat or drink.¹

Promote family-friendly foods

While 80% of operators say families help build repeat business, only 30% of operators actively market to families. Promotable foods include better-for-you breakfast items such as yogurt or juice-based smoothies and vegetable sides with kid appeal. Parents agree that kids' menus could use a boost.⁶ In fact, 50% of kids enjoy eating adventurous ethnic cuisines as well as mainstream ones.⁴

87% of kids who try authentic Mexican cuisine (beyond tacos and quesadillas) enjoy it.⁴

Successful children's menus build business from families.⁵ Two out of three operators agree that families with children help drive repeat business.⁴ Millennial parents are the most conscious of kid-friendliness when making their venue and menu choices.¹ Three out of four consumers eat away from home with their children at least once a week and 93% of parents say they consider their kids' preferences on these occasions.⁶

Appeal to tiny diners

Children's palates are often more sophisticated than operators realize,⁴ so they can include more choices for kids while still appealing to their parents. Offer try-before-you-buy samples, which encourage children to try new flavors. While chicken strips appear on 60% of kids' menus in foodservice operations, other choices such as angus beef and tuna appeal to children as well.⁶ Similarly, ethnic grains have kid appeal. Approximately half the children who have tried bulgur wheat and two-thirds of children who have had couscous enjoyed the experience.⁴ Designing new kids' menus is not without its challenges for operators, but it is also an area of opportunity that can increase traffic.

Parents typically encourage their children to try new menu items⁶

- 72%: "I strongly encourage my kids to try new foods"
- 12%: "My kids have to try new foods"
- 16%: "I don't require that my kids try new foods"

Sources:

1. Datassential, CPP – Generations, 2015
2. Datassential, CPP – Motivators & Behavior, 2015
3. Datassential, Next Generation Coffee Rituals, August 2016
4. Datassential, FoodBytes – What Do Kids Want to Eat?, June 2016
5. Datassential, Menu Boards Keynote, July 2015
6. Datassential, Kids' Menus Keynote, May 2016