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TREND REPORT

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FLAVORS

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2024 FOOD TRENDS

77%

OF CONSUMERS ARE EXCITED ABOUT NEW FOOD AND BEVERAGE TRENDS IN 2024



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Don't miss 2023's final episode of the industry-renowned Datassential webinar on **Thursday, Dec. 7, at 12 p.m. CST.** Join Datassential experts Jack Li, Claire Conaghan, and Huy Do as they dive into the year's economic news, discuss the performance of major brands, take inspiration from some of the hottest LTOs from around the world, and arm you with the 2024 outlook.

REGISTER NOW

I think every editor's letter introducing our annual trends report has started with some variation on, "It's here!" But we know how hotly-anticipated this report is every year — in fact, we start getting questions about it in the summer, right after our *Midyear Trend Report* releases (and there is still plenty of relevant trend data and information in that report).

So, without further delay...it's here!

As always, our annual issue of *FoodBytes* covering our trend predictions for the year ahead is just a small sample of what you'll find in the full report, which will release in Report Pro in the near future. That report will be packed with even more data, generational breakdowns, commentary from consumers, and real-world examples. There will even be a few special sections that are exclusive to the full report, including an AI-driven look at what the future could hold for a variety of industry concepts, from restaurants to supermarkets to convenience stores. If you aren't a Report Pro subscriber, send us a message today to make it a part of your 2024 package and you'll have access to the entire report the minute it launches.

But we know you've been waiting for an overview of the trends to watch out for in 2024, so you'll still find plenty of data and food for thought in the pages ahead. If there is one topic that will surely dominate the conversation as we head into a new year, it's prices. When we asked consumers to give the food industry advice for the year ahead, the vast majority of them mentioned high prices in some capacity. We clearly have our work cut out for us.

But there are plenty of trends to get excited about, from unique foods and flavors (we have a whopping 30 in this year's report) to tech (have you heard of "cobotics"?) to changes in demographic groups like Gen Z. We hope this issue jumpstarts your creative process as we head into a brand new year that will surely be filled with innovation, excitement, and success.

Mike Kostyo,
Trendologist & Associate Director

HEALTH IN 2024

68%

of consumers want to drink more water and exercise more in 2024, which tied for consumers' top health goals

VALUE IN 2024

32%

of consumers say 21-30% is the minimum percentage discount required for an everyday household item (food, clothing) to be a good deal

COVID IN 2024

27%

of consumers say they will likely wear a mask in public due to COVID in 2024

PRICES IN 2024

92%

of consumers say that "food prices have been too high for too long"

OUTLOOK IN 2024

63%

of consumers say they are optimistic about the year ahead

HOT TOPICS IN 2024

14%

of consumers say they are interested in GLP-1 prescription drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy

INDULGENCE IN 2024

34%

of consumers say they treat themselves to an indulgent food treat a few times a week

SCIENCE IN 2024

17%

of consumers say they are open to trying lab-grown meat

2024 FOOD TREND EUROPEAN 2.0



42%

of consumers love or like french cuisine

As consumers gravitated toward Mexican and Asian cuisines, many European cuisines were stagnating, both in the U.S. and in their home countries. But that's always a starting point for innovation, and now a new generation of chefs are rethinking what these classic cuisines can be. Look across the country and you'll find new Italian restaurants with bolder, spicier, often TikTok-friendly dishes on the menu; French spots that combine both light and indulgent dishes, new takes on classic desserts and pastries, and a less stuffy view of fine dining; Greek concepts that feature a fun, party-like atmosphere alongside serious seafood that highlights the Mediterranean; and mashup restaurants that combine English and Indian flavors in crowd-pleasing pub fare. As consumers head to the U.K., Italy, France, and Spain on post-COVID vacations, expect them to return with a taste for the fresh ideas and ingredients they are finding abroad — think crispy English potatoes, unique Italian pastas and cheeses, high-end Spanish meats, and more.

2024 FOOD TREND TREND COMEBACKS



30%

of Millennials say they still eat gourmet cupcakes regularly

In this era of "newstalgia," everything old is new again. Remember when everything was being turned into an in-house pickle over a decade ago? Now pickles are the "it" ingredient again. Do you miss the cocktails you enjoyed in the '90s? They're all making a comeback, with espresso martinis becoming one of the fastest-growing menu items in the last 12 months. Do you recall the "mini dessert" craze that took over menus? **Now "mixed dessert" plates are growing on menus again, up 37% at midscale operators in the past 12 months alone.** As Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers longingly look back to a rose-colored past amid continued worries, while Gen Z experiences some of these trends for the first time, brands should dive into the archives for ideas. That includes foods, dishes, and ingredients that consumers miss (we're looking at you, Keebler Pizzarias and O'Boises), but also decor (consumers continue to seek out old-fashioned Pizza Hut restaurants) and advertising or marketing campaigns (welcome back, McDonald's Halloween buckets). If you have a concept that resonates with nostalgic consumers, challenge yourself to find a way to bring it back in 2024.

2024

FLAVORS & INGREDIENTS TO KNOW

We've expanded our foods, flavors, and ingredients to know list to a whopping 30 this year. This year we're featuring the flavors that are red-hot that you can activate on right now, the future-forward flavors to consider for 2024, and the far-off flavors and ingredients that should be on your radar. While not every food or flavor will work for every segment or brand, you are sure to find something to add excitement to your menu or product line. For data and real-world examples on each of these, stay tuned for the full report, releasing soon.

NOW

Za'atar: In growth mode for over a decade, za'atar has become a go-to flavor enhancer.

Tahini: The creamy drizzle of choice for veggies and bowls.

Yuzu: When you want citrus, but trendy.

Mochi: Branching out into donuts, ice cream, and beyond.

Black Garlic: Taking its sweet time in growth, black garlic is steadily becoming a chef favorite.

Pineapple: The fruit of the moment.

Harissa The new sriracha.

Castelvetrano Olives The olive variety to call out.

Focaccia: From pandemic fave to new menu varieties.

Ponzu: The new soy sauce.

2024

Flowers: Floral flavors, from lavender to violet, continue to blossom.

Mustard Seeds: A flavorful crunch and crust enhancer.

Spicy Ranch: Put it on everything.

Caesar Everything: Kale, asparagus — anything but romaine.

Spam: The hip chef's nostalgic secret ingredient.

Shawarma: And just about any meat carved off a spit.

Shaved Ice: Look for new globally-inspired options, flavors, and toppings.

Cresto De Gallo: The "it" pasta shape of 2024.

Mexican Beers: The growth leaders for the category.

Sweetened Condensed Milk: From desserts to drinks, SCM is taking center stage.

FUTURE

Amba: Add tang with this pickled green mango sauce.

Scamorza: First mozzarella, then burrata, now scamorza.

Sunomono: The vinegary cucumber salad adds a bright note.

Grains of Selem: The black pepper with a smoky, slightly bitter flavor.

Nam Prik Pao: Thai chile jam, but bolder.

Hojicha: Take green tea, but make it smoky.

Toasted Rice Powder: A back-of-house workhorse.

Checca: Uncooked tomato sauce is as fresh as it gets.

Gooseberry: A next-level fruit and flavor option.

Shiso: The go-to fresh herb for a range of Asian dishes.

2024 DEMOGRAPHIC TREND GOLDEN AGE

While our culture is incessantly focused on youth, you ignore more senior generations at your peril. Indeed, the national median age continues to get closer to 40, while 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65 starting in 2030. These cohorts have changed a lot — they have plenty of buying power, they are living longer, they are seeking out unique experiences and traveling, they are living at home or in upscale retirement communities, and they enjoy a nice beer or glass of wine. In fact, **Gen X is more likely to seek out premium experiences, travel often, and regularly enjoy an alcoholic beverage than any other generation, while Boomers are the least likely to say they are watching their budget.** In 2024, companies need to make a real effort to understand the unique needs of Gen X and Boomers.

67%

of Boomers say their goal is to live at home for as long as possible

2024 OPERATIONAL TREND GEN Z GROWS UP

The oldest members of Gen Z aren't kids anymore. In fact, they are graduating from college, entering the workforce, and making more purchasing decisions. **As you hire Gen Z, consider that this generation likes clarity in their role and goals, with 39% saying they prefer clear rules and guidelines at work.** The same percentage prefer to work for companies that share their values, but they are also more skeptical of work and companies, with **36% agreeing that a job is just a way to earn money and survive.** Coming of age during the pandemic means that this generation is being thrown into a world that can be a little scary and anxiety-inducing. While this generation grew up glued to phones, tablets, and monitors, they are also pushing back on it a bit — **47% say they are nervous about the future of technology, while a third say they regularly take breaks from tech.** As we enter 2024, evolve your thinking on Gen Z and consider who they are as employees and consumers.

21%

of Gen Z says they want a mentor at work

2024 OPERATIONAL TREND RETHINKING DELIVERY

The pandemic created a huge increase in delivery infrastructure and ordering in a short amount of time, but in 2024 we'll rethink some of the pain points associated with delivery. In the immediate term, high prices are consumers' biggest pain point, with **half of consumers agreeing delivery is too expensive and 39% saying they've abandoned their cart when they saw the final price.** Delivery platforms will need to make their value proposition clear, even going above and beyond what's expected in order to surprise and delight customers. In the long term, there are a lot of pain points to solve for — many consumers told us that customization is difficult, personalized instructions or requests weren't followed, they've received poor quality or damaged orders (TikTok is full of consumers complaining that delivery orders are smaller), and menu descriptions are inaccurate,



38%
of consumers want food to be delivered in less than 30 minutes



2024 OPERATIONAL TREND STOP DOING THIS!

It's been too easy to go back to "business as usual" post-pandemic, but 2024 is a chance to rethink some of the outdated practices that consumers dislike. With so many consumers reporting that they are often disappointed with the dining out experience, rethinking these practices can be an easy win for operators.

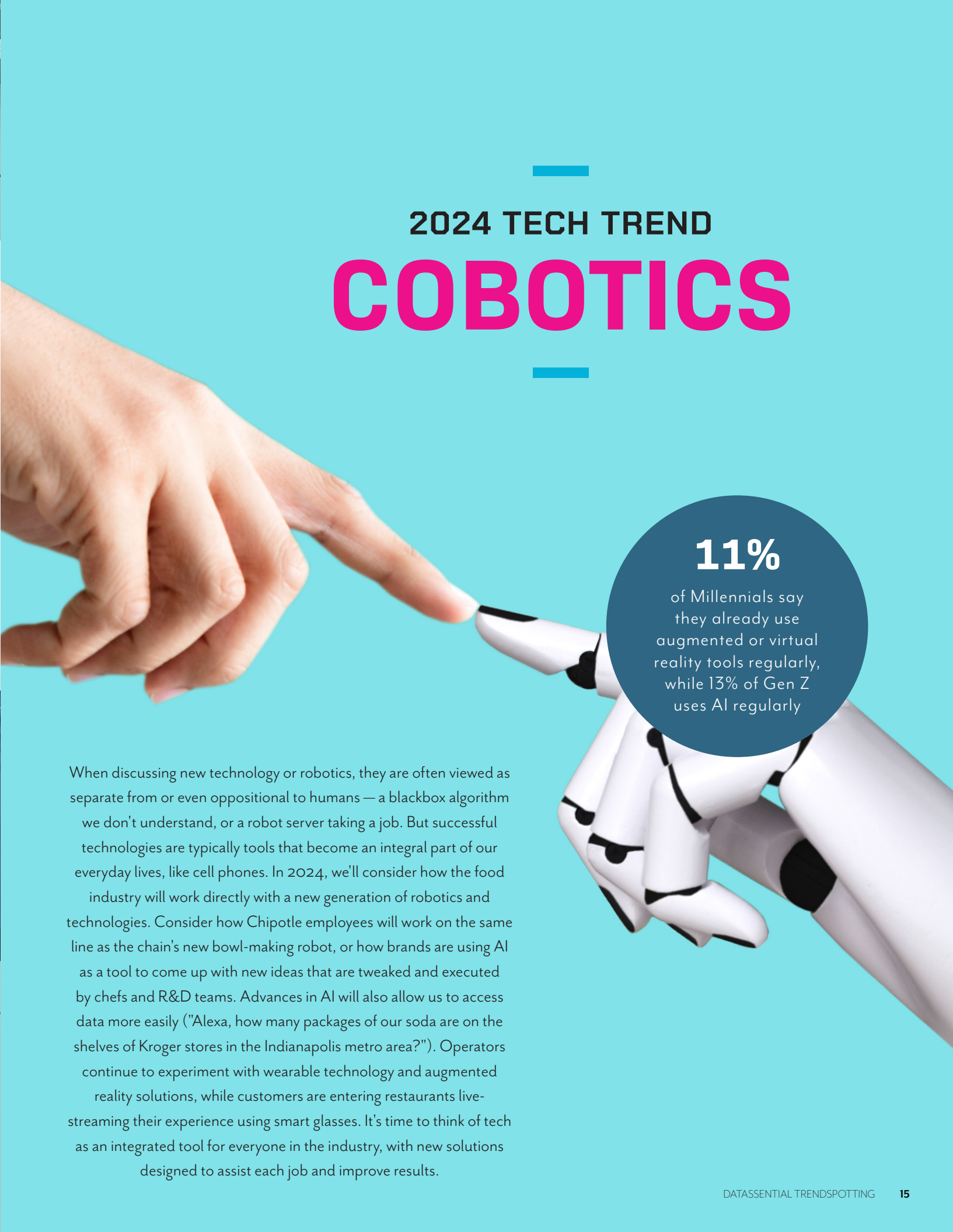
- **49% of consumers want operators to drop credit card fees**
- **48% want operators to put prices on their website**
- **26% of consumers would end formal dress codes (including 31% of Boomers)**
- **35% dislike tiny portions**
- **27% of consumers say salt and pepper should always be on the table**
- **20% of consumers would end market pricing**



70%
of operators
planned to upgrade
their food prep
equipment this year

**2024 TECH TREND
THE CHANGING BACK OF HOUSE**

There's no shortage of new-fangled equipment and technology available for the back-of-house today, but operators want to know that those big capital purchases will be worth it. They don't want to take a chance on a new piece of equipment that will be obsolete in just a few years. As we head into 2024, there are a few safe bets. As operators still feel the economic crunch, they want to see a clear ROI on equipment investments. Simple robotics that save on labor, often from trusted suppliers, will be key (less robot servers and more robot drink fillers). Operators want to future-proof their kitchens, whether that means purchasing electric and induction options in the face of changing legislation or ensuring the back-of-house can pivot to accommodate changing demands for pickup and delivery. Options like ventless hoods and smaller/multifunctional equipment allow operators to open in a range of non-traditional locations. Look for a new generation of combi ovens and speed ovens to continue finding their place in today's kitchens (more operators are interested in purchasing these options than any other piece of equipment, according to our [2023 Pulse Report](#)). Freshness, great taste, and cleanliness are table stakes today and back-of-house equipment must support those need states, whether it's Subway rolling out deli slicers or tech-enabled buffets and salad bars that promote food safety.



**2024 TECH TREND
COBOTICS**

11%
of Millennials say
they already use
augmented or virtual
reality tools regularly,
while 13% of Gen Z
uses AI regularly

When discussing new technology or robotics, they are often viewed as separate from or even oppositional to humans — a blackbox algorithm we don't understand, or a robot server taking a job. But successful technologies are typically tools that become an integral part of our everyday lives, like cell phones. In 2024, we'll consider how the food industry will work directly with a new generation of robotics and technologies. Consider how Chipotle employees will work on the same line as the chain's new bowl-making robot, or how brands are using AI as a tool to come up with new ideas that are tweaked and executed by chefs and R&D teams. Advances in AI will also allow us to access data more easily ("Alexa, how many packages of our soda are on the shelves of Kroger stores in the Indianapolis metro area?"). Operators continue to experiment with wearable technology and augmented reality solutions, while customers are entering restaurants live-streaming their experience using smart glasses. It's time to think of tech as an integrated tool for everyone in the industry, with new solutions designed to assist each job and improve results.

2024 MARKETING TREND

MODERNIZE YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

Today's food brands look very different — have you kept up with the changes? In 2024, spend time adapting your brand to fit modern consumer needs and wants.

Modern food brands are releasing clothing, going all-in on attention-getting LTOs and product releases, taking stances on hot-button issues (be careful!), and conversing with customers directly through social media (and sometimes getting a little spicy in the process). Instead of trying to create a single brand that reaches everyone (ultimately reaching no one), smaller brands are finding a niche and sticking to it, while larger brands are creating targeted marketing initiatives to reach different audiences and demographic groups. According to our data, **29% of consumers would visit a pop-up restaurant or shop from their favorite brands, 28% agree it's OK for brands to be more risqué or funny online, and 21% have purchased a limited-edition product from a food brand** like a sneaker collab or special snack released online for one day only. But watch out — a quarter of consumers say food brands are launching too many marketing gimmicks. It's about quality, not quantity.



18%
of consumers have
worn a clothing item
from a food brand



WHAT ADVICE WOULD CONSUMERS GIVE TO THE FOOD INDUSTRY FOR 2024?

"Food quality and service aside, I would really like for brands and companies to pay their employees a fair and livable wage."

Female, 21

"I want to see prices reduced. I realize that prices had to be increased at the height of inflation. However, they are rarely reduced when inflation is normalized."

Female, 79

"I would like to see healthier food options and lower prices for food in the coming year. I would like to see more foods with lower fat, sodium, sugar, and cholesterol and that are higher in antioxidants and essential amino acids."

Male, 54

"Start treating people nicer; in other words, no more bad customer service. I have been to a few restaurants where they seat you and you don't see a waiter for almost 10 minutes. It's not good for business."

Male, 45

"Make sure, before sending food out the drive-up window or for delivery, that the food order is correct and that it's prepared without being burnt, dry, or that simply no one cared."

Female, 51

"We like to eat out at restaurants that offer good food and friendly service at a reasonable price. It doesn't matter what cuisine it is, just do what is right and people will respond. We have."

Male, 72

"Smaller portion sizes. I want to enjoy my meal and not feel like I have to eat it all because it costs so much. I don't want to have to take home part of my meal either."

Male, 58

"Please be specific when listing ingredients. I hate it when the label just says 'spices.' I'm allergic to black pepper and garlic so I really need to know what's in there."

Female, 46

"Just please provide more good quality food at an affordable price. Ditch the lab-grown, chemical-stuffed items and give us real food."

Female, 35

"I would like the food industry to be more innovative in terms of healthy options, and focus more on safety and the quality of their food."

Female, 26

"First and foremost, quit paying CEOs so much money, period! They say inflation is back down, yet my chicken is still \$4.49 a pound. It has not gone back down. Neither has my pasta or anything else. So cut the CEO pay and pass that savings onto us."

Y'all are greedy."

Female, 53

"One thing that always irritates me is packaging. Opening packages and containers is nothing but a struggle. Could these people come up with an easier way to get food out of a box?"

Female, 75

"Quit throwing out food just because it has passed a sell-by date. There are plenty of people who are going without food that could benefit from that stuff."

Female, 42

"Keep the packaging sizes the same. Stop making packages smaller. I often have to purchase multiple quantities of a product instead of one."

Female, 31

"I would like to see a larger variety of foods, such as spices or teas, from around the world easily available in stores."

Female, 28

"If there was one thing I could tell the food industry in 2024, it would be more spicy options, as well as more sweet and savory options."

Female, 29

"Keep innovating, work on sustainability, and do good for the world."

Male, 37

WHAT'S COMING UP NEXT?

Did you know 84% of shoppers visited the prepared foods department on their last trip to the supermarket? That's just one of the stats you'll find in our new *Supermarket Prepared Food Keynote Report*. In next month's issue of *FoodBytes*, we dive into the latest consumer and operator data on supermarket prepared foods with a sneak peek at this essential report. From current consumer perceptions to what they want to see in the future, you are sure to learn something new.



HUNGRY FOR MORE TRENDS? Check out last month's Report Pro releases!



TW: Dessert Trends

Sweeten up your menu or product line with on-trend desserts.

This issue of *Trend Watch* features out-of-this-world dessert trends including traditional Chinese mooncakes that are getting a modern spin with flavors like mango and chocolate. Also, get buttered up with buttermilk pie and butter mochi; check out creative cheesecakes; see how cherry blossoms are blossoming on menus; and stare into the eye of the tiger with leche de tigre.



CC: Candy Trends

Things keep getting sweeter with our look at the state of candy.

This issue of *Creative Concepts* is full of treats (not tricks, don't worry) and candy trends sure to tempt your sweet tooth. Discover what's trending in chocolate (plant-based Reese's, anyone?), how different candies appeal to different generations, top reasons consumers purchase candy, and so much more.



IC: Global Sides & Apps

Take inspiration from around the world to liven up the menu.

Think your customers are sick of the same old sides? Check out side inspiration from across the pond in this issue of *International Concepts*. Cue the claps for this issue featuring global sides and apps that include everything from a primer on 10 Turkish sides/apps to know to queso chicharrones to nopales salads.

