

WHAT'S *Hot* 2025

CULINARY
FORECAST



Top of THE CHARTS



TOP 10 OVERALL

1 *Sustainability & Local Sourcing*

2 *Cold Brew*

3 *Korean Cuisine*

4 *Hot Honey*

5 *Vietnamese Cuisine*

6 *Hyper-Local Beer & Wine*

7 *Fermented/Pickled Foods*

8 *Wellness Drinks*

9 *Creative Spritzes*

10 *Value Deals*



WHAT WILL BE TRENDING IN '25?



DAK-GALBI

Personal and planetary well-being, coupled with a deeper exploration of Southeast Asian cuisines, take center stage in the 2025 What's Hot Culinary Forecast.

Industry professionals identified restaurants' commitment to sustainability as the leading overall trend that will impact where customers choose to eat out.

Generationally, we can expect that customers' support of businesses that support environmental stewardship—through local sourcing, reduced-waste cooking, sustainable ingredients—will grow stronger rather than diminish.

Southeast Asian foods lit the survey, taking the top three spots under Dishes and two of the Top 10 overall. Korean- or K-dramas have a distinctive niche in global entertainment, including in the U.S.; combined with popular new Korean cooking competitions, and food documentaries, viewers have become especially curious about Korean food traditions and innovations. This year, Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino cuisines all ranked high.



COLD BREW COFFEE

The Association team behind What's Hot assumed customers are sensitive to restaurant value, and value deals came in second to sustainability as a Macro Trend. That said, in the overall trends, value was outranked by the likes of cold brew, hot honey, global cuisine and local beer and wine, telling us that at the end of the day, if the food's worth it, it's worth it.



BIBIMBAP

Asian Ascending

TOP DISHES

1. *Korean Cuisine (bingsoo, kimchi, bibimbap)*
2. *Vietnamese Cuisine (pho, bahn mi, mi Quang)*
3. *Filipino Cuisine (tocino style pork, chicken adobo, lumpia, pancit)*
4. *Customized Croissants*
5. *Mushroom-Infused Dishes*

BEEF PHO



CROISSANT HAM SANDWICH

More than 70% of U.S. counties boast an Asian restaurant, but where Chinese, Japanese and Thai have dominated, consumers are digging into the unique ingredients/flavor profiles, potential wellness benefits, and serving styles of cuisines from throughout Southeast Asia. Consumers have an increasingly nuanced palate for spice and heat that many Asian dishes deliver, and many of them may also check the wellness box, with an underpinning philosophy that food is medicine.

The peppers, pickling and fermentation prevalent in Asian preparations carry perceived health benefits. Asian cuisine also lends itself to interesting and delicious fusion mashups, especially with Latin American dishes. Exposure to hyper-regional Asian cuisine is increasing on social media and streaming services that import myriad dramas, comedies, cooking shows and food documentaries. Consumers' access to authentic ingredients through a proliferation of Asian groceries in cities and suburbs across the U.S., also indicates this trend could grow.



Oh Honey, Honey

TOP INGREDIENTS

1. *Honey and Seeds*
2. *Functional Mushrooms*
3. *Pineapple*
4. *Tamarind*
5. *Ube*

Honey is the bee's knees for 2025. Honey and seeds and hot honey top both the ingredients and flavors/condiments categories respectively in this year's What's Hot forecast. Honey is a sugar, but it's high in antioxidants, has anti-inflammatory properties, and it's a natural, versatile product. Its rich, mild flavor pairs perfectly with seeds, nuts and spices in an unlimited number of culinary combinations—a drizzle of honey and sesame seeds over a square of Italian Robiola or Greek feta could be a menu starter or dessert.



BAKED PEAR WITH GORGONZOLA CHEESE, WALNUTS, & HONEY

Mushrooms are out of the shade and into the spotlight, celebrated for their versatility as ingredients, as meat substitutes, and for their potential functional properties, including cognitive support, mood enhancement, and energy-boosting. Some new mushroom-infused beverages advertise all the euphoric buzz of alcohol with none of the aftereffects. Also on the ingredients list: ube, the yam variety used in Filipino desserts. It's catching attention thanks to its glorious purple hue and sweet, vanilla-like flavor.

FRIED FOREST CHANTERELLE MUSHROOMS



All In For Fermentation



TOP FLAVORS & CONDIMENTS

1. *Hot Honey*
2. *Fermented/Pickled Foods*
3. *Matcha*
4. *Miso*
5. *Spicy Maple*

After hot honey, with its sweet start and spicy finish, fermented foods are riding a wave. The process, historically developed to preserve food and beverage, intensifies flavor, offers potential functional benefits, like gut health, and checks the box for sustainability.



HOT HONEY



PICKELED FOOD

Ordered up by both the converted and culinarily curious, dishes with fermented ingredients are staples of the three cuisines topping this year's Top Dishes category, Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino. Think kombucha, kimchi, tempeh, gochujang and miso, the fermented paste made from soybeans, a grain, salt and koji (a mold). With thousands of varieties, miso adds a delectable umami flavor to soups, sauces, dressings and batters.



Good, & Possibly Good For You

TOP BEVERAGES

1. *Cold Brew*
2. *Wellness Drinks (with vitamins, supplements, or fiber)*
3. *Boba*
4. *Kombucha/Fermented Drinks*
5. *Energy Drinks*

BLUEBERRY PROTEIN SMOOTHIE



Wellness-conscious consumers of all ages are driving the growing interest in beverages that boost energy levels, lower stress, enhance digestive health and sharpen cognition. They're seeking beverages that not only taste good but that potentially improve immunity and increase general well-being. Both wellness drinks infused with vitamin-rich supplements, and fermented drinks, like kombucha (said to improve gut health), are examples.

Customers also expect their beverages to deliver on the flavor front—like how smooth cold brew eliminates hot brew's bitterness—and are gravitating to drinks with unique mouth feel and more complex tastes. Texture adds a multisensory experience. Pearls, or popping “boba,” for example, gel-encased spheres that burst with flavors like vanilla, coffee, cocoa, mango, pomegranate, and more, are elevating beverages, cocktails, and even desserts.



Flights Take Off

TOP BEVERAGE ALCOHOL

1. *Hyper-Local Beer & Wine*
2. *Creative Spritzes*
3. *Flights*
4. *Innovative Old Fashioneds*
5. *'90s Martinis (espresso, apple martinis)*

With sustainability topping the overall 2025 What's Hot list, it's no wonder that hyper-local beer and wine are predicted to be beverage menu must-haves in the coming year. Locally crafted beers and wines connect customers to the community, allowing them to support local business and eco-friendly processing. When it comes to cocktails, many customers are nostalgic; smooth cocktails like espresso martinis and innovative old-fashioned are examples.



ESPRESSO
MARTINI



GOLD
ALE BEER

Look for these and other alcohol beverages—martinis, mimosas, bloody marys—to be served in flights of three or four tasting-size glasses, allowing guests to sample different flavors and varieties in a presentation that indulges experimentation and can deliver a strong perceived value. Keep an eye out for no- and low-alcohol options for cocktails, beers, and wine—often offered not in a separate menu section, but simply as a choice of 'with or without' alcohol.

What's Top Of Mind?

TOP 10 MACRO TRENDS

1. *Sustainability & Local Sourcing*
2. *Value Deals/Propositions*
3. *Smaller or Streamlined Menus*
4. *Healthy Kids' Menus*
5. *Pop-Up Restaurants*
6. *Hyper-Local*
7. *Convenience Proteins (sous vide, individual serving packs, shelf stable, plant based)*
8. *Limited-Time-Only Menus*
9. *Flights*
10. *Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration*



Macro trends reflect consumers' bigger-picture priorities, and those considerations cover a lot of ground in 2025. AI integration, smaller and streamlined menus and convenience proteins speak to the labor shortage in the kitchen. Vendors at the National Restaurant Association Show introduced a number of precooked, sous-vide, pre-carved and pre-ground plant and animal proteins designed to ease food-prep pressures, improve consistency and speed service in a short-handed environment.

BEER FLIGHT



Innovation is always a pull, and pop-up restaurants, LTOs and flights all speak to menu creativity that can set a concept apart. Flights ranked highly in the beverage alcohol category, but food flights are appearing with increased frequency. Flights of deviled eggs, baked potatoes, pancakes and desserts are just a few showing up on social media. This year's show boasted a huge variety of mini desserts, a hot trend a decade ago that seems to be making a comeback—just in time to get into flight formation.

METHODOLOGY

Targeted to thought leaders in the culinary world, industry professionals weighed in to tell us what they see as the leading menu trends for 2025 in this year's What's Hot Culinary Forecast (survey fielded October 2024).

Respondents were presented with a list of more than 70 food and beverage items and industry macro trends curated by the National Restaurant Association, including

- Dishes & Ingredients
- Flavors & Condiments
- Non-Alcohol Beverages
- Alcohol Beverages
- Macro Trends

and were asked to rate each item as a Hot, Not Hot, or Emerging trend. The top results are included in this report.

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WHAT'S *Hot* 2025

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