

5 Food Trends Here to Stay in 2021

In many ways, the trends of 2021 will pick up where 2020 food trends were expected to go before they were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the emerging food trends predicted for last year went into a kind of hibernation, that's a good starting point for what we'll see this year.

That said, 2021 still has its own trend identity, one that is shifting in the second half of the year. Right now, consumers are looking to improve their health, and get back on track. As more people are vaccinated, and feeling safer to venture out, we are seeing them seek out new trends and experiences again. This means striking a balance between indulgence and healthfulness, comfort with a specific awareness of ingredients.

Comfort food

After the year and a half we've had, a desire for comfort food comes as no surprise. In fact, 57% of consumers say they're interested in more comfort food trends this year—second only to health trends, says Mike Kostyo, trendologist for Datassential.

Instead of restaurateurs struggling to find eccentric ingredients or new promotions, 2021 will focus on getting back a sense of balance. People want to gather around the table, socialize and feel safe—so rather than obsessing over a rare new super-food, restaurants will move forward by providing guests with feel-good food and genuine hospitality, filling the need for comfort and warmth during these extraordinary times.



“For 2021 the trends will go towards comfort and simplicity. This is due to the pandemic, and everyone looking for a sense of comfort and normalcy. Unfortunately, restaurants are also just trying to survive and have limited resources and staffing now, so that will also impact what we all do moving into 2021.” — *Michael Schulson, chef and founder of Schulson Collective*

Flavor & the Menu's Dessert Flavor-focus Report speaks to the need of familiar, yet imaginative and translates well into to-go offerings, highlighting a beloved treat - the churro. Head to our recipe page for a spin on this classic.

Specific Spices & Ingredients



Consumers are paying extra-close attention to functional foods, looking for specialty spices on menus. In previous years. Now, the trend for specific spices and ingredients has expanded into front of pack claims for other spices, alliums, fruits and vegetables, like black garlic rather than just garlic. The desire for specific ingredients ties into the macro trend for transparency across the supply chain as consumers want to know more about the foods and flavors they are eating and the craving for uniqueness.

Consumers have an increased interest in their consumption habits, and the storytelling of the products they purchase. This story may include twists on traditional flavors, understanding the cooking techniques that add depth of flavor, or stories built for specific transparency in the products. Examples like Madagascar Bourbon Vanilla, Peruvian Chocolate, or Saigon Cinnamon can be found in our indulgent desserts.

Individual Portions



Not all dessert trends involve exciting new combinations of flavors, and one of the most well-represented trends you'll be seeing as we move forward with 2021 will be the prevalence of individual desserts that go a step beyond the traditional approach of selling slices of cakes, pies, and cheesecakes. In 2009, the National Restaurant Industry's survey results showed 83% of chefs stating mono-portion desserts were the next big thing in pastry. Restaurants will want to shift desserts and other food items crafted for ease of portability while still delivering on taste and quality.

Individually portioned and wrapped desserts are ideal to cater to this trend.

Nostalgia Is King



Dessert has always served as a safe haven for diners, a soft landing at the end of a meal where favorite indulgences await. Those pre-covid days were a distant memory for us all and now, people are craving what connects them to life before lockdowns. We're seeing a rise in flavors that reflect comfort and nostalgia, as most people attach certain flavors to their childhood. Of course, that familiarity doesn't mean that the dessert category lacks imagination. Cookies jam-packed with cereal have cafe visitors reminiscing of Saturday morning cartoons. Chocolate-chunk cookies remind us of laughing and baking with grandma. S'mores toppings can bring anyone back to sitting around the fire and sharing stories with dear friends.

Shareables: Dessert Charcuterie Boards

Hot on the heels of jarcuterie, and mail-order charcuterie boards, Pinterest predicts that fancy boards with unique toppings will continue to rise in popularity throughout 2021. However, it's no longer about just cured meats and cheeses: Bagel or pancake-topped breakfast charcuterie boards, colorful candy charcuterie boards, and snack-attack charcuterie boards will be the casual family meal du jour. Restaurants are taking advantage of the concept as an alternative to buffet displays, catering options, appetizers, and to-go menus. Small bite-sized pieces allow for portion control and share-ability, a concept that consumers are starting to get more comfortable with, again.



@modern_brie

"Charcuterie has taken off for many reasons, but one reason is because it's highly visual. It's all over social media and the internet, and

Millennials in particular reported even more impact on their diets from influencers and social media over the course of the pandemic,” says Sarah Marion, Ph.D., a Seattle, Washington-based director of syndicated research for the market research company Murphy Research. “Back in January a little more than a quarter of Millennials rated influencers and social media networks very influential on their eating habits. As social lives moved online, this number went up, hitting a high point of 41% in September and is currently sitting around 37%.” Searches for breakfast boards went up five-fold, dessert boards three-fold and Mexican charcuterie boards nearly two-fold from 2019 to 2020, according to Pinterest Business.

Full-service restaurants have opened their doors to welcome back customers, in what has proved to be a challenging environment, yet we are still seeing the strength, flexibility and innovation shining through. While consumer-needs evolve, restaurants strive to adapt and comfort, and set new trends for all to cherish.

Resources: Restaurant Dive ; Food & Wine ; Better Homes & Gardens