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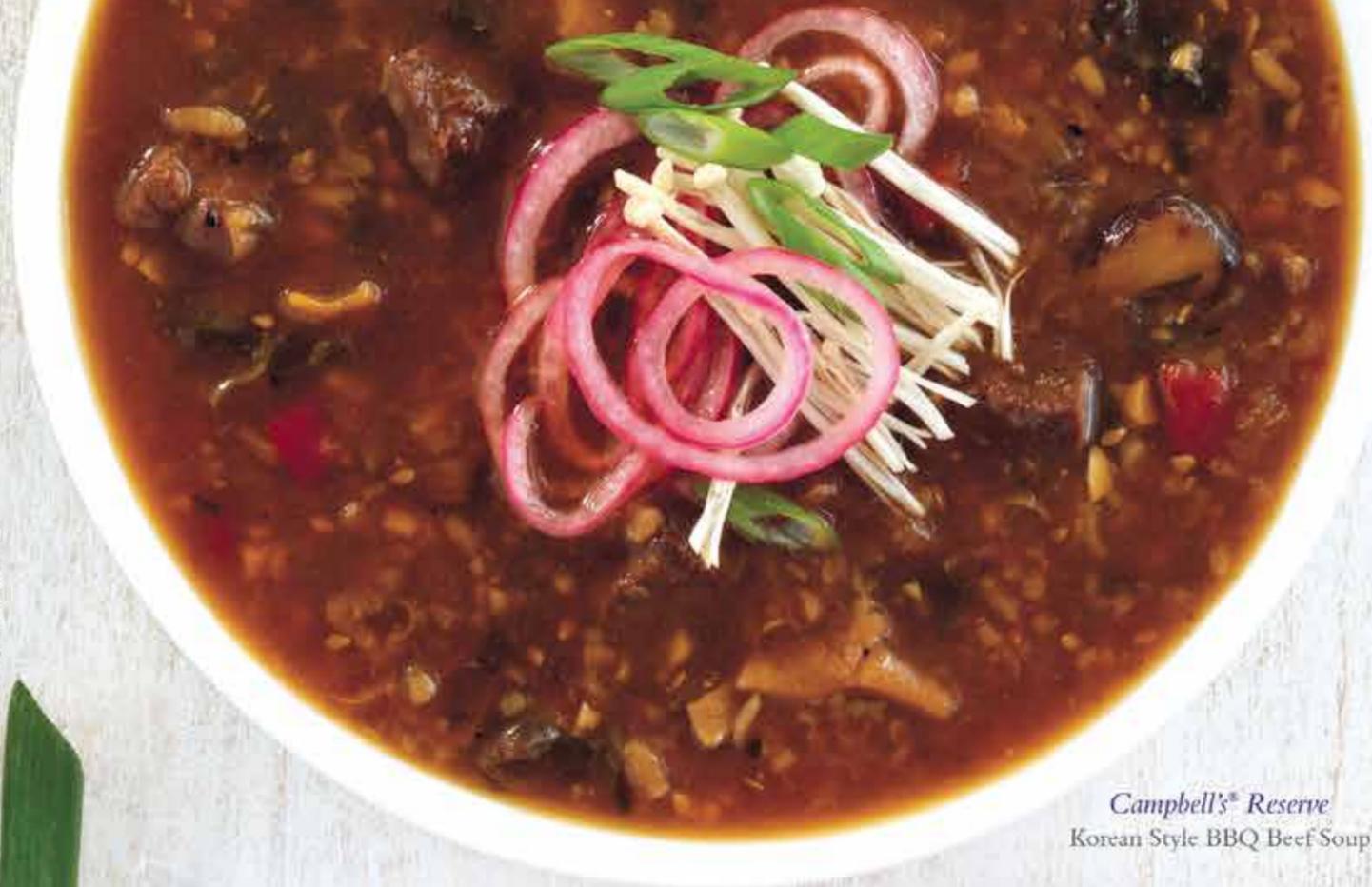
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HOGGING SPACE

PORK MEANS MORE THAN BACON PAGE 26

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FALL 2015

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The image shows a Progressive Commercial Bakery Flo figurine in its packaging. The figurine is a woman in a white chef's uniform with 'PROGRESSIVE' on the chest. The packaging includes various bakery-themed accessories: a white chef's hat, a rolling pin, a dough scraper, a whisk, a set of colorful marzipan balls, a glass of beer, a hand mixer, and a small cake. The background of the packaging is a chocolate swirl. A small inset image shows a white and blue delivery van with a woman driving.



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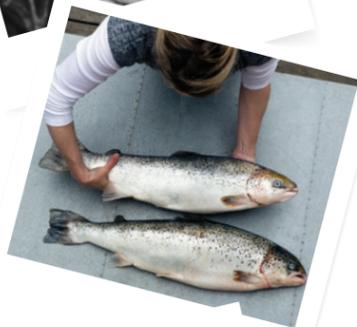
Who are these people?

What does it take to pull off every issue? A whole lot of different talent. Our regular contributors are called out here.

Paul Strabbing is soft on pastry. He shot the James Beard Award-winning book "Art of French Pastry" and documented the U.S. pastry team's participation in the French Coupe du Monde de la Patisserie. Paul has spent the past 15 years shooting food. When he's not behind the lens, he's on his '74 Moto Guzzi looking for the perfect Cuban sandwich.



Johanna Brannan Lowe is a food and prop stylist who has worked on James Beard Award-winning cookbooks. British born, she brings a charming accent and her innate quirkiness to the set. Off set, she tends to her English garden at her Michigan summer home, drinking gin and tonics and trimming the crusts off her cucumber sandwiches.



Gloria Dawson writes about restaurants and various other topics for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Tasting Table, Bloomberg Businessweek and others. She often thinks about opening a restaurant, and then she writes another story on how hard it is to run one. Follow her on Twitter @gloriadawson.



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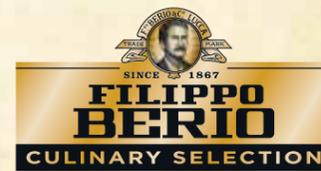
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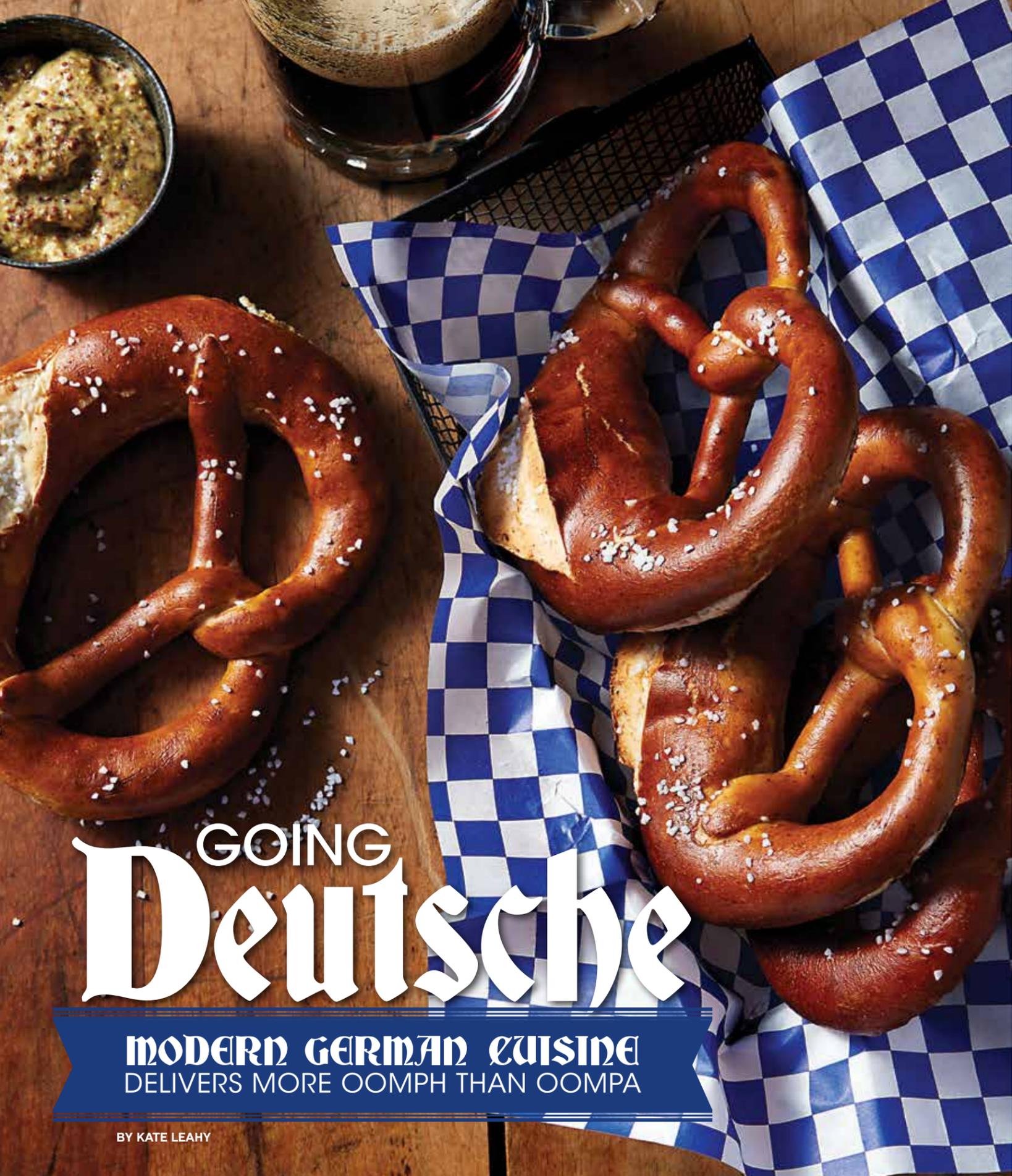


German Emerging

This European cuisine's heartier side is showing



Schupfnudeln, quark cheese, potato, and herb dumplings, from Brauhaus Schmitz represents a new take on German food.



GOING Deutsche

MODERN GERMAN CUISINE
DELIVERS MORE OOMPH THAN OOMPA

BY KATE LEAHY

Sauerkraut and pickles, craft beer, housemade sausages and Old World breads are the hallmarks of the artisanal movement. They make up the backbone of German cuisine, yet Germany has not been given the culinary star treatment like France, Italy, Spain and Scandinavia.

Some signs, though, indicate that German cuisine is starting to find a foothold. The most well-known German dish, sauerkraut, is found on more than 10 percent of menus in America, according to foodservice research firm Datassential. While spaetzle appears on only 5.4 percent of fine dining offerings, it has risen nearly 30 percent since 2010 on overall menus.

“As chefs, we’re always looking for the next exciting cuisine that we can pilfer for our own purposes,” says Executive Chef Andrew Zimmerman of Sepia in Chicago. “That’s how we get to Germany. Obviously they have good food. Germany is one of the great sausage-making countries of the world. It’s funny that it took us this long to get there.”

Recognizing the potential, some chefs, like Zimmerman, are adding German-accented dishes to their menus. Others are going all out Teutonic, opening German-centric restaurants. By avoiding—or adapting—beer hall clichés to appeal to contemporary American diners, these chefs are giving German food what it has rarely received before: a platform to showcase culinary depth.

“German food has been pinned to sausage and beer, and this is an important part of my restaurant,” says Chef-owner Tim Wiechmann of Bronwyn, a restaurant focused on the foods of Central Europe, in Somerville, Massachusetts. “But it is not everything.”

Defining New German

Philadelphia’s Brauhaus Schmitz opened in 2009 with a menu that customers expected to see in a beer hall, specifically *jägerschnitzel* (meat with brown mushroom sauce) and sausage. To avoid a schnitzel-and-sausage rut, Executive Chef Jeremy Nolen began revamping less-common German dishes and serving them as Wednesday specials.

The dishes sold out so often that they became part of the menu and the inspiration behind “New German Cooking,” the book Nolen wrote with his wife and Brauhaus Schmitz’s pastry chef, Jessica.

“Part of it is freshening up German-inspired cooking based on traditional ingredients,” he says.

In other words, making food lighter. Dandelion greens form the base of salads, while celery root—an ingredient more popular in Germany than celery—and other root vegetables are leveraged in sides, soups and salads.

The other part of new German, Nolen says, is revitalizing interest in regional dishes, such as *schupfnudeln*, a quark cheese, potato and herb dumpling and *spießbraten*, a spit-roasted pork preparation—though Nolen uses flank steak.

“I’ve been to dozens of German restaurants in the U.S. and have never seen it (*spießbraten*) on the menu,” he says.

TELL ME A STORY

Germany’s southwestern area of Idar-Oberstein is known for *spießbraten*, a regional specialty of spit-roasted pork. Gem prospectors, who had traveled to South America in the 1800s, learned the cooking technique from gauchos and brought the Argentinian method back home.





Veal Schnitzel with Cauliflower, Anchovies and Lemon-Caper Butter

*Chef-owner Tim Wiechmann
Bronwyn, Somerville, Massachusetts*

1 large head cauliflower
Olive oil, as needed
Salt and black pepper, to taste
1 cup milk
Dash of freshly ground nutmeg
8 veal loin medallions, pounded out thin
1 cup flour
3 eggs, beaten
1 cup panko
3 tablespoons butter
6 fresh anchovies
1 bunch flat leaf parsley, chopped
2 tablespoons capers
Juice of 1 lemon

Cut cauliflower into 1-inch florettes and toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt and pepper. Roast on sheet pan in preheated 375 F oven, 10 to 15 minutes.

Rough chop the remaining cauliflower and simmer in milk with salt and nutmeg until tender. Puree, adjust seasonings; keep warm.

Season meat with salt and pepper. Dredge in flour, eggs, then panko. Fry in cast iron skillet heated with oil until golden and crispy. Drain.

Brown butter, add anchovies and saute. Add parsley, capers and lemon juice; remove from heat.

To plate, make a swipe of cauliflower puree and top with roasted cauliflower. Place schnitzel in the middle and spoon sauce over the meat.



Sauerkraut

*Executive Chef Ben Pollinger
Oceana, New York*

2 cups mirepoix, brunois
2 tablespoons canola oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup apple, diced
2 quarts sauerkraut, lightly rinsed
1 cup apple cider
Salt and pepper, as needed
Chives, minced, as needed

Sweat mirepoix in canola oil. Sweat garlic briefly and then add apple. Add kraut and heat through. Add cider, return to boil. Cover and cook in preheated 350 F oven for 25 minutes. Cool and season with salt and pepper. Finish with chives. Makes 14 to 16 servings.

Flavor Matters

To achieve German sensibility, chefs can rely on techniques such as fermenting, curing and smoking.

“Sometimes a dish doesn’t read German, but it’s how the menu flavor profile makes it German,” explains Nathan Sears, chef-partner of The Radler, a modern German restaurant in Chicago.

For example, Sears cures meats for three days before cooking. Several untraditional ingredients are smoked, too, including creme fraiche, which he folds into sauces and kohlrabi slaw. Sears also mines produce, often turning to cucumbers and asparagus when composing starters and sides.

At Bronwyn, Wiechmann limits his pantry to represent Central Europe. “There is no balsamic vinegar in the building,” he says. Instead

of olive oil, he maintains a fryer filled with pork fat. And his spice pantry is streamlined with essentials such as caraway, juniper, cloves, curry and coriander.

Beer is also an important ingredient. For haxe, beer-braised pork shanks, Wiechmann marinates the shanks in German lager for a few days to tenderize the meat. He then braises the shanks in the beer until tender, and serves with sauerkraut, potatoes and roasted apples. “The easy part of German food is that it’s easy to sell German beer,” Wiechmann says.

Portion Pointers

Zimmerman ranks sausage with sauerkraut and mustard among the world’s most perfect foods. “It’s right up there with a late-night taco or a slice of pizza,” he says.

To elevate sausage and sauerkraut for his menu, he turned to *choucroute garnie*, a braised sausage, pork and sauerkraut dish from the French-German border. But the traditional dish is hefty and hard to serve in a fine dining restaurant.

To scale back on portion size, Zimmerman uses duck instead of pork. “Duck is the next most versatile animal,” he says, explaining that he can serve every cut of the animal and use the fat for cooking. “It’s a nose-to-tail animal in the way a pig is,” he says.

He confits the gizzards and makes smoked duck sausage seasoned with wine, garlic, coriander and caraway, using lamb casings in place of pig casings. Medium-rare duck breast and red cabbage sauerkraut accompany the sausage and gizzards.

“For us, it’s about portioning,” Zimmerman explains. “And we opt for a little brighter acidity to balance it and cut the richness.”

Fishing for Compliments

With a coast lining the North and Baltic Seas, Northern Germany has a long history of seafood consumption. Yet many chefs running German restaurants in America say fish can be an impossible sell. At The Radler, Sears finds diners even resist scallops. “What restaurant can’t sell scallops?” he asks.

Instead of taking seafood off the menu, Sears looks for fish he can order in smaller quantities, such as two pounds of whitefish yielding six orders. He’s hoping diners will eventually take the bait.

Surprisingly, German-themed seafood dishes are killing it at some non-German restaurants. At Oceana, a seafood restaurant in New York, Executive Chef Ben Pollinger worked with his sous chefs to create a seafood version of a German *schlachtplatte*, a plate similar to *choucroute garnie*. Intended to be a one-month special for Oktoberfest, it ended up staying on the menu for months. “This was the sleeper hit of the menu,” he says.

To pair with housemade sauerkraut, Pollinger makes bacon from swordfish, bratwurst from salmon, and weisswurst from monkfish and dorado. Fish skin ground with the fish meat melts into the sausages when cooked, adding richness, while pickled mackerel brightens the plate.

“My cooks love it because it gives them the opportunity to do something very artisanal,” he says. “They are making sauerkraut, curing and smoking bacon, making sausages and pickling fish. This is as Old World as it gets.” ■

Kate Leahy is an Oakland, California-based writer and cookbook author. Follow her on Twitter @KateLeahy.



Bierkasesuppe (Beer and Cheese Soup)

Chef-owner Jeremy Nolen
Brauhaus Schmitz, Philadelphia

- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 small leek, white and green parts, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 small carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 24 ounces Spaten Optimator, Ayinger Celebrator, or other double-bock beer
- 1 pound Emmentaler or Gruyère cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 sprigs thyme, leaves only
- 1½ tablespoons kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 slices hearty rye bread, diced
- 2 tablespoons chives, chopped

Sweat onion, leek, garlic, carrot and celery in butter, about 6 minutes. Add beer, cheese, Worcestershire, thyme, salt and 1 teaspoon pepper and stir well. Bring to a boil, stirring often for about 45 minutes to blend the flavors. Add bread and continue cooking, stirring often, until the bread softens, about 15 minutes.

Transfer to blender and puree. Return to pot, reheat gently, and ladle into bowls. Garnish with chives. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Adapted from “New German Cooking: Classics Revisited” by Jeremy and Jessica Nolen (Chronicle, 2015).

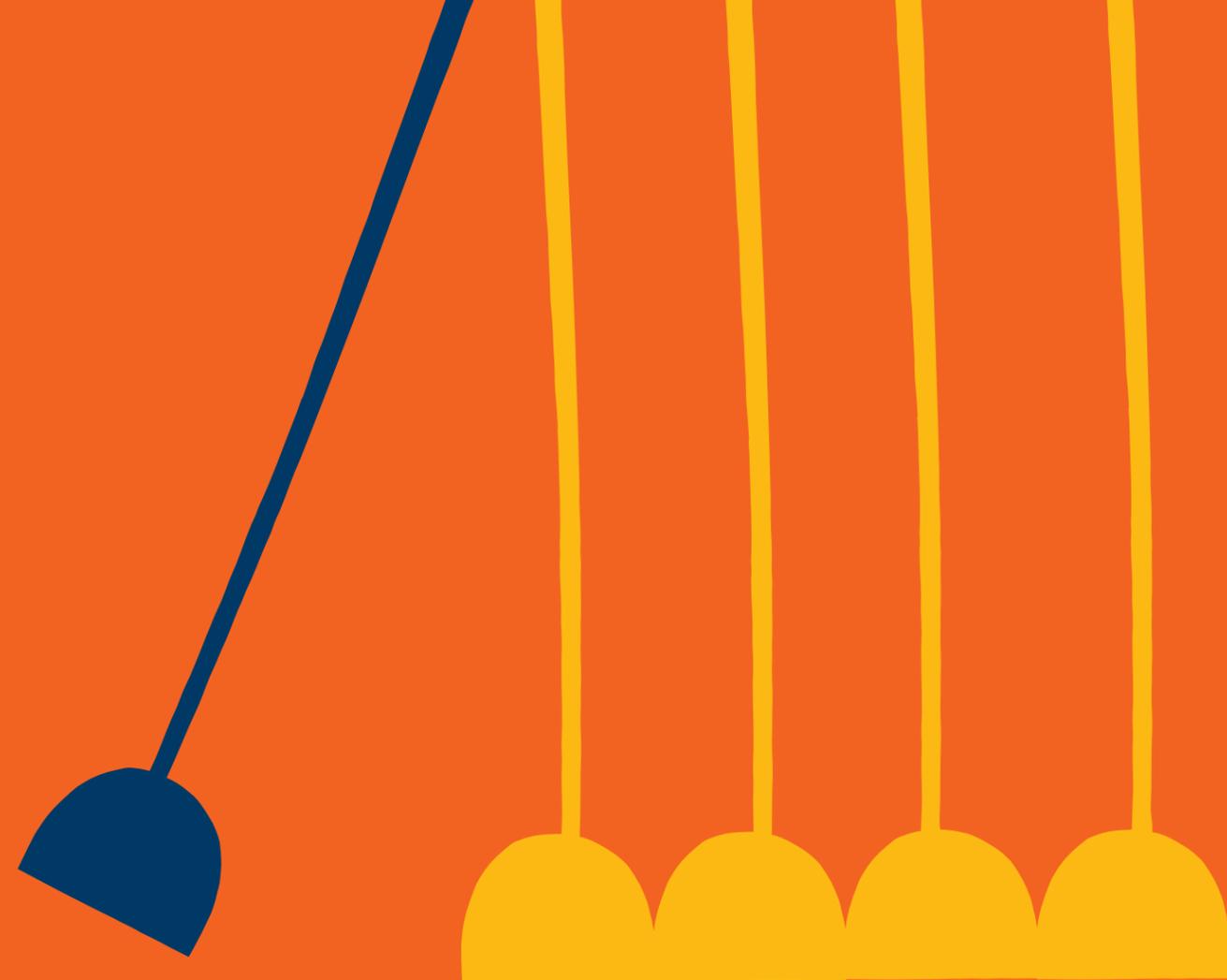
Play With German Dough

Chicago’s Table, Donkey and Stick is an Alpine concept, which means Executive Chef Scott Manley draws ideas from all over Central Europe, including pasta.

But instead of pasta, he makes dumplings such as *bubespitzle* (also known as *schupfnudeln*) and *maultaschen*. Manley likens *bubespitzle* to gnocchi, though longer with tapered ends. He poaches and pan fries them.

Likewise, *maultaschen* takes the place of ravioli. The filling includes breadcrumbs, eggs and meat, like a meatball, which is spread onto the inner layer of pasta. Manley rolls it up and cuts it into pinwheels, leaving the filling exposed rather than pinching the edges closed.

“It’s like a ravioli that is filled with a dumpling and crossed with a strudel,” he says.



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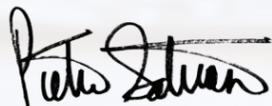
One of the things I find most energizing about the foodservice industry is that it is constantly evolving. Old favorites are made new again, an emerging trend in one city starts appearing on menus across the country and new technology is continually being introduced.

Helping chefs, restaurateurs and foodservice operators stay in the know with what's happening in the industry so they can increase success is what *Food Fanatics* is all about.

For example, have you ever heard of schupfnudeln? It's a delicious little dumpling made from cheese, herbs and potatoes that is part of a Philadelphia restaurateur's efforts to revitalize German cuisine – it may very well end up on a menu near you soon. Land-raised seafood is another hot topic that may change the way operators source seafood in the future. This issue of *Food Fanatics* magazine provides more insight about both of these trending topics, and many more.

Of course, it takes more than great food to have a successful operation. You need to have the right people working for you, user-friendly software to keep costs under control and the ideal promotions to get diners in the door while keeping profits up. We have you covered with articles on these important issues and encourage you to visit foodfanatics.com for extended content that we couldn't fit in this issue.

Thank you for being a part of the *Food Fanatics* movement! I look forward to the journey ahead and the great things we'll all learn by being part of the *Food Fanatics* community.



Pietro Satriano
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FAST FACTS

ON EGG SUBSTITUTIONS

FROM US FOODS®



Avian Influenza has been a recent concern in foods that use poultry or eggs, and while the chance of it entering the food chain in the U.S. is extremely low (due to farming safeguards, bio-security and Federal inspection) – here are some quick tips you may need on using egg substitutions:

- 1** Before choosing an egg substitution option, consider the taste and texture of the dish and what substitution will blend best.
- 2** If a recipe calls for only one egg, the egg can often be omitted. The fewer eggs in a recipe, the easier it is to find an adequate substitute.
- 3** Egg replacements don't have flavor, though they can have a drying effect. Consider adding in an extra tablespoon of milk or water.
- 4** Baking powder or baking soda can be an aid to leavening also for baked goods.
- 5** Use alternate ingredients:
 Fruit: great for binding and adding moisture to baked goods
 Tofu: a versatile egg substitute to replicate the quality and texture of whole eggs
 Soy: can be used for leavening
 Nuts or seeds: they act as great vegan binders in egg-free recipes

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THINK

Outside the

OPEN-FACED TURKEY SANDWICH

GIVEN THE CHANCE,
THIS BIRD CAN FLY
OFF THE MENU

BY ANTHONY TODD

TURKEY GETS A BAD RAP. STILL.

Just as chefs get creative with brining, smoking and blending grinds to ensure moistness and flavor, fallout from the Avian flu outbreak could cause shortages and higher prices.

What to do?

Stay updated through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, take a “this too shall pass” attitude and be ready to take off with different approaches on turkey—like the ones that follow.



Brining and smoking a bird before a butter baste makes turkey a yearlong favorite.



Xmas Burger, \$13.50

The Ace

Inspiration: Thanksgiving dinner on a bun

“I wanted to give a burger the complexity of an entire Thanksgiving meal,” says Executive Chef Peter McKnight. The Xmas Burger, with a stuffing center and a cranberry topping, combines the food-centric holiday flavors in a package that diners can really sink their teeth into.

McKnight starts with fresh turkeys from Hayter’s Farm in Dashwood, Ontario, and grinds together half white and half dark meat.

“You need a good amount of fat for any burger to have flavor, and the dark meat has both the fat and the flavor,” he says.

He hand forms the patty, leaving an empty core for the stuffing. The stuffing is a traditional mix of day-old bread, carrots, celery, onions and sage cooked in butter. Once the burger is stuffed, the whole creation goes into the oven. “We roast it because it’s a bit delicate,” McKnight says, “and it gets a good caramelization on both sides.”

The burger is then topped with a bourbon-cranberry compote. The rest of the burger is traditional: lettuce, tomato, onion, mayonnaise and a side of hand-cut fries.

The Ace Xmas Burger

Executive Chef Peter McKnight

1 small onion, finely diced, divided use
1 egg
¼ cup breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
½ sprig rosemary, leaves only
1 pound turkey, half white, half dark
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons butter
1 small carrot, finely diced
½ stalk celery, finely diced
2 sage leaves, finely chopped
1 teaspoon ground dried sage
2 slices day-old bread, diced
⅓ cup chicken stock
4 buns
4 slices tomato
4 pieces of lettuce
Mayonnaise to taste
Cranberry compote, recipe follows

Combine half of the onion, egg, breadcrumbs, mustard and rosemary in food processor; pulse into puree. Add mixture to meat and season with salt and pepper. Form into three large balls.

Heat butter in saute pan and sweat remaining onion, carrots, celery and herbs until soft. Add bread and stock, season with salt and pepper and remove from heat.

Split each ball of meat, flatten slightly and fill with golf ball-sized portion of stuffing. Re-form the meatball around the stuffing. Roast burgers on greased, parchment-lined sheet tray at 375 F for about 20 minutes. Correct seasonings, place on a bun and top with mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato and cranberry compote. Makes 3 servings.

To make cranberry compote, combine ¾ cup cranberries, ½ cup brown sugar, 1 cinnamon stick, 1 vanilla bean, 1 ounce Wild Turkey bourbon, ½ cup orange juice and zest of 1 orange in a saucepan. Bring to a boil; simmer 10 minutes.

“

YOU NEED A GOOD AMOUNT OF FAT FOR ANY BURGER TO HAVE FLAVOR.

—Executive Chef Peter McKnight, The Ace

”



Turkey is brined, smoked and cooled overnight before getting pulled off the bone for the Smoked Turkey Sandwich at The Winchester.

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Winchester Turkey Sandwich

Chef Greg Bastien

- ¾ cup kosher salt, plus extra for seasoning
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 head roasted garlic
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 2 sprigs sage
- 1 tablespoons black peppercorns
- Rind of 2 lemons
- 2 large turkey breasts
- Ciabatta rolls
- Tomato jam, recipe follows
- Aioli, your recipe
- Lettuce, tomato, avocado, arugula
- Olive oil, as needed
- Lemon juice, as needed

Combine salt, sugars, garlic, herbs, peppercorns and lemon rind in 4 quarts water. Bring to a boil; cool and pour over turkey. Brine 6 to 8 hours; rinse.

Roast turkey in preheated 375 F oven until internal temperature reaches 160 F; tent, rest, slice.

To compile sandwich, layer ciabatta rolls with sliced turkey, tomato jam, aioli, lettuce, tomato, avocado and arugula dressed with olive oil, lemon juice and salt.

To make tomato jam, slowly caramelize 4 cups sliced onions in heavy bottom pan. Add 4 quarts canned tomato, ½ cup sugar, ½ cup brown sugar and ½ cup cider vinegar. Cook down by one-third.

Barbecue Turkey Breast, \$11 per half pound
Hill Country Barbecue Market, New York and Washington, D.C.
Inspiration: Classic Texas barbecue

Roast turkey gets the barbecue treatment at the Washington, D.C., and New York locations for Hill Country.

“Turkey is a barbecue staple; you’ll find it at many Texas-style barbecue restaurants,” says Chef Ash Fulk, culinary director for operating company Hill Country Hospitality.

Fulk starts with turkey breasts off the bone—fresh if he can get them, frozen if he has no other choice. Then comes the brine— buttermilk, rosemary, sugar and salt.

“Turkey is a very lean meat, so it loves to dry out,” Fulk says. “Brining raises the moisture level of the turkey.”

He brines the bird for less than 24 hours before it’s smoked at 200 F in post oak, native trees to Texas. When the bird hits the halfway mark, it’s submerged in butter, which also sits in the smoker, to finish cooking.

Sauces are available, but Fulk says the finished product doesn’t need anything extra. “The turkey is a sponge of moisture—it’s epic,” Fulk says. “The turkey fight is all about keeping as much moisture in the bird as possible, and that (brining, smoking and butter bath) gets it done.”

Hill Country offers the breast year-round, but for Thanksgiving it’s served as an entree and as to-go meals with classic sides. Last year, they sold 300 birds to-go.

“**THE TURKEY IS A SPONGE OF MOISTURE.**”

— Chef Ash Fulk, culinary director for operating company Hill Country Hospitality, on cooking the breast in butter.

”

More Ways to Serve Your Bird



› **Confit five-spice turkey leg congee** with soft-boiled farm egg, crispy turkey skin and Charleston gold rice in smoked turkey broth, \$15
Warehouse Kitchen + Bar, Charleston, South Carolina

› **Smoked turkey rillettes**, cranberry-fig compote, rustic bread, \$45 as part of a three-course prix fixe
Ardeo + Bardeo, Washington, D.C.

› **Fried turkey**, cheese and bacon sandwich, \$5.99
The Fried Turkey Sandwich Shop, Fayetteville, North Carolina

› **Turkey burger** with brie, apple and honey mustard, \$10
Trina’s Starlight Lounge, Boston

› **Turkey MoMo** (Nepalese dumplings) with turkey, scallions, onions, cabbage, ginger, garlic, Himalayan spices and tomato chutney, \$7 to \$13
Gorkha Palace, Minneapolis

Smoked Turkey Sandwich, \$10

The Winchester, Chicago

Inspiration: Creating the perfect turkey sandwich

This dish is a byproduct of perfectionism and boredom. “We had a great chicken sandwich on the menu, and it had won a few awards,” says Chef Greg Bastien, “but the dish was losing appeal because it had been on the menu a long time.” Instead of reworking the chicken, Bastien switched to turkey.

He starts with locally raised Gunthorp Farm bone-in turkey breasts. “Anything that’s roasted or smoked on the bone is juicier and tastier than anything removed from the bone,” Bastien says.

The breast is brined with salt, sugar, roasted garlic, sage, thyme and other herbs for 12 hours. Then, it’s smoked with applewood chips for four to six hours and cooled overnight. The skin is pulled off, and the meat is separated from the bones.

The sandwich is served with housemade tomato jam, lemon aioli and arugula. “When we composed this dish, it was just on the cusp of winter,” Bastien says. “I wanted to be able to use canned tomatoes instead of fresh tomatoes, because fresh in November isn’t so great.” The jam combines garlic, onion, wine, vinegar and sugar.

The dish has become so popular that it’s now a mainstay. ■

Anthony Todd is a Chicago-based lawyer and food writer. Follow him on Twitter @FoodieAnthony.



BY DAVID MCANINCH

FISH

in Your Own Backyard

Is land-raised seafood the next farm-to-table trend?

This 10-pound king salmon was land-raised in a tank farm, courtesy of the Freshwater Institute in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.



WITHIN A DECADE, THE MAJORITY OF SEAFOOD WILL COME NOT FROM OPEN WATERS BUT FROM FISH FARMS. AND NOT JUST THE KIND MOST DINERS THINK.

Some of the best-tasting and most sustainably farmed seafood in the world is currently raised on land. As awareness grows among environmentally minded chefs and restaurants, land-based aquaculture is poised to explode.

“The processors and distributors get their fish the same day they’re harvested,” says Steve Summerfelt, director of aquaculture systems research for Freshwater Institute, a nonprofit aquaculture operation and pioneer in land-based fish farming in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, some 60 miles inland from the Chesapeake Bay. “The biggest selling point was that it was local,” he says.

While great strides have been made to address overfishing in the face of increasing demand, seafood watchdog groups like Monterey Bay Aquarium say that the world’s oceans are still being depleted. Aquaculture produces about half of the world’s seafood, which will only grow now that it’s the fastest growing form of food production in the world, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Land-based aquaculture operations, sometimes called tank farms, have been in production in North America for many years.

Where to Find Land-Raised Seafood

Not all land-based aquaculture operations are alike. Some onshore fish farms use flow-through technology, which discharges significant amounts of water into the environment; others recycle only a portion of their tank water.

The most sustainable land-raised seafood comes from closed-containment recirculated aquaculture systems (RAS). Here are a few pioneers:

→ The Freshwater Institute in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, sells nearly all of its fish in the Mid-Atlantic and Washington, D.C., area. The feed for its salmon contains no fish meal or genetically modified organic material.

→ Kuterra is also a purveyor of land-raised Atlantic salmon, based in British Columbia. The operation was founded by the Namgis First Nation, whose native waters—home to the wild salmon that are their traditional livelihood—were being imperiled by offshore salmon farms.

→ RDM Aquaculture is a family-owned shrimp farm in northwestern Indiana that helped jump-start domestic land-based shrimp farming in the United States.

→ SKY8 Shrimp Farm of Stoughton, Massachusetts, ships white shrimp fresh at about twice the price of most imported frozen shrimp. But owner James Tran says cost hasn't dampened demand.

→ Blue Ridge Aquaculture of Martinsville, Virginia, specializes in tilapia, a fish that's conducive to intensive tank farming.

→ Australis Aquaculture, based in Turner Falls, Massachusetts, specializes in barramundi (also known as Asian sea bass). The farm, near the banks of the Connecticut River, produces some 2 million pounds of fish per year and only 15 pounds of solid waste per day. The waste is donated to local farmers as fertilizer.

But last year, land-raised seafood hit a milestone: Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch gave its coveted "Best Choice" sustainability ranking to Atlantic salmon raised in land-based closed-containment farms, making it the only category of Atlantic salmon to receive the honor.

This is a big deal, considering that salmon is among the most popular fish in the United States.

Shrimp is America's No. 1 seafood, evidenced by the fact that the average American consumed more than 3.6 pounds of the crustaceans in 2013. To meet demand, land-based tank farms look increasingly like the future, offering a sustainable, domestic alternative to shrimp sourced from environmentally detrimental aquaculture operations in many parts of the world.

Offshore Benefits

What do closed-containment seafood farms have over the conventional open-net kind? As the name suggests, they're fully self-contained, eliminating the controversial environmental and biological contamination found in massive coastal aquaculture farms around the globe, including Asia and South America.

These recirculating aquaculture systems—as they're referred to in the industry—reuse up to 99 percent of their water, compost their fish waste and are sealed off from the natural watershed. The other upside? Land-based operations have the potential to take the notion of "locally sourced seafood" to a new level.

"One big advantage is that you can actually locate them as close as possible to their market," says Jenna Stoner, a campaign manager at Living Oceans Society, a marine conservation nonprofit.

What About Taste?

Closed-containment-raised seafood is poised to give conventionally farmed and even wild seafood a run for its money.

"I bought out practically their whole supply," says Chef Rich Regan of Monocacy Crossing Restaurant in Frederick, Maryland, referring to the Freshwater Institute's land-raised salmon.

"Typically when someone mentions farmed fish, I think of a handful of species, all of which taste like corn," he says. "But this salmon melts in your mouth and has a mild, buttery flavor."

Regan says his only worry about the product is that the price, which currently falls between organic farmed salmon and conventionally farmed salmon, will likely jump because of increasing demand. "I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop," he says.

The Argument for Land-Raised Seafood

Self-contained, recirculated aquaculture systems (RAS) offer some big pluses over conventional net-pen and pond-based fish farms:

The risk of farmed fish escaping into wild populations is virtually eliminated, preventing the spread of diseases and parasites.

Raising seafood in a hermetic, controlled environment eliminates the need for antibiotics, pesticides, hormones and other chemicals.

Up to 99 percent of the water in the growing tanks is recirculated, drastically reducing waste.

Fish waste can be collected and composted instead of being released into the environment.

Fish in closed-containment tanks consume up to 30 percent less feed than their conventionally farmed counterparts.

Land-based aquaculture can happen almost anywhere, reducing the distance between production and the restaurant. This reduces the product's carbon footprint and preserves flavor and quality.

Salmon and shrimp raised in closed-containment systems show fewer signs of stress than their conventionally farmed counterparts, and grow more quickly because the farming environment can be maintained at optimal levels.

Some cutting-edge tank farms are finding innovative ways to offset the energy that indoor aquaculture consumes, such as harnessing the heat generated by the fish, and cleaning waste water using bacteria instead of synthetic filters.



Chef Sean Sanders sings similar praises of the land-raised shrimp he buys for his Chicago restaurant, Browntrout, from a closed-containment aquaculture farm in Indiana.

"They're able to purge the shrimp before shipping, so you don't even have to clean them. You're just getting nice, beautiful live shrimp." Sanders, an advocate of sustainable agriculture, thinks land-raised seafood could be a boon, particularly for Midwestern chefs like him.

"When you're a restaurateur in Chicago, getting seafood that's both local and sustainable can be a big challenge."

Land Fish Forever?

Is land-raised seafood the way of the future?

"Some analysts believe that eventually all new fish farming operations will be on land," says Jo Mrozewski of the land-based aquaculture operation Kuterra, in British Columbia. "And that open-water fish farming will diminish and disappear."

Until that starts to happen, challenges remain. One of the hurdles for fully sustainable closed-containment aquaculture is changing misperceptions about farmed fish. For example, the incorrect notion that farmed fish is genetically modified. Salmon like those raised at Kuterra or the Freshwater Institute are genetically no different from Atlantic salmon that have been fished in the wild for generations.

Another challenge? "Scaling up production," says Mrozewski. "We just can't keep up with demand." ■

David McAninch is a freelance writer and contributing editor for Rodale's Organic Life magazine. Follow him on Twitter @DMcAninch.



Hot to Trot
Pork's star status
gives all parts a
chance to shine

BY MIKE SULA

PHOTO BY KATHRYN GAMBLE



IT'S A BRAVE NEW WORLD FOR PORK.

Chefs hail the nose-to-tail movement forged over the last decade for finally killing off that eye-rolling phrase “the other white meat.” The obsession with bacon and pork belly has peaked at near maniacal levels, while charcuterie and salumi are emerging from dry curing rooms across the country. Even the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gives the thumbs up to cooking chops to a juicy 145 F.

If pork has a problem today, it isn't demand—it's supply. A hog has only so many parts, which can be challenging to keep up with demand.

“Three pigs only give you six bellies” says Chris Shepherd, chef-owner of Houston's Underbelly. “Once you run out of six bellies, you've got to do something else.”

The solution: Get creative with lesser cuts. In the same way that chefs transformed diners' views on pork belly, some operators are finding that creativity in the kitchen combined with a good story gets diners on board.

Going Whole Hog

To keep up with the daily rotating menu at Underbelly, Shepherd partners with a local farmer to crossbreed Berkshires and Large Black heritage hogs. The result is a larger breed with good intramuscular fat, which translates into more meat for his money.

In his braised pork dish, *thit kho*, a tribute to Houston's Vietnamese population, Shepherd uses pig face. The meat from the skull goes in an immersion circulator for 48 hours before it's braised in a stock with cinnamon, star anise, sugar and fish sauce. A \$20 pig head can yield 30 servings at \$14 apiece.

“If you're going to do something, and people are going to push back, you have to push back harder and teach them,” he says.

Once you cross that hurdle, the options are limitless. Lesser-used cuts from fresh ham, like pork sirloins or eye rounds, can go on the menu rather than just grinding them into sausage, says Rob Levitt of Chicago's The Butcher & Larder.

A pork top round, Levitt says, can be used for sandwiches. “You can roast that thing whole like a pot roast and shave it thin like a French dip-style sandwich. You can cut it up for kebabs, or slice it thin and it makes the best schnitzel. And that's just one cut.”

The eye round, he says, can be used like pork tenderloin, except it's “way cheaper because nobody knows what it is.”

Be Your Own Butcher

There's a bright future for “sauce butchers,” says Kari Underly, a Chicago-based third-generation master butcher and principal of niche meat consultant agency Range Inc. The term refers to in-house meat cutters that can do it all: from fabricating a pig and aging charcuterie to making stocks and sauces.

“Chefs want to highlight the skill of having a butcher on-site and being able to say, ‘We make food with our hands, including meat,’” she says.

The trend is becoming popular enough that a nine-month meat academy is in the works. The course will steep students in the art of butchery and certify them for the kitchen, Underly says.

Butchery knows no bounds in Memphis, Tennessee, where Aaron Winters breaks down five hogs each week for restaurants Hog & Hominy, Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen and the cafe at Porcellino's Craft Butcher. No bit of pork is left behind, whether it's the bones for stock at the restaurants, or the ears, which go into a Buffalo pigtail appetizer at Hog & Hominy.

“We also sell the bones for people to make the stock at home,” Winters says. “Five pigs a week makes a lot of bones.”

The Dry Age

It might sound counterintuitive, but more value and flavor comes from shrinking whole pork muscles. Due to higher water content, pork can't dry-age as long as beef, but similar enzymatic reactions occur in the meat at shorter lengths of time, boosting flavor.

Winters wraps a percentage of his pork loins in cheesecloth and hangs them in the walk-in for a week to 10 days. With good airflow, they in



Putting Lipstick On a Pig?

The North American Meat Institute's Meat Buyer's Guide lists new names for old chops. They correspond to familiar steak cuts, undoubtedly to help consumers better identify with pork and build a positive association. Pork porterhouse and pork rib-eye are among the names.

› 14-ounce brined, smoked and grilled porterhouse pork chop with seasonal vegetables (\$32 to \$34)

The Ravenous Pig, Winter Park, Florida

“It is certainly a dramatic cut. When it comes out it's a bit of a showstopper. It dominates with pretty strong sales. People do come here for it.”
—Chef de Cuisine Joseph Cournoyer-Burnett

› 8-ounce boneless pork rib-eye au poivre with bourbon cider glaze (\$21.99)

The Windjammer, Burlington, Vermont

“I personally like the rib-eye because it's cut from the fattier section of the loin. You get that nice fatty marbled cut, and it just adds a lot more flavor than up near the shoulder. It makes people question, ‘What is a pork rib-eye?’ And we sell quite a few of them.”

—Executive Chef Chris Lassy

› Pork blade steak with spicy green beans, tomatoes and red onions (\$19)

Cane & Table, New Orleans

“In South Louisiana it's a pretty common cut. It's generally regarded as an inexpensive piece of meat. We sourced out a local farm, and they just have a really outstanding product. We wanted to spend the extra couple dollars a pound to treat it better and really highlight it on our menu as a piece of South Louisiana.”

—Chef Jason Klutts

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Pig Face Thit Kho

Chef-owner Chris Shepherd
Underbelly, Houston

1 pig face
Brine, your recipe
2 yellow onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 jalapeno, sliced into rounds
4 star anise
2 cinnamon sticks
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup fish sauce
3 cups pork stock
4 carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
Salt and pepper to taste
Grilled baguette
Coca-Cola pickled onions, recipe follows

Prepare pig face for sous vide by making an incision starting from under the mouth. Peel back the flesh from the bone, working around the entire head to remove it. Brine for 24 hours; pat dry. Place in Cryovac bag and immerse in circulator at 60 C for 48 hours; chill.

Cut meat from face into 1-inch cubes and roast in preheated 500 F oven until crispy at service.

Sweat onions with butter in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add jalapeno, star anise and cinnamon sticks, stirring until fragrant. Stir in sugar and fish sauce. Pour in pork stock; bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer about 20 minutes.

Add carrots and cubed pig face. Simmer uncovered, 15 minutes. Remove star anise and cinnamon sticks. Adjust seasonings with salt and pepper. To plate, divide stew among four bowls and serve with baguette or warm rice. Garnish with pickled red onions. Makes 4 servings

To make Coca-Cola pickled onions, heat 12-ounce can of Coke over high heat, add ¼ cup soy sauce and 2 tablespoons sambel olek. Reduce by two-thirds. Remove from heat and add 4 ounces cider vinegar and 2 ounces lime juice. Pour over 2 cups sliced red onions and steep at least 2 hours.



PHOTO BY KATHRYN GAMELE

Heritage Breeds

Meet the “designer” hogs

“Heritage” is a term for pig breeds that neared extinction due to the advent of modern farming methods that emphasized lean meat and rapid growth.

They are characterized by their higher fat content and darker, porkier tasting meat, which is why farmers are taking the time and spending the money to raise them. A rundown of some popular heritage breeds:

Kurobuta: Japanese Berkshire hogs, streaked with fat; buttery, nutty flavor; firm texture.

Red Wattle: Characterized by distinctive fleshy lobes hanging from the jowls. Intensely porky, almost beefy, flavor that picks up hints of vegetation it forages.

Large Black: Lean without a lot of excess back fat; short-muscle fiber and moist meat.

Gloucester Old Spot: A reputation for laziness leads to delicate meat and milky fat.

Tamworth: Long bellies and lean, firm meat. Great for bacon.

Duroc: A middleweight in terms of fat. Clean tasting.

Mulefoot: Has a characteristic uncloven hoof. A docile animal that produces dark red meat with spotted marbling and terrific hams.

Iberico: The legendary black-footed free-ranging Spanish breed, finished on acorns to create some of the world’s best hams.

Guinea Hog: A gentle-natured adept forager that produces excellent bacon, ham and lard.

Ossabaw: A feral breed confined to an island off the coast of Georgia; great marbling particularly suited for curing.

Mangalitsa: The Hungarian wooly pig. Tremendous extramuscular fat content and marbling; very moist meat.



A Crossed Pig is a Good Thing

Pigs are bred for yield and good mothering tendencies. To get a good meat-to-fat ratio a farmer might consider breeding Durocs, which grow lean and take good care of their litters, with a Hampshire, which is a fatty breed.

Houston’s Underbelly partners with a farm that raises Large Black/Berkshire cross-breeds, while The Butcher & Larder in Chicago gets a good price from a farmer that crosses Berkshires with Gloucester Old Spots.

PORK’S GOT GAME

1.6 percent



Growth of the average servings of pork at restaurants

-2.1 percent



Decline in the average servings of seafood

-0.9 percent



Decline in the average servings of beef

-0.6 percent



Decline in the average servings of poultry

Source: The NPD Group/CREST® comparing data from 2009 to 2014.

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Pork Jowl Char Siu

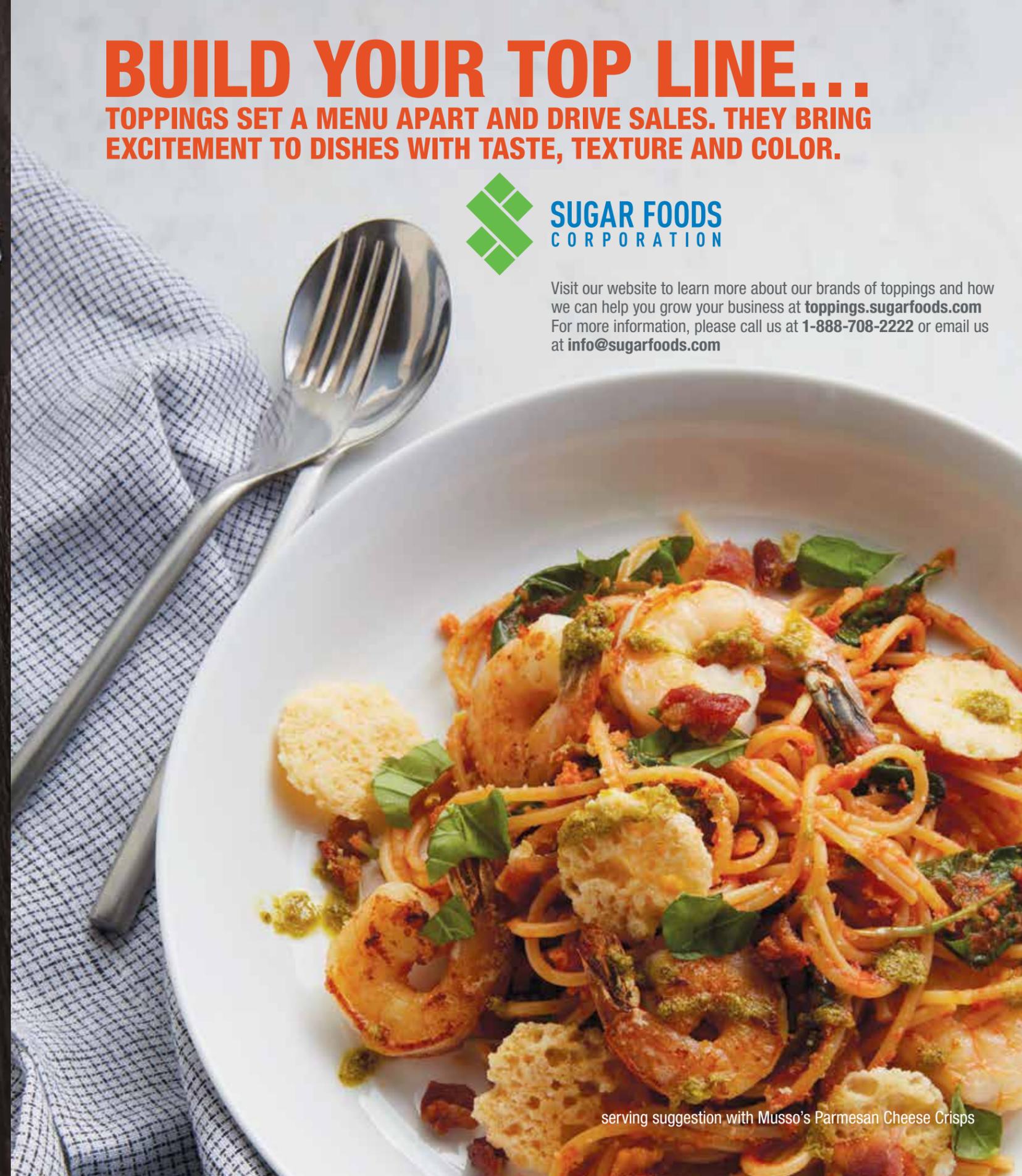
Chef Rodelio Aglibot
Several concepts, Chicago

20 pounds pork jowl
2 cups brown sugar
3 cups hoisin
2 cups Chinese rice wine or dry sherry
2 cups honey
1 cup soy sauce
Glaze, recipe follow

Pack pork jowls with brown sugar until completely covered and refrigerate overnight; brush off sugar. Combine hoisin, rice wine, honey and soy sauce and marinate jowls in mixture for 12 to 24 hours.

Roast jowls on racks in preheated 300 F oven 45 minutes. Remove from oven and hold until ready to serve. Raise temperature of oven to 350 F and brush jowls with glaze. Roast 5 minutes, glazing more if necessary, until jowls are glossy and deeply roasted. Rest and slice. Makes about 30 servings.

To make glaze, combine 1 cup water, 1 cup Chinese wine, 1 cup honey and 1 cup soy.



serving suggestion with Musso's Parmesan Cheese Crisps

tensify in flavor. They'll lose up to 10 percent of their water weight, but he can cut porterhouse chops and sell them at \$12.99 a pound—two dollars more than his regular chops.

Executive Chef Craig Deihl of Cypress in Charleston, South Carolina, has aged chops up to 20 days.

"The meat structure is really tight," he says. "The aroma is a little bit nuttier and a lot more porky, as long as we leave the skin on. The fat is protected and shows very little sign of rancidity."

They'll sell for \$12 a pound at Artisan Meat Share, and at Cypress, with good sides and a finishing sauce, for \$30 a chop.

Easy to Digest

Snacks, appetizers and shared plates are an outlet for experimenting and an easy way to get traction on pork dishes.

"It's a way to show people these really cool cuts," says Winters. At Porcellino's Craft Butcher, carts supplement the main menu. Out of 15 to 20 dishes a night, at least four come from his pigs—anything from involtini to tacos to boudin balls.

He likes to cut out the tender spider steaks, aka the "oysters," from the round, cook them in a pastrami seasoning and serve them on a bed of braised cabbage. He gets 10 spiders a week out of his hogs, and they sell at \$6 apiece. "It's a neat little plate," he says. "Maybe two bites."

These cuts carry a novelty value, but someone has to educate the guest. "There has to be someone to tell the story of the cut," Winters says. "When someone comes in and sees some of the different cuts, it starts the conversation. Our customers are very curious. Most of them enjoy seeing new and different cuts."

Michael Scelfo, chef at Boston's Alden & Harlow, doesn't need to do the big sell for pigtailed and clams, which is among two to four nightly shareable pork dishes. The menu changes daily, but the pigtailed have been a constant since he opened last year.

The shellfish is cooked with white wine, garlic, parsley, Calabrian chilies, olive oil and butter. All the ingredients are then folded into the hickory-smoked braised pigtailed. Wood-grilled crostini brushed with chili-pesto puree accompanies the \$17 dish. Scelfo sells up to 25 per service.

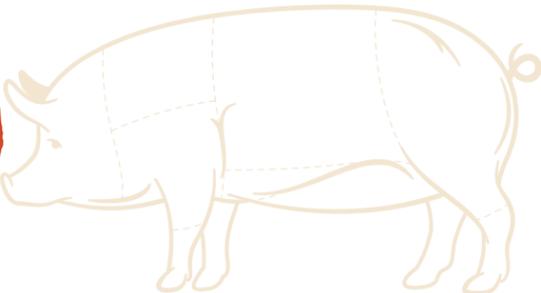
"I don't think people even do a double take when they see pigtailed on the menu," he says. ■

Mike Sula is a James Beard award-winning writer and restaurant critic for the Chicago Reader. Follow him on Twitter @MikeSula.



PHOTO BY KATHRYN GAMELE

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Regular commodity hogs can cost as little as **\$1 A POUND** hanging weight.

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²Innovative, shareable appetizers drive sales, Nation's Restaurant News, 2013.
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TREND TRACKER

The heat index on what's happening



Looks like bone broth isn't a passing fad after all.



Rum breaks out of the bottle as the spirit to watch.



German food secures its role in the Zeitgeist as a menu star.



Though a rad idea, an '80s playlist is bogus.

FYI: Poor lighting doesn't qualify as mood lighting.



Butter coffee loses its hype among part-time Paleo worshippers.



Restaurant concepts pile into gourmet food halls around the country.



Fast casual is still king.

WARMING UP

ON FIRE

COOLING OFF

Everyone wants to bite into the taco shop trend.



There's proof that chef-driven bakeries are on the rise.



Spanish tapas never went away, but we're happy to see it back in the spotlight.



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The happy hour crowd begs for better bar fare than deviled eggs.

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In With the Old

These diners aren't ready for retirement yet



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MCGILL

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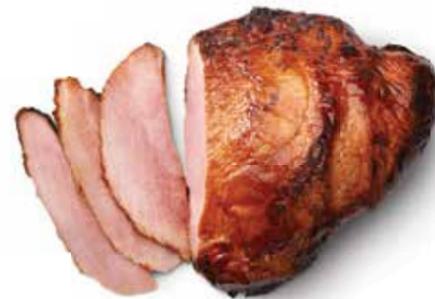
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OLD AND TRUE

BOOMERS ARE THE IN CROWD THAT EVERYONE SHOULD WANT

BY MONICA GINSBURG / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MCGILL

ALL THE BUZZ AROUND WOOING MILLENNIALS MAKES IT EASY TO DISMISS BABY BOOMERS. BUT THESE FOLKS, BORN BETWEEN 1946 AND 1964, AREN'T RIDING OFF INTO THE SUNSET JUST YET.

“They (boomers) are the ones keeping the restaurant industry alive,” says Bonnie Riggs, restaurant industry analyst for The NPD Group. “They go to all types of restaurants. They’re eating out more often. And they feel they’ve been neglected. If you meet their wants and needs, you’re going to get that loyalty from them.”

Restaurants targeting a younger audience need to rethink their approach, Riggs says. Boomers are driving sales and have increased their share of restaurant traffic by 6 percent in recent years. Meanwhile, millennials and Generation Xers in the coveted 18-to-47-year-old range have decreased their traffic share by the same amount, according to NPD.

Predominantly empty nesters with disposable income, baby boomers have the means and the freedom to dine out more frequently than other age segments. While the generations that preceded them spent less, research from the Nielsen Company and BoomAgers shows that’s not the case with boomers.

Creature Comforts

Bastille, a popular French restaurant in Alexandria, Virginia, has been a hit with the 50-plus crowd since opening in 2006, says Michelle Poteaux, who runs the restaurant with her husband Christophe.

When Bastille relocated in January, several boomer must-haves drove the expansion: Carpeting to absorb noise, lower positioned lighting to make reading menus easier, substantial chairs with firm seats and comfortable banquettes with high backs.

“Boomers do not care about current trends,” she says. “What they really want is consistency and quality. They expect great service and a comfortable atmosphere. They understand that it is dining, not see-and-be-seen.”

Check the Attitude

While it’s easy enough to turn up the lights and turn down the thumping music, restaurant owners also need to check their attitudes.

“Remember: Bruce Springsteen is a boomer,” says Matt Thornhill, president of the Boomer

Project, a marketing and research organization. “The feeling of your waitstaff, bartenders and greeters should not be that people over 50 are old. If they’re coming out to see you at 7 or 8 in the evening, they are a long way from a nursing home.”

Boomers don’t want to be treated like their parents, so don’t even think about using the “early bird” special label. If you want to drive early dinner traffic, try “first seating,” “pre-theater” or even “happy hour” menus, with smaller portions and smaller prices.

Boomers relish time with their grandchildren. Create specials that encourage dining out with the grandkids. “Instead of puzzles on the kids’ menu, add some questions for kids to ask their grandparents (such as) favorite movies, favorite food; anything to start a dialogue,” Thornhill says.

Everyone Ages

Targeting boomers does not mean overlooking younger guests, considering that millennials and Generation Xers will eventually reach boomer age.

Shaw’s Crab House, a longtime stalwart of boomer patrons in Chicago, recently celebrated its third decade of business. One of its keys to success: cultivating a younger crowd without compromising the expectations of its regulars.

Young guests typically sit at the casual Oyster Bar, which features live music at night. Older patrons prefer the main dining room.

BUILD A BOOMER BUSINESS

Boomers have certain expectations and intolerances when it comes to dining out. Here are four ways to win them over and keep them coming back.

Polish your service // Knowledgeable staff is important. Service approaches, such as serving women first and waiting to clear the table until everyone is finished, is noticed and appreciated by this group.

Don’t snub (or charge for) special requests // Train staff to take special requests in stride. Customers who ask for vegetarian options or split entrees should be accommodated whenever possible.

Don’t keep them waiting // No one with a reservation likes waiting for a table, which is especially true for boomers. They also don’t like losing their table, so build in the time to accommodate.

Make them feel special // Greeting customers by name, remembering preferences and offering samples of new appetizers or desserts go a long way.

Special events work here, too. The restaurant hosted a crab dinner earlier this year, which drew older customers. An event that paired cocktails and oysters attracted mostly millennials.

"We need to try new things without changing who we are," says Steve LaHaie, Shaw's senior vice president. A few years ago, Shaw's added sushi to its menu after numerous requests from younger customers. "Now the older crowd is following, too," he says.

Digital Immigrants Use Tech

Boomers aren't Snapchatting, but the older end of the demographic is catching up with the younger end.

"What we've learned over the years is that boomers are very modern and very sophisticated," says Anita Walker, vice president of marketing for North Italia, an upscale restaurant concept with locations in Arizona, Texas, Colorado and Kansas. "They're more inclined to communicate online like the rest of the world does. They're there, and they're watching."

All customers are encouraged to leave feedback on the North Italia website, Walker says, but it's the boomers who respond most frequently. Old-school methods of marketing, like direct mail, don't work, she says.

"This is a huge and diverse group. You need to understand your own market and who's coming in," says Mary Chapman, senior director at research firm Technomic Inc. "Pay attention to what they say to servers, and ask them what you can do to make their experience better."

Consistent Quality

No one likes inconsistency, but boomers tend to be less tolerant.

"I used to change the menu all the time, but there are certain things that our regulars have come to expect," says Matthew Karp, owner of Plates Catering and Restaurant, a new American restaurant in Larchmont, New York, that draws mostly boomer patrons.

"Most of my regular customers come for our traditional items like roasted chicken," he says. "Now, I keep our core menu in place and change our specials more often."

Everyone wants a good dining experience, from a well-executed menu to solid service. But when it comes to certain segments, hitting certain touch points resonates more.

"What I like about this group is that if they're treated well, they are here every week," LaHaie says. "They truly can save a business." ■

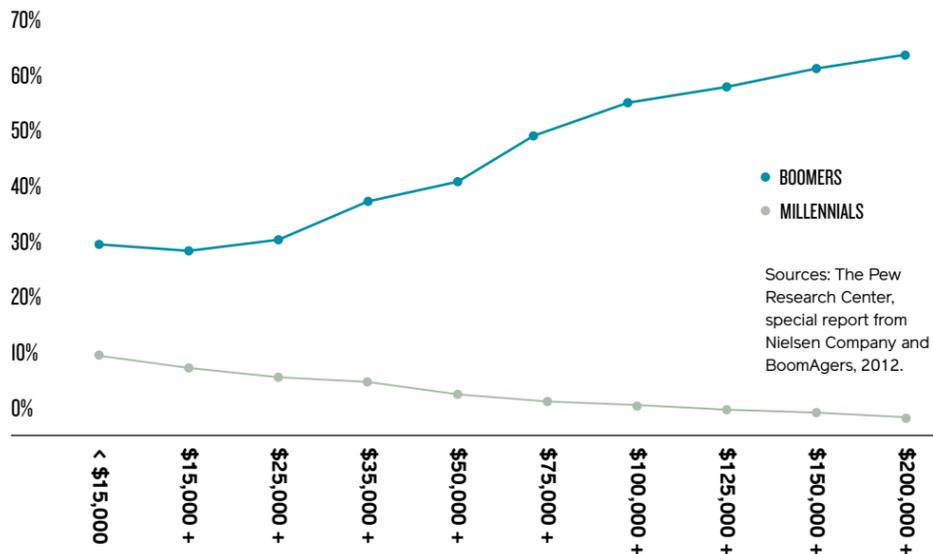
Monica Ginsburg is a borderline boomer who writes about business and dines out in Chicago.



Source: The Pew Research Center
*No chronological end point has been set. Some of Generation X and Generation Y are often classified in this age range.

Who's Got the Big Bucks?

Millennials are projected to take the lead as the largest age group in the country this year, outnumbering boomers by reaching 75.3 million, compared with 74.9 million boomers. But boomers still earn more and have greater discretionary income.



● BOOMERS
● MILLENNIALS

Sources: The Pew Research Center, special report from Nielsen Company and BoomAgers, 2012.

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SHARPEN YOUR HIRING

IQ

DON'T GET CUT OFF FROM THE BEST AS THE LABOR POOL TIGHTENS

BY GLORIA DAWSON

FINDING QUALITY EMPLOYEES IS HARD, AND YOU CAN EXPECT IT TO GET HARDER.

Hiring “is getting more difficult because the economy is doing better and there are simply more restaurants in more places,” says Clark Wolf, a New York food and restaurant consultant. “Hiring smart is more valuable and cost-efficient than ever before.”

So how can you amp up your hiring IQ? Start here.

1. Dig Deeper

Charlie Trotter’s extensive hiring questionnaire is legendary—one that served him twofold. It reinforced his high expectations and unyielding quest for perfection, but it also provided insight into potential hires.

A questionnaire should be a reflection of your concept and what’s important to it. Think of questions that will cull deeper insight into the potential hire, and measure knowledge that pertains specifically to your operation.

2. Share Your Vision

Make sure your hires understand what you and your restaurant are all about. Your vision is “one of those things you really can discuss at a first meeting,” Wolf says. “You can very much see from their response if it rings any bells.”

Employees who buy into your philosophy are especially significant when millennials make up your staff, says Darren Tristano, executive vice president of Technomic Inc., a food research and consulting firm.

“The younger generations want to have a voice, and they want to be connected and understand the culture and the philosophy of the business,” Tristano says. “They want a future, and they’ll go to whoever gives it to them.”

3. Adopt a Group Mentality

Tommy Hall, co-owner of Halls Chophouse in Charleston, South Carolina, takes a page out of Silicon Valley’s hiring practices. He assembles various employees to meet with potential hires before committing to a candidate. To hire a line cook, he’ll have applicants talk to a server, a shift leader and the sommelier. “I want to see how they interact,” he says, adding that restaurants are all about teamwork.

Teamwork is so important to Hall that he often talks to the candidates’ former colleagues, too, not just bosses. “I’ll dine in the restaurant and ask staff,” he says.

Requiring a potential hire to do a stage is par for the course for top kitchen positions, but consider extending this condition to all hires. It reveals how well the person interacts with staff.

4. Consider a Recruiter

Sometimes the best fit, especially for a high-level position or one that you’ll rely on to help run the business, isn’t looking for a job.

Recruiters can help unearth passive candidates—people content in their current positions and not actively looking. Matt Post, owner of

GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT

You may say it’s always been hard finding good workers, but it’s not an official labor shortage—yet. The National Restaurant Association, however, acknowledges that the “underlying fundamentals suggest that the labor market is likely tightening.”

Some factors to consider:

✦ Job growth has steadily increased annually, a trend expected to continue. The number of restaurant workers is projected to hit **15.7 million by 2025**, a 1.7 million increase from 2015, according to the NRA.

✦ Finding employees is a significant concern among nearly 20 percent of restaurants surveyed by the NRA. About **50 percent** of respondents say they will be focusing more resources on recruiting and retaining employees.

✦ Restaurants are competing with companies such as Wal-Mart, which has voluntarily increased minimum wage. Corporate-owned McDonald’s has followed suit. While the federal minimum wage has yet to increase, many states have already taken the initiative.

✦ The restaurant industry is increasingly becoming a place where people look for long-term jobs and careers. **Seven out of 10 people** in a 2014 NRA Educational Foundation survey said they see themselves staying around long enough to retire from the restaurant industry.

Javelina, a new Tex-Mex restaurant in New York, hired a recruiter specializing in the restaurant industry to find an executive chef. Post wanted a chef who had worked in a large kitchen and was familiar with more than Tex-Mex cooking. Chef Richard Caruso was consulting for another restaurant but he jumped at the chance when the recruiter approached him to start Javelina with Post.

“It’s really easy to find that active job seeker,” says Post, a former recruiter. “But there’s also a ton of (people) working for great organizations, who don’t know that they’re interested yet in a new opportunity because they’re happy where they’re at.”

5. Plan For Their Future

Making growth potential clear and transparent to employees can be an important factor for

them to stick around, Tristano says. “Without a vision in an organization, employees tend to look elsewhere.”

“We’re not Google, we’re not some Fortune 500 company that’s got different VPs, directors and SVPs. We’re a small, lean organization, but we do want to grow,” Post says. “The first port of call is going to be our high performing workers.”

6. Start Low With Space to Grow

To gauge worth ethic and dedication, ask whether potential hires would consider starting in an entry-level position.

Hall recently asked two applicants for server positions if they’d be willing to start off as a table runner. One applicant said, “I’ll do it if I have to.” The other said he’d do “whatever it takes to get in the door,” says Hall, who chose the latter. “Every single bartender started as a waiter and moved their way up.”

7. Make Scheduling Easier

Restaurants that change schedules, whether to adjust for seasonality or higher volume times, can create instability for some staffers, causing them to miss work or quit altogether.

Many new technology companies, such as 7shifts and ShiftPlanning, offer online scheduling so that restaurants can plan for busier or slower times. Employees can then make adjustments and restaurants can fill in the gaps weeks or months in advance.

“You make it easier for people to swap shifts with technology,” Tristano says. It’s a “huge step forward, not only for a restaurant but for a group restaurant where people may be able to utilize the other restaurants to add a shift or swap a shift.”

8. Accept and Adjust

Despite all the best hiring practices, staff shortages can still occur, especially in the current economic climate.

“Sometimes you need to adjust the conceptual notion, construct or the execution to meet the parameters of what you have,” says Wolf. “Sometimes you need to shorten the menu; simplify the service method. You have to adapt.” ■

Gloria Dawson is a contributor to The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, who suspects she was once hired at a restaurant called Olive Oil’s because she looked like the cartoon character.

WHEN DO YOU GIVE BRAGGARTS THE BOOT?

BY KATE BERNOT

LIKE DEATH AND TAXES, ATTITUDES IN THE KITCHEN ARE A CERTAINTY IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS. STRESS AND PRESSURE FAN A RAGING EGO, MAKING SOME STAFF DOWNRIGHT AWFUL TO WORK WITH. RESTAURATEURS WHO'VE DEALT WITH JERKS—AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE—EXPLAIN THEIR STRATEGIES.

PHOTO BY JEFF MARINI



Iliana Regan

Chef-owner of Elizabeth Restaurant, Chicago

Backstory: Michelin-starred chef and semifinalist for a James Beard Award; her second project, Bunny Bakery, opened earlier this year in Chicago.

“It’s one thing for someone to be arrogant because they are really good and know it. And to a certain extent, we’ve accepted that. But when an attitude or arrogance interferes with an employee’s relationship with others or myself, then we don’t bother trying to amend it. It usually wears itself out and they leave, or we have let them go. It’s a really tricky subject because there are so many sides to it. I love when employees know they are good, and they use their good to help and teach others. That makes them leaders. When they use that attitude negatively, the results eventually end up negative.”

“WHEN AN ATTITUDE OR ARROGANCE INTERFERES WITH AN EMPLOYEE’S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS OR MYSELF, THEN WE DON’T BOTHER TRYING TO AMEND IT.”

“YOU MUST BE READY TO TERMINATE, AND THEY HAVE TO KNOW THAT WITHOUT YOU SAYING IT.”

Martino DiGrande

Owner and general manager of Palio d’Asti, San Francisco

Backstory: Served as beverage director and general manager in 2008 before taking ownership in 2012.

“When someone is not living up to expectations in the job description, I like to use the axiom ‘groom or broom.’ Either someone can be made to follow the rules and get along, or it’s time to go. Determine whether the trait you are trying to rectify is an ingrained personality trait or just bad decision-making due to lack of training and discipline. Employees will always deny their wrongdoing and attempt to explain it away. If they are confronted, and you do not back down or let them ‘explain,’ they tend to make up their own mind on whether they want to stay and change or leave.

As with any negotiation, if you are not willing to leave the table, then they have all the power. You must be ready to terminate, and they have to know that without you saying it. Treat the employee like a team member and not like a member of the family. Family make excuses for each other; team members hold each other accountable.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF PALIO D’ASTI



PHOTO COURTESY OF GADZOOKS

“ I MAKE SURE OUR STAFF KNOWS THAT NONE OF THEM ARE BIGGER THAN THE BUSINESS. ”

Patrick Ryan
Chef-owner of Port Fonda, Kansas City, Missouri
Backstory: Started as a local food taco truck, which became brick-and-mortar Port Fonda. A second location is planned to open in Lawrence, Kansas.

“I make sure our staff knows that none of them are bigger than the business. The only people that have to show up day in and day out to take care of the business are me and my partner, Jamie Davila. Everyone else is free to leave whenever they want, for whatever reason they want.

My job is to provide a fun workplace where people (those that deserve it) are treated with respect. After the first year, the people that stay become a family, but it's very important to know that it's a work family. If you've worked in a restaurant, and if you've been taken off the schedule, straight-up fired or phased out, it might not always be because you are a bad worker, but because your attitude isn't a good fit for the ownership or the rest of the staff.” ■

A Phoenix transplant, Kate Bernot is an editor and freelance writer specializing in food and suds. Follow her on Twitter @KBernot.



Aaron Pool
Chef-owner of Gadzooks, Phoenix
Backstory: After graduating from Arizona State University, he opened Gadzooks in 2013.

“We hired (an employee) at the very beginning of Gadzooks to be a prep cook and help on the line. We were brand new—and new to interviewing. I knew this person was ‘off.’ He complained that management at other jobs didn't know what they were doing. But he had tons of experience, so we took a risk and hired him. During trainings, he'd make sarcastic comments, didn't respect the dress code and vandalized our to-go packing machine with a Sharpie. The final straw came on a busy Saturday morning when he just didn't complete the job we asked him to do and we let him go.

We just had to work short-staffed for a few weeks. The employees that make it through weeks of being short-staffed turn into the loyal ones. It's absolutely better to work harder than have a crappy employee. That employee will do so much more damage than extra work you will do.”

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FOOD FANATIC ROAD TRIP!

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FOOD FANATIC

Aaron Williams is a Food Fanatics chef for US Foods based in Los Angeles who's all about the Golden State.



@ChefAaronW
Follow the Food Fanatic on Twitter for more tips.

The French Laundry has skewed the perception of wine. Despite the shine Thomas Keller's famous jewel of a restaurant has created for Napa Valley dining, food in this part of the world generally serves to complement the wine, not the other way around.

To dine like a native, choose a varietal and then look at the main menu.

This is cabernet country, so if you order a dry-aged rib-eye at Press in St. Helena, a red needs to accompany it. Chardonnay is your cue for the poached yellowfin tuna salad at Archetype and merlot for the mushroom and pancetta pizza at Redd Wood in Yountville.

No one will judge you for filtering your search by the view: The spa-goers scene at Solbar in Calistoga; the Valley floor from Auberge du Soleil's terrace in Rutherford; and the Napa River from Morimoto Napa.

For your best chance at clinking glasses with vintners and winemakers, pick a restaurant with a killer wine list and eat at the bar. Industry folks patronize the establishments that carry their labels and return frequently to make sure they stay featured. Servers and bartenders don't

flinch if you ask for tastes to make sure you're picking the right wine for each course.

If you dine during high season—June through October—start making calls way ahead. If you'd rather operate on the fly, look to hotel concierges, drivers from private touring services and your hosts at wine tastings to lock down reservations. ■

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Cindy's Backstreet Kitchen

Cindy Pawlczyn's follow-up to Mustards Grill has more charm, less noise and a cool outdoor patio. The Adult Grilled Cheese with white cheddar and the Campfire Pie, a superior s'more, aren't kids' stuff.



Archetype

This St. Helena restaurant has a serious cross-cultural menu: Niman Ranch lamb gyro with garlic naan; tzatziki grilled trout with crispy skin potatoes; oven roasted Brussels sprouts, marinated shiitakes and Chinese mustard cream; and hamachi crudo with white beans.

Bottega

Michael Chiarello launched an empire of shopping, dining and drinking in Yountville, and this restaurant has been hot from the start. Seasonal California ingredients are served regional Italian style.

The Restaurant at Meadowood

Chef Christopher Kostow's brilliant work is the new Napa standard. The menu is too elastic to predict, but is sure to be driven from the curated restaurant garden.

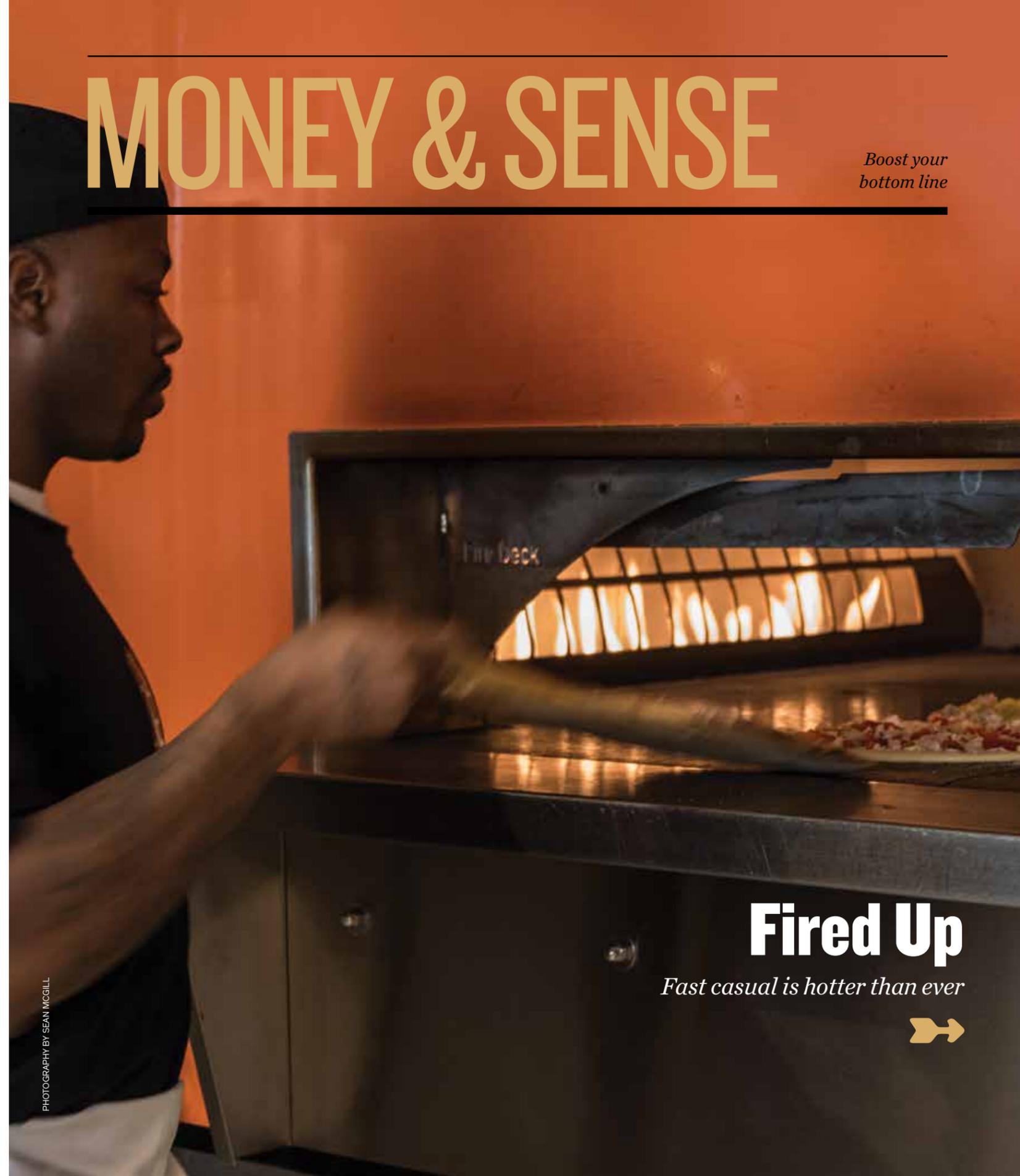
Oxbow Public Market

Downtown Napa's not-to-be-missed fantasy food court is made up of two dozen merchants, from C Casa's grilled citrus shrimp tacos to Kara's vanilla coconut cupcakes.



MONEY & SENSE

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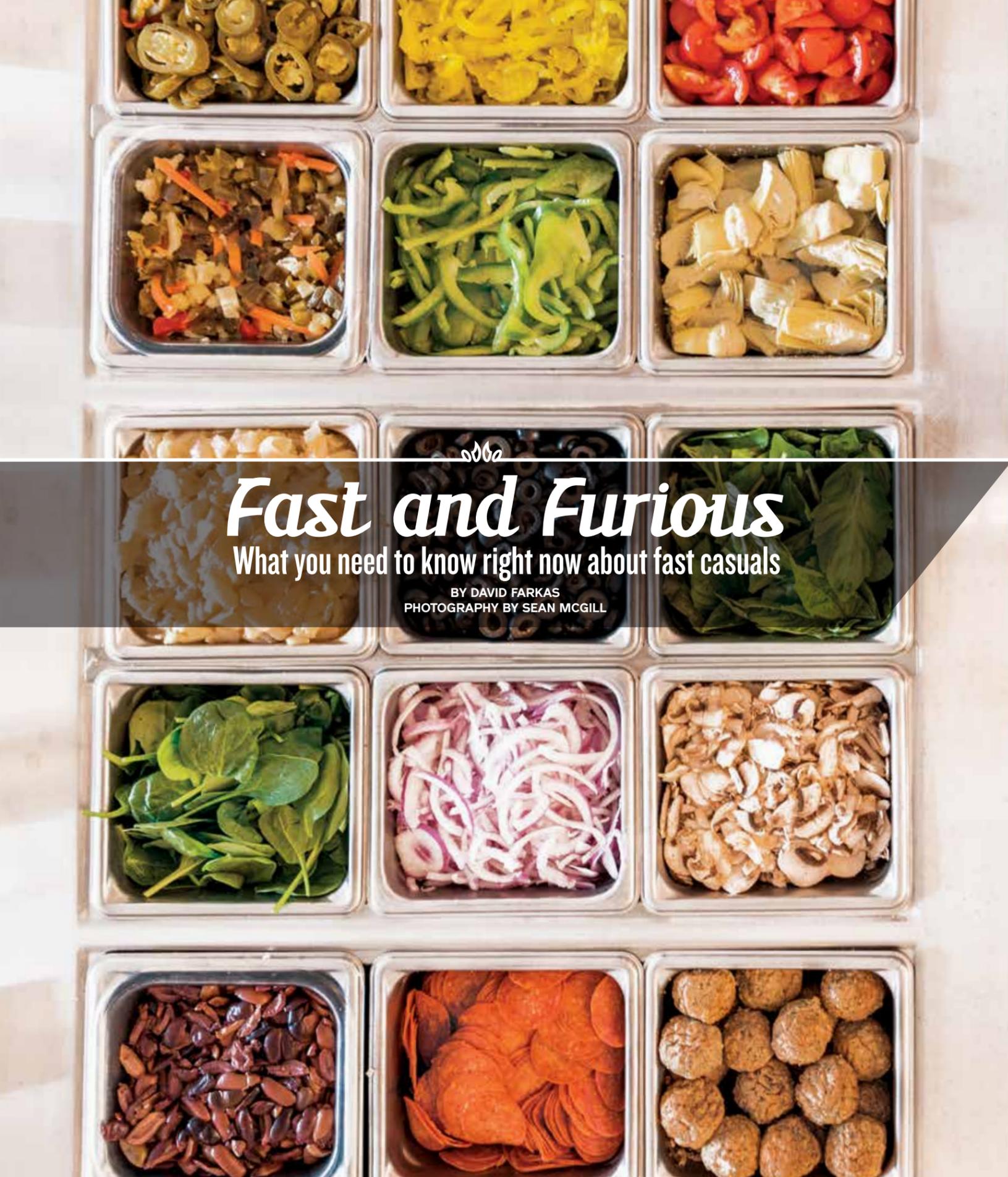


Fired Up

Fast casual is hotter than ever



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MCGILL



Fast and Furious

What you need to know right now about fast casuals

BY DAVID FARKAS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MCGILL



ANYONE ENTERING THE FAST CASUAL FRAY SHOULD HEED THE WORDS OF A SEASONED PRO.

“As far as potential goes, the breakout categories are build-your-own pizza, Mediterranean and barbecue,” says Darren Tristano, executive vice president at restaurant research firm Technomic Inc.

Notable concepts like Blaze Pizza (ingredients pictured), Zoe’s Kitchen and Dickey’s BBQ are indeed rising stars, all chasing the unprecedented payday of category leader Chipotle Mexican Grill.

But what does it take to be a part of the industry experiencing the most growth and the likelihood of the highest returns? Read on.

Go Big or Go Home

If you compete within the increasingly crowded fast casual segment, think in terms of multiplying. The key to growth—often referred to by investors as “scaling”—is your management team’s ability to balance financing, site selection and capital with the need to open locations as quickly as possible to capture market share.

Generally, public companies like Noodles & Company, Shake Shack and The Habit Burger Grill, are more likely to be under such pressure given their immediate access to capital.

Privately held fast casuals can grow more slowly with so-called “patient capital.” Still, one or two site selection mistakes for either can set a small chain back.

THE ROAD TO FAST CASUAL

STEP ONE

Friends and family supply \$350,000 to \$1 million to start. Banks are unlikely partners unless it’s a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan.

STEP TWO

Grow concept quickly to five or more locations to mark a position in the marketplace.

STEP THREE

Go after growth capital, typically private equity firms. Must show potential for rapid expansion. Valuation is placed on the company; investors seek 30- to 50-plus percent ownership.

Concepts that Landed the Capital >>

In 2011, Brentwood Associates began funding a Los Angeles vegetarian concept called Veggie Grill. Since then, it has grown from seven outlets to 28 in California, Oregon and Washington. Private equity firm Catterton has recently provided growth capital for Piada Italian Street Food, Mendocino Farms and Protein Bar.

KarpReilly recently funded Patxi’s Pizza, a 15-unit concept in the San Francisco Bay area; 70 outlets on the West Coast are set to open within the next five years. The firm also owns controlling interest in Burger Lounge, a fast casual gourmet burger concept.

Fast Casual DEFINED*

- >> Food quality is on par or better than casual dining
- >> Food prep of fresh ingredients is usually in plain sight of customers
- >> Knowledgeable, concept-savvy employees
- >> \$8 to \$15 check average (including beverage)
- >> Authentic design materials—wood, brick, metal, glass and ceramic tiles, oftentimes recycled or repurposed
- >> Environmentally conscious (LEED-certified, recyclable utensils and paper products)
- >> Customizable, counter-service format
- >> Limited table service
- >> Single-serve beer and wine containers

*Some industry observers divide fast casual into "fresh casual" and "fast fine" categories to denote differences in quality and pricing; others note that traditional fast feeders now offer fast casual-level menu items and insist fast casual is too obtuse. For now, fast casual remains the most acceptable term.

CASUAL CULTURE RULES

Fast casual restaurants have their own set of cultural rules. These typically include promoting their values, stewardship of the environment and offering fresh foods. Aspiring "founders" should consider:

Create a brand with a purpose that drives food quality, service, price and decor. Chipotle, for example, risked lowering sales by pulling carnitas from its menu at many units after suspending a large pork supplier for violating its standards for raising pigs.

Avoid processed foods or ingredients, which can turn off customers looking for fresh, whole foods.

Use recycled paper and plastics to reduce your carbon footprint.

Use meaningful language. Fresh and local are now overused. Instead, list local suppliers on the menu and make sure employees can share that information. If you use a commissary to batch-process foods, refer to it as the "central kitchen."

Keep nutritional information handy. Check out Sweetgreen, a fast-casual salad concept based in Washington, D.C.

Source: Michael Mack, Garden Fresh founder and Tender Greens advisory board member



Why Everyone Wants to Be Chipotle

Chipotle is in a different world, says Mark Saltzgaber, a restaurant investor and board member of multiple restaurant chains, including Snooze and Patxi's Pizza. "They're simply the best, and their unit economic model is unmatched in today's market."

18.2%

Mexican segment growth in 2014, most of it Chipotle units

1,755

Number of locations throughout U.S.

\$2.5 MILLION

Per unit sales

66%

Cash-on-cash return, uncapped

Source: "Growth Restaurant Stock Primer & Case Study Book" (June 24, 2014), Wells Fargo Securities

2 Hot Concepts

CITY BARBECUE

Concept: Barbecue is king at this 23-unit concept headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

Founder: Rick Malir opened the first location in Upper Arlington, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, in 1999.

Background: Malir, who has won awards on the competitive barbecue circuit with his cooking team, catered barbecue events from his garage in Columbus.

Menu: Pork, beef and other proteins with emphasis on free-range and all natural with some local ingredient sourcing. Employees cut meats in front of customers; made-to-order sandwiches.

Check average: \$12 to \$15, with beverage

Decor: Rustic, roadhouse-style with reclaimed barn boards and other woods for tables and seating.

Growth capital: Bootstrapped first unit; combination of bank debt and cash flow to open outlets.

Expansion strategy: Two City Barbecue outlets—North Carolina and Kentucky—to open in 2015. Prefers sites in strong suburban neighborhoods. Goal is to launch three more locations.

& PIZZA

Concept: Build-your-own pizza, headquartered in Washington, D.C., featuring a TurboChef conveyor oven that cooks pizzas in just under two minutes. Twelve locations with more on the way.

Founders: Michael Lastoria and Steve Salis, co-founders

Background: Entrepreneurs Salis and Lastoria, who have beverage and advertising backgrounds, moved from New York to D.C. for their first unit on H Street in mid-2012. They hired architect Thaddeus Briner of Architecture Outfit to design it, who also designed Chipotle's ShopHouse Southeast Asian Kitchen.

Menu: Customers line up and choose from three types of dough (traditional, ancient grains or gluten free), eight sauces and spreads, three cheeses, and a variety of meat and vegetable toppings. "Finishes" include garlic oil, oregano oil, red pepper chili oil and tzatziki yogurt.

Check average: \$10 to \$12, with beverage.

Decor: Black and white brick walls; customers share long communal tables.

Growth capital: Ruby Tuesday founder and strategic advisor Sandy Beall is among the investors.

Expansion strategy: Open locations in the Northeast (including Boston) and urban outlets before launching in the suburbs. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY BBQ

WHO'S ON TOP?

CATEGORY	SALES GROWTH	LEADER OF THE PACK	SALES/UNITS
Mexican	18.2%	Chipotle Mexican Grill	\$4.05 billion/1,755
Sandwich	14.5%	Jimmy John's	\$1.73 billion/2,132
Chicken	13.9%	Zaxby's	\$1.26 billion/660
Bakery Cafe	6.1%	Panera Bread	\$4.37 billion/1,809
Asian/Noodle	12.9%	Panda Express	\$2.28 billion/1,729
Better Burger	11.2%	Five Guys Burgers and Fries	\$1.21 billion/1,163

Source: "Technomic Fast-Casual 150 Chain Report" on 2014 category growth. All data is U.S. operations only.

Dave Farkas has been covering the restaurant industry for nearly 20 years.

BE SOCIAL

Given the legion of young fast-casual diners, engaging customers through social media is essential. Some observers noted that premium burger concept Shake Shack, which raised \$1.6 billion in its January IPO, created much of its buzz through Instagram (185,000 followers) and Twitter (43,700 followers).

Its Twitter feed features product photos, lists Shake Shack-related events, retweets admirers, and recruits and compliments employees. Instagram followers regularly send food photos for a chance to be reposted on its social feed.





THE REVERSE COMMUTE

Suburbia is the next frontier for enterprising restaurateurs

BY PETER GIANOPULOS

FOR FAR TOO LONG, THE SUBURBS HAVE BEEN TYPECAST AS THE PLACE WHERE INNOVATIVE RESTAURANTS GO TO DIE. THE SPRAWLING EXPANSE OF STRIP MALLS AND CHAIN RESTAURANTS SEEMED AN IMPROBABILITY FOR CHEF-DRIVEN RESTAURANTS THAT DOMINATE BUSY CITY NEIGHBORHOODS.

No population density? No foot traffic? No significant lunch crowds or food-obsessed diners? No chance—until now.

The suburban dining scene is transforming into a land of opportunity, from Boston to Chicago to Portland. Pockets of food communities are popping up in suburbs as diners tire of schlepping to the city for a memorable meal.

“The casualization of fine dining has changed everything,” says Mary Chapman, senior director of product innovation for food industry research firm Technomic. “Suburban diners don’t see dining out as a special occasion anymore. So if you can give them something unique and affordable that’s closer to home, they’re more likely to try it.”

Lower Costs

The suburbs are a relief for operators exhausted by the challenges of owning an urban restaurant: skyrocketing leasing rates, astronomical operating costs and fierce competition among chef-driven concepts.

“It’s not uncommon to see rent cost half as much in the suburbs as it does downtown,” says Dan Simons, founding partner of Farmers Restaurant Group, which runs three Founding Farmers restaurants and Farmers Fishers Bakers in the Washington, D.C., area. “The question to ask is, ‘Can you double the business downtown that you would in a suburb?’”

That depends. While many suburbs have the usual rows of mega chains, the spending power and cultural values can change from place to place. For owners of city restaurants, heading to affluent communities where their diners live can be a sound bet. For example, Geoffrey Zakarian of “Chopped” fame, is planning a Greenwich, Connecticut, location for his New York-based The National, this fall.

“There’s plenty of room for the smart restaurant operator in suburban locations,” says consultant Mario Ponce of Chicago-based Partners in Hospitality. “The restaurant operator will have an advantage if they understand that the value-price relationship is driven by excellent good food and drinks with a strong culture and ambiance to match.”

Find Your Niche

Four years ago when Simons wanted to expand his health-conscious Founding Farmers concept, he searched for area locations flush with chiropractors, alternative-medicine clinics and personal trainers.

“We were looking for communities that had an interest in health and nutrition,” he says. “If we made a vodka and orange juice, we wanted to find people who cared that we use fresh-squeezed orange juice and organic vodka.”

His strategy paid off. The second location in Montgomery County, Maryland, was an instant hit, becoming the foundation for launching a third in the D.C. suburb of Tysons early this year.

Dirt-cheap real estate also lured Chef Pascal Chureau to the suburb of West Linn, Oregon, to open his restaurant, Allium, which cost about one-third less than the price tag in nearby downtown Portland.

Instead of competing with the many farm-to-table restaurants in Portland, Chureau tapped into West Linn’s many locavores. Reduced portion sizes and lower prices worked for his customers’ budgets, while simple bar bites and more sophisticated dinner fare appealed to their taste buds.

“I was the first one in the area to try something like this,” Chureau says. “And that made a real difference.”

Building a Better Value Meal

Suburban diners are becoming more adventurous, but value and variety remain the top menu priorities in most markets.

“Today, it’s not unusual to find people going out to eat two or three days a week,” says Chef Dean James Max of Parallel Post in Trumbull, Connecticut. “Suburban diners want to eat well, but still stay within their budget.”

Pricy steaks and expensive seafood options guarantee returns for special occasions, but Max says creative entrees in the \$13 to \$15 range can generate rapid repeat visits. Dishes like a \$15 wahoo and short rib faro “fried rice” hit the right price, while also differentiating his restaurant from nearby chains.



Numbered Opportunities

141

of the highest density urban ZIP codes averaged 122 upscale restaurants per square mile.

124

suburban ZIP codes offered 23 upscale restaurants per square mile.

Source: Datassential Firefly 2015



At The Strand House in Manhattan Beach, California, just outside of Los Angeles, Executive Chef-Partner Greg Hozinsky has used cookbook signings, guest-chef dinners and farm-to-table events to introduce more exotic offerings. Once a run-of-the-mill steak and seafood spot, The Strand House now offers reinvented classics that lean on more exotic ingredients, including wild boar sausage pizza with piquillo pepper sauce and Norwegian *skrie* (cod) with chia seeds and rapini blossoms.

"In the suburbs, you have to work up to that 'I trust the chef moment,'" Hozinsky says, adding that diners are hooked once they taste a dish.

Newer, Bigger, Better

In the city, small restaurants with tight dining spaces and minimal curb appeal can make it on volume. In suburbia, bigger can be better.

After success in Dallas, Chef-owner Kent Rathbun turned to the Texas suburb of Plano to build an outpost of Jasper's, a barbecue concept that ranges from Dr Pepper-braised lamb shank to wood-roisserie prime rib.

Rathbun built an 8,800-square-foot behemoth packed with themed rooms, including an outdoor patio, an enclosed re-creation of a typical suburban backyard deck and a dining room guised as a picnic area.

"We wanted to go where there was a lot of chain restaurants so we would stand out," Rathbun says. "In these outlying communities, (Jasper's has) become their gem."

Jasper's concept and location appeals to local families, but the area's large concentration of corporate campuses, such as J.C. Penney and Cinemark Holdings, has increased private dining.

Jeremy Fitzgerald also hit the mark after opening his first successful Bar 145 in Toledo, Ohio, four years ago. He launched four others in Ohio, including a Columbus suburb and a community outside of Akron.

The locations allowed for the space to fuse together three concepts: an upscale burger shack, sports bar and a live music venue.

"I want to go into areas where I can fill a void," Fitzgerald says, "And with all the competition in the city, the suburbs is where you can find a niche and stand out from the crowd." ■

Peter Gianopulos is a critic for Chicago magazine, an adjunct professor and freelance writer.



Far From the Maddening Crowds

Five ways to attract suburban diners

1. Support the Community: Sponsoring local athletic teams, donating meals to membership organizations and hosting community movie screenings draws attention and opportunities for valuable private-dining dollars.

2. Park It: Free parking is an essential, but valet parking and spacious, brightly lit parking lots create a sense of safety and convenience for older diners and families.

3. Show off Your Chef: The more your executive chef gets out of the kitchen, the better. Engage diners with table visits, cooking classes and custom recipes for special events.

4. Get Social: Determine which social channels your customer base prefers and jump in, whether it's Instagram photos of your daily specials or exclusive offers for Facebook followers.

5. Tap the Right Talent: Recruit experienced chefs and offer generous incentives to keep them. Word spreads faster in the suburbs when food quality declines.



...WITH ALL THE COMPETITION IN THE CITY, THE SUBURBS ARE WHERE YOU CAN FIND A NICHE AND STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD.

—Jeremy Fitzgerald of Bar 145



On the Move

Chefs are debunking suburban dining myths, one creative concept at a time. ➡➡

Your Reputation Will Suffer

Reality: After six years at The Publican in Chicago, Chef Brian Huston opened a simple farm-to-table concept called Boltwood in his native Evanston last summer. Less than a year later, he was nominated for a James Beard Award.

Creative Ethnic Fare Will Never Fly

Reality: Iron Chef Jose Garces opened the fourth location of his Mexican street food concept Distrito in Moorestown, New Jersey, last year, offering creative ceviches, tacos and enchiladas to welcoming crowds.

An Urban Concept Won't Translate

Reality: Chef-owner Jason Bond of Bondir in Cambridge, Massachusetts, found success with his 2013 sequel in suburban Concord serving spruced-up comfort food like parsnip soup and nettle agnolotti.

You Can't Charge City Prices in the Suburbs

Reality: After leaving Canlis in Seattle, Chef-owner Jason Franey opened Restaurant 1833 in Monterey, California, outside of San Francisco, serving \$46 salt-crusted dorade and \$39 truffled chicken.

SCHOOL OF TRASH

Four easy steps to saving money on can liners!



Ask your Heritage representative how to save on can liners!



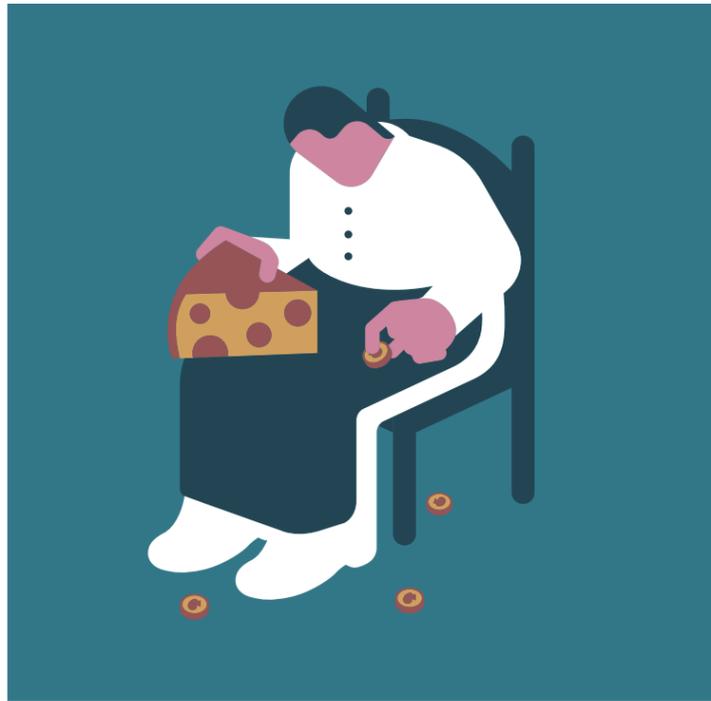
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HERITAGE





Count the Costs

No more excuses: Embrace food management software to save you time and money

BY LAURA YEE

Sad, but true: Your old spreadsheets can't learn new tricks. If you're still trying to determine food costs and monitor inventory by staring into a wall of cells, you're probably wasting resources that you'd rather see on your bottom line.

Specialized food cost and inventory software programs can simplify and speed up some of the most tedious responsibilities of running the business—and converted restaurateurs say that technology makes a significant financial impact.

Still a tech holdout? Lucky for you, these operators have a comeback for any excuse.

Excuse No. 1

"It's just as much of a time suck."

Technology-resistant operators often say the software programs require a time commitment to learn and use them, so why bother? Michael Ferraro, executive chef of Delicatessen in New York, discovered analytics tools after spending hours poring over spreadsheets and monitoring product needs and fluctuating food costs. Analytics tools tied to ordering history and food prices, for example, eliminate the time it takes to nail down fluctuating food prices.

The system, Compeat Advantage, also tracks the restaurant's

purveyors, inventory and recipes. It scans the list for the lowest price and then, after orders are received, instantly recalibrates food costs for his recipes.

"It takes time to train your people on how to use it," Ferraro says. "But we can now analyze aspects of our business on a daily basis."

Excuse No. 2

"It's only for big operations."

"This is a falsehood," says Scott Shaffer, who sold food cost software to restaurants before starting YoGo Express, a sandwich and frozen yogurt concept in Seneca, South Carolina. "The restaurant business is a pennies business, which means every percentage point counts."

Shaffer, who has owned or operated more than 20 restaurants, says any operation can benefit from software that provides data on food prices and inventory. Instead of trying to avoid running out of inventory by over-ordering, he uses analytics to order exactly how much he needs—and his kitchen has reduced waste and dropped food costs 5 percent.

"The benefit of ordering what you are going through is that you do not have extra dollars on your shelves not making any money," Shaffer says. The kitchen staff, he says, is also more careful with product knowing that the inventory is limited.

Excuse No. 3

"It costs too much."

The question is not how much technology costs, but whether you can afford not to have it, says Jason Tschida, owner of DeGidio's Restaurant and Bar, a 200-seat restaurant in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Numerous people I know do not embrace technology because they are stuck on costs," he says. "They're going day by day instead of long-term. Over time,

all that money saved goes to the bottom line."

Tschida uses a variety of software across all operations, from scheduling and sales to food costs and liquor inventory. Though the fees range from \$45 to \$1,000 per month, the software pays for itself in savings from improved efficiency.

He's seen the greatest savings with liquor. Knowing that inventory is counted and monitored, servers and bartenders are more careful about pouring. The service that costs \$1,000 per month has resulted in a \$5,000 monthly increase in revenue.

Excuse No. 4

"It's not accurate or flexible."

Flexibility depends on the software, which should integrate with a restaurant's POS system to meet an operator's specific needs. But accuracy relies on the quality of data entered by staff.

"It all comes down to the foundation," Tschida says. "People make the mistake of thinking volume and weight are the same. If you put in garbage, you'll come out with garbage."

Like anything else, the information used by the program has to be maintained and recipes adjusted or added.

"I like technology," Tschida says, "but I love efficiency. So it all works for me." ■

Peter Gianopulos contributed to this story.



FOR TIPS ON
CHOOSING SOFTWARE
go to
FOODFANATICS.COM

PR MACHINE

Sharp ideas to get butts in seats

DOWN WITH DISCOUNTS

Reward diners with just the right deal

BY ANTHONY TODD



HAPPY HOURS. LOYALTY CLUBS. COUPONS. NIGHTLY SPECIALS. HALF-OFF BEER ON TUESDAYS AND \$1 OYSTERS ON MONDAYS.

Diners are bombarded with deals and discounts. As one of those diners, I know more about restaurant deals than almost any other subject. I might not remember my anniversary, but I definitely remember that great \$6 martini deal down the block.

Done right, promotions can strengthen your brand, increase revenue and keep customers coming back. Done badly? At best, loyal customers come down with discount fatigue and unsubscribe from your mailing list. At worst, everyone in town decides your fare is never worth the regular menu price because it's always on sale.

"The number one guiding principal," says Alan Lake, a Chicago chef and restaurant consultant, "is never cheapen your brand."

So how do you discount the right way?

Be Consistent

Happy hour is a staple, which is why so many restaurants and bars compete to draw customers with lower-priced menu items and discounted drinks. That's OK, but don't be tempted to add off-concept items.

"We're not buying something frozen and dropping it in the fryer and serving it cheap," says Josh Hahn, operating partner at Washington D.C.-based EatWell restaurants. "If we don't serve it at dinner, we won't serve it at happy hour."

Offering low-cost, happy hour food that isn't on the menu also creates a strain on the back of the house. "We don't want to overcomplicate things and add extra work," Hahn says.



THE NUMBER ONE GUIDING PRINCIPAL IS NEVER CHEAPEN YOUR BRAND.

—Alan Lake, a Chicago chef and restaurant consultant.



Do the Math

Half-off drinks on Tuesdays might sound good, but does it align with your profit margins? Do you have a specific plan to use the deal as a loss leader, or just a vague sense that people might order food, too?

If you don't do the math, you might end up with a full restaurant and an empty wallet. Lake cautions against offering deep-discount deals without crunching the numbers. "You're lucky if you have a 10 percent margin in this business," he says. "If you're discounting more than that, you'd better have a plan."

Chicago restaurateur Nick Kokonas, whose restaurants Alinea and Next are based on a prepaid reservation model, looks at the math differently. He has sold tickets for less popular nights at a lower price than for Saturday evenings, even if it means barely breaking even.

"If I have empty seats and people sitting around waiting to serve people, I'm definitely losing money because I'm not making my labor costs."

A discounted table is making more money than an empty one, he says. Just pay attention to the numbers.

Be Selectively Cheap

Half off all wine or beer nights might be easy for staff, but the approach can damage your bottom line.

Instead, use value as the lure. "Maybe there's a nice wine we sell by the glass for \$14, and when we make it available for happy hour it's not necessarily at \$6, but at \$10 or \$11," Hahn says.

The approach introduces a wine or food that the customer might be willing to pay full price for during their next visit.

Discourage Discount Hunting

Yes, you want to attract new customers through deals, but you don't want discount hunters. Be sure to include promotions to reward regulars by offering deals exclusive to them.

Also tie discounts directly to loyalty. "Give customers an incentive program—spend X, get Y. Come five times, get something special. Then you're rewarding good behavior, which in turn will get you more business," Lake says.

Avoid Discount Fatigue

Discounting regularly will create a customer mindset that always expects a deal and questions why there isn't one.

Draw strategically from the discount well. Look at your sales from year to year and target the slowest periods for discounts.

By using deals to introduce diners to your concept, reinforce your brand and reward regulars, you can grow a business based on the quality of your restaurant—not on cheap food and drinks. ■



A smartly equipped kitchen at the Promontory in Chicago.

EQUIPPED TO CONQUER THE TASK OF BUILDING A KITCHEN RULE

BY JEFFREY TOMCHEK
PHOTOGRAPY BY SEAN MCGILL

IF YOU HAD UNLIMITED BANK, OUTFITTING A RESTAURANT KITCHEN WOULD BE A PIECE OF CAKE, RIGHT?

Maybe, but no one wants to make mistakes. After opening more than 50 restaurants, I have found that a combination of new, used and leased equipment works best. A \$200,000 kitchen with all new equipment can be built for \$150,000 with a mixed approach.

Before choosing, answer some questions. What fits in the space? What type of cuisine will be prepared? How many people need to be served each night? While a kitchen is typically designed to suit a specific concept, make sure you can execute a different one if the restaurant changes to meet market demands.

Consider the pros and cons of each choice with your budget in mind. Most importantly, do your homework. Your own needs and expectations will come into play, so remember these are guidelines, not gospel.



LEASE
Ice machines
Dishwashers
Steamers



For some operators, leasing everything can be a good idea. It lowers opening expenses and lessens the headaches that come with owning equipment. That said, certain items should always be leased because of their high probability of breaking down, such as ice machines, dishwashers and other equipment that combine water and electricity. If the dish machine glitches, the leasing company will send a repair person on a Saturday or holiday to fix it, saving you from paying someone double time.



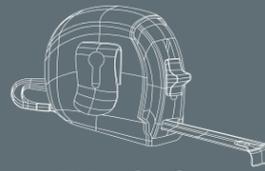
USED

Food processors (such as Robot Coupe)
Grills
Hood fans
Mixers (such as Hobart or Berkel)
Ranges
Stainless steel tables
Small wares (mixing bowls, stockpots, shelving, sheet pans)
Slicers (such as Berkel)

As a rule, anything without moving parts carries little to no risk. Exhaust hoods are pricy but durable. A new 11-foot hood can cost around \$13,000. A smart shopper could save 50 percent buying used. Stainless steel hand and dish sinks are smart used purchases, too, and will last a long time.

Watch one episode of "Kitchen Nightmares" and you'll see how some operators abuse their equipment. I've seen 2-year-old ranges completely shot. But I've also come across ranges like Jade or Montague that can last 20 years. Quality endures only when the equipment is diligently cleaned and maintained. That said, grills hold up even if mistreated and are a good bet to buy used.

Still, ask a lot of questions. Where is it from? Are there maintenance records? Can you get a warranty?



Measure Twice, Cut Once

Estimating the exact amount of space for equipment versus knowing hard numbers can be costly, so double-check.

Other tips for purchasing equipment:

- > Look carefully at the gauge of the steel and check its fit and finish.
- > Inspect insulation and wiring.
- > Test the equipment.
- > Play with the controls.
- > Compare brands. Differences from one manufacturer's six-burner range to the next can be big.
- > Always factor in the expense of your time. Finding good, used equipment will require more effort than purchasing new.
- > Remember warranties that come with new equipment have value.
- > Buy the best you can afford. The price difference between bottom tier and top brands is typically around 10 percent, but the quality difference can be huge.

NEW

Deep fryers
Freezers
Griddles
Immersion circulators
Refrigeration
Vacuums

Go new for this kind of equipment



It's better to roll new when it comes to anything high-tech, especially considering the rapid improvements in efficiency. Some technology comes at a high price, such as POS systems, but can offer savings on labor and food shrinkage.

Considering that refrigeration is the only barrier between fresh and spoiled food, it makes sense to go new. Compressors are fragile. Insulation breaks down. If you want to save a little, ask your supplier if they have any new units with superficial dings. A couple of dents are fine.

Griddles and deep fryers need to be carefully cleaned and maintained. I wouldn't trust used unless its past can be documented.

Ranges have the fewest moving parts and can last forever if well maintained. But here's the rub: This is the heart of your kitchen. If you can afford it, buy new. Buy top line, heavy duty maximum BTUs. Pay once, take care of it, and use it for 20 years. The price difference between a top and bottom of the line can be 10 to 20 percent. Consider that \$2,000 over 20 years is \$100 a year. ■

Jeffrey Tomchek has opened restaurants around the world. He is currently working on launching his own restaurant in suburban Chicago.

DEAR FOOD FANATIC

Seasoned advice on the front and back of the house

Q Catering and private dining goes through the roof from fall through the holidays, but I'm torn between hiring seasonal temps or permanent workers. Which is smarter financially?

A **HIRING FOR A SPECIFIED TIME CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO MAINTAIN A LOWER LABOR COST AND FORGO BENEFITS.** However, permanent workers are usually higher quality, skilled employees. Operational efficiency could also be improved. Look at your labor budget and decide if you want to invest in your future or just through peak season. If peak times are consistent, it might make sense to look into a permanent solution.



FOOD FANATIC

Tom Macrina is a Food Fanatics chef for US Foods from Philadelphia who was recently appointed a second term as president of the American Culinary Federation.



@ChefTomMacrina
Follow the Food Fanatic on Twitter for more tips.

Q. How can I build a mentorship program within my restaurant? It's something that helped me when I started in the industry.

A. Ask your employees if they would be interested, and then reach out to your area culinary schools. Be sure to establish goals, guidelines and expectations with input from the school. When you find people with the same passion for food, keep them engaged in learning and allow them to use what they learned in your restaurant.

Q. I have good lunch business, but I want to increase it. I'm lucky to be around businesses, hospitals and corporations, but I can't seem to get them to come in.

A. Keep your restaurant front of mind and make it easy to order. Look at your marketing budget and see what you can afford to get the word out, whether it's old-fashioned menu drop-offs or advertising with online ordering services. Create a tab on your website with daily lunch specials. Capture the emails of office managers and administrative assistants who are likely to order from restaurants. Once you have the connections, interact with them to build customer loyalty.

Q. Do I really have to have a full website, Facebook page and Twitter account for my

restaurant? I use the local paper to advertise, isn't that enough?

A. Digital holdouts are declining by the second. You need to participate if for no other reason than to show up in online searches. Your website is your billboard, so make sure it is robust. A social media presence is worthwhile if you engage the audience regularly and if your core audience is on the same channels. Lastly, if you do not engage, someone else will take control of your message, like Yelp.

Q. I have a fairly new restaurant with a \$1 million interior build-out, an open kitchen with all new equipment and a sleek, modern dining room. There's a full bakery and a cafe area, too. But now I'm looking for my fourth chef. Why doesn't anyone want to run this cool concept?

A. An awesome setup is attractive, but other factors may be prohibiting you and your chef from reaching your full potential. Newly hired chefs often inherit an existing staff that can impede cohesion in the kitchen. Language barriers and skill level might also need to be addressed. Encourage your chef to build a team atmosphere in the kitchen, and allow time for it to gel. It can take months for a great kitchen build-out, and sometimes it takes just as long to build a great culinary team. ■

Got a question for the Food Fanatics? Send your challenges, comments and suggestions to ask@FoodFanatics.com

I'LL DRINK TO THAT!

DOWN THE HATCH

Turn unwanted booze into profits

BY CARLY FISHER

Polish off bottles of wine and create a seasonal drink by making sangria.

UNWANTED LIQUOR SEEMS UNHEARD OF. BUT A QUICK SURVEY OF THE BAR WILL REVEAL A FEW NEGLECTED BOTTLES.

You know the ones: the weird product samples, flavored liquors that seemed like a good idea at the time, the once-hot but now discontinued vodka, the spice-laden spirits perfect for winter yet terrible for summer.

Luckily, one bar's overstock is another bar's new profit center. Put the craft back in cocktail by putting leftover liquors back to work.

Spirits in Flight

The shelves at Yabba Island Grill in Naples, Florida, are always stocked thanks to the rotating list of 70-plus rums on the bar menu. But when some of those labels start to lose popularity, bar manager Donny Darling knows how to move them: Offer a flight.

"Offering rum flights definitely helps people try something that they may not have ever had before because you're not paying for a full drink, you're paying for a half-ounce pour of three different rums," Darling says.

For his "Rum Tour" flight, Darling segments the rums by region, offering three half-ounce pours neat or with a splash of soda for \$15.90. The benefits are twofold: The flight pushes slow-moving product, and if a guest likes a particular rum, the bartender can introduce a similar rum or cocktail.

Throw Your Best Punch

Batching is the quickest way to drain booze. Sell punches by the glass or bowl while rotating a daily cocktail.

Spiced Sangria

Bartender Aurel Bardho
RED Bar at the Hyatt Regency
St. Louis, Missouri

- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- 2 Granny Smith apples, sliced
- ½ cup Cointreau
- ½ cup cranberry juice
- 1 bottle Malbec

Combine all ingredients. Makes 6 servings.



Remaining liquor, whether the last bit of wine or other alcohol, can generate revenue as a sangria, punch or other concoction.

“

WE'RE MOVING PRODUCT THAT WOULD HAVE EITHER GONE BAD OR COLLECTED DUST.

—Bartender Aurel Bardho, Hyatt Regency in St. Louis, on using leftover wine for sangria

”

The daily cocktail menu at Sportsman's Club in Chicago often leaves not-quite-empty bottles of an interesting liqueur, aperitif or spirit behind. Instead of dumping that eighth of a bottle down the drain, it goes into a rotating liquid batch in an amaro machine and is sold as a shot for \$4 or a neat pour for \$6. The foundation of the drink is a mixture of such amaros as Rabarbaro Zucca, Luxardo Bitter and Cocchi Rosa, which evolves as other spirits enter the mix.

Leftover wine from large events turns into \$130 in extra monthly profit at RED Bar at Hyatt

Regency in St. Louis. Bartender Aurel Bardho adds fruits and herbs to transform it into a \$5 sangria special.

"Our sangria offerings have been a hit both for our bottom line and for our guests," Bardho says. "It helps our beverage costs, as we're moving product that would have either gone bad or collected dust."

Don't forget the power of a freebie. At McCrady's in Charleston, South Carolina, bartender Sam Gabrielle uses excess liquor to welcome guests with a complimentary amuse. It might not have a direct payout, but excellent hospitality leads to repeat business.

Knowledge is Power

Use leftover liquor as a training tool, says house mixologist Greg "Bootleg Greg" Genias of Parallel Post in Trumbull, Connecticut.

"Using the excess liquor (for staff training) always proves to be less costly than using your actual inventory," Genias says.

It also comes in handy for creating recipes that might have a few trial and error rounds. Genias also recommends creating a sales incentive that would enable servers and bartenders to sell excess inventory, either by the bottle or as cocktails.

For the seasonally rotating featured cocktail menu at Barrelhouse Flat in Chicago, owner and bar director Stephen Cole will challenge his team to utilize any excess product the bar has acquired. Bartenders are asked to pitch drinks and recipe ideas, which drives the team to get creative with a lesser-used spirit and thins out excess liquor supply.

Down the Line

Tried everything and still can't kill that bottle? Try handing it over to the kitchen, says Bar director Meaghan Dorman of Raines Law Room and Dear Irving in New York.

"We often use brandy or vodka to stabilize syrups, and they don't have to be the premium quality that we would use in cocktails," she says.

Chefs can also use excess liquor for glazes and sauces, she says. On a whim, Dorman used maple-flavored whiskey for a French toast batter. After the alcohol cooked off, Dorman says the remaining flavor was far subtler and more sophisticated than anything it could have brought to a cocktail.

"It was delicious, and honestly I would not have drunk the whiskey on its own," she says. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

Mine the math for a smarter menu

WAYS WITH WHEY

What's the state of dairy on menus? We've milked the stats for the most worthy mentions.

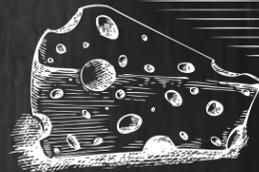
SAY CHEESE

HIGHEST GROWTH

Cheese curd
Queso fresco
Manchego
Chihuahua

MOST POPULAR

Mozzarella
Parmesan
Cheddar
Provolone

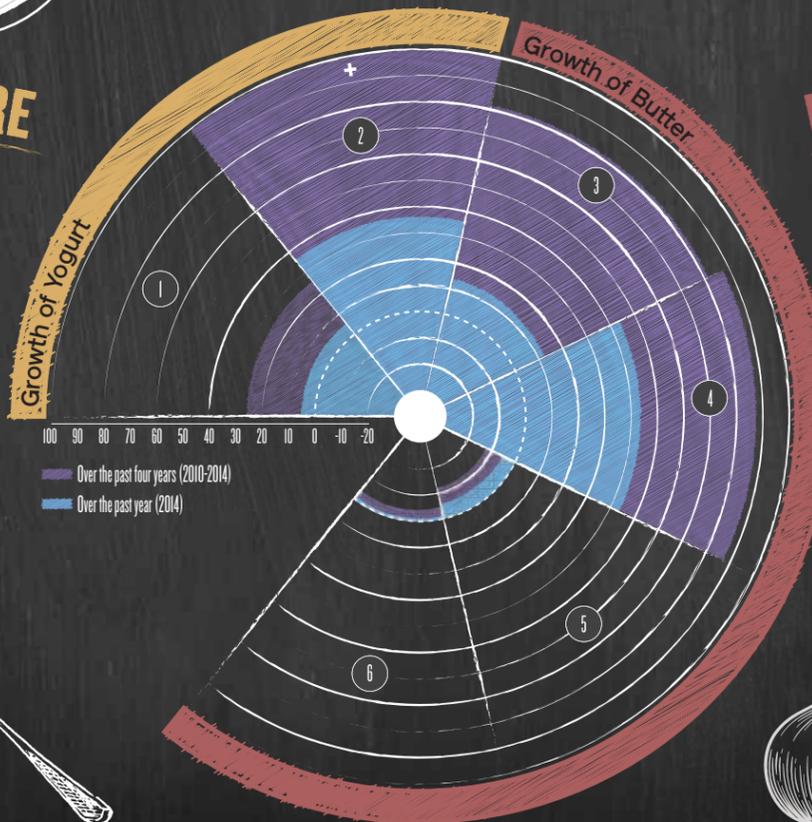


Growth of cheese curds, mostly as an appetizer, on poutine, breaded or fried, and paired with dipping sauces

Source: Technomic Inc., MenuMonitor, comparing 2014 to 2015, first quarter

ACTIVE CULTURE

1. Yogurt
26.6% ↑ 5.1%
2. Greek Yogurt
420% ↑ 36.8%



BUTTERED UP

3. Brown Butter
80.6% ↑ 13.5%
4. Truffle Butter
87.4% ↑ 42.8%
5. Lemon Butter
-11.7% ↓ -7%
6. Garlic Butter
-5% ↓ -.06%



Source: atassential MenuTrends on yogurt and butter



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* NPD Crest, 2012

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** Suggested Recipe



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HISTORY WORTH REPEATING



Alsatian Choucroute Garnie

It's the original original. Crafted with pork belly, bacon and five kinds of sausage, this rustic Alsatian comfort dish has been satisfying for centuries. Discover the whole story at PorkFoodservice.org and sign up for our newsletter, The 400.



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