

## Transforming Nostalgic Desserts into New Formats

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Consumers have an interest in nostalgic desserts—45% prefer classic, traditional desserts, and nearly three-quarters (72%) enjoy flavors that remind them of their childhood.<sup>1,2</sup>

More than 4 in 5 consumers say they're at least somewhat interested in trying nostalgically themed desserts; only 2 in 5 operators, though, currently offer them.<sup>1</sup>

The remaining restaurants could be missing out on an opportunity to elevate sales with memory-evoking menu items—such as a birthday cake-flavored donut, for example, or a banana pudding-infused parfait.

If you have yet to embrace the emerging item-as-a-flavor trend, here's what you need to know to tap into Americans' affection for desserts that embody the past.



### Crafting Menu Items from Enduring Elements

Retro-friendly flavors are making more frequent appearances. Lemonade and brownie tastes, for instance, have popped up on 62% and 25% of menus, respectively, positioning desserts that are based on those flavors to offer a broad appeal.<sup>4</sup>

Lemonade was actually one of the top 20 fastest-growing flavors used in sweet items in 2022. Brownie, as a flavor, has shown some of the speediest growth in the past three years.<sup>4</sup>

These [Chewy Brownie Ice Cream Sandwiches made with OREO](#), for example, combine brownies and ice cream for an elevated, nostalgic bite.

Other up-and-coming flavors that are still making their way onto menus could also serve as the basis for an enticing dessert—such as gingerbread or cookie dough, which have shown notable upward movement within the sweet item category in the past few years. As consumers continue to gravitate toward flavorful, brightly hued snacks, rainbow

cake has shown an impressive four-year menu penetration growth of 350%.<sup>3,4</sup>

Cotton candy has been cropping up in a number of desserts lately, ranging from the eight-layer cotton candy cake from Dylan's Candy Bar to Dairy Queen's Cotton Candy Blizzard.

Dishes that feature throwback textures and tastes have also gained ground in recent years—such as funnel cake, which drive-thru chain [Checkers](#) serves in fry form, dusted with powdered sugar. In the past 12 months, funnel cake desserts have experienced 31% growth on sweet item menus in restaurants.<sup>3,5</sup>



***Funnel Cake Treat made with Golden OREO Cookie Pieces***

## **Using Branded Ingredients as a Base**

Restaurants may find dessert items that tie into branded candy and other sweet items offer a dual draw of both name recognition and a chance to relive fond food-related memories.

Cookies can be a particularly alluring theme for a dessert, given that Americans' consumption of them has risen 25% since 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Sugar and Scribe bakery in La Jolla, California, sold 100 versions of its Nutty Cookie Cake made with Chunky CHIPS AHOY! Cooke Pieces shortly after the item's introduction last year. The dish eventually proved so popular that it earned a permanent spot on the bakery's menu, according to [owner and Chef Maeve Rochford, who also serves as a Mondelez Foodservice Brand Ambassador](#).



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Life without cookies is no life at all. Today is National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day, and one of my favorites is Chunky Chips Ahoy Cookies, they make everything better, including cake! Our Nutty Cookie Cake is made with Chunky CHIPS AHOY! Cookie Pieces, peanut butter and love...everything you need! Have a slice for breakfast for the best coffee cake ever or enjoy a slice at night. This spectacular cake is only available this month, get it before it's gone! @snackanddessertsolutions #nationalchocolatechipcookieday

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“[We] wanted to make a rich, moist cake LTO,” Rochford told Mondelēz Foodservice. “We created [the] cake, and then we drizzled chocolate and added more cookie pieces on top. It came out amazing, and you can really taste the cookie!”

When [Mondelēz Foodservice Brand Ambassador and Chef Clarice Lam](#) created a new take on a favorite breakfast item from her youth, she similarly drew inspiration from a popular cookie choice.

“The look of an OREO cookie is so iconic that anything made with black cocoa and a white ingredient will automatically read cookies and crème,” Lam says. “I wanted to dress up the fudge toaster pastry from my childhood in an OREO cookie-inspired tuxedo and fill it with tangy cream cheese and OREO Cookie Pieces. This version tastes great at room temp or warmed.”



*OREO Toaster Pastry by Chef Clarice Lam*

## **When to Innovate on Classic Flavors**

Desserts that feature a nostalgic flavor theme can often work well as limited-time offer items, according to Rochford.

“Taking classic ingredients or flavors and using them in new ways is also something we think about when it comes to an LTO,” she says. “We love working with Mondelez products like CHIPS AHOY! and OREO because people already love those flavors. When we can use them in a new, delicious way, it really creates a wow factor.”

Holidays, in particular, may offer opportunities for restaurants to debut nostalgia-related specials. Consumers tend to link celebrations with specific foods; 64% of people, for instance, associate certain dishes with religious holidays that occur in winter like Hanukkah and Christmas.<sup>6</sup>

To commemorate St. Patrick’s Day in spring, Sugar and Scribe debuted a stout-infused brownie made with OREO Cookie Pieces, chocolate ganache and mint—one of the 25 most prevalent flavors that’s appeared in sweets during the past five years. The bakery found the item held widespread appeal.<sup>4</sup>

“It was a hit,” Rochford says. “We decorated it with lots of green glitter and gold coins to really bring it to life. It was really popular in our bakery, and we were also able to offer it on Goldbelly for nationwide shipping!”



*Mint Stout Brownie made with OREO Cookie Pieces by Chef Maeve Rochford*

While basic brownies and other baked goods will likely garner some general interest, treats designed around retro flavors can resonate even more with customers who'd like to temporarily relive their youth, one bite at a time.

Wondering what the next big foodservice flavor movement will be? Read our [2024 industry trends report](#) to find out what nostalgic and other elements we may see next year.

1 [Desserts: Keynote Report](#), Datassential, 2023

2 ["Top Dessert-Inspired Flavors Trending Now,"](#) Flavorchem, February 23, 2022

3 Items as Flavors, Datassential, 2023

4 [Force for Change 2023 Taste and Nutrition Charts](#), Kerry, 2023

5 ["Dessert Trends Indicate Consumers Want a Mix of Flavors and Textures,"](#) PizzaMarketplace.com, February 17, 2015

6 Seasonal Flavors & Holiday Menus, Datassential, 2022

7 Seasonality Report, Datassential, 2023

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