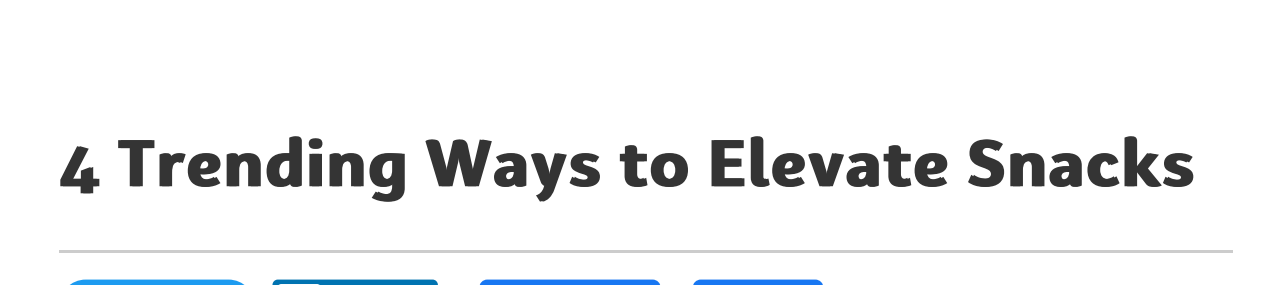
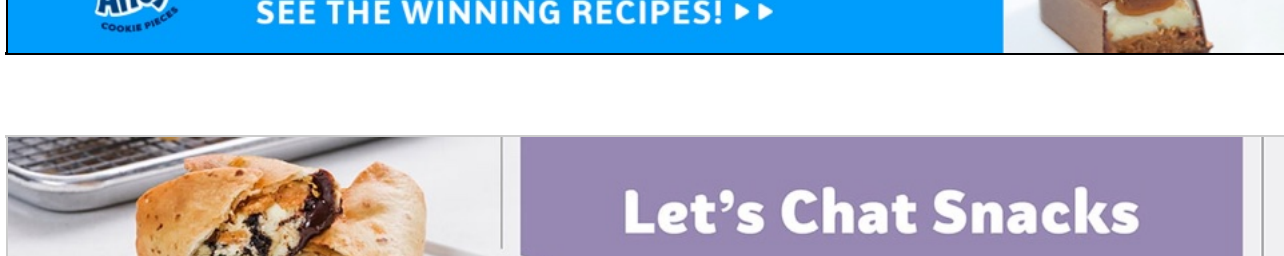
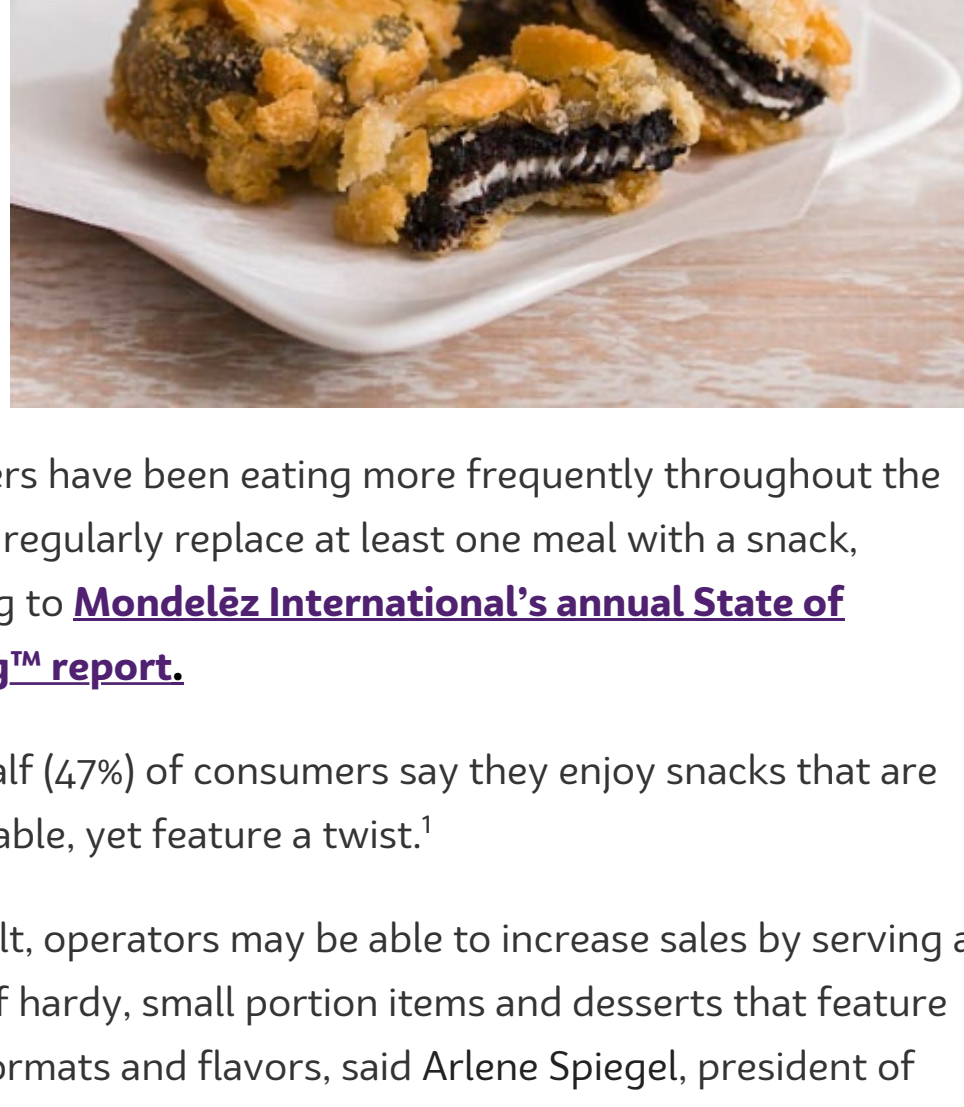


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4 Trending Ways to Elevate Snacks

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Consumers have been eating more frequently throughout the day; 64% regularly replace at least one meal with a snack, according to [Mondelēz International's annual State of Snacking™ report](#).

Nearly half (47%) of consumers say they enjoy snacks that are recognizable, yet feature a twist.¹

As a result, operators may be able to increase sales by serving a variety of hardy, small portion items and desserts that feature unique formats and flavors, said Arlene Spiegel, president of restaurant and hospitality consulting firm Arlene Spiegel and Associates, in an interview with Mondelēz Foodservice.

“Snacks have become a really important part of the mainstream diet,” Spiegel says. “There’s an opportunity to have more people come in during the slow times, if they have a compelling appetizer or small plates menu—[such as] from 2:30 until 4:30, there’s great charcuterie platters, or a hot chocolate beverage bar. Even doing a snack and wine pairing could bring people in at different dayparts than the traditional lunch and dinner.”

Shack Shack, for example, introduced a weekday afternoon happy hour between 2 and 5 pm, promoting a buy-one-get-one-free deal on shakes.²

Infusing familiar dishes with appealing elements—such as an array of flavored marshmallows to add to hot cocoa—can help build excitement and, in turn, attract customers. Here are four ways operators can elevate offerings and capitalize on snacking occasions.

Adding Global Touches

The interest in trying new globally based foods and beverages has grown in recent years; 27% of consumers are now eating those items more than they did two years ago.³

A third—particularly Gen Z members and millennials, which Spiegel describes as “an audience hungry for adventure”—feel snacks are a stellar way to sample cuisines from other countries. Some, such as African, Jamaican and Indian cuisine, were included more frequently on menus between 2018 and 2021.¹

Authentic street fare, too, can resonate with customers. With Mexican food ranked as the top international cuisine consumers would like to try in a snack flavor format, restaurants may find there’s interest in [items like elote](#), corn traditionally sold by street vendors that’s topped with savory items like a mayo-based sauce, cotija cheese, lime juice, chili powder and cilantro.

Dishes that are inspired by certain components in specific types of international cuisine—such as sesame, miso and nori, often found in Japanese street food items—may also intrigue customers.¹

“They’re looking for a Korean barbecue flavor on top of their mashed potatoes, instead of just regular gravy,” Spiegel says. “They’re looking for a kimchi that would be used instead of coleslaw to enhance a sandwich. It’s taking the ordinary and then literally elevating it.”

Tapping Into New Seasoning Tastes

Bold flavor could potentially draw some of the 43% of consumers who say they’d be interested in trying a spiced snack—particularly within younger age groups, which have shown the most interest in extreme flavor profiles.¹

Items may also sell well if they combine sweet and spicy flavors such as chili lime, which 60% of Gen Z members and 67% of millennials either have tried or would like to. Consider desserts that feature spice, like these [Spiced Mango Whip Sundaes made with SOUR PATCH KIDS Bitz](#), which combine sour, sweet, spicy and smooth flavors.

Other popular spice additions include sea salt, turmeric, smoked paprika, and black pepper.¹ Black pepper cocktails, in fact, are one of 50 emerging menu trends Technomic identified for the coming business quarter.⁴

Including Upscale Aspects

Operators may also want to take a look at some of the classic comfort foods they offer, which could be a good candidate for premium ingredients.

In addition to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich made with almond butter, mixed berry compote and maple-bourbon honey, Chicago’s [PB&J](#), for example, serves a \$350 Golden Goose sandwich that contains high-end ingredients like manuka honey and Maison Dutriez jelly.

Branded ingredients, which 31% of consumers say would make them more inclined to purchase menu items, can be another attractive aspect to include in desserts and snacks.⁵

Consider elevating nostalgic dishes by featuring them in smaller, snack-sized formats with branded inclusions, like these [BBQ Pork Mac & Cheese Bites made with RITZ Crackers](#) or [Cracker Coated Cookies made with OREO and RITZ Crushed Crackers](#).

Incorporating emerging flavors that are on currently the verge of becoming more widely used, such as meyer lemon, hibiscus and fig, into cake, ice cream and other commonly served desserts may also help boost interest in those items.^{6,7}

For more information about offering new takes on familiar favorites, [contact us today](#).

1 [Trending Flavors and Ingredients: Snacks](#), T. Hasegawa, 2022

2 [Get a Free Shake on Weekday Afternoons at Shake Shack’s New Happy Hour](#), Thrillist, July 14, 2022

2 Novel Menu Trends to Drive Business and Delight Guests, Technomic, 2022

3 50 Menu Trends to Watch, Technomic, 2022

4 “[3 Premium Ingredients Consumers Will Pay More For](#),” Restaurant Business, May 31, 2018

5 Dessert Flavors: Menu Adoption Cycle, Datassential, September 2022

6 Dessert Varieties: Menu Adoption Cycle, Datassential, September 2022

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Elevate the Movie Theater Experience with Crave-Worthy Concessions

Posted in [Side Dishes](#) on February 24, 2022

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Today’s moviegoers want red-carpet-worthy food and beverage options—which recent research indicates might also help woo still-hesitant viewers back to the big screen.

More than half—54%—of consumers who’d stopped going to movie theaters at the start of the pandemic or when the delta variant emerged say being able to get gourmet foods at a higher price would make them want to attend movies more often.¹

After spending much of 2020 and points of 2021 isolating at home, venturing out to a cinema or other venue can be cause to celebrate—a scenario that’s played out at a number of Marcus Theatres’ 85 U.S. locations, according to Rob Novak, Marcus Theatres’ vice president of concessions and food and beverage.

“People have spent more,” Novak says. “What we’ve seen is when people go out, they want to indulge.”

That can be good news for theaters, since concessions are often a highly profitable business model component, according to Malcolm McAlpine, business manager for branded snacks and confections at Mondelēz International Foodservice.

“Food and beverages are a massive margin contributor,” McAlpine says. “The trend is to broaden the scope of concessions and what they’re offering.”

Here’s a look at what some theaters have been including on their movie menus.

Inventive Eats

In addition to the traditional popcorn, soda and candy, a number of movie theaters have begun serving more unconventional fare in recent years—ranging from vegan chicken nuggets, which AMC debuted earlier this year², to upscale macaroni and cheese made with RITZ crackers, which is available at [Bow Tie Cinemas](#), a chain with locations in six states.³

When renovating its theaters around 2009, Marcus Theatres began to add kitchens, according to Novak; today, the theaters’ dining options include unique items such as fried pickles, chicken and waffles, and cheese curds.

“The theater industry a lot of times follows the stadium business, [which] 10 years prior was getting into chefs and bringing in upscale things,” he says. “It wasn’t just beer and peanuts anymore. As consumers on an out-of-home basis looked for more offerings, we had to do it, too.”

Marcus Theatres generally tries to keep its menu on trend, according to Novak, but also considers convenience.

“Initially, we tried to mimic what you see in different dining concepts,” he says. “But as we learned, people want items they could eat with their hands. It’s not a very knife-and-fork-friendly environment, both from the sound of cutting and just the difficulty of twirling pasta in the dark and making it from that bowl to your mouth.”

Recognizable Sweet Treats

Name brand products, sold on their own or included as ingredients in menu items, can also pique consumer interest, according to McAlpine.

“There’s a ready acceptance of branded ingredients—particularly where you have an established brand like OREO that appears in desserts, pie crusts and shakes, ice cream,” he says. “You don’t see no-name gummies or chocolate items in concessions; it’s all the big brands because that’s what people want and expect when they go to the movies.”

Marcus Theatres, for instance, offers OREO cookie pieces as a topping choice for its build-your-own sundae dessert.

“Movie theaters have been resistant to add a lot of hard-packed, scoopable ice cream; they prefer it to be novelties, which are in the freezer case, ready to go,” Novak says. “But if customers are willing to pay and we can make it work from a labor perspective, we can accommodate it.”

Gourmet popcorn is another growing trend, McAlpine says, which can be sold at a premium. A Cheetos variety was available from Regal Cinemas in 2017; and OREO popcorn is currently being served at select theaters nationwide.

“You’re starting to see more higher-end popcorn,” McAlpine says. “The movie theaters see that as a natural extension of one of the most profitable items—a way they can extend their popcorn offering and charge accordingly.”

Items that Encourage Guests to Stay—and Spend

Movie theaters can also potentially increase concessions sales in other ways, such as offering combo deals, which may encourage moviegoers to purchase more items.

“There’s a lot of bundling—buy a popcorn and SOUR PATCH KIDS and get a dollar off,” McAlpine says. “We’re going to continue to see that more and more.”

Alcoholic beverages, too, can be a high-margin addition. McAlpine has seen theaters replace lower-performing video game areas with bars, seated food sections and other amenities that can prolong guests’ experience by allowing them to come early—and potentially start spending before showtime.

“Instead of them stopping at Panera before or after, what if [the theater] could capture that sale?” McAlpine says. “A lot of them have bars; now you can get a meal while you’re watching a movie.”

Adding cocktails in 2007 was a game changer for Marcus Theatres, according to Novak; currently, about 90% of its theaters have bar service.

“It increased spend—getting consumers to the theater who might not have gone and were looking for something different in their entertainment experience and engaging consumers who were moviegoers but not necessarily concession buyers,” he says. “And they have very low waste levels. They don’t spoil as quickly; it’s not like when you’re dealing with fresh foods.”

Offering a mix of cocktails, burgers, ice cream and other items helps theaters satisfy a variety of consumer tastes—which, Novak says, can be key in the current entertainment environment, where theaters are constantly competing with home entertainment streaming options.

“We’ve spent a lot of time in the last decade reinvesting in theaters to do everything we can to up the out-of-home experience—including the food and beverage,” he says. “We’re trying to bring the things people want together; the best chairs, the best sound systems and the offerings that, in your mind, need to accompany those things. Whether you want alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, a burger, chicken tenders—that’s what we’re trying to do.”

Reach out below to learn the many ways Mondelēz International can help your operation create crave-worthy concessions.

1 [Exhibition At A Crossroads](#), The Quorum, Cultique and Fanthropology, November 2021

2 “[AMC Theaters Now Serve Impossible Chicken Nuggets](#),” VegNews, January 11, 2022

3 [Bow Tie Cinemas Ultimate Food Menu](#), BowTieCinemas.com, Norwalk location menu, February 2022

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Beverages and Desserts Fuel Flavor Inspiration

Posted in [Snacking](#) on September 20, 2022

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Beverages that include OREO cookies and cheesecake, cotton candy and other indulgent ingredients have played a dual role on menus in recent years, often serving as both drink and dessert options.

Today, with 42% of consumers saying unique flavors are the reason they decide to try new baked goods, desserts featuring tastes that have traditionally been associated with beverages can also potentially be big sellers.¹

Rock Bottom Restaurant & Brewery’s popular four-layer carrot cake, for instance, is made with kolsch beer its locations produce, according to Kaitlyn Venable, director of culinary at SPB Hospitality, the Houston-based operator behind Rock Bottom and several other casual dining restaurants.

“It gives it just a little bit of an additional depth of flavor from that maltiness; and also a little bit of dryness from the beer to help balance out the sweetness of the cake,” Venable said in an interview with Mondelēz International. “Our guests love it so much that it probably will be forever on our menu.”



Thirst-Quenching Treats

Other types of beverages are also appearing in desserts—such as bubble tea, which is used to make national chain Xing Fu Tang’s brown sugar boba soft serve ice cream; Dairy Queen’s latest Blizzard lineup includes an OREO Hot Cocoa option.

Coffee and tea flavors seem to be a welcome dessert inclusion, as well. “Tea flavors are more prevalent than ever,” said Christine McCabe, Corporate Pastry Chef at BomboBar, in an interview with Mondelēz International. McCabe cited espresso, green tea, earl grey, hibiscus and chamomile as flavors that work well in desserts.

Chai has become increasingly more common in frozen items; similarly, ingredients provider Kerry singled Irish cream out as one of 20 flavors that’s experienced the fastest growth in both beverages and desserts in recent years.^{2, 3}

With post-morning coffee consumption up 15% in the past year, restaurants may find the Café Gourmand concept—an approach that caught on first in France and has since spread to the U.S., which involves pairing a java drink with several mini desserts—can be a way to collectively boost beverage and dessert sales.^{4, 5}

Espresso-based drinks, for example, are a great match for numerous types of chocolate, according to Gregory Kong, head bartender at the Japanese-Italian New York restaurant Kimika.

“Additionally, herbal teas work well with darker, higher cacao percentage chocolate,” Kong told Mondelēz International. “One example of a great pairing is a roasty, nutty genmaicha tea with an earthier chocolate to complement each other’s flavors.”

Bakery-Themed Libations

Beverage-inspired sweets—such as [cappuccino cheesecake](#) and [Thai-tea-and-OREO-flavored mochi](#), for example—aren’t the only items that have gained ground in recent years. Numerous drinks have popped up that contain aspects of various desserts.

The amount of pie-flavored latte offerings, for instance, grew 33% in 2021 alone.⁶ Venues ranging from Krispy Kreme, which started serving an iced coffee topped with pumpkin pie sauce this month, to Disneyworld—which created an apple pie milkshake adorned with two cinnamon donuts for its Halloween festivities this year—have also debuted pie-oriented drinks.

Some Rock Bottom locations have integrated conventional dessert tastes into beers. This holiday season, according to Venable, the chain’s Denver location plans to offer a tiramisu-flavored blonde stout that will be made with lady fingers, liquid cacao, espresso and vanilla extract that’s added after the fermentation process.

Other SPB eateries, including the Washington, D.C. District ChopHouse restaurant, have also woven sweet components into craft beers.

“The last time I was at ChopHouse, they had a vanilla porter on tap that was delicious,” Venable said. “The brewer used real vanilla beans; you got that really fresh, strong vanilla flavor. That definitely was a dessert beer.”

Rock Bottom further tapped into the dessert-flavored beverage trend with a previously available line of alcohol-infused milkshakes, including one that contained whiskey and salted caramel. Another featured pieces of the fudge brownie from the restaurant’s dessert menu, Kahlua, chocolate syrup, and stout or porter, depending on what the brewers had on hand, Venable says.

Rock Bottom’s beers have also made their way into other menu items, including a chili recipe, fish and chips batter and a caramel dip served with donut holes.

“Because we brew our beer, we’re forever trying to connect the brewery piece with the food piece—so any way we can incorporate our beer specifically into our food is always a win for us,” Venable said. “We try to use it in as many applications as possible, just to make sure we’re telling a cohesive story. [Having] the beer inside helps tell that story.”

Including proprietary beverages in dishes can certainly help with branding; restaurants, however, don’t need to have an in-house brewery to benefit from the current interest in drink-and-dessert mashups.

Offering cocktails or nonalcoholic beverages that feature classic cake, pie and other flavors, or desserts like a [coffee-imbued ice cream bombe](#) or [smoked earl grey cheesecake mousse made with CHIPS AHOY!](#), can help operators appeal to a wide range of consumers—whether they’re looking for a unique new take on dessert or would prefer something sippable that also happens to be sweet.

Looking for more menu inspiration? Check out our [Culinary Center](#) for a bevy of beverage and dessert recipes.

1 [2022 Food and Beverage Flavor Trends Report](#), T. Hasegawa, 2022

2 [Datassential Desserts Keynote](#), Datassential, May 2021

3 [2021 U.S. Taste Charts](#) (Kerry, 2021)

4 [National Coffee Data Trends 2022](#), National Coffee Association, March 2022

5 [“Cafe Gourmand, the French Mini-Dessert Trend, Hits the U.S.”](#) Bon Appétit, Dec. 12, 2012

6 Technomic, LTO Seasonal Review, Spring 2021

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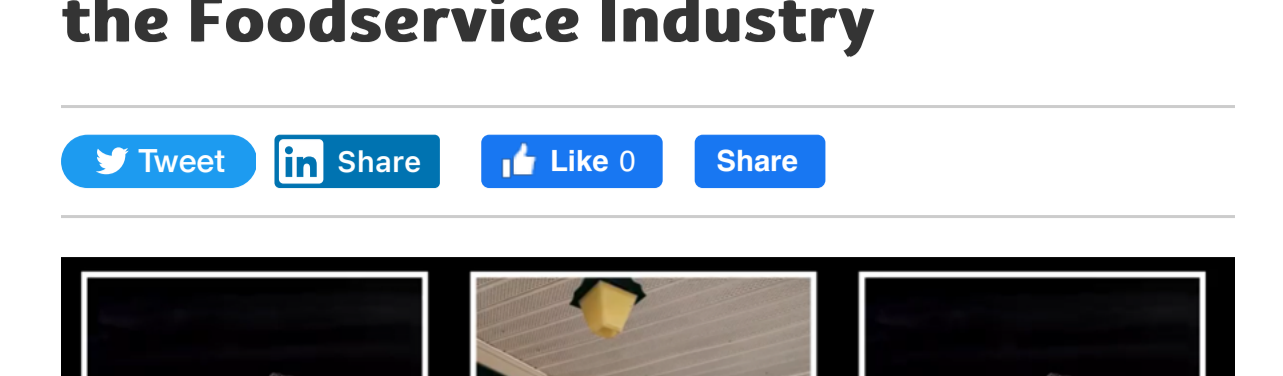
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Leveraging TikTok's Influence in the Foodservice Industry

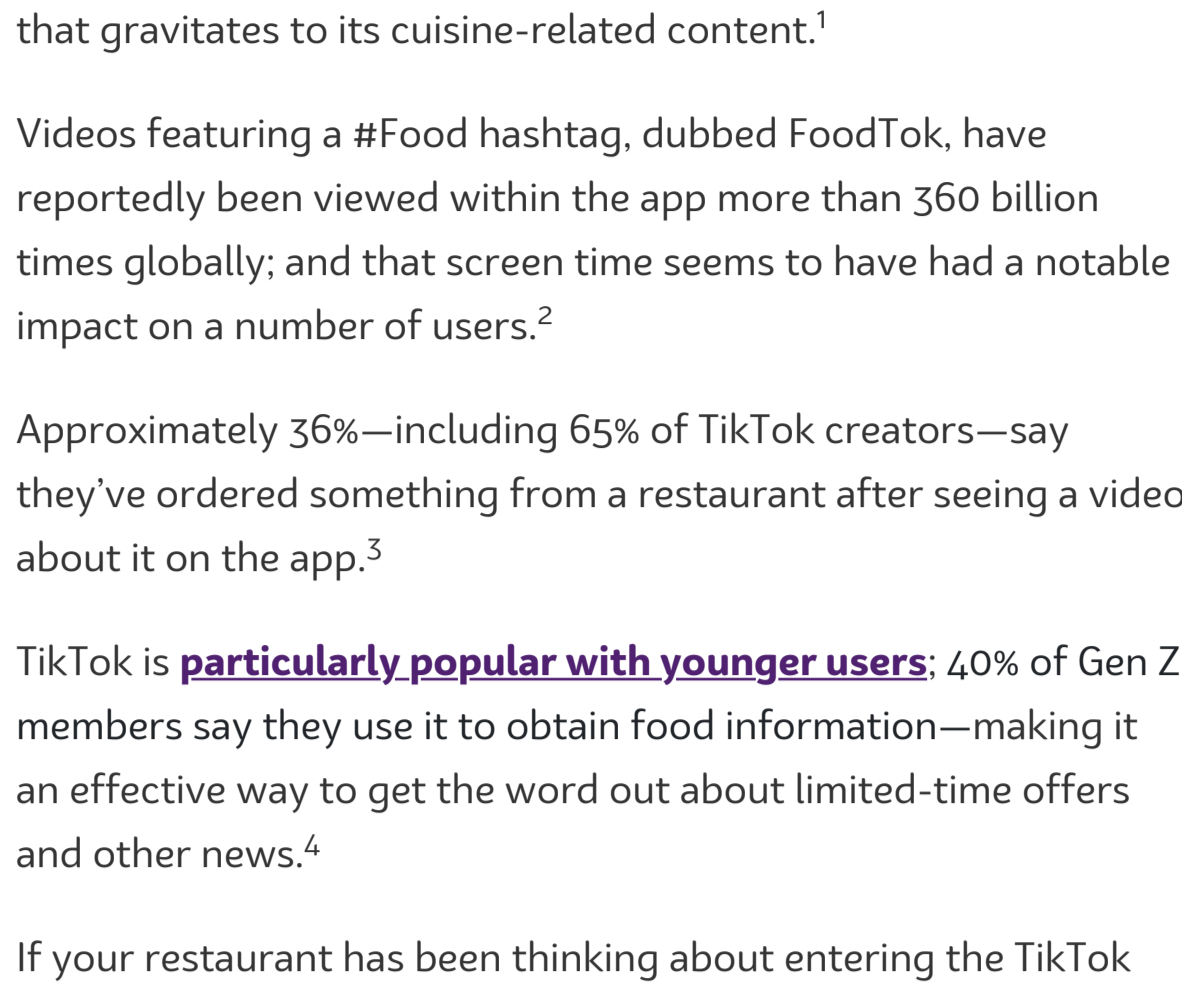
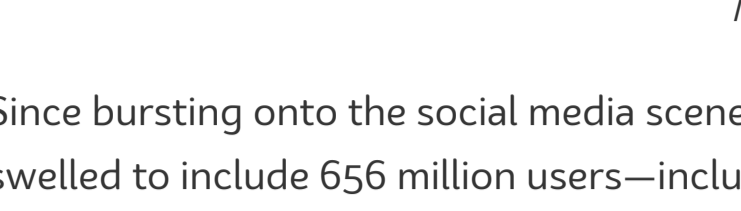


Image courtesy of Applebee's

Since bursting onto the social media scene in 2016, TikTok has swelled to include 656 million users—including a sizable amount that gravitates to its cuisine-related content.¹

Videos featuring a #Food hashtag, dubbed FoodTok, have reportedly been viewed within the app more than 360 billion times globally; and that screen time seems to have had a notable impact on a number of users.²

Approximately 36%—including 65% of TikTok creators—say they've ordered something from a restaurant after seeing a video about it on the app.³

TikTok is **particularly popular with younger users**: 40% of Gen Z members say they use it to obtain food information—making it an effective way to get the word out about limited-time offers and other news.⁴

If your restaurant has been thinking about entering the TikTok realm but isn't sure where to start, consider the following approaches.

Getting Kudos from Well-Known Fans

TikTok claims nearly half (48%) of its audience is more likely to discover new brands or products from a celebrity or public figure within its app than on other platforms.⁵

Celebrity endorsements in videos have helped restaurants garner comments, shares and ample attention. After Justin Bieber's limited edition doughnut holes debuted at Tim Hortons, for instance, which is headquartered in Canada, in November 2021, Canadian musician Michael Bublé shared a TikTok video lamenting the fact he hadn't been contacted about a similar promotion.⁶

That double serving of star power has been credited with boosting business for the coffee chain. During the fourth quarter of 2021, Tim Hortons' sales rose 10.3%, according to its parent company Restaurant Brands International. During the same time period the year before, sales had declined 11%.⁷

In a financial results call, CEO Jose Cil called the joint Bieber-Tim Hortons' promotion "one of the more successful traffic-driving initiatives in recent memory" and said it prompted "unprecedented social engagement and increased appeal with younger guests."⁷

Operators have also aligned with social media influencers to promote menu items. While some of the videos feature influencers sampling foods that are currently being offered, Denny's worked with two dozen popular TikTok creators to craft new dishes that were featured on a Social Stars Influenced Menu from February to June.⁸

The limited-time offer items included the cream cheese icing-topped Get That Cookie Dough Pancakes, designed by Jenny Solares and The EnkyBoys, and a burger fashioned by TikTok stars Jonathan Chavez and Elise Osafo, made with aged white cheddar cheese and a blistered jalapeno.

Asking Users to Engage

Hashtag challenges are another popular type of TikTok promotion. Videos with tags like #RestaurantChallenge—which range from people eating nothing but food from New York's most famous restaurants for a day to users trying tiny tacos—have received more than 14 billion views.⁹

Chipotle has sponsored more than one successful challenge, including a 2020 event that touted a \$10,000 prize for the three TikTok users who best illustrated why their order involved the ideal item combination.¹⁰ The chain also pledged to serve the winners' chosen mix at restaurant locations in December of that year.

In 2021, the fast-casual Mexican food chain's "Burritos or Bitcoin" campaign, which had users guessing a six-digit code to win a free burrito or up to \$25,000 in Bitcoin, had 4 million unique users.¹¹

Similarly, operators can monitor hashtag use on TikTok and other social media outlets to identify food trends that might serve as a catalyst for upcoming LTOs. Demand for buzzworthy items that are shown on TikTok can be significant; 29% of users who tried to buy an item that was trending on the app found it was sold out.¹²

Posting Personal Content

A number of operators have stepped into the creator role by making videos that have garnered significant views. In some—such as the video of Applebee's President John Cywinski and his daughter dancing to "Fancy Like," a song that mentions the eatery in its chorus—the restaurant's food isn't even shown.

Cywinski's clip received more than a million views the day he shared it in 2021 and led to numerous reenactment videos from other users. Applebee's also again began offering the OREO Cookie Shake that's mentioned in the song lyrics, which had been taken off its menu—and during the subsequent months saw same-store sales rise, ultimately surpassing the previous year's amount by 12.5%.¹³

Some restaurants have also used TikTok to communicate their personal commitment to philanthropic efforts. Kentucky Fried Chicken, for instance, in February announced it would be giving away \$500,000 in cash grants to nonprofits that are fighting hunger across the U.S. via the app.¹⁴

While, after just six years in existence, TikTok may be one of the newer social media platforms on the block, its visual nature and rapidly growing audience—projected to reach nearly 90 million by 2023—make the app a viable option for restaurants' promotional efforts.¹⁵

By creating captivating cooking, food presentation or other video clips, or encouraging TikTok users to share their own, operators can build excitement about both the menu items they serve and their overall dining experience—potentially reaching a wider audience of restaurant-goers and driving sales to a higher level.

Contact us for menu solutions that drive buzz about your restaurant on TikTok and beyond.

¹ **Number of TikTok users worldwide from 2020 to 2025**, eMarketer, Sept. 5, 2022
² **"TikTok is transforming how and what we eat,"** The Globe & Mail, Sept. 15, 2022
³ **"(SURVEY) How TikTok Influences Restaurant Dining Behavior,"** MGH, Sept. 21, 2022
⁴ **Social Media Drives Customer Engagement**, Mondelēz International, April 8, 2022
⁵ **The new word-of-mouth marketplace: How TikTok drives action and satisfaction throughout the purchase journey**, TikTok, June 15, 2022
⁶ "The End of the Celebrity Meal," The New York Times, Dec. 8, 2021.
⁷ **"Justin Bieber almost single-handedly turned around Tim Hortons,"** CNN.com, Feb. 15, 2021
⁸ **"Denny's Collabs with TikTok Stars on New Menu Items, Unveils New Brand Campaign,"** Cision PR Newsire, Feb. 24, 2022
⁹ "restaurant challenges," **TikTok**
¹⁰ **"Chipotle Royalty Gives Fans The Chance to Have their Go-To Orders Become Real Menu Items,"** Chipotle, Nov. 17, 2020
¹¹ **"How Chipotle's Candice Beck Builds Social Media Relevance,"** QSR Magazine, June 16, 2022
¹² **TikTok's Unique Path to Purchase**, TikTok, 2021
¹³ **"How the Viral Song 'Fancy Like' Rocked Applebee's Summer,"** Restaurant Business, Nov. 5, 2021
¹⁴ **"KFC® Is Giving Away Half a Million Dollars on Tiktok® in a First-of-Its-Kind Grant Program,"** PRNewswire
¹⁵ **Number of TikTok users in the United States from 2020 to 2023**, eMarketer, Jan. 28, 2022

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Posted in [Pies/Tarts](#) on January 26, 2023

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Familiarity is a key food and beverage purchase consideration for 68% of consumers—which is one reason why offering menu items that incorporate retro formats and ingredients, an approach sometimes referred to as



newstalgia, is one of this year’s most anticipated menu trends.¹

Several operators have already introduced successful blast-from-the-past promotions. In 2021, [Pizza Hut](#) debuted a limited-edition PAC-MAN box that contained an augmented reality version of the video game customers could access with a smartphone—and sponsored an arcade-sized PAC-MAN game giveaway.

In January 2022, TGI Fridays launched a [Remixed and Remastered menu](#), consisting of slightly altered versions of fan favorites like OREO Madness—a large cookies-and-cream-ice-cream-filled cookie decked out in sprinkles and fresh strawberries—that customers had named as their most-missed items.

Desserts are another dinner daypart aspect that can benefit from a newstalgic touch, according to Chef Jackie Joseph, [Brand Ambassador](#), founder of Louisville, Kentucky’s JJBakes & Co. and the season four winner of the Food Network’s “Best Baker in

America.”

“I see consumers requesting nostalgic desserts or elevated classics,” Joseph told Mondelez Foodservice. “New and innovative desserts are lovely and exciting, but enjoying something that reminds you of a special time in your life can’t be beat.”

A Sweet Selling Point

Treats people have traditionally enjoyed throughout their life—including “the comfort foods of their childhood or the more recent memory of a sandwich from a favorite deli they haven’t visited in two years,” according to a 2022 Symrise report—can provide a sense of security and solace that many consumers may be seeking in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.²

As a result, traditional American dishes are poised to make a comeback, according to Maeve Rochford, Brand Ambassador and owner of the Sugar and Scribe bakery in La Jolla, California.

“People are looking for comfort; for memories,” Rochford told Mondelez Foodservice. “Additionally, a fusion of classics will be huge, from twists on donuts to croissants.”

Although the specific components may vary, nostalgia-influenced foods hold considerable appeal for various generations.

Approximately 70% of consumers over age 65 and 76% of 22- to 55-year-olds love to eat things that remind them of their past.³

Products that have been consistently popular for decades, which more than one age group might associate with their childhood, can be particularly powerful inclusions. A crust made with OREO cookies, which have been sold since 1912, can invigorate a classic like [Baked Alaska](#), for example; and make [Boston](#) or [banana cream pie](#) even richer and more flavorful.

Memory Lane-Focused Meals

Operators' emphasis on sweet newstalgia items can extend beyond just the dessert menu, according to pastry chef Paola Velez, who "Food & Wine" included on its Best New Chefs list in 2021.

"I foresee a lot of folks venturing into the comforting and fun twists on Americana comfort breakfasts," Velez told Mondelez Foodservice.

In September, McDonald's released what it called ["a fresh take on a pastry McDonald's first offered in the '80s,"](#) its Cheese Danish. A month later, Taco Bell—which had reintroduced the iconic [Klondike Choco Taco](#) it had stopped serving seven years ago earlier in 2022 in two markets—announced a unique campaign that involved a pledge to tone down its breakfast menu innovation and ["focus on ease and familiarity,"](#) the company's Global Chief Brand Officer Sean Tresvant said in a press release.

Taco Bell did introduce one brand new sweet breakfast item last

year, though—[Cinnabon Delights coffee](#), which sports the same flavor as the icing-filled Cinnabon Delights donuts the company describes as “dessert, disguised as breakfast.”

Adding revered ingredients in beverages, either as a garnish, flavoring or other element, can help infuse standard drinks with a hint of retro appeal—such as topping a classic soda shop-style [Butter Pecan Milkshake](#) with pieces of Golden OREO Cookie Pieces, for example, or [combining chilled espresso with Chunky CHIPS AHOY! Cookie Pieces](#) to capitalize on the comeback of the espresso martini.

Today, with restaurants vying for customers amid changing eating patterns, inflation and other challenges, competition can be fierce. Crafting a menu that builds on classic flavors by leveraging the appeal of recognizable brands, potentially including well-known candy, cookies and other ingredients in dishes, can help set operators apart from other restaurants in their market—which will hopefully help draw customers, and ultimately transform the eatery’s desserts and other sweet items into increasingly lucrative offerings.

For more insight into what consumers will be looking for in the coming months, read our 2023 [trends report](#).

1 [2021 Food & Health Survey](#), the International Food Information Council, 2021

2 [“New Nostalgia and Multicultural Everything for Food and Bev in 2022,”](#) Symrise, April 7, 2022

3 [“The New Nostalgia of Foods,”](#) Symrise, May 10, 2022

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How Noncommercial Operators Can Maximize Sales With Prepackaged Snacks

Posted in [Snacking](#) on November 18, 2021

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Nine in 10 adults now snack more often than before the COVID-19 pandemic¹—and due to efforts to limit close contact to reduce the virus’ spread, prepackaged items have become a popular choice.

Foodservice provider Morrison Healthcare, which works with more than 800 hospitals and healthcare systems, has seen a notable uptick in prepackaged snack interest during the past 18 months—although Jeffrey Quasha, Morrison’s director of retail culinary innovation, says customers have actually been drawn to prepackaged options for several years.

“Our clientele eats in our cafes five to seven times a week,” Quasha says. “When they’re coming in for breakfast, they might grab two snacks and several bottled beverages—because if it’s a doctor or a nurse, or frontline service personnel, they might, depending on what’s happening, not get another opportunity to come down to the cafe or any of our engaged spaces.”



In the current foodservice climate, prepackaged snacks can potentially help healthcare, hospitality and other noncommercial venues continue to increase sales. To capitalize on the snacks’ appeal, operators may want to consider the following elements.

Consumers Crave Variety

While numerous customers gravitated toward health and wellness-focused snacks before the pandemic, some have since adopted a more decadent snacking approach that extends throughout various dayparts, according to Scott Harris, director of category growth at Morrison.

Although more than half of adults say they’ve relied on snacks for nourishment during the pandemic (54%), the salty snacks category showed the largest year-over-year consumption increase in 2020. In the U.S., the chocolate, cookie and candy snack categories all showed significant growth, according to [Mondelēz International’s annual State of Snacking™ report.](#)¹

With a roster of wellness facility clients, Morrison tries to strike a balance between providing functional fare and more indulgent treats like cake pops and brownies.

In recent years, Morrison has found that offering a wide array of items can translate into customers picking up multiple snacks, due in part to the convenience factor—particularly during the pandemic.

“People bought one-and-a-half more products because they wanted to have something for later, so they didn’t have to deal with going to the grocery store or supply shortages,” Quasha says.

Familiar Tastes Can Attract Customers

Some of the prepackaged branded products hotels and medical centers sell may also, when used as an ingredient, help increase interest in limited-time offer and grab-and-go items.

Approximately 27% of consumers feel an item being made by a brand they like is very important when deciding which snacks to eat or drink²; more than half of adults—53%—say they’ve been buying nostalgic snack brands during the pandemic.¹

Offering an LTO item that contains a branded ingredient can allow operators tap into the product’s consumer loyalty, trust and following—and serve as a low-risk way to test the item’s marketability, according to Malcolm McAlpine, business manager for branded snacks and confections at Mondelēz International.

“A lot of permanent menu items started as LTOs but were so successful they became mainstream,” McAlpine says. “People experiment, see what sells, what consumers have a stomach for; that’s the beauty of LTOs.”

Morrison, Quasha says, has drawn inspiration from social media influencers, foodservice industry research and other data to give classic desserts and snacks “a 2.0 application.”

“We do a lot of parfaits made from products that have a distinguished feature or characteristic—making a mousse or a parfait from [OREO Creme Variegate](#), and then crumbling up the rest of the OREO cookie to make a dust that’s a garnish,” he says.

Simplifying Snacking May Boost Sales

To accommodate healthcare facilities and hotel customers’ nosh-related needs, Morrison is installing round-the-clock markets with self-checkout options where guests can just scan the packaging to pay at some of the locations it serves.

“Some of our operations are open 24 hours a day; that resident, guest or patient is looking for a snack or meal in the middle of the night,” Quasha says. “In Georgia, we just opened a 24-hour market where they have the ability to heat up a composed meal and grab some snacks and beverages—no different than what they would receive in the cafeteria during the day.”

Scan-and-go kiosks, a mobile market cart that’s pushed from floor to floor, refrigerated structures that allow access with payment and other automated formats can potentially reduce the manpower needs associated with ringing up customers—a boon for organizations that are short on staff in today’s tight labor market. More than 80% of healthcare foodservice providers have experienced staffing shortage-related challenges during the pandemic.³

Morrison has found scan-and-go setups can be helpful, Harris says.

“We lost a lot of employees,” he says. “We are rapidly addressing the issue with smart walls with snacks, grab-and-go coolers—stuff that can hold a lot of snacks.”

Prepackaged items may also be able to help operators with another operational aspect—reducing food waste as they try to determine what post-pandemic production numbers should be with a different number of employees and visitors on-site.

“We’re seeing a tremendous rise in packaged items for breakfast. For instance, [belVita](#), a breakfast biscuit item, is a perfect item for grab-and-go,” McAlpine says. “Operators like prepackaged products—basically, there’s no spoilage because of their shelf life. That’s going to apply to cafeterias as well as micro markets; preparing food for any meal daypart, there’s no prediction to how many people will be there on that day.”

A Strong Prepackaged Value Proposition

Even with social distancing and other pandemic guidelines reduced in some regions, the demand for individually-wrapped prepackaged items isn’t going away anytime soon, according to Harris.

“We’re still seeing people lean toward packaged items,” he says. “Because of the current situation with the delta [variant], people are still concerned. If they can get a cookie sitting out on a tray with tongs, they’d much rather get a package of cookies.”

Offering a robust selection of easy-to-pick-up packaged snacks can help hospital and hotel cafes, gift shops and other healthcare and hospitality foodservice locations enhance sales both during—and likely after—the pandemic.

Operators that are able to also find unique ways to capitalize on iconic brands’ name recognition by incorporating them into single-serving treats may find they can have the best of both worlds: increased prepackaged item sales from customers looking to load up on sustenance to get through the day—along with impulse buys visitors make after seeing their favorite cookie or other product featured in an irresistible new dessert or snack.

To get more up-to-the-minute healthcare, hospitality and other noncommercial foodservice insights, check out the latest edition of our [Culinary Inspiration Guide](#).

¹ [State of Snacking™ report](#), Mondelēz International and The Harris Poll, 2020

² [“Snacking During COVID-19: Finding Comfort in Familiar Brands.”](#) The Hartman Group, 2021

³ [The State of Healthcare Foodservice: Full 2021 Survey Results](#), FoodService Director, June 15, 2021

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