



**THE
ULTIMATE
BREAKFAST
GUIDE**



Bacon, sausage and ham have become essentially ubiquitous breakfast menu elements—aside from eggs, they're the protein options restaurants most frequently include in morning meals.¹

However, while your customers will likely expect to be able to order a traditional side of bacon and other breakfast meats, a number may also be looking for more unexpected fare.

Inventive ingredients, value items and other offerings can add some allure to your menu—and potentially encourage consumers to stop by at the start of their day.

Exclusive insights and information about current breakfast trends—along with eight delicious recipes that will keep patrons coming back for more—can be found below.



SIMPLICITY AND HEALTH ASPECTS ARE SOUGHT AFTER

Consumers want breakfast to be easy; **51%** say they like to have it at home because they feel it's convenient.²

An even greater amount, though—**58%**—prefer to dine out due to the convenience factor, indicating menu items that are complex to prepare or can be quickly purchased and consumed may resonate with customers.²

Nutrition is also a focus. Approximately **48%** of consumers like to have a healthy breakfast, but definitions of what that involves can vary.²

With parents in the office more often (half the companies that began requiring employees to be on-site in recent years now want them there four to five days a week) and kids having returned to school and extracurricular activities, a breakfast that provides a sense of fullness throughout the day is a priority.³

Promoting eggs, bacon and other breakfast meats that **56%** of operators currently serve as high-protein menu selections could also interest the **51%** of consumers who want a protein-packed meal.²

Customers may also find high-fiber breakfast options, currently offered by **36%** of operators, and low-sugar foods, which **39%** supply, attractive. Adding new items or highlighting existing ones with those attributes might help increase a.m. sales.²

The emphasis on returning to the office could present another opportunity for operators that provide breakfast catering services; some have seen a bump in orders from companies that are trying to encourage employees to come in more during the week.⁴

INTERNATIONAL CUISINE CAN ELEVATE BREAKFAST



The demand for dishes and ingredients that hail from various countries has continued to increase in recent years; **59%** of customers are interested in seeing globally inspired breakfast items on menus.⁵

Because Mexican and Italian cuisine have been mainstream favorites for years, other options may help draw customers who are seeking a novel dining experience; **26%** of operators say they would like to offer Middle Eastern breakfast dishes—which include dishes like ilbir, made with eggs poached in yogurt.²

In addition to items that feature elements from Mexican cuisine, like Breakfast Empanadas, this Jian Bing—a crepe packed with scallions, egg and Hatfield® Classic Ham—and Morning Shakshuka—featuring Hatfield® All-Natural Skinless Sausage Links in a savory mix of tomatoes, onions, green peppers and garlic—offer international appeal.

More than a quarter (**28%**) of operators are also interested in serving breakfast dishes that feature elements from Asian cuisine.

Although dishes such as bibimbap and ramen are currently in the earliest stage of adoption, just **8%** of operators offer Asian-influenced breakfast items, compared with **32%** of consumers who report they'd like to try them.¹

A Korean Street Toast-themed egg sandwich, with cabbage and ham on a sugar-topped brioche bun, is something customers can easily pick up on their way to work; more than a third (**36%**) of the consumers who eat breakfast away from home, though, say they choose to because of cravings—suggesting indulgent, noteworthy dishes can also be a valid menu inclusion.²

Quick-service eateries, in particular, might benefit from adding breakfasts that derive culinary inspiration from Asian countries—menu items **45%** of Gen Z members say they're interested in.²

Gen Z is also the demographic that patronizes fast food restaurants most often; **77%** visit them at least one to three times a month.⁶

VALUE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER



Operators are facing several ongoing challenges, including higher labor and food costs, which **98%** and **97%**, respectively, say are an issue; **45%** need more employees.⁷

As a result, some are making operational adjustments—trying to optimize their inventory, for instance, and keep things fresh by offering a manageably sized menu and occasional specials, limited-time offers and seasonal dishes.⁸

Although breakfast menu items had only shown minimal cost increases before 2022, in the past two years, their average price rose **17.4%** at the top 500 limited-service restaurants and **13%** at the top 500 full-service restaurant chains.⁸

Additionally, more than two-thirds (**67%**) of operators say diners are very price sensitive during morning business hours; **45%** now search for coupons, and **39%** are choosing value meals.^{8,9}

So, what's the solution? Bundling items as a breakfast deal is one way to potentially cut costs without having to reduce menu prices.⁸

In May, Wendy's introduced a \$3 breakfast combo, featuring an egg-and-cheese English muffin sandwich with bacon or sausage and a side of seasoned potatoes; even though traffic declined during other dayparts, the company's breakfast offerings helped fuel a **0.6%** increase in U.S. same-store sales in the second quarter of 2024.^{10,11}

In July, more than a quarter (**27%**) of U.S. adults expressed an interest in trying Starbucks' Pairings Menu—which includes a tall tea or hot or iced coffee and sausage, cheddar and egg, bacon, gouda and egg, or other breakfast sandwich for \$6 to \$7.^{12,13}

Consumers' considerable appetite for breakfast is prompting numerous operators to reexamine their morning meal mindset; **80%** believe brunch menus will be more popular in the years ahead, and **42%** have already expanded their breakfast hours at least one day a week.⁸

Incorporating items like the Hatfield® line of bacon, sausage and ham products can allow operators to cost-effectively expand what they offer to provide both familiar breakfast classics and head-turning new dishes.

Menu options like this [Breakfast Poutine Biscuit](#), made with sweet potato fries, a Hatfield® All-Natural Sausage Patty and acon, can offer a hearty start to the day.

Dishes that combine aspects of two or more cuisines may also entice customers—like these breakfast-friendly [Korean Corn Dogs](#) and this flight of [Breakfast Bao Buns](#), made with ingredients like Hatfield® Carving Ham, Swiss cheese, egg, avocado and applewood bacon.

Items that aren't necessarily portable but pack a big flavor punch—like a [Sausage-Stuffed Waffle](#) made with Hatfield® All-natural Sausage and applewood bacon, whipped lemon ricotta and spicy hot honey—could be a breakfast choice customers find hard to resist.



BACON CONTINUES TO CHARM DINERS



Bacon's enduring popularity doesn't seem to have waned in the past year; **61%** of U.S. consumers ate the same amount in 2023 as they did in 2022—and **44%** have expressed an interest in sampling new bacon products, preparations and flavors.¹⁴

To address the desire for items that feature the breakfast protein staple, a number of eateries have crafted creative menu items that feature it in recent years.

Dunkin' began serving Snackin' Bacon, for example—glazed half-slices of bacon dusted with black pepper—in 2020. The Million Dollar Bacon dish that's offered at First Watch, a chain with locations in 29 states, contains smoked bacon that's prepared with a brown sugar, black pepper and cayenne glaze.^{15,16}

In 2024, Panera debuted an egg-and-cheese breakfast sandwich, served on black pepper focaccia bread, that contains a double portion of bacon. Customers can also ask for one of the eatery's other sandwiches—which feature egg and cheese components tucked into a cinnamon roll—to be made with bacon.¹⁷

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