

# 2020 BROUGHT UNCERTAINTY.

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# SOUP BRINGS COMFORT.

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2





33% of consumers say they are more likely to eat comfort foods since the onset of COVID-19.

Datassential, Sheltered Report, March 27, 2020

## 80% OF CONSUMERS LOVE SOUP. FAMILIAR AND COMFORTING, SOUP IS A PERFECT CARRIER FOR TODAY'S HOTTEST FLAVOR TRENDS.

73 out of every 100 operators have soup on their menu, according to Technomic. Soup has all the best benefits of comfort food, like the delightful aroma of the broth, the warmth of the vessel, and the satisfaction of each bite. And right now, consumers are looking for a bit more comfort.

As an industry, we are still on the road to recovery. The economy has not quite rebounded following the surge of COVID-19. And consumers are restless, eager to dine out again, and inching their way back to a revised version of normalcy. As they do, we expect their restaurant orders to maintain a theme of comfort, value, and flexibility. Hearty, classic dishes will be the top picks, especially those able to withstand takeout and delivery.

Soup is the perfect choice for meeting these needs. And, more and more, soup has become a platform for exploring new trending flavors, an opportunity to try something new in a familiar format, and a perfect vessel for upcycling proteins and produce that might otherwise go to waste. From classic flavors to ethnic twists, the bowl can hold it all, whether you're serving it to guests on-premise or sending it out the door.



# IN TIMES LIKE THESE, CONSUMERS SEEK COMFORT FOODS.

In a time of crisis, consumers gravitate to familiar foods, nostalgic favorites, and approachable classics. And the last quarter proved it as we watched eating habits shift from a state of exploration to a state of familiar, with items like pizza, burgers, and pasta topping the list. The desire for comforting foods is predicted to continue through 2020 and into 2021 as consumers ready themselves for the next season—cooler weather, back-to-school uncertainty, and flu season. In other words, soup season has arrived, and consumers are looking for the relief of routine.

2020 menu exploration hasn't stalled, only different needs and drivers are at play. More time at home, more family meals, and a higher incidence of off-premise traffic as consumers opt for safety over flavor, to name a few. All the while, new habits are forming as consumers continue to seek their favorite foods and flavors.



81% of households with kids are interested in full 3- or 4-course family meal deals.  
86% of millennials are interested in buy-one-take-one entrée deals

Datassential, Reinvention, April 10, 2020

Consumers who have been under stay-at-home orders for months due to the spread of the coronavirus are looking for meals with leftovers and comfort foods, according to a Technomic COVID-19 update in July 2020.

I am seeking meals that will provide leftovers

48%

I am craving more comfort foods

47%

I am seeking meals that can feed a family

41%

Technomic's Take: Consumer Perspectives and Behavior, COVID-19 foodservice update, May 15, 2020



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# 1 IN 4 CONSUMERS ARE EATING HEALTHIER SINCE THE ONSET OF COVID-19.

Where functional foods most recently reigned, immunity-boosting ingredients have stepped in to take the lead. Balancing health with comfort is the trick, motivated by the desire to build immunity and reduce stress. Promoting the immunity-boosting attributes of ingredients is one way to give consumers added peace of mind. Another way is to menu functional fare based on consumers' desired physical and mental attributes, such as turmeric for immunity, ginger for anti-inflammatory effects, and fermented foods for gut health.

## **TREND SPOTLIGHT: Functional Foods**

In 2019, ingredients such as turmeric, kombucha, matcha, and bee pollen were showing triple-digit growth, according to Datassential, and showing up in everything from soups to salad dressings. With the renewed emphasis on immunity-boosting ingredients, it may be the time to call them out on your menu. Or, position them as part of an overall focus on wholesome and beneficial offerings.

Today, the perception of "better for you" benefits is a compelling selling point. Part of what makes the wholesome ingredient trend so appealing is that patrons can easily incorporate superfoods into their diet rather than having to completely change their lifestyle or behavior. By adding trending ingredients like kelp, activated charcoal, or maitake mushrooms, you'll boost the functional benefits of your menu items without sacrificing flavor.



Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to satisfy a craving increased as consumers sought comfort foods. Conversely, many consumers also wanted better-for-you options to maintain overall health during a stressful spring.



Technomic Industry Insights,  
July 13, 2020

### **Immunity Boosting Soup Ingredients:**

- Mushrooms
- Spinach
- Ginger
- Garlic
- Citrus
- Turmeric
- Bell peppers
- Sweet potatoes
- Miso
- Fermented foods

# AUTHENTIC ETHNIC SOUPS ARE HARDER TO CREATE AT HOME.

Authenticity is important when it comes to ethnic foods, especially when consumers are craving their favorite items. But authentic ethnic meals are harder to create at home for many consumers. In fact, 30% of consumers are craving the dishes that are hard to make at home, according to Datassential. Even more, 70% of consumers say global foods and flavors are what they're looking forward to ordering from restaurants right now.

In 2019, nearly 60% of consumers shared authenticity is important when deciding where to eat, according to Technomic, and another 44% of consumers prefer completely authentic ethnic foods. Fast forward to 2020, consumers are returning to trusted platforms and forms to ground new flavors and twists.



45% of consumers prefer to order meat & seafood dishes away from home.

Datassential, New Opportunities in the New Normal, August 12, 2020

## CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT: Millennials



The generation born between 1981 and 1996 are driving much of the away-from-home consumption of ethnic foods. As the population continues to diversify, the consumption is set to increase and expand to include new cuisines, in particular, those with Asian, Latin American, and Mediterranean influences. Even more, this is the group driving the largest increase in delivery during the coronavirus crisis, with 31% using delivery more than before.

# TRENDING SOUPS

## TO TRY RIGHT AWAY



Tom Kha, Thai  
4-yr Growth: +2.9%



Pho, Vietnamese  
4-yr Growth: +10.4%



Pozole, Mexican  
4-yr Growth: +18.1%

Albondiga, Mexican  
1-yr Growth: +7.4%

Miso, Japanese  
4-yr Growth: +11.2%

Ramen, Japanese  
4-yr Growth: +29.3%

Cioppino, Italian-American  
4-yr Growth: +9.6%

Tom Yum, Thai  
4-yr Growth: +13.5%

Stracciatella, Italian  
4-yr Growth: +37.0%

Source: Datassential, MenuTrends 2020

### MENU TIP: Menu descriptors convey authentic flavor cues.

Whether ordered in person, over the phone or online, offering menu descriptors is an effective approach to conveying authentic cues. Many restaurants are taking to social media to share their recent menu additions and to create interest for their limited menus with an authentic twist. New Orleans Chef Peter Nguyen of Banh Mi Boys recently made Canh Chua Cá, a Vietnamese sweet and sour fish soup with tangy, sour flavors from tamarind and sweetness from pineapple chunks, for his Instagram fans to view.

Ramen Tatsunoya, with locations in L.A. and Chicago, keeps its popular Ramen menu very simple. Their signature bowl is served with thin noodles and topped with a house-blended umami paste, onion and garlic infused oil, and pork back fat. Talat Market, a Thai pop-up turned brick-and-mortar restaurant in Atlanta, GA offers a rotating soup option on their daily menu. Khao Mun Gai, a broth-based soup with poached chicken and rice, fermented bean sauce, cucumber, and cilantro, was a recent feature.

# SOUP OFFERS A PLATFORM FOR UPCYCLING INGREDIENTS.

In a time when labor and food waste are a strain to profitability, leaning on a platform that lends itself well to upcycling and batch cooking is even more valuable. Soup shines in this area as a perfect menu item to optimize SKUs, utilize low-cost ingredients, and create high-profit margins.

## **CHEF TIP: Don't shy away from bruised or damaged fruits or vegetables.**

“ Work with local farmers to take all they have and use your imagination to transform them into your signature relishes and chutneys or as nutritious enhancements in your vegetable, rice, and noodle bowls.

**Chef Scott Gilbert**  
Custom Culinary®



The USDA estimates that restaurants spend \$162 billion annually in food waste costs, and upcycling presents a unique answer to this challenge.

Datassential, The Next Phase Report, May 8, 2020

### **Items to upcycle in soups:**

- Day-old bread for bread bowls or croutons/crisps
- Vegetable leaves, scraps, tops, stems, peelings
- "Ugly" produce, oddly colored, oddly shaped fruits and vegetables
- Fruit rinds for zest



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# SOUPS ARE A RELIABLE & SCALABLE TO-GO OPTION.

Where functional foods most recently reigned, immunity-boosting ingredients have stepped in to take the lead. Balancing health with comfort is the trick, motivated by the desire to build immunity and reduce stress. Promoting the immunity-boosting attributes of ingredients is one way to give consumers added peace of mind. Another way is to menu functional fare based on consumers' desired physical and mental attributes, such as turmeric for immunity, ginger for anti-inflammatory effects, and fermented foods for gut health.



## Top Soups Ordered for Carryout & Delivery:

- Bone Broth
- Broccoli Cheddar Soup
- Cauliflower
- Chicken Noodle
- Chili
- Farro
- Tortilla Soup

The DoorDash Dish: 2019-2020 Trend Report;  
Grubhub's Taste of 2019 Report; Uber Eat's Look  
Back at 2019 Report

## MERCHANDISING SPOTLIGHT: Off-Premise

With so many consumers eating off-premise, the merchandising opportunities are limited. Now, operators must consider other ways to tell guests about their offerings. A tempting menu description has the most influence on diners' decisions to try a dish, according to nearly half of consumers in a recent Technomic study. Take a moment to update websites and descriptions on third-party apps to ensure accuracy. Be sure to include the ingredients which make the dish special.





## PACKAGING & MERCHANDISING TIPS

The foodservice industry is in recovery mode. And many of the current trends will stay around a bit longer. Comfort, value, and growth of delivery, to name a few. But as we move into the fall, consumers will be seeking familiar favorites, trusted routines, and foods that bring memories of normal times. Sounds like the right time for a comforting bowl of soup, a family-style stew, or a big batch of chili fit for a crowd.

- To put guests at ease, invest in tamper-evident seals.
- Package toppings separately in soufflé cups to ensure freshness.
- Shrinkwrap soup containers to avoid spills while transporting.
- Keep soup hot by wrapping in foil to add additional insulation.
- Pack bags securely for movement during transportation. Consider double bagging to prevent spills.
- Use clear lids for your soup packaging to allow staff to verify orders without contamination risk or heat deterioration.
- Employ sticker systems to identify contents without reopening.
- Offer soups as add-ons to entrées and salads.



- Batch and pre-package soups in various sizes to offer as a supplemental “next day” meal solution. Label packages with the day and time of preparation to indicate freshness.
- Bundle full-course family meal solutions to solve dinner for stretched and stressed families.

OF COURSE, SOUP IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. WORKING WITH PARTNERS WHO UNDERSTAND TODAY'S TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IS HELPFUL, TOO. WITH A DEEP REPERTOIRE OF BASES, GRAVIES, AND SAUCES, CUSTOM CULINARY CAN DELIVER AUTHENTIC FLAVOR TO UTILIZE ACROSS THE ENTIRE MENU. PLUS, OUR TEAM CAN HELP YOU FIGURE OUT THE PLAN—CONSUMER INSIGHTS, MENU CONCEPTS, ON-TREND INGREDIENTS, AND HIGH-MARGIN RECIPES. IT'S WHAT WE DO.



At Custom Culinary®, we're dedicated to perfecting the art of flavorful food. Our team of industry experts combine culinary arts with food science, manufacturing technology, and menu insights to create authentic flavor systems and unique menu concepts that meet your bottom-line goals.

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