



Eat Well, Live Well.



GLOBAL FLAVOR GUIDE

*Insights For Boosting Crave
Worthy Flavor*



GLOBALLY INSPIRED

UNIVERSALLY DESIRED

Flavor Without the Labor

The continuing challenges faced by foodservice operators, such as rising food and labor costs, as well as recruiting, hiring, and retaining hourly staff,¹ make it more important than ever to use food trends to your benefit.

In a 2022 survey, 86% of respondents said that global fare is one of the hottest trends of the year.² As in years past, the most popular global cuisines are Chinese, the most searched-for food type on Google; Mexican, the most popular Latin food; and Italian.³

As one of the top frozen foods manufacturers of these three types of cuisine, Ajinomoto Foods North America (AFNA) offers the added benefits of quick prep, including many ready-to-eat options; long shelf life; and variety of options for every daypart.

And because another 2022 trend is streamlined menus,² operations across the board are utilizing frozen foods more than ever. Smart operators know that partnering with a prepared food manufacturer helps them save time, labor, and money without sacrificing quality or creativity.

AFNA offers frozen appetizers, entrées, and handhelds that give consumers the global flavors they crave while giving operators the versatility they need.

¹Datassential

²NRA What's Hot Culinary Report, 2022

³Chef's Table, 2021/Google Trends



Takeout Is Here to Stay

The National Restaurant Association (NRA) predicts that most industry growth for the next 10 years will come from the off-premises market.¹ This expansion in takeout and delivery, combined with understaffed kitchens, means that using foods that transport well and packaging them in the right types of containers are more crucial than ever.

Packaging Goals

According to a recent National Restaurant Association (NRA) survey, operators are focused on making their takeout experience as seamless as possible for their customers. Operators who responded to the survey emphasized the importance of using sustainable packaging that retains temperature and keeps food intact in transit.¹

In addition to quality packaging, there are several things you can do to ensure satisfaction in your takeout meals:

- Cool slightly before packing
- Use vented packages
- Use absorbent paper
- Pack components separately
- Use anti-tamper seals
- Include reheat instructions

While deep-fried foods like those from AFNA retain their internal temperature well, using vented packaging is especially important to release excess moisture, keeping the surfaces crispy.²

¹NRA What's Hot Culinary Report, 2022

²NRN





Quick-Prep and RTE

With globally inspired foods that can be served on-premise or off, any operation can offer the authentic flavor their customers crave. It's even better when these foods are quick-

prep or ready-to-eat (RTE), saving time in the kitchen and requiring fewer employees throughout the process.

Time-Saving and Safe

Frozen and RTE foods offer operators a value-added advantage because they don't require much training or expertise to prepare. Frozen foods also offer a long shelf life, giving operators the flexibility to buy in bulk when supply chains allow.¹

Many operators rely on RTE foods because they have already been cooked to the minimum safe temperature. When RTE products are frozen immediately after cooking, it minimizes the growth of harmful bacteria and lessens the risk of cross-contamination.² These items can then be prepared directly from frozen or after thawing in the refrigerator.

Menu Item	Cook from Scratch Time	RTE and/or Quick Prep	Cook Method
Potstickers	1 hour	8-10 minutes	Steamed
Rice	20 minutes	4 minutes	Stove-top
Filled Pasta	1 hour or more	4 minutes	Boiled
Mini Taco/Taquito	30-45 minutes	3 minutes	Fried
Chili	1 hour or more	7-10 minutes	"Thawed" Stove-top or Microwave

Many AFNA products are RTE, including our entire Latin lineup.

¹American Frozen Foods Institute

²AAPS



Snacking is an All-Day Event

With snacking becoming the “all-day daypart”¹ and side dishes becoming appetizers,² it’s clear that the lines between traditional meals continue to blur.

A recent study reports that 96% of consumers had at least one snack in the past day, with most averaging three to four snacks throughout the day.¹ Late afternoon and after dinner/late night snacking have increased - consumer visits to restaurants during those time frames went up 1% over the prior year.³

Reasons for these 3-5 p.m. and after 9 p.m. restaurant visits range from “the kids like it there” to “we had a craving” and tend to be more common at quick-service chains. Late-night snacks aren’t always small either - often, they’re as substantial as pizza or a burger.³

¹Datassential Snacking Keynote Report 2021

²Simplot

³The NPD Group

Consumer Cravings for Snacks



(CSP Magazine)

Sides are Getting More Play

Offering side dishes as meal starters or shareable plates is a trend that's gaining steam in 2022.¹ This criss-crossing between traditional menus is good news for operators - adding flexibility to the items they already offer and giving them opportunities to add new products. With just a few well-chosen ingredients and unique preparations, almost any side dish can be reimagined as a popular appetizer.¹

It's also a great opportunity to introduce or expand upon global flavors. A 2021 survey found that 23% of respondents said they had experimented with different cuisines, ingredients,

or flavors since the start of the pandemic.² Another report said that 40% of U.S. consumers like dips and sauces with internationally inspired flavors.³

Exploring flavor trends in globally inspired spices and seasonings is an accessible way to start adding more authenticity to appetizer offerings in any type of operation. These flavors can be easily introduced to sauces, dips, and toppings, making it a simple and profitable way to satisfy consumers' cravings.

¹Simplot

²International Food Information Council

³T. Hasegawa 2022 Food and Beverage Flavor Trends Report



Asian Foods Are On Top

While Chinese is the most popular type of global cuisine in the U.S., most of those menu items are inspired specifically by the cuisines of Hong Kong. In 2022, however, foods inspired by Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines are trending. Asian

foods are most commonly menued at midscale restaurants (15.9%) and independents, (15.6%) and they include chicken more than any other paired flavor (56.6%).¹

Appetizers Take the Lead

Among appetizers, the most popular Asian items are wontons (on 13.1% of appetizer menus), spring rolls (10.0%), and potstickers (5.6%).¹ Each of these items is great on its own, but even better when combined into a shareable sampler platter, offered throughout the day to get those snack-focused consumers in the door (or ordering takeout).

As the foundation of an endless amount of entrees, rice is an incredibly versatile and popular item, showing up on 58.6% of menus.¹ Fried rice, specifically, is on a whopping 92.8% of menus!¹ Fried rice and our Cilantro Lime Rice (a trending flavor combo that's up 9% on menus over the past four years¹) can be used far beyond Asian foods - they're just as versatile in Latin and Caribbean entrees.

¹Datassential



Dip Into Spicy Flavors

Spicy flavors saw a 16.5% increase in launches from 2017-2020.¹ Through 2022, experts say they expect this trend to continue, with formulators also balancing the heat with a bit of sweetness.²

One of the most popular spicy Asian flavors is gochujang, up 177% on menus over the past four years. Togarashi, a zippy Japanese spice blend made of chile flakes, seaweed, and sesame seeds, is up 36.7% on menus over the past four years.³

A simple and cost-efficient way to introduce new, spicy flavors to customers is by featuring them in dipping sauces. Forty percent of U.S. consumers like dips and sauces with internationally inspired flavors like sriracha and Thai peanut, and are often using them as spreads to enhance dishes with which they are already familiar.⁴

Wontons, spring rolls, and potstickers can be paired with a sweet/spicy dip made with gochujang, sugar, honey, rice wine vinegar, minced garlic, and sesame oil. Or try mixing togarashi seasoning with spicy sriracha mayo. These dips can also do double duty as sauces for rice or fried rice-based entrées.

¹Mintel

²FlavorSum

³Datassential

⁴T. Hasegawa 2022 Food and Beverage Flavor Trends Report





Latin Cuisine Is Leading

In the U.S., the bulk of Latin food in restaurants is Mexican, strongly influenced by Spanish, Mayan, and Aztec cuisines;¹ but other countries are gaining traction on menus as well.

In a recent survey, 87% of respondents said that to them, Latin food equates to Mexican food; 23% said Cuban; 18%

said Puerto Rican; 13% said Brazilian; 12% said Colombian; and 8% said Argentinian. Featuring regional Mexican cuisines and shared traditional ingredients like chilies, corn, beans, tomatoes, and rice can ease consumers into trying less mainstream Latin cuisines.²

Time-Tested Mexican Foods

A great starting point for introducing Latin foods to a menu is with tried-and-true burritos, taquitos, flautas, and mini-Mexican appetizers. Burritos are among the most popular Latin foods, available on 18.1% of restaurant menus across all segments. Of restaurants serving burritos, 53.6% offer chicken as a protein and 39.5% offer beef.¹

Shredded Chicken Taquitos and Mini Taquitos are portable, snackable Latin foods that are great for enjoying on the go, as are Chicken and Cheese Flautas, Mini Tacos, and Mini Burritos. Paired with a classic dip or sauce, they are a profitable addition to any menu.

¹Datassential

²T. Hasegawa

Traditional sauces like salsa, in the top spot at 37.8% menu penetration, sour cream at 34.8%, guacamole at 22.3%, and pico de gallo at 20.2%, are an expected part of any Mexican snack or meal.¹ But adding an unexpected, trending condiment like tajín, a popular Mexican seasoning made with ground, dried chile peppers, dehydrated lime, and sea salt,² takes menus up a notch.

In addition, using up-and-coming flavors like adobo and hibiscus, up 29% and 24% respectively on menus since 2018,³ is also a great way to introduce guests to a wider variety of Latin cuisines.²

¹Datassential

²T. Hasegawa

³NRA What's Hot Culinary Forecast, 2022

For a flavorful dipping sauce that hits all the right trends, try blending chipotle peppers with garlic, cumin, tomato puree, red wine vinegar, sugar, and hibiscus flowers, and serve with a sampler platter of Posada Mini-Mexican Appetizers. Another exciting option is creamy adobo dip, made with chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, sour cream, mayo, chili powder, cumin, garlic, lime juice, and cilantro. Pair with Posada Taquitos or Flautas for an enticing anytime snack or entrée!



Italian Food Is Always Comforting

Often associated with pasta and pizza, Italian food varies throughout the country. Italian cuisine originating in Northern Italy typically features the main staples of butter, cream, and pork. In comparison, most Southern Italian-inspired food is made up of olive oil, tomatoes, seafood, fresh produce, and pasta.¹

Italian food as a whole is one of the top 3 most popular types of cuisine in the U.S., giving operators the opportunity to experiment with less-common ingredients like spicy arrabiata sauce as an alternative to mild marinara or cheeses like taleggio, a mild cheese with an unusual, fruity tang.¹

Craveable Flavors, Easy to Serve

Among the most popular Italian foods traditionally served in the U.S. are filled pastas like ravioli (on 52% of entrée menus) and manicotti (19%). Many of Bernardi's filled pastas feature popular, traditional cheeses like ricotta (on 22% of menus), mozzarella (46%), parmesan (54%), and romano (12%).²

Our Jumbo Manicotti satisfies customers' cravings for Italian comfort food, offering generously filled pasta that's simple, easy to prep, and delicious. Our Ravioli provides the same benefits with even more variety. We have everything from Medium Square Cheese Ravioli to upscale Jumbo Round Spinach & Gorgonzola Ravioli to Breaded Beef Ravioli, a great option for an any-time-of-day appetizer or snack.

¹ SNAP by Datassential

² Datassential





Think Outside the Jar

While filled pasta like manicotti and ravioli is typically served with marinara sauce (28%),¹ it leaves room for more innovative, differentiating sauces that are still easy to make with limited staff.

The creamy, savory, smoky, and spicy flavor preferences trending this year² give Italian operations all the reason they need to expand upon their sauce offerings:

- Creamy: Bechamel-style cream sauce made with heavy cream, butter, flour, parmigiano, garlic powder, and salt
- Savory: Carbonara rosa sauce made with bacon, eggs, tomato paste, and pecorino
- Smoky: Smoked meat sauce made with smoked tomatoes, Italian sausage, and ground beef and blended with olive oil, diced white onion, garlic, tomato sauce and paste, beef broth, and Italian seasoning
- Spicy: Arrabbiata sauce made with olive oil, crushed red pepper flakes, onion, garlic, San Marzano tomatoes, torn basil, sea salt, and fresh black pepper

Expand Beyond Entrées

With the exception of Breaded Ravioli, filled pastas are most often served as entrées - but even manicotti can offer more menu variety when it's served as an appetizer or snack! Just coat our Cheese Manicotti with breadcrumbs, fry in oil, cut in half, and serve with a spicy marinara dipping sauce for a gourmet take on fried cheese sticks!

¹SNAP by Datassential

²T. Hasegawa

Classic Appetizers With Flair

With the big shift toward snacking any time of day, including late at night, classic American appetizers like those from Fred's, hit all the right spots. They're craveable, shareable, quick to prepare, and easy to serve. They also offer the variety of options operators need to nail down the ideal streamlined menu.

It probably comes as no surprise that fried cheese is one of the most popular appetizer items (on 17.5% of appetizer menus) - this includes Battered Mozzarella Sticks, Breaded Mozzarella Sticks, and Battered White Cheddar Curd Nuggets. Fred's new flavored cheese curds feature on-trend coatings like Breaded Ranch and Nashville Hot, flavors that are up 8.1% and 368.5% respectively over the past four years.¹

Beyond Cheese Sticks

Macaroni and cheese is one of those comfort foods that never seems to go out of style. In fact, modern variations have boosted the popularity of this flavor combo in recent years (mac & cheese bites are up 40.4% over the past four years).¹

Fred's Smoked Gouda and Bacon Flavored Mac and Cheese Bites help operators take advantage not only of the mac & cheese bite trend, but also individual flavor trends like smoked gouda, which is up 14.3% over the past four years. Fred's also offers Spicy Breaded Pickle Chips, which are up 13.0% over just the past year, making them a no-brainer for adding to all-day appetizer menus.¹

¹Datassential



Fun, Fusion Flavors

Combining tried-and-true American appetizers like Fred's cheese sticks and curds, mac & cheese bites, and fried pickles with globally inspired flavors give operators an edge over the competition. Here are a few exciting ideas from AFNA:

- Add amazing Asian flair to our Smoked Gouda & Bacon Flavored Mac & Cheese Bites. Fry the mac & cheese bites and sauté them with Szechuan peppercorns, garlic, ginger, sesame oil, and star anise, and garnish with sliced scallions.
- Italian-Style Breaded Mozzarella Sticks take on upscale Mediterranean and Italian flavor when they're fried, wrapped in thinly sliced prosciutto, and served alongside a creamy parmesan and artichoke dip.
- A Vietnamese bánh mì sandwich is leveled up with the addition of Fred's Spicy Breaded Pickle Chips. Simply toast a baguette, top it with Asian BBQ pork, fried spicy pickle chips, sliced jalapeños, pickled daikon radish and carrots, fresh cilantro, and spicy mayo.
- Both our Breaded Nashville Hot Style Cheese Curds and Breaded Ranch Flavored Cheese Curds make a fun addition to a deluxe charcuterie board - simply fry them and arrange them with a variety of cured meats, unique cheeses, olives, nuts, fruit or dried fruit, nice crackers, and jelly or jam.



Hot Tips for New Dips

Starting with a familiar dipping sauce and adding a trending flavor is a profitable way to add global flair to a menu without adding much labor or time. Surveys bear that out, as 51% of U.S. consumers say they are interested in trying traditional dips and sauces with new flavors.¹

For example, spicy mayo is the fastest-growing dip today, up an amazing 359% on menus over the past four years, and serves as the ideal base for an internationally inspired dipping sauce. Spicy ranch, up 28.6% over the past four years, is another versatile option to start with, as is aioli, up 9.4% over the past four years.²

Dips with International Intrigue

Experts say that creamy, savory, smoky, and spicy are all top flavor preferences for 2022.¹ Operations can take full advantage of these trends by adding smoky Philippine adobo, spicy Szechuan chile crunch, or savory za'atar to a creamy dip base like the aforementioned mayo, aioli, or ranch.

Other intriguing and trending Asian options are furikake (+19.6% over the past year) and togarashi (+8.1% over the past year). Additional global flavors worth trying in a dipping sauce this year include:

Flavor	Origin	Increase in menu penetration over 4 years
Bulgogi	Korea	+5.1%
Chamoy	Mexico	+282.7%
Elote	Mexico	+94.2%
Kimchi	Korea	+5.4%
Sambal	Indonesia	+51.7%
Tahini	Middle East	+15.3%
Tamari	Japan	+19.4%
Za'atar	Middle East	+18.7%

And don't be afraid to offer internationally inspired dipping sauces with traditionally "American" foods. Experts say that consumers have become more adventurous with global sauces, pastes, dips, and condiments,¹ so intensifying a bestselling flavor with a twist is a profitable choice!

¹T. Hasegawa

²Datassential





While experts predict the foodservice industry will reach \$898 billion in sales in 2022, more than half of restaurant operators expect that it will be a year or more before business conditions return to normal.¹

No matter the daypart, menu type, or operation, every restaurant kitchen can benefit by replacing time-consuming, labor-intensive foods with frozen alternatives from Ajinomoto's family of brands. Our offerings give you a strong foundation to build upon using your own ingredients and expertise.

Partnering with Ajinomoto helps your operation adapt and succeed, no matter the challenges, while improving customer perceptions as well as profits and brand awareness.

Ajinomoto Foods North America is your source for great food, from appetizers to entrées. Find online tools, websites, social media, apps, and more at **[AjinomotoFoodservice.com](https://www.AjinomotoFoodservice.com)**.

¹NRA 2022 State of the Restaurant Industry Report

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AjinomotoFoodservice.com