

Food Trends 2018

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Comfort food, colorful food and “fine-casual” are among the year’s predicted food trends.

By Rieva Lesonsky

Restaurant and hospitality consultancy Andrew Freeman & Company ([AF&Co.](#)) predicts there will be a lot of changes in the food and beverage industries in 2018. According to a report in *Restaurant Hospitality*, the company says, “Change is here to stay, and this year’s top trends reflect the industry’s acceptance of this state. And there’s a lot of change to deal with—economic, political and social factors as well as significant cultural shifts in the way people use restaurants and hotels.”

Here’s a look at some of the changes they predict for restaurant foods.

Chicken: More chefs will be “introducing the versatile rotisserie chicken,” which is “easy on the wallet and perfect for delivery and takeout.” Fried chicken and chicken sandwiches will also be in demand.

Fine-casual: The concept, coined by Danny Meyer of Shake Shack fame, is “upscale counter-service—or even table service—with curated ingredients and unexpected touches like a wine bar and optional tasting menu.”

Israeli cuisine: Israeli flavors are “deep and vibrant,” says AF&Co., and lend themselves well to both savory and sweet dishes. The company calls Israeli food the “cuisine of the year.”

Colorful food: In the age of Instagram, “the more photo-friendly your food, the better,” which means bright and colorful food (yes, like Starbucks’ infamous Unicorn Frappuccino) will be on menus across America.

Vegetable entrees: It’s not just vegetarians who are clamoring for meatless entrees; health-minded diners want them as well.

Contemporary regional Mexican & Chinese food: While both Chinese and Mexican food have been popular cuisines for decades, in 2018, says AF&Co., look for “new takes on dishes specific to one of Mexico’s 31 states” and Chinese cuisine specific to Shandong province and Beijing.

Pizza: Local and regional pizza specialties will be spreading beyond their regions. For instance, says AF&Co., Detroit-style pizza is currently quite popular in New York City. Also popular will be “globally-inspired pies topped with Asian ingredients.”

Nostalgic foods: When people are stressed, their minds (and stomachs) turn to the comfort foods of their childhood. So, not only are chicken nuggets, Tater Tots, Pop Rocks, edible cookie dough and more suddenly in demand, they’re “showing up in unexpectedly refined places.” There’s also been a resurgence in upscale versions of meat loaf, deviled eggs and crudités.

Jewish-style deli: This is one trend I’m definitely looking forward to. AF&Co. says delicatessens featuring corned beef, pastrami, smoked fish and more are opening all over the U.S.

Next week we’ll take a look at 2018’s hottest beverage trends.