

# GLOBAL FOODS FOR EVERYONE

**65%** of consumers say they like trying new flavors from time to time

**How to make ethnic flavors more approachable**

When considering the habits of consumers dining out, it's pretty safe to assume that many enjoy trying new things at least occasionally. In fact, Technomic's *2017 Flavor report* found that 65% of consumers say they like trying new flavors from time to time, while 16% actively seek out new flavors to try on a regular basis. Only one in five consumers say they prefer sticking to their favorites and rarely try new ones.

With statistics like that, it's not surprising that nearly half of restaurants (47%) say they feature a new or unique flavor—either in a new menu item or a limited-time offer—at least once a month. After all, continually offering diners something new and enticing is an important part of attracting repeat business.

But there's a catch 22 at play—diners want to try unique flavors, but even those who want to try something new may feel nervous taking a flavor risk when dining out. What if they don't like their meal?

For operators, it can feel risky to offer new flavors—especially if they're unfamiliar flavors, such as varieties from global cuisines. But the better alternative isn't keeping new options off the menu. Rather, there are ways that operators can menu new and exciting flavors in approachable, familiar ways in order to appeal to wary diners.

Falafel Lavash Wrap made with Marie's® Creamy Ranch Dressing



## OFFER NEW FLAVORS WITH FAMILIAR INGREDIENTS

One of the easiest ways to introduce global ingredients is to use them in dishes that include familiar ingredients. For instance, the Korean condiment gochujang—a red chili paste—can be added to Smokehouse 220® barbecue sauce to create a Korean-inspired barbecue sauce, perfect for short ribs or a pulled pork sandwich.

By combining familiar flavors with new ones, diners might feel more comfortable and more confident that they'll like the new dish. Additionally, operators can write menu

descriptions or educate staff to talk to diners about the new flavors. For instance, if someone isn't sure what gochujang might taste like, staff should be able to relate it to something that the customer has had before, such as hot sauce.

Another way to combine familiar flavors with new ones is in salad dressings. For instance, chipotle ranch dressing combines smoky heat from chipotle with cool, savory ranch for a fun new twist on a perennial favorite.



## GET CREATIVE WITH FUSION DISHES

When it comes to the dishes that diners are most likely to try a new flavor in, sandwiches are top in rank—55% of consumers say they'd be likely to try a sandwich that had a new or interesting flavor in it, according to Technomic's *2017 Flavor report*. For operators, that's easy enough to make happen. Get creative with toppings, spreads and condiments. For instance, offer a traditional club sandwich with pickled veggies instead of standard vegetable toppings. Or, blend harissa (a spicy Middle Eastern condiment) into a mayonnaise for a flavorful sandwich spread.

For proteins, dressings such as Marie's® Creamy Avocado Poblano can be used in Mexican dishes such as burrito bowls or taco salads. As a dipping sauce, its refreshing taste can't be beat. Dressings can also be used as a marinade to impart flavor. Diners are all familiar with how chicken tastes, so they won't have to try a new protein just to try a new flavor. For instance, marinate cubes of chicken in Chili Lime Ranch dressing, then skewer them with red onions and bell peppers for a Latin-inspired shish kebab entree.



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BBQ Shrimp "Po Boy" made with Smokehouse220® Honey Bourbon BBQ Sauce



**49%**  
of consumers say that an appealing menu description can influence them to try an ethnic food while they're dining out



## EXPAND DINERS' PALATES WITH UNIQUE SIDE DISHES

According to Technomic's *2018 Ethnic Food & Beverage report*, 35% of consumers ages 18-34 say they are eating more unique types of ethnic food and beverages than they were two years ago, and 45% of those diners say the reason they're doing so is that they wanted to try new flavors or flavor combinations.

To appeal to these diners, as well as ones who may be a bit more reticent, it can be helpful to serve them as appetizers, sides or shared plates. This way, diners won't feel like they're stuck

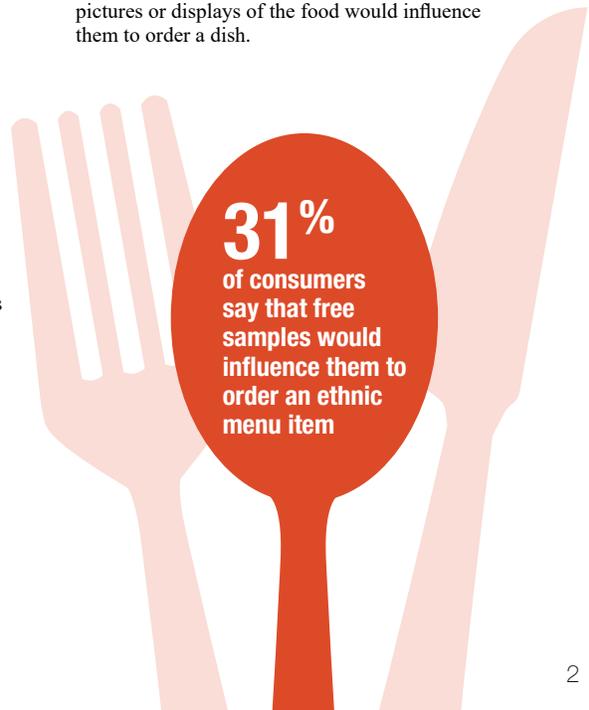
with a dish if they don't like it. Operators should pay close attention to their menu descriptions, as well. According to Technomic's *Ethnic Food & Beverage report*, 49% of consumers say that an appealing menu description can influence them to try an ethnic food while they're dining out. Pictures on the menu or around the restaurant can help, as well, since diners like to be able to see what the dish looks like if they're not familiar with it. In fact, 36% of consumers say that pictures or displays of the food would influence them to order a dish.



## GET STAFF ON BOARD

Operators shouldn't underestimate the power that word of mouth can have when appealing to diners. Nearly a quarter of consumers say that recommendations from staff would influence them to order an ethnic menu item, while 31% say that free samples would influence them to do so, according to Technomic's *Ethnic Food & Beverage report*. Consider allowing staff to offer sample plates to newly arrived guests, and make sure they're highlighting the new ethnic dishes when they talk to their tables.

Making diners feel more comfortable with lesser known flavors is easy—compare new flavors to ones they know and love; pair new flavors with foods they've had before; blend global ingredients into ones that are on American-food menus; offer new foods in smaller formats to encourage orders; and get staff to engage with diners about the new foods and flavors being offered. Soon, diners will be ordering all kinds of global cuisines—not just the ones that look familiar.



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