

Consumer Trends: 5 Canadian Restaurant Trends For 2013

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) — Shifting consumer preferences continue shaping Canada's foodservice industry, with numerous implications for restaurant operators in the coming year. Looking forward, Technomic sees these five trends as growing in importance in 2013:

1. Snacking, small plates and sharing blur traditional dayparts. Changing dining habits are impacting traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner dayparts. Consumers want their meals and snacks when and where it's convenient. They want options that meet their dining and social needs as well, such as late-night options and choices for sharing among friends. Restaurants are adapting by adding all manner of small bites, snacks, tapas and sharing plates. Expect chefs to get more creative by paring down traditional entrees into creative small plates, looking to street trucks for snacking inspiration, and incorporating more ethnic flavours and ingredients into sharing dishes.

2. Taking chicken to new heights. It's nearly 2013 and the better-burger trend has spread like wildfire across Canada. Building off the burger trend, chefs will turn to the humble chicken as the next workaday food primed for a gourmet update. Look for increasing use of high-quality birds raised locally, naturally and humanely. More chefs will call out the supplier of their poultry on the menu as well. Other factors that will play into the better chicken trend are highly flavourful ethnic influences like peri peri, Peruvian and Mexican. Also look for artisan-minded approaches to cooking methods like rotisserie, frying and roasting.

3. Veggies find more prominence on the plate. Expect to see not just more locally sourced, in-season fresh veggies siding up to proteins, but more vegetarian entrees as well. Consumers are taking a newfound flexitarian approach to dining—enjoying meat on some occasions, eschewing it on others. This provides new opportunities for chefs to give veggies star or co-star billing. Standout veggies ready for the spotlight include kale, Brussels sprouts, carrots and cauliflower.

4. Asian breaks out. From the burgeoning ramen scene in Toronto to Japanese tapas restaurants in Vancouver, diners are increasingly seeking out Asian fare beyond the traditional. Whether it's banh mi served streetside from a mobile eatery, or an upscale sit-down eatery focused on authentic Thai food, expect to see interest in the multitude of food cultures that Asia has to offer. This includes not just up-and-coming Southeast Asian dishes from Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia, but regional Chinese and Japanese fusion as well.

5. Specialty approach to beverages. Artisan preparation and ethnic flavours are not just hot food trends—chefs are exercising their creativity beyond the plate with beverage innovation too. Restaurants are now crafting everything from craveable

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small-batch sodas, including retro quenchers like housemade root beer and handmade fountain drinks, to exotic refreshers like South American aguas frescas. Consumers are also seeking more authenticity at restaurants, particularly when it comes to ethnic dining. We'll see more and more food-and-beverage pairings that complete an ethnic dining experience. Think street burritos paired with Mexican horchata, a plate of chicken tikka served with a mango lassi, or a Thai dish complemented by tea flavoured with orange blossom and chilled coconut milk.

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