



Labneh

Labneh is a “buzzword” for 2022, according to restaurant consultants Baum+Whiteman in their annual forecast predicting the hottest food-and-beverage trends for the coming year. The double-strained yogurt—commonly served in Middle Eastern cultures—continues to gain traction. In 2019, Dataessential noted that labneh had grown nearly 70 percent on U.S. menus in the prior four years and predicted it to grow another 20 percent by 2023.

Labneh is thicker and richer than Greek yogurt, for which it can serve as a substitute (it can also be used as a replacement for cream cheese and sour cream). Packed with protein, calcium and probiotics, it’s most traditionally made with cow’s milk, followed by goat’s milk. Often used as a spread or dip—drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with za’atar—labneh makes for a memorable addition to the ever-popular charcuterie board.

Great Performances Taps Andrew Smith as Culinary Director



New York City’s Great Performances (GP) appointed Andrew Smith as culinary director. In his new role, Smith oversees menu development for GP’s catering, venue and corporate dining operations; research and development; the production team; and tastings. Previously Smith served as executive chef of Riverpark in New York.

“Andrew’s decade-long experience at Riverpark makes it seem he was fated to join us, because the case can be made it is a mini version of GP, incorporating events, a café and corporate dining, in addition to the upscale a la carte,” said Liz Neumark, Great Performances’ founder. “As we move out of the pandemic doldrums into a reinvigorated business climate, Andrew’s expertise will help us take full advantage of new opportunities, while assuring our core product, food, continues to excel.”

Smith plans to more prominently feature ingredients grown at the organic Katchkie Farm, owned and operated by GP, on GP’s menus. He will also explore new ways to approach GP’s signature focus on seasonality and integrate more pickling into the company’s food production flow. For more information, visit greatperformances.com.



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Marcia Selden Catering & Events Wins Connecticut Caterer of the Year Award

In December, Marcia Selden Catering & Events—based in Stamford, Connecticut—won the CRAZie Award for Caterer of the Year. The CRAZies are given annually by the Connecticut Restaurant Association (CRA), based on votes by industry members, the media and the general public. Other nominees were Delicacy Catering in West Hartford; Emily's Catering in Bristol; and The Mobile Pub in Watertown. For more information, visit marciaselden.com.



Scott Dolch (right), executive director of the CRA, presented the CRAZie Award to Robin Selden, managing partner and executive chef of Marcia Selden Catering; and Jeffrey Selden, managing partner of Marcia Selden Catering.



Lancer Hospitality Becomes Primary F&B Operator for Mystic Seaport Museum

Lancer Hospitality has added the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut—the largest maritime museum in the U.S.—to its growing roster of clients throughout the country. Lancer is now the primary food-and-beverage operator for the museum grounds, which include multiple onsite eateries and food outlets, as well as private dining and event spaces.

Lancer will cater events for the museum's internal purposes, as well as its external corporate, group and private events. The company will also manage weddings taking place on-site at the museum's various venues. Lancer debuted new catering packages on Jan. 1. For more information, visit lancerhospitality.com or mysticseaport.org.

New Dates, Venue and Format Announced for Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show

The all-new Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show (FRLS) will take place Nov. 1-4, 2022, at the Caribe Royal Resort in Orlando, Florida. The newly reinvented gathering for the restaurant, foodservice, lodging and hospitality industry replaces the historic FRLS, which was traditionally held in Orlando in September.

Education will be a key component of this new event, with topics including technology, trends, marketing, sustainability and more. The expo hall will offer a diverse and curated collection of products and services, high-production demonstrations, wine and spirits, flair bartending, a Latino initiative and much more. Special events will include a breakfast keynote, roundtable lunches with peer-to-peer networking, receptions, awards, and a fundraiser.

The Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show is sponsored by the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) and produced by Clarion Events.



"We have been working closely with our partners at the FRLA to evaluate the best ways to bring the Florida restaurant and lodging industry back together after a two-year hiatus, and we are thrilled to be announcing the launch of this new and exciting conference and expo," said Rita Ugianskis, vice president for the Clarion Events Food & Beverage Group. "We know the Florida restaurant and hospitality market is vibrant and deserving of an event that delivers top-notch exhibits, education and networking opportunities. We look forward to delivering that for FRLA members and the entire Florida market in November 2022."

For more information, visit flrestaurantandlodgingshow.com.

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National Restaurant Association Releases What's Hot Culinary Forecast



What do chefs think the hottest culinary trend will be in 2022? The top five answers of chefs surveyed by the National Restaurant Association are:

1. Sustainability
2. Plant-based foods
3. Comfort foods
4. Healthy and immunity-boosting foods
5. Global fare and flavors

"In addition to a return to health-focused menu offerings and more eco-friendly, improved off-premises packaging, all of which rated high in the top trends, we're expecting operators to look across their menus for transformative opportunities," said Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of research for the National Restaurant Association. "Look for trends that fuse the traditional meal daypart items with other dayparts, and an increasing popularity of snacking and its allied items. Also, with the popularity of cocktails-to-go during the pandemic, restaurants will look to expand both alcoholic and non-alcoholic craft beverage options."

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Among other findings, the survey forecast the top three trends by daypart:

BREAKFAST

1. Nontraditional breakfast proteins (e.g., chorizo, vegan bacon)
2. Plant-based breakfast sandwiches
3. Egg-based breakfast bowls

LUNCH

1. Plant-based sandwiches
2. Globally inspired salads
3. Grain-based bowls

DINNER

1. Less-expensive chicken cuts (thighs vs. wings)
2. Plant-based burgers
3. Less-expensive beef cuts (beef chuck vs. loin)

APPETIZERS & SIDES

1. Upscale potato chips (new preparations, flavored with unexpected ingredients)
2. New appetizer wings (flavor-fusion sauces, global accents, plant-based protein vs. chicken)
3. Globally spiced fries (with furikake, za'atar, etc.)

The What's Hot survey was conducted in October 2021. More than 350 professional chefs of the American Culinary Federation rated 109 food items and culinary concepts compiled by association experts and Technomic's Menu Research & Insights Division. For more information, visit restaurant.org.

LCA Survey Shows Pandemic's Toll on Catering

Leading Caterers of America (LCA), a consortium of more than 60 of the largest caterers in the U.S., has endured the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic without losing a single member to closure. However, a revenue survey recently conducted of the LCA membership shows how impactful the downturn has been on even the largest and most stable caterers.

Among the 35 LCA caterers who responded to the December 2021 survey, revenue declined 73.3% in 2020 compared to 2019 (from \$386.3 million to \$103.4 million). The caterers estimated their full-year revenue for 2021 at \$204.6 million, a 47.1% decline from 2019.

Carl Sacks, LCA's executive director, notes that the Omicron variant caused offices to close and holiday parties to be cancelled in December 2021, dashing expectations that the industry would end the year on a high note. "The catering industry employs hundreds of thousands of full- and part-time employees," said Sacks. "Most want to come back to work, but the recurrence of these COVID variants have put the entire industry in a deep hole. The various government subsidies have certainly been lifesavers, but even among our members, only half have received Restaurant Recovery Funds. We strongly believe that essential fairness requires that the funds be replenished, and the rest of the industry be made eligible for these funds." For more information on LCA, visit leadingcaterers.com.