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**C**hillier weather and holidays on the horizon signify a special time for Technomic: the coming year's foodservice trend predictions. Our 2020 trends—which touch on menu, operations and labour—reflect today's biggest cultural, governmental and consumer shifts impacting macro industry trends. Operators and suppliers need to understand how and why macro trends such as health, sustainability, technology and employee engagement are changing in order to succeed in today's highly competitive foodservice arena. Read ahead for Technomic's expert predictions of the trends that will have the greatest impressions on foodservice in 2020.

# Key Trends for 2020

By Sophie Mir, Associate Editor

# 1. MARINE EATS

Operators will shine a light on aquatic-based ingredients in a plethora of new ways. Not only will restaurants continue to highlight less familiar seaweeds, algae and sea plants, including nori, wakame, kombu, kelp, dulse and spirulina, but they will also incorporate sea elements in nontraditional applications and mealparts, such as condiments, seasonings, snacks and even desserts. Specific examples include marine-based butter, mayonnaise, salt and dessert sauces. Because many of these aquatic ingredients are glutamate-rich, they offer operators a craveable umami flavour profile to add to their dishes and drinks. In addition, several of these ingredients are highly nutritious and can serve as salt substitutes.



Pictured: kelp

# 2. BEAUTY AND BRAINS

As consumers' definitions of health become more holistic, operators are shifting their focus from highlighting nutrient-rich, remedial ingredients (such as those that help with digestion) to functional enhancements offering physical, mental and emotional benefits, bringing health into the modern era. Clearer skin, better cognitive performance and mood elevation are some of the perks from ingredients such as collagen, aloe, biotin, CBD oil, hemp derivatives and medicinal mushrooms, all of which will show momentum in 2020. Expect more chains to embrace these enhancements in both foods and beverages, and promote their functional benefits on social media as well as in-store and online menu descriptions.



Pictured: aloe vera

# 3. PLANT-BASED MATURES

For 2019, we forecasted the proliferation of plant-based proteins across menus, spreading from imitation beef and pork to chicken and seafood. In 2020, the plant-based trend will extend beyond faux meats to include plant-based eggs, gelatin, cheeses, milks, sauces and condiments. Moreover, as branded meat analogues saturate the market, restaurant brands will create proprietary plant-based meat products to differentiate from competitors and reduce expenses. As these plant-based impostures become more commonplace on menus, expect operators to broaden the way they market these items beyond healthy eating to include a flavourful and sustainable message.

Pictured: mung bean "eggs" with avocado, onion and cilantro



## 4. GOING GREEN TO THE EXTREME

The government continues to tighten regulations around eco-harmful products, including Styrofoam and plastic, while consumer demands for green initiatives evolve from preferences to expectations (especially among Gen Zers). As a result, singular endeavors, such as eliminating plastic straws, are no longer enough. In 2020, expect to see restaurants incorporate multiple efforts that drastically reduce their carbon footprints. Tactics will include constructing concepts from recycled or sustainable materials; implementing energy-saving equipment; providing compostable or recyclable cutlery, plateware, napkins and packaging; sourcing sustainable ingredients, including meats; and contributing to greener practices outside the restaurant.



Pictured: compostable disposables

## 5. MAXIMIZING LABOUR EFFICIENCIES

Labour is on everyone's mind as the low unemployment rate continues to create staffing challenges. Foodservice operators are adopting one of two business strategies to combat these labour woes. The first decreases the need for additional labour by incorporating tech-driven, passive paths of purchase (e.g., voice-automated ordering, etc.) and modifying restaurant services (e.g., offering only dine-in services during a specific time of day, etc.). The second tactic focuses on outside-of-the-box approaches for hiring and retaining good workers. Initiatives for hiring include using social media apps like TikTok to accept applications, while retention incentives will range from tuition reimbursements and discounts on franchise fees to opportunities for company ownership.

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