

Burnt ends and French dip sandwiches set to become latest eating out food trends, says Horizons

Charred meat cut from a barbecued brisket, known as 'burnt ends', are becoming one of the emerging trends in the UK's high street restaurants, according to foodservice expert Horizons in its latest Menu Trends survey, which tracks the menu changes of high street restaurants, pubs, quick service outlets and hotels.

According to the survey, burnt ends made with either beef or pork - are now starting to go mainstream, having previously been limited to specialist barbecue restaurants.

O'Neill's, the Irish pub chain with nearly 40 outlets, had burnt end chilli and melted cheddar on its menu over the last quarter, while Revolution (with over 50 bars in the UK) featured pinto beans with pork burnt ends.

US innovation 'French dip' sandwiches are also making an appearance on mainstream British menus for the first time. These are made with thinly sliced roast beef on a baguette served with beef juice from the cooking process. TGI Friday's and OK Diner are among the high street restaurants which had French dip sandwiches on their menus, with London-based restaurant Dip & Flip specialising in them.

The survey also revealed the emergence of meat in sauces - baconnaise and bacon jam being two examples. Gourmet Burger Kitchen, All Bar One and Castle Pubs have all sold dishes featuring meat jams and mayonnaises.

Dukkah, the Egyptian herb and spice condiment, Italian spreadable pork sausage n'duja and the reappearance of spicy noodle soup laksa are additional menu trends the survey noted.

'Tastes are becoming ever-more cosmopolitan, with British dishes declining on menus in favour of food from the Mediterranean, Asia and Latin America,' commented Nicola Knight, Horizons' director of services.

'At the same time operators are keen to improve their margins, prompting a rise in dishes made with cheaper cuts of meat and more use of seasonal vegetables.'

Lobster and crab continue to feature more on UK menus, up 28% and 14% year-on-year respectively, prompted by a slump in wholesale prices. Café Rouge's menu featured bisque de homard, London-based Ping Pong had lobster dumpling and Jamie's Italian sold crab bruschetta. The appearance of salmon is also up, partly because of the growth of sushi as well as its use in new ways such as on pizzas.

The nation's taste for chilli is also still in evidence with hot chilli sauce sriracha seeing a 400% growth year-on-year, while super-hot ghost chillis are now being used by at least three pub brands to add fire to their menu.

Certain vegetables also appear to be on-trend. Beetroot, with its superfood credentials, has shown a 24% increase in appearance on menus over the winter period, with in-season butternut squash, sweet potato and cauliflower also featuring significantly more.

Some of the latest trends for breakfast include the hash, either as a hash brown, corned beef hash or cheese & onion hash, while health-conscious Bircher muesli made five times as many menu appearances as it did last year, but while common in coffee shops and sandwich bars, has yet to reach other outlets.

And if you thought burgers were on the way out, think again. Restaurant operators are working harder to produce ever-more exotic burgers such as Beefeater's double steak festive burger, Hungry Horse's double donut burger and Wildwood restaurant's Wild Boar & Chorizo burger.

Said Knight: 'We are seeing a combination of influences on high street menus that have an impact on what operators are offering.'

Consumers always like to try something new, but at the same time like the familiarity of something they know, hence the enduring popularity of burgers. Burgers are also easy for operators to update with the latest sauce or topping.

?Several of the more innovative dishes have come from smaller, independent outlets including food trucks and one-off operators. Once these dishes are picked up by high street brands, a trend becomes established.

?Health seems to be an increasing factor in consumer choice. When consumers eat out more regularly, as they are now starting to do, they want a choice of healthy foods as well as more indulgent dishes.?

The biannual Menu Trends survey, which tracked high street menus from Oct-Nov 2014, found the use of the words 'allergy' or 'allergen' had seen a 20% year-on-year increase. General awareness of food intolerances by operators has been driven largely by the allergen information legislation of December 2014, as well as by demand from consumers. Gluten-free terminology also shows an increase, up 15% year-on-year.

The promotion of dishes low in salt or carbohydrates has declined, while menus showed a renewed focus on buzzwords such as superfoods, omega 3 and low-fat, healthy dishes.

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Editor's Note

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