

TRENDS

TO KNOW

MAY 2023

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TAP INTO

BAR & GRILL FOOD TRENDS



THE TREND

Bars & grills are well-known for their casual atmospheres and alcoholic beverages paired with fan favorite comfort foods that can be a platform for safe experimentation. For a trend-forward twist on bar & grill fare (which is known for showcasing ooey gooey cheese), consider ways to take comfort foods to new heights. For example, consider capitalizing on plant-based burgers, which have grown 1,683% on menus over the past 4 years (Datassential MenuTrends) and could be a vehicle for on-trend plant-based cream cheese spreads. Pickle-topped pizza is also on the rise as part of the cheeseburger pizza mashup trend feature American cheese, and taco styles like quesabirria (a cross between a taco and quesadilla, both well-loved items on bar & grill menus) could put a refreshing spin on a well-loved concept, showcasing stewed meat and mozzarella, Monterey Jack, or Oaxaca cheese.

DAIRY REPORT

Cheese and dairy-based sauces are shining stars on bar & grill menus. As bars & grills are hubs for comfort foods, consumers can expect to find cheese in everything from burgers to pizza to mac & cheese. It's also the star in items like mozzarella sticks and shareable cream cheese jalapeno poppers and quesadillas. Additionally, with sauces appearing on 85% of bar & grill appetizer menus (Datassential MenuTrends), dairy-based queso sauces, in particular, could present an opportunity for innovation. Consider capitalizing on queso sauces that add a touch of heat for a twist, think ghost pepper queso sauce or jalapeno queso sauce for stand-alone appetizers offering or as an ingredient on burgers or chicken sandwiches.

MENU INSPIRATION

GRILLED CHEESE BITES

Philly's Sports Grill | Tempe, AZ (HQ)
Swiss and cheddar grilled cheese bites on crispy Texas toast points. Served with tomato bisque.

SMOKEHOUSE NACHOS

The Greene Turtle | Hanover, MD (HQ)
Smoked pork, Fat Tire beer cheese queso, jalapeno, smoky BBQ sauce, pico de gallo, and lime crema.

NASHVILLE HOT FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH

Tavern in the Square | Allston, MA (HQ)
Garlic aioli, pepper Jack cheese, pickled carrot, and daikon.

SOUTHERN BURGER

Mugshots Grill and Bar | Hattiesburg, MS (HQ)
House-made pimento cheese, hickory smoked bacon, fried pickles, lettuce, and tomato.

BISON CHILI FRIES

Biggio's Sports Bar | Houston, TX
Bison chili, queso, onion, cheddar, green onion, sour cream.

DATA FILE

99%

OF BAR &
GRILL MENUS
HAVE CHEESE
LISTED

Datassential MenuTrends

TREND STAGE

PROLIFERATION



Bar & grill foods fall all across the Menu Adoption Cycle (MAC), but the concept as a whole is in Proliferation. While some foods found on bar & grill menus are ubiquitous (think wings, burgers, sandwiches), they also tend to have some items menued that lean more into safe experimentation and showcase Inception- or Adoption-level ingredients, making for an approachable yet intriguing concept.

Bar & grill menus can be a study in how to practice safe experimentation, wherein familiar concepts like burgers, pizza, and tacos are leveraged as blank canvases for showcasing next-level twists. Consider putting a creamy indulgent cheese spin on any of the above concepts and featuring pimento cheese or look to mashups like the smokehouse nachos to showcase a beer cheese queso.

KEY
TAKEAWAY