

TRENDS

TO KNOW

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CAPITALIZE ON CASUAL DINING TRENDS

THE TREND

According to Datassential's *Casual Dining Keynote Report*, 24% of consumers are visiting casual dining restaurants more often than a year ago. Some of the top drivers to casual dining restaurants according to consumers who increased their visitation include an improvement in the variety of foods/beverages offered and more interesting/unique items. To tap into these key drivers, look to casual dining staples like burgers, sandwiches, loaded fries, and over-the-top milkshakes as vehicles for creative, dairy-forward ingredients like global cheeses, or lean into the plant-based trend and offer dairy-free alternatives like oat milk milkshakes. Also gear items towards the generations most likely to be ordering them. While all generations order entrees, younger generations are more likely than older generations to order appetizers/sides and dessert.

DAIRY REPORT

Some of the hallmarks of casual dining include comfort foods like burgers, mac & cheese, chicken sandwiches, milkshakes, and loaded fries, yet casual dining customers are increasingly seeking out more unique/interesting concepts and variety. With younger generations more likely than older generations to order appetizers/sides and desserts, look to those categories as key opportunities to capitalize on items that are Insta-worthy. Think global concepts like burnt Basque cheesecake (which is up 63% on menus over the past 12 months, according to Datassential Menu Trends), mashups like quesadilla burgers, or sharable loaded fries that showcase a spicy cheese sauce or beer cheese poured on tableside for an interactive element.

MENU INSPIRATION

QUESADILLA BURGER

Applebee's | Glendale, CA (HQ)

Part burger, part quesadilla, all taste. This original burger creation comes piled high with two slices of pepper Jack cheese, Mexi-ranch sauce, crispy applewood-smoked bacon, house-made pico de gallo, and shredded lettuce in a crisp, warm, cheddar quesadilla.

SICILIAN CHEESECAKE WITH STRAWBERRY TOPPING

Olive Garden | Orlando, FL (HQ)

Ricotta cheesecake with a shortbread cookie crust topped with strawberry sauce.

TRUFFLE TOT-CHOS

TGI Fridays | Dallas, TX (HQ)

Handmade tots with truffle aioli, Parmesan-Romano, and parsley.

CHEESY BACON FONDUE BURGER

Red Robin | Greenwood Village, CO (HQ)

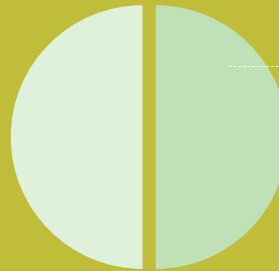
Hardwood-smoked bacon, American cheese, and mayo. Served with cheesy, bacon fondue for dipping.

CHILI'S PHILLY SANDWICH

Chili's | Dallas, TX (HQ)

Made with premium, thinly-sliced steak, grilled bell peppers, onions, jalapenos, and white queso on a toasted roll.

DATA FILE



50%

OF CONSUMERS WHO VISITED A CASUAL DINING RESTAURANT WITHIN THE PAST 1-2 MONTHS ORDERED AN APPETIZER/SIDE

Datassential's Casual Dining Keynote Report

TREND STAGE

UBIQUITY



Casual dining staples are mostly familiar favorites that fall in Ubiquity. To draw consumers to casual dining restaurants, early-stage ingredients can add interest and flair to classic casual dining comfort foods. Look to mashups like burger quesadillas to change up Ubiquitous items or lean into eye-catching desserts like over-the-top milkshakes that are prime for social media. Integrating interactive elements like pouring cheese sauces over dishes tableside can also add to the casual dining experience.

Lean into what different generations of consumers gravitate to when they eat at casual dining restaurants. While all generations generally get entrees, younger generations are more likely to get appetizers/sides and desserts, so make sure those items cater to their preferences. Up the experience ante by pouring cheese sauce over loaded fries tableside, offer social media-worthy desserts like over-the-top milkshakes, and capitalize on mashups of familiar favorites like quesadilla burgers.

KEY TAKEAWAY