

TRENDS

TO KNOW

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BITE INTO OOEY, GOOEY

CHEESE TRENDS

THE TREND

Cheese is loved by almost all consumers, and capitalizing on trending varieties can be a key way to tap into safe experimentation. Some of the fastest-growing cheeses currently that could be leveraged in many well-loved applications (think mac & cheese, pizza, sandwiches, salads, tacos, and more) include vegan cheese, shaved Asiago, Italian stracchino, and cheddar Jack. Notably, these trending cheeses are in a variety of stages on the Menu Adoption Cycle (MAC) and are seeing growth regardless, showing that later stage cheeses can make a resurgence. Vegan cheese is up 131% on menus, shaved Asiago is up 33%, stracchino is up 27%, and cheddar Jack is up 22%, according to Datassential Menu Trends. Regional U.S. cheeses, such as pimento and beer cheese, are also crossing borders and gaining on menus.

DAIRY REPORT

Cheese offers operators a simple way to practice safe experimentation. By using a familiar item as a vehicle, such as pasta or pizza, operators can capitalize on trends like plant-based cheese, one of the fastest-growing cheeses on menus currently. On the flip side, operators could also turn to later stage trending cheeses, such as cheddar Jack or creamy mozzarella, to add a hint of familiarity and comfort to dishes that consumers may not be as familiar with. In line with the modern Italian trend (where operators have been featuring more regional dishes), cheeses like regional Italian stracchino could also add interest to menus showcasing Italian dishes.

MENU INSPIRATION

VEGAN CHICKEN PARMIGIANA

Chase | Santa Barbara, CA
Plant-based chicken breaded and baked with vegan cheese and marinara. Served with spaghetti marinara.

CRISPY CARNITAS DIPPERS

Houlihan's | Leawood, Kansas (HQ)
A cross between a potato skin and potato chip topped with melted Jack cheese, crispy carnitas, beer BBQ sauce, and finished with beer cheese dip poured tableside.

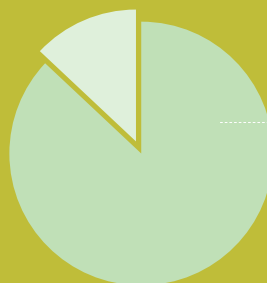
ASIAGO RANCH CHICKEN CLUB

Wendy's | Dublin, OH (HQ)
A juicy chicken breast marinated and breaded in a fiery blend of peppers and spices and topped with thick applewood-smoked bacon, Asiago cheese, creamy ranch sauce, crisp lettuce, and tomato all on a toasted bun.

BACON JALAPENO POPPER GRILLED CHEESE

Dallas Grilled Cheese Company
| Dallas, TX
Freshly-roasted jalapenos, sour cream, bacon, cream cheese, Jack and cheddar cheeses, and spicy pepper jam on white bread.

DATA FILE



87%

OF CONSUMERS LOVE OR
LIKE
CHEESE

Datassential Consumer Preferences Platform

TREND STAGE

UBIQUITY



Cheese is core to many Ubiquitous comfort foods, ranging from mac & cheese to pizza to sandwiches and more. Some of the fastest-growing cheeses, though, are in earlier stages of the MAC and can add interest to later stage dishes. Take vegan cheese, for example, which is up 131% on menus over the past 4 years (Menu Trends) and is in Adoption on the MAC. Later stage cheesy items like cheese curds, which are in Proliferation, are also having a moment and are up 51% on menus over the past 4 years.

Whether you're looking to add early MAC-stage flair to familiar items (aka safe experimentation) or looking to capitalize on regional or more familiar cheeses to amp up the comfort (think beer cheese, nacho cheese, or cheese curds), cheese is a primary vehicle for accomplishing all of the above. While plant-based/vegan cheeses are seeing the most growth in the cheese space on menus, some later stage cheeses are also seeing a resurgence like cheddar Jack.

KEY TAKEAWAY