TRENDS
TO KNOW

JUNE 2026

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Schreiber



ENTER
ENTRÉE TRENDS

THE TREND

Dairy products, especially cheese, appear across both trending and well-loved entrée formats. Butter ranks as one of the top sauce/flavor components in entrées at 40% menu penetration (Datassential One), while whipped feta is one of the fastest-growing sauces/flavors in entrées, up 166% on entrée menus over the past 4 years. Cheese-forward dishes like sandwiches, burgers, pizza, and mac & cheese are some of the most popular entrées on menus overall. Notably, some of the fastest-growing items among restaurants serving entrées to have on the radar include birria tacos (up 486% on entrée menus over the past 4 years), smash burgers (up 514%), and caprese salad (up 191%), all which can feature a variety of cheeses, ranging from cheddar or American to mozzarella or on-trend burrata (up 59% on entrée menus over the past 4 years).

DAIRY REPORT

Dairy products, especially cheese and butter, are quintessential to many entrées. Zooming in on some of the fastest-growing items at restaurants serving entrées, many of the concepts are key vehicles for showcasing cheese – think birria/birria tacos, smash burgers, caprese salad, or chicken taco salad. Also consider capitalizing on entrées that index higher in different regions of the U.S. and could resonate more with locals, such as stuffed crust pizza or deep dish pizza in the Midwest or hot brown open-faced sandwiches in the South (the latter of which feature bacon, turkey, and tomato on toasted bread covered in a creamy, cheesy Mornay sauce).

MENU INSPIRATION

SHUGGIE'S BURGER
Torchy's Tacos | Austin, TX (HQ)
Smash burger patty, American cheese, chopped bacon, shredded lettuce, pickled onions, Maria's Pickle Pico, and chipotle sauce on a flour tortilla.

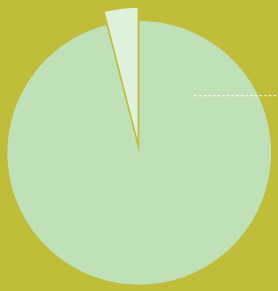
TOASTED CAPRESE FOCACCIA
Panera Bread | Fenton, MO (HQ)
Melty fresh mozzarella, vine-ripened tomatoes, fresh arugula, basil pesto spread, salt and pepper, and balsamic glaze drizzled on black pepper focaccia.

BIRRIA PIZZA
Fuego Cravings | Beaumont, CA (HQ)
13" pie filled with mozzarella, birria, onion, and cilantro. Served with consommé.

SCORCHIN' CHEESY MAC SMASH
Smashburger | Denver, CO (HQ)
Certified Angus Beef burger, American cheese, smashed and griddled Scorchin' hot mac & cheese, and chipotle mayo on a butter-toasted bun.

HARISSA CHICKEN POWER BOWL
Cava Grill | Washington, D.C. (HQ)
Chicken cooked with harissa and honey, white sweet potato, and power greens topped with spiced whipped feta, hummus, sumac slaw, tomato, onion, broccoli, cucumber, avocado, zhug, and yogurt dill dressing.

DATA FILE



96%

OF OPERATORS MENUED ENTRÉES AND OTHER MAIN DISHES IN THE PAST MONTH

Datassential's Table Stakes Tracker: April 2026 Report

TREND STAGE

UBIQUITY

1 2 3 **4**

Entrées are solidly in Ubiquity on the Menu Adoption Cycle (MAC) as a category since nearly every restaurant/café operator offers them. To add interest to entrées, consider leaning into some of the fastest-growing items on entrée menus, including birria/birria tacos or smash burgers. Also look for ways to add interest to comforting popular entrées like mac & cheese or pizza (for the latter, tap into trending regional options like Detroit-style, which is up 173% on menus over the past 4 years, according to Datassential One).

KEY TAKEAWAY

Entrées are essential to most restaurant/café menus and many of them can serve as primary vehicles for showcasing dairy products, especially butter and cheese. Add interest to entrées by leaning into regional concepts (think Southern hot brown sandwiches or Midwestern pizza styles like deep dish or Detroit-style) and tap into some of the fastest-growing concepts on entrée menus, such as birria tacos/birria, smash burgers, caprese salad, and more.