



CONSULTANTS PREDICT 11 HOTTEST FOOD & BEVERAGE TRENDS IN RESTAURANT & HOTEL DINING FOR 2018

- * Baum+Whiteman calls plant-based dining 2018's trend of the year.
 - * Three ethnic cuisines going mainstream.
- * Technology takes over: Voice ordering, cashless restaurants, facial recognition and its privacy issues.
 - * Plus 26 new buzzwords.

Baum+Whiteman creates high-profile restaurants around the world for hotels, restaurant companies, museums and other consumer destinations. Based in New York, their projects include the late Windows on the World and the magical Rainbow Room, and the world's first food courts. They've recently been at work in Dubai, New York and Florida. Their annual hospitality predictions follow ...

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#1. 2018 TREND OF THE YEAR: PLANT-BASED FOODS GO MAINSTREAM

Major dining trends are usually unleashed by restaurant ... falafel, poke, Nashville hot chicken, food halls, or pumpkin-spiced lattes, for example. But one mega-trend finds restaurants way behind the curve: The rapid consumer shift to "plant-based" foods. To understand this, look to grocery store shelves ... because that's where innovation is showing up ... largely by cheeky packaged goods startups who've figured out this new consumer psyche. Here are some data, not necessarily all in agreement:

- 31% of Americans practice meat-free days, according to Mintel.
- 35% of Americans get most of their protein from sources other than red meat.

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- 66% of consumers who eat alternative proteins believe they are healthier than red meat.
- About 83 percent of U.S. consumers are adding plant-based foods to their diets to improve health and nutrition, while 62 percent do so for weight management.
- But only 6% of North Americans follow vegetarian diets and less than 3% identify as vegans.
- Mintel says that between 2012 and 2016 there's been a 25% increase in vegetarian claims and a 257% rise in vegan claims in new products in grocery stores.
- NPD Group says that over the past decade consumers under age 40 upped their fresh vegetable intake by 52 percent ... compared with those above 60 who've decreased fresh vegetable consumption by 30 percent.
- 58% of adults drink non-daily milk.
- Wal-Mart is pleading with its suppliers to ramp up plant-based product development.
- Google sees a 90% increase in vegan searches in the past year.

Baum+Whiteman predicts that plant-based dining is 2018's trend of the year!

Millennials and Gen X and Zers are embracing "plant-based" food while still young ... and probably sticking with it. So we're looking at a food industry divide ... where plant-based products capture increasing shelf space in supermarkets but (so far) little space on restaurant menus.

"Plant-based" is the new organic ... just not much in restaurants. McDonald's, to cite one example, has recaptured its mojo by ignoring plant-based demand ... a demand expected to grow 10% annually for the reasonable future.

Meanwhile, old lumbering food manufacturers are investing in small- and medium-sized plant-based innovators. In a wave that's nowhere near crested, Nestlé USA acquired plant-based supplier Sweet Earth; Campbell's is trying to buy almond-oat-hemp milk company Pacific Foods; Danone acquired WhiteWave, and Maple Leaf Foods acquired Lightlife ... some examples from just this year!

(At the other end of the protein spectrum they're tinkering to *make meat more acceptable* by growing it from cells rather than from animals. Cargill, the country's second-largest beef processor, took equity (with Bill Gates, Richard Branson) in Memphis Meats. This company creates chicken, duck and meatballs from animal cells ... on the premise that you won't have to slaughter antibiotic-laced animals in order to have hamburgers or leather shoes. Hampton Creek, which won the eggless mayonnaise battle, predicts its lab-cultured chicken meat will be on the market next year.)



Could be that a "post animal" economy is around the corner.

The new lingo for these products is "clean meat" or "cultured meat" ... which has a better ring to it than restaurants' claims of "transparency."

There's a fork in the road for restaurants: Wait for more validation that plant-based dining has legs. Or figure out how to react. We see more restaurants in 2018-2019 incorporating such new plant-based options as ...

- Vegan "cheese" on burgers and pizza will become more common.

- Following the successes of Beyond Meat and Impossible Burger ... whose faux burgers are gaining traction in restaurants and food shops ... more restaurants will offer plant-based meat entrees. So a vegetarian might order, for example, a (mock) schnitzel Milanese while the rest of the table orders real meat.
- If lab-grown meat catches on (which might take several years), we'll need new language to separate lab-grown stuff from protein derived from killing animals.
- Steakhouses will multiply the number of enticing vegetable options in order to eliminate "no" votes from vegetarians.
- More plant-based restaurant chain startups will seek fearless investors.
- Eyeing successes of vegan ice cream in supermarkets, more chains will offer vegan or vegetarian frozen desserts. Ben & Jerry's and Haagen-Dazs are already there, as is [Van Leeuwen](#) from Brooklyn, of course (*see photo, right of three vegan ice creams: Planet Earth, Matcha Green Tea, and Toasted Coconut Brownie Sundae*).



- Some casual dining chains (already in a scary business slump) will cease telling vegetarians gratuitously that they can "customize" standard menu items ... "drop the cheese, eliminate the sauce, order without bacon, skip the mayo" ... or Millennials and GenXers will abandon these restaurant even more rapidly. So look for some first-rate vegetarian (if not vegan) dishes that don't sound like deprivation.

- The entire vegan/veg industry ... including consumers ... will have to come to terms with an inherent contradiction: Mock meats, faux fish and ersatz cheeses as well as bleeding vegburgers are in fact highly "processed foods" ... the very words that drove people away from fast food and casual restaurant menus. So here's another divide: between restaurants selling processed imitations of meats, dairy products and egg-based products ... and restaurants concentrating on fresh fruits, vegetables and grains to satisfy veg/vegan palates (*photos where nothing's fake, above from [Beyond Sushi](#), and [Dirt Candy](#), right.*)
- Look for a revolution in non-dairy cheeses that, via fermentation, come uncannily close to tasting like the genuine stuff. A few years off.
- Watch the progress of veg/vegetarian outfits like By Chloe, based in New York and opening in London; fas-cas Veggie Grill emphasizing meat analogs, with about 30 locations; Amy's, moving from frozen food cases to fast food locations; fast feeder Clover Labs, clustered around Boston.



- These 400-lb. gorillas are trying to change our diets: Along with Panera Bread, Hilton Hotels, Stanford University, Unilever, and Sodexo, Google is developing "plant-forward" menu items in an effort to shove animal proteins to the edge of ... or entirely off the plate. Google is using its vast dining facilities to see how much it can change the eating behavior of its employees. By placing veg-forward items at the tops of their menus ... and by canny use of language and portion sizes ... they're influencing employees' choices and moving them across a spectrum from meat-oriented dining to veg-oriented dining. Google two years ago tried to buy Impossible Foods, so this is not a short-term fad.



2) THREE NEXT-WAVE CUISINES

Here's what will your dinner plate next year ... all from foreign lands:

A) Philippine cuisine. The Philippine's number one export probably is its people ... primarily domestic caretakers and nurses, hospitality industry employees, and tech workers. With hundreds gunned down there on suspicion of using or selling drugs, we've become aware that millions are living in our midst. Like immigrants before them, they've clustered into

neighborhoods ... the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York, Florida ... cooking largely for their own communities. Now they're spilling out of those neighborhoods and food writers are taking notice of dishes that are fragrant, spicy and acidically bracing, using vinegar or citrus juices ... preferably calamansi.

Dishes like *lumpia*, *sisig*, *longganisa*, and *kare-kare* aren't yet on the tips of our tongues ... but they're getting there; Google searches for Filipino food doubled since 2012. We're also inundated with *ube*, the purple yam that's been coloring our food lately. Eat at: [Bad Saint](#), and [Purple Patch](#) in Washington; [Ricebar](#) and [Sari Sari Store](#) in LA; Oriental Mart in Seattle's Pike Place Market; [Purple Yam](#), [Jeepney](#) and [Ugly Kitchen](#) in New York; [Guerilla Street Food](#) in St. Louis. Whole lot of fusion going on.

B) Indian fast-casual street food. Indian food is gradually moving beyond cliché curry ... especially in the fast-casual world where intrepid startups see a vacant ethnic dining niche.

Most are "fusionating" ... tandoori chicken poutine or spicy lamb burritos or chicken masala pizza ... making it less intimidating for Americans. Most are small businesses questing to become "the Chipotle of Indian cuisine" ... which means they're doing the 1-2-3 dance of build-your-own bowls, wraps and salads.

Tava Kitchen, a chain in the Bay Area, seems to have collapsed into the arms Curry Up Now which, after closures and rebranding is now a six-unit fast-casual outfit serving up Indian-inspired food ... with tongue-in-cheek items like tikka masala burrito, naughty naan and tikka tikka hummus. [Biju's Little Curry Shop](#), is a two-store chainlet around Denver region. Saffron is a three-

unit chain in LA. IndiKitch is a two-unit fast-cas outfit in New York and Kati Roll Company has three serving burrito-like wraps made of paratha bread.

Two potential limits on Indian fast-cas growth: 1) Unfamiliarity with the food and how to pronounce it, and 2) the fast-cas format itself ... for unlike chains like, say, Sweetgreen with displays of colorful fresh vegetables, many fast-cas Indian restaurants have steamtables stocked with hot foods ranging in color from murky ochre to brown to khaki ... and don't visually excite appetites.

One exception is the about-to-be five-unit [Choolaah Indian Barbecue](#) chain.

Their differentiation:

Four you-can't-miss them tandoori ovens (*photo, right*) ... two for cooking breads and two for cooking fish, lamb, poultry and paneer (a dense white cheese).

Barbecued items, cooked

to order, emerge from the 700-degree tandoors in discrete chunks ... with various condiments and sauces on the side. Bowls, salads and wraps, too.



C) Upscale Korean restaurants. While Indian food remains mysterious for most of us, Korean food's gastro-American inroads were funded by South Korean government's educational campaign about the food. Which is why kimchi and bibimbap have become familiar, and why American chefs here were using Korean condiments ... like gochujang ... before the rest of us could even pronounce them. We're gobbling up big flavors based on fermented food, lots of umami and relentless spicing.

Now the action is shifting. Upscale Korean restaurants are escaping America's rowdy Koreatowns with their beer-stoked karaoke bars and smoky cook-it-yourself grills. In New York there's [Jungsik](#), the first Korean restaurant in the U.S. to win two Michelin stars; [Atoboy](#), whose chef came from Jungsik, serves myriad small plates with French and Californian wine ... and now is planning Atomix, a kaiseki-style Korean tasting format; and Oiji ... whose nouveau menu includes oysters with radish kimchi and apple foam, and beef tartare with ramp aioli. In Chicago, Parachute serves high-fusion Korean-esque dishes ... like yellowfin tuna bibimbop with preserved lemon, and sardine toast with horseradish and edamame. Baroo, in LA, traffics in fusion stuff like pork belly tortilla flambé with wasabi creme fraiche, crudites and lemon-verbena kombucha dressing. More fusion in Seattle ... where [Joule](#) serves beef tartare with Asian pear and cod roe aioli (*a Bon Appetit dish of the year, above*) and octopus, bok choy, and hot bacon vinaigrette.



Straddling the highbrow-lowbrow spectrum in New York, there's [Ms Yoo](#) ... a short-menu gastro-pub with roasted bone marrow with bacon kimchi and onion jam, and Korean fried chicken feet (*photo, left*). Owner Esther Choi also owns two Mokbars, which are Asian-fusion ramen places.

#3. AVOCADO ISN'T TOAST YET; IT HAS GONE BAROQUE:

Hoping to escape triteness, restaurants are going artsy with the avocado dishes ... even losing the toast. (*See also avocado "buns" on page 17.*) Somewhere there's an avocado cappuccino with Santa Claus's face on it ... but until it surfaces, these will have to do for inspiration.



#4. THE TECHNOCRATS ARE TAKING OVER

Say goodbye to your local food delivery website ... and say hello to new ways to make dinner reservations. By this time in 2018 lots of delivery services either will be gobbled up by big gorillas like Uber and Google and Amazon ... or they'll have collapsed under competitive pressure. Look at what's happened mostly, in the last few months, as the big social media expand their services ... and transform how we'll be interfacing with restaurants. *We'll have to quit thinking about food and home and food away from home because the categories now have too much overlap; is Chinese food delivered to your door by Amazon considered dining at home or away from home?*

- **Save your thumbs; use your voice:**

Google, Amazon and Apple all are innovating (via Siri, Home and Alexa) ordering food just by asking for it. You can holler from the next room that you want pizza and these gizmos will ask whether you want to repeat your last order from the same place you used last time ... so you needn't lift a thumb or your butt from your couch. Starbucks and Domino's also are big voice-activated players and Panera's now joining them. When these companies dance, the floor shakes!



- **Roll 'em Up:** Cable TV companies got big by gobbling up lots of little ones. Now it's the food delivery business's turn to get "rolled up" ... which is what the big money people call it. GrubHub is a stitched-together series of acquisitions. Another example: Online ordering/delivery service called [Bite Squad](#) just bulked

up by acquiring 17 small local outfits and integrating them into a system covering 30 metro areas in the US. We'll see if that makes them big enough to hang in there against even larger competitors ... who themselves are expanding their services.

- **TripAdvisor** has leaped beyond being a review site by including meal delivery services in an alliance with Grubhub. Trust TripAdvisor's reviews? Then just click on their new online order button ... and avoid shuffling between sites to order your favorite Chinese food.
- **Snapchat's** new Context Cards let people who follow you (if, indeed you're young enough to use Snapchat) to pull up reviews and reserve tables at restaurants you've posted ... via OpenTable or Resy. And then seamlessly have Uber or Lyft bring you there. Just as TripAdvisor's not just for reviews anymore, Snap's no longer just about pretty pictures.
- **Facebook** experimented with adding a "buy" function to its restaurant web pages earlier this year ... and now it's gone national by partnering with food delivery specialists like GrubHub, Doordash and EatStreet. And the company is testing the same stuff on Instagram ... which it owns. Facebook says it is open to partnerships with other delivery services as well.
- **Yelp sold its Eat24 food delivery system to GrubHub** ... hinting that it's tough to make money in this business. But the two also are long-term partners with Yelp integrating GrubHub's online food ordering into its own platforms.
- **Airbnb now allows users to make restaurant reservations** through its app and website. It's powered by Resy and is currently available in 16 US cities. You even ... for a surcharge ... get a seat at places that are "fully booked."

The upshot: These big-name players are invading their competitors' turfs ... and simultaneously making alliances with them. When you look at names like Amazon, Google and Airbnb, OpenTable, then you know there'll be a huge competitive shakeout and lots of mergers ahead ... and not just among the smaller players (*see our theoretical logos, right*). In the long run, we'll lose consumer choice ... in the way that you have little choice in internet service providers. Meanwhile, watch out for drones delivering burritos.



#5. GOING CASHLESS: A smattering of restaurants have stopped accepting cash without much hullabaloo. Now Sweetgreen and Shake Shack are taking the plunge, so scrapping old "cash registers" has become a big social issue ... because it accentuates the spread between "haves" and "have-nots." The "haves" have bank cards and mobile wallets; the "have-nots" generally are poor and unbanked ... so this could be more controversial than non-tipping restaurants.

Going cashless raises restaurants' credit card expenses. But it saves running to the bank for change ... or finding out why a server is ten dollars short at the end of a shift ... or worrying about theft ... or counting all those nickels and dimes when closing for the night ... or, if you're a fast-feeder or fast-casual restaurant, dealing with bottlenecks while customers fiddle with their wallets searching for exact change. So the question is ... whether



excluding the bottom of the market will make economic sense. Oddly, the highest growth in US brick-and-mortar retailers are ... cash-welcoming dollar stores.

In China, smartphones and QR codes have become the medium of exchange. In restaurants there you can scan the bar code of a dish with your phone, pay for it cashlessly and have it delivered to our table. Some US towns will try banning the concept and some groups will sue ... but this experiment in frictionless restaurant shopping will expand in 2018

#6. FLAVOR INJECTORS: As if we're not bombarded with hopped-up flavors, restaurants are having us inject additional sweet and savory flavors into food. It's a method of getting us "involved" with what we're eating ... or perhaps customization has gone a step too far. It affirms that Americans are a bunch of flavor junkies. The DEA hasn't weighed in on customers mainlining sriracha mayonnaise or jelly-swirled Nutella into sushi and donuts. Here are three examples: potato-cheddar balls, oysters, frozen desserts.



#7. WHAT'S NEXT FOR FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANTS (BESIDES SELLING US BOOZE)?

New fast-casual concepts keep swarming into a field that's already saturated ... Indian, Korean, doner kebabs, sushi, multi-ethnic burritos, Chinese wraps, grilled cheese. Meanwhile, earlier arrivals are making radical changes ... widening their niches ... and putting competitive distance between themselves and the newcomers. *They're becoming more like fast food ... and at the same time becoming more like restaurants ... hoping to poach customers from both ends of the price spectrum.* Here's how:

They are stealing pages from fast food playbooks:

A) Adding order-and-pay kiosks to speed service, just as McDonald's has.

B) Adding drive-thru facilities (what happens to drive-thru windows when we have driverless cars, do you suppose?).

Emulating casual dining restaurants, they are:

C) Upgrading lighting, decor, and interior design ... and enhancing creature comforts to appear more like restaurants ... so they are more suitable for nighttime dining (*photo, right*).

D) Promoting urban delivery and ... even more important ... customer pickup (*photo, right*) . They've uprooted the first 20 feet of their stores, adding shelves for pre-ordered bagged lunches ... giving new meaning to "grab-and-go."



- E)** Building second cook-lines specifically for to-go and catering orders.
- F)** Having "waiters" bring food to your table after you've paid at a kiosk or at the counter. Note: These are not tipped employees so customers don't see increased checks ... and operators avoid costly accounting complexities that come with tipped personnel.
- G)** Putting in-store dining on real plates.
- H)** Offering beer, wine and even cocktails. *Prediction: Right now booze is an afterthought, grafted onto an existing system of service. Look to next-generation fast-casual companies to make room for actual bars ... moving themselves closer to the world of restaurants.*

#8. HOW BIG IS YOUR BUBBLE? ONE-ITEM RESTAURANTS ARE POPPING UP AGAIN: With stocks at all-time highs, (some) people are wallowing in profits. So investing in oddball restaurant concepts amounts to risking loose change.

For example, take a look at the profusion of one-item restaurants opening not just in the US but in Europe as well. What's stunning is not their sheer quirkiness -- but the fact that consumers have enough pocket money to patronize them.

I'm thinking of an all-cream cheese restaurant opened earlier this year on a fairly pricy street in New York's East Village. Or [XO Marshmallow Cafe](#) in Chicago serving marshmallow-based variations on s'mores, lattes and afogatos (*right*).



In Amsterdam there's [The Avocado Show](#), perhaps the world's first all-avocado restaurant. You want to their sausage-and-bacon "burger" with buns that actually are avocados (*right*) ... or their toast with a picturesque avocado rose and wasabi ... putting your standard avocado toast to shame. It has spawned copycatters: In London an avocado bar summer popup served goodies like avocado tempura. And in Brooklyn (what took so long?) there's Avocaderia serving toasts, salads and smoothies out of a 450-sq.ft. quest for franchise stardom.



If you thought we're beyond peak bacon, restaurant [Belly](#) opened midyear in Brooklyn serving a Korean-inflected \$55 bacon omakase ... a nine-course onslaught of torched bacon sushi, pork jowl with salted shrimp, ricotta ravioli with pork belly and pickled red chili, and kimchi-sauced sausage.

Another one-dish wonder ... Yang's Braised Chicken Rice, with 6000 franchises around the globe ... opened recently in Tustin, California. It serves only clay pot-braised chicken thighs with mushrooms, ginger and chilies over rice ... with a secret (of course) sauce.

A tartare-only restaurant in Lisbon generates lots of attention. [Tartar-Ia](#), in the Time Out food hall, serves three kinds of beef tartares, tuna, herring, salmon and sea bass tartares ... even a vegetarian rendition ... generally fussy-cheffy in style (*photo right*). Now there's a version in Amsterdam.



All this froth doesn't necessarily indicate foolishness or impending flameouts. After all, everyone laughed when New York's Meatball Shop opened ... but now has seven



locations as well imitators in London, called Balls & Co (*left*). And there were snickers at the first mac-and-cheese emporium and the first grilled cheese shop. An unlikely raw cookie dough crowd-pleaser called "Do" opened in January in New York and is still standing.

But there's danger in being co-opted.

In the '70s an explosion of croissant specialty shops all went under when Burger King deployed the item for sandwiches, followed by half the country's restaurants. Same thing with Arby's ... which began as a roast-beef only restaurant until menu expansion become inevitable ... as others easily added roast beef to their menus (Arby, by the way, stands for the initials R and B, or roast beef). Poke-only fast-casual places are, to mix a metaphor, multiplying like rabbits ... but marinated raw fish recipes are appearing in multiple variations on restaurants menus all kinds, so perhaps we're looking at croissant-type vulnerability. Anyone remember the fro-yo fallout? Today you'll find raw cookie dough on menus of yogurt and ice cream shops as well as bakeries ... so who knows how long it'll take to become generic.

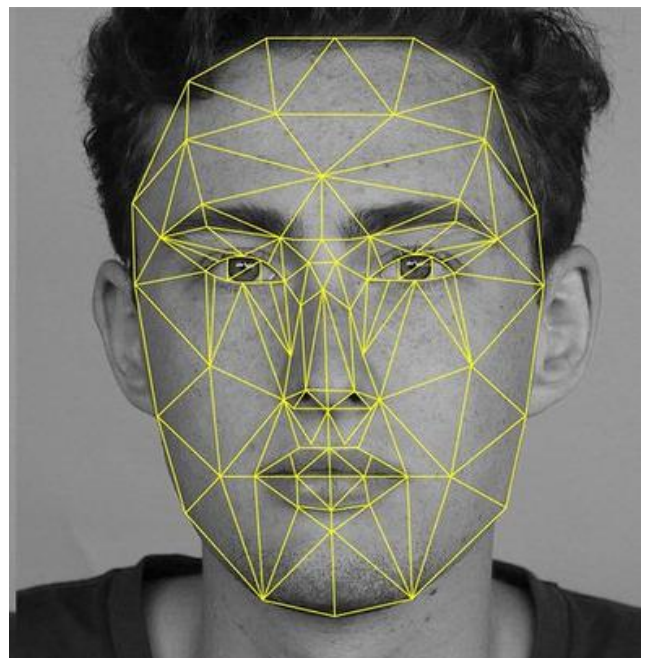
Where does that leave us? As long as financial markets hold up, there'll be plenty of money for offbeat ... even wacky ... ideas. Adam Fleischman, founder of Umami Burger, opened a [peanut butter-and-jelly](#) stand in the Los Angeles Public Market ... and someone just opened a peanut butter bar in Australia ... suggesting there's still unbounded optimism. (Perhaps they'll merge with one of the marshmallow enterprises and then we'll have a national fluffernutter explosion.)

#9. DRY-ISH RAMEN: They're taking the soup out of trendy ramen ... creating an even trendier version that's less likely to dribble into your lap. It's called mazemen ... or "mixed noodles." You still get a bowl but it contains a modest amount of strongly flavored sauce... instead of broth ... with lots of traditional and wacko toppings. You toss these as you would Italian pasta. What goes atop these noodles? Bacon and eggs; ricotta, white beets and mustard greens; cured salmon and camembert; cream cheese, parmesan and minced smoked pork; chili oil and tahini ... plus all manner of traditional Japanese toppings, which probably is the best way to go. The dish should have a real kick to it ... and it is about the noodles rather than the broth.

#10. FEEDING YOUR FACE AND PAYING WITH YOUR FACE:

Here's a technology that you'll consider creepy or convenient: Facial recognition is edging into restaurants. A KFC unit in China has a camera-embedded ordering kiosk that almost instantly recognizes your face, who you are, what you ordered last time and any other transactions you made at the shop. If you opt to repeat your last order, you then swipe your card ... and in four seconds you're done.

This sounds benign ... especially since Facebook already uses facial recognition tagging. But then there's this scenario: Mr. Jones enters a fancy restaurant with his wife, and a camera over the door spots him as a regular customer ... but his wife thinks he's never set foot in the place. "Good evening, Mr. Jones," purrs the hostess. "Welcome back. May I order your usual martini?" Maybe not so benign? What if the FBI's looking for Mr. Jones and his photo matches their data base ... and he's led out in handcuffs before finishing that martini?



The [Wow Bao](#) chain was happily using a similar system ... it figured out who you were in under a second ... but recently was slapped with a lawsuit over how they're using the information they've gathered. If you have pimples, might one of these systems (probably not Wow Bao's) send a coupon to your smartphone for acne medicine? If you pay with a smile but have crooked teeth, might you receive an Invisilign advert? What if the data base also knows you're diabetic ... will it forbid your order of a hot fudge sundae? ... or will it notify your health insurer?

On the bright side, if the system senses that you've been ordering burgers without dressing, it could suggest low-calorie dishes next time you're there. Or if you've ordered only grilled items, it could remind of their gluten-free offerings. "Fries with that?" is just kid stuff compared with how ordering ... and intelligent upselling ... at fast food and fast-casual restaurants might be streamlined.

Douwe Egberts ... the global coffee company ... installed an airport coffee machine with a thingamajig that recognized when passers-by were yawning (*right*). If so, the machine immediately dispensed a free cup of coffee. (Maybe our clumsy TSA needs this system to speed us through airport security.)



Will consumers sacrifice privacy for speed? We'll bet they will.

#11. GETTING SLOSHED ON A SLUSHIE: MA, THERE'S BOURBON IN MY ICE CREAM!

Restaurants will be boozing up their desserts and ice creams. So you might be carded at Disney Springs' Amorette's Patisserie where they're serving red wine slushies flavored with strawberries. Sounds like a frozen sangria.

In Duluth, Georgia, [Suga and Ice](#) has people queuing for its booze-infused ice creams ... like bananas Foster and strawberries and champagne. They're also stuffing warm donuts with ice cream for those in need of caloric overload.

In New York [Tippy Scoop](#) is hand-dipping cones of dark chocolate whiskey, maple pecan bourbon, and cake batter vodka martini. Suga and Ice's products contain one to two percent alcohol, but Tippy Scoops top out at 5% ABV ... the same as your standard beer (*see right*). Lantern, a Brooklyn beer hall, collaborated last summer with Tippy Scoop to make beer-infused ice creams ... for customers who couldn't choose between sipping and licking.



Aldi in Britain sells gin-and-tonic popsicles containing about 11% booze ... with more gin-infused products coming. Cindy's atop the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel sells boozy popsicles, as does the La Carnita chain in Toronto with its tequila sunrise popsicle. And Haagen-Dazs recently launched boozed-up ice cream pints ... vodka-key lime, whisky-chocolate truffle ... but only in Canada.

The biggest indicator that this is more than a seasonal trend ... is Taco Bell opening dozens of "cantinas" around the country serving spiked slushies of the sort you find in New Orleans tourist bars. Most will be located in urban areas (50 threatened for New York) on the premise that city dwellers don't drive ... therefore, Taco Bell's ditching the drive-thru, so sloshed or not you'll have to get home standing up. Slush machines will dispense flavors of margarita, piña colada, lemonade and they like can be goosed up with tequila, rum, vodka or whiskey.

Which makes us wonder ... could Taco Bell be making a move on places like Rocco's Tacos and Bar Taco ... two successfully growing taco bar chains with entry level pricing about the same as Taco Bell's? Or are they just trying again (as usual) to shake up the fast food world.

BUZZWORDS

Zhug: you can't pronounce this green (cilantro, green chili, cardamom) Israeli-Yemenite condiment but you'll remember its slow burn ... **Raclette** makes a comeback as cheese of the year ... **Hemp**, the non-hallucinatory kind ... **Lamb burgers**, riding a wave of all things Med Rim ... **Multi-grain slow-rise pizza dough** ... **Vegetable pizza crusts** for the gluten-adverse ... **Bubble waffles** (*photo, right*)... Better look this one up: **Cheese tea** from Taiwan ... **Fallout: Too many meal kit companies losing too much money** ... Individual takeaway portions of **Instagrammable desserts** ... **Doner Kabobs** from lots of countries ... **Raw cookie dough** (better watch the "I got sick" lawsuit ... **Spam** (*see Filipino food, page 6*) ...





More re-discoveries of **Ancient grains** (*read about [Kernza](#)*) ... It's old, its new: **Schnitzel** becomes trendy again ... Indian-inflected **ice creams** ... **Onion soup** as a flavoring agent ... **Robots** in kitchens, dining rooms and running over your feet on the sidewalk ... **Purple ube** ... **Seaweed and algae** in your food, especially **spirulina** ... New uses for **Churros** ... **Avocado desserts** and **Nitro desserts** ... Restaurants adding their own **retail shops** to compete with supermarket prepared foods departments ... **Cotton candy** ... Burgers "**blended**" with mushrooms, soy or other additives to cut down on meat consumption ... Yet another year for **freakshakes**, **ice cream-stuffed donuts** and other **extreme desserts** ... More **Virtual restaurants**.

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