

foodscape™

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Plan for Success

UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS

JANUARY

04 National Spaghetti Day

Celebrate the fun and flavour of spaghetti with a BOGO offer on that menu item, or set up a spaghetti bar featuring several toppings, including meatballs, mushrooms, peppers and onions, and scores of parmesan cheese. Advertise that day's specials on social media to drive traffic to your establishment.

10 Bittersweet Chocolate Day

Whether you offer bittersweet chocolate brownies, create a rich chocolate cake or add bittersweet chocolate to cookies – serve up the desserts on a fun features menu that your server can present after the main meal. You can celebrate in style by conducting a wine tasting with bittersweet chocolates displayed in bowls along the bar.

20 National Cheese Lover's Day

The ideas are endless when it comes to promoting this day. Perhaps feature cheese fondue as a special appetizer, or \$5 grilled cheese sandwiches, macaroni and cheese bowls and discounted chips and cheese to commemorate the day.

FEBRUARY

02 National Tater Tot Day

Offer a basket of tots as a substitute for fries with any burger order for one day only. Why not try featuring different kinds of tater tots – cheesy tots, taco tots, spicy tots – and put the options on a LTO menu for the first week of February. Photograph the tot baskets and post them on Instagram a couple of days before.

09 Pizza Palooza!

On National Pizza Day operators should jump on ways to promote this much-loved Italian classic. Serve up a pizza buffet with several varieties and salad choices, or offer single pizza slices and a beer as a deal for those who sit at the bar. You can even host a pizza tasting with wine or beer pairings.

25 National Clam Chowder Day

Flights are a fun and creative way to serve clam chowder. Put together small servings of New England, Manhattan and other variations of clam chowder and advertise as "Chowder Flight Night." Have patrons vote on their favourite chowder variety and add the winning version to your main menu.

MARCH

09 Meatball Madness

Put together a small, colourful menu to display at the tables featuring 3-4 meatball apps to promote this day, like meatball marinara poppers, Buffalo chicken meatballs and Swedish meatballs. Put a board out in front of your establishment displaying that day's specials, from meatball sliders, subs and meatball-topped pizzas.

14 National Potato Chip Day

Have your chef create their own seasoned potato chips and offer options using sweet potatoes and a variety of spice combinations. Serve them as a side with any burger, sandwich or bowl of chili for a \$1 upcharge. Put a few new options on a LTO menu featuring potato chip nachos, potato-chip breaded chicken tenders or a fun new dip with a side of potato chips.

17 St. Patty's Day!

Have fun with specials and bar features on this popular holiday. Green beer from the tap, corned beef, Irish stew and shepherd's pie are always a hit and you can put your own twist on those classics. Offer a variety of drink specials like Irish whiskey, Guinness or Irish coffee for one day only. Live music is always a great way to celebrate any holiday so book a local band and get your diners in the mood to celebrate.



From farm to fork: Menu makeovers are part of growing sustainability movement

Operators shift focus to eco-friendly fare



Operators are likely going to be serving more colourful plates full of local vegetables and plant-based dishes as part of an effort to become more resource efficient and to please sustainably-minded patrons.

That's not to say meat and poultry are being replaced, but there is a push for smaller eco-friendly menus with less protein that highlights the products of local partners, experts say.

Timothy Tejuco, Gordon Food Service® business solutions specialist, said the shift to this type of menu is catching on.

"I see a lot of vegetable-forward dishes," he said. "Meat is the condiment, like a risotto with a beef red wine demi-glace. You're getting the same flavour of the meat, but just in a different way."

Gordon Food Service Corporate Executive Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski agrees and says it can benefit operators' bottomline. Less protein cuts costs and more eco-conscious meals is what consumers are asking for. It's a win-win.

"Make the size of the protein option much smaller. You can build a super flavourful beef broth for pho served with local and seasonal produce and a smaller portion of shaved beef, lamb or pork," he said.

According to Sustainability in Motion 2021, a report from the Kerry Group, 58% of consumers in North America are strongly influenced by sustainability when making a food or beverage purchase at a restaurant.

Tejuco said diners are definitely paying attention. "People are more informed



about ethical practices and how their food is sourced,” he said.

Minimize, seasonalize your menu

One of the ways operators can pivot to a more sustainable menu is to think “seasonal.” There is more flexibility which results in less food waste as it allows operators to use products across multiple dishes.

“Your menu doesn’t have to be smaller, but it has to be more nimble – one that can be changed and adjusted on a regular basis depending upon availability and seasonality of ingredients,” Kwiatkowski said.

In addition, Tejuco said if operators

have the ability to grow some of their own items, it’s a great way to reduce costs and have fresh ingredients available on the menu. He references a restaurant in Vancouver that has a backyard garden of herbs used in their dishes, and an Italian restaurant that grows their own tomatoes for their sauces.

Benefits beyond menu offerings

Gordon Food Service Stewardship Manager Amy Gautraud said once operators begin to create a more sustainable menu, they may see other positive changes follow.

“By showcasing your sustainability initiatives through menu offerings or

transparent communication, you may be able to attract new customers while making a positive impact on the environment or local economy,” she said. “You may also find your employees are excited about these initiatives resulting in improved job satisfaction or fulfillment.”

Tejuco agrees and suggests sharing where local products are from and promoting farms and growers with whom they partner. “Really showcase that on a menu,” he said.

Focusing on sustainability is also beneficial for operators on a financial level, Gautraud said.

“The impacts of sustainability can reach beyond what you expect and could actually help your bottom line,” she said. “A focus on food-waste reduction can help manage food cost and allowing your culinary team to think upcycled ingredients and menu items can merge creativity and cost savings.”

Gordon Food Service offers its own solutions for operators to begin the sustainability process. Resources, like Clear Choice™ – a product transparency program – allows operators to filter within Gordon Ordering™ to select items and attributes their consumers prefer.

ECO-FRIENDLY MENUS AIM TO REDUCE WASTE, SOURCE LOCALLY

Operators can start with these efforts to create a sustainable menu:

- **Work with vendors who partner with local growers for seasonal ingredients:** Reduce food miles by using ingredients from local farms and suppliers.
- **Offer a variety of plant-based dishes:** Reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and lower water and land use.
- **Opt for sustainably sourced seafood:** Protect marine ecosystems and support responsible fishing practices.
- **Compost and recycle:** Divert food waste from landfills.
- **Simplify menu:** Focus on a smaller selection of high-quality, sustainable dishes and simplify inventory management, enhance efficiency.
- **Partner with sustainable suppliers:** Work with suppliers who prioritize eco-friendly practices and packaging.
- **Make customers aware:** Highlight local sourcing and indicate which items on your menu are made with locally sourced ingredients.

Source: OpenTable.com

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Artificial intelligence is changing the way foodservice operators find success and solutions



Imagine this futuristic scenario: It's 7 a.m. and a foodservice operator starts their day with real-time data on inventory levels, sales trends and customer feedback on an AI-powered dashboard.

The operator takes that data and adjusts menu offerings and updates specials. Hours later, the system manages incoming reservations. At closing time, it spits out a comprehensive performance report for the day and – voilà! – operators have data gold at their fingertips.

This is a new reality for foodservice operators everywhere, many struggling with the same industry issues. From easing tight labour market woes to improving efficiency, AI can be used in a myriad of ways. Ultimately an operator can view AI as an “extension of a foodservice operator’s team,” said Gordon Food Service® Full Stack Conversation Designer Amber Prause.

“Many uses currently fall under the bucket of analyzing data.

For restaurants, that can look like collecting data on customers and having AI analyze behaviour to be able to personalize ads or emails or even menu suggestions based on personal preferences,” Prause said.

That is why analysts say one of the main benefits of using AI in the restaurant industry is that it can help ease the tight hiring market for operators.

Operators easing into AI one step at a time

Gordon Food Service Business Solutions Specialist Billy Nichols said the capabilities of AI can seem overwhelming. But using chatbots is a great place to start, he said.

"While chatbots aren't necessarily new, they are getting more advanced and can help with less-personalized jobs, like taking reservations," Nichols said.

But it's good to keep in mind that it's called "artificial" intelligence for a reason: AI can't replace the human aspect of customer service, though ideal for technical tasks, he said.

"It's not meant for interaction with customers. It's more about how they will work in operations, like how they forecast costs or pull in more intuitive algorithms. It seems really valuable," Nichols said.

Another way AI is useful is for eliminating on-call shifts by predicting business from weekend to weekend, Nichols said.

"It can pull weather information, for example, and try to determine the number of guests that will walk through the door on a Friday night. It allows an operator to know how to staff that specific weekend," he said.

Operators can add AI into leveraging that data it analyzes to optimize their supply chain operations and ensure they have the right ingredients, products and equipment available when and where they are needed,

according to Smartbrief. This not only improves efficiency and reduces waste, but also helps businesses better manage their inventory and cash flow.

Prause said AI can also be used in food design to create innovative recipes and dishes that meet specific dietary requirements or preferences, expanding culinary possibilities.

Save AI for the technical stuff, leave 'hospitality' to humans

While AI is transforming efficiencies for operators, it can't replace the impact a thoughtful server or gifted chef brings to a dining experience.

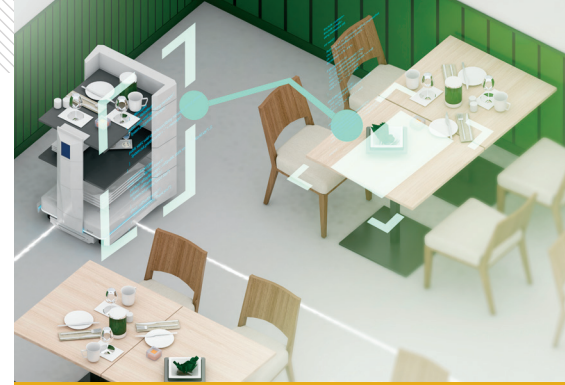
"Hospitality has yet to be perfected by robots," Nichols said. "Human experience could be lost in subtle, but impactful ways." He points out that people dine out for "the experience."

"There is a difference between hospitality-driven and product-driven restaurants," he said.

Sure, AI can help create a recipe, but bringing it to that next level cannot be replicated by a machine. For example, a server may recommend a perfect bottle of wine because they have tasted it, going beyond what AI suggests based on data.

It's something operators must remember as AI progresses, Nichols said.

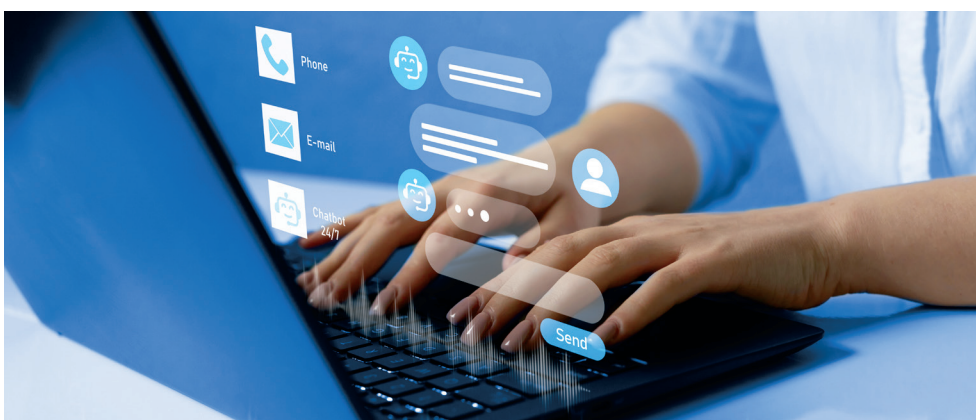
"How do we keep a spark of humanity with those interactions?" he said. "No matter what it is, there is an art that is lost when you outsource it to a robot."



3 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN IMPLEMENTING AI

- **AI is not a replacement for everything.**
AI needs to be thought of as a performance booster. It can't replace the human side of the industry. Make a list of where improvements can be made and then see where AI is a good fit to help handle those pain points and challenges.
- **Make data security and privacy a top priority.**
When determining what AI solutions to integrate, it is important to ensure you are keeping your data safe.
- **Stay on top of the AI trends.**
It takes continuous research to keep up with the fast-moving innovation. Make sure you know what's coming next and decide how it can benefit your operation.

Source: Gordon Food Service®
Full Stack Conversation Designer
Amber Prause



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COLOURS, *patterns* ARE 'ON THE TABLE' AS THE LATEST INDUSTRY TREND

*A couple of old favourites
are sticking around as well*

There are few things as stunning as the blue hues of the Mediterranean Sea. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that among the hottest tabletop trends right now is dinnerware coated in Mediterranean colours – especially the blues, experts say.

The prismatic Mediterranean-themed dinnerware is one of several tabletop trends operators should note for the coming year, including small plates, shared boards and specific dishware finishes ranging from matte to textured.

There is also a planet-friendly trend that doesn't seem likely to fade: Sustainable materials and containers. Operators can anticipate seeing that for years to come.

An expert from Gordon Food Service® breaks down what's hot now and what will (literally) be on the table for 2024.

Colours, patterns on dishware is big

There's something warm and inviting about the earthy vibes Mediterranean colours give off. Terra cotta seems to resurface as a trending design colour throughout the years, and its place at the table is no exception this year.

Gordon Food Service® Tabletop and Disposables Product Specialist Jean Van Horn said a string of Mediterranean hues including terra cotta, ochre, burnt umber and chestnut brown continue to trend. Van Horn said those colours apply mainly to dinnerware plates, platters, bowls, cups and saucers.

"Most operators choose two to three of these colours and transition in with

existing dinnerware, creating exciting tabletop combinations that guests appreciate," she said.

Mediterranean blue-coloured items, specifically, seem to be the most popular among operators, Van Horn said.

"Growing the fastest from the Mediterranean family are blues. Anything from aqua blue to deep, dark navy blue had the most new introductions at industry and trade shows this past year," she said.

Victoria Greene, business development manager for United Restaurant Supplies says she is also seeing

colourful dishware with earthy tones, fun patterns and shapes taking centre stage.

The soothing colour schemes will highlight the meals served and help create a pleasant atmosphere for customers.

"It's an easy way to stand out and add flair to dishes. It leaves a memorable impression on guests and it's very Instagram-worthy which translates to owners not having to spend extra on advertising. The customers just do it for them," Greene said. "It shows customers that the restaurant went above and beyond and put some honest thought into the experience they want their customers to have."



Fancy finishes coat tableware; organic-dish material on the rise

What better way to have colourful dish- and serviceware stand out than with a finish that really accentuates. A trending finish like matte or textured also disguises fingerprints, Van Horn said, and that is a “big advantage” for operators.

Here are some other types of materials still trending:

Melamine: This type of dishware is made with an organic, nitrogen-based compound. Dishes made of this lightweight material are especially nice for patio and outdoor-dining locations, Van Horn said. It looks and feels quite durable and acts as a great alternative to porcelain, glass and ceramic. “In many applications the plastic

dinnerware, serving platters, bowls and drinkware are practical trade outs for breakable counterparts,” she said.

Cast iron: Cast iron items seem to defy time. It has been around forever and continue to trend with no end to its popularity in sight. “Baked entrées and desserts are just better in cast iron!,” Van Horn said.

Biodegradable supplies: Experts from Back of House say they are seeing all kinds of biodegradable servingware. Check out the Re.Source™ brand of products or the hundreds of other biodegradable products found on Gordon Ordering™.

Small plates, share boards here to stay

The continued popularity of charcuterie boards and shareable dishes generated the desire for more small plates, share boards and condiment sauce dishes, Van Horn said.

“Asian entrées call out noodle bowls. Thai, Indian and Korean authentic presentations are enhanced with specific ethnic serving pieces as well,” she said.

Greene said kitchen smallwares as tabletop items like mini-cast iron pots for individual pasta dishes, for example, and bun pans for fries and burgers is also an industry trend that is really taking off.

And it doesn’t sound like small plates and boards are going away anytime soon. Charcuterie boards were big this year and expected to be again in 2024. The board craze was listed as No. 3 on a list of the Top 10 Hot Trends in 2023, according to the National Restaurant Association.



Tableware featured in this issue:

Steelite Performance

Ink - *Nomad Blue, Nomad Sand, Legacy Blue, Legacy Ginger*
Vesuvius - *Lapis, Amber*
Aurora Vesuvius - *Lapis, Amber*
Craft - *White*
Dapple - *Blue, Brown*

Steelite Folio

Patina - *Bronze*
Azores - *Costa*

Steelite Creations

Blue Dapple Melamine
Cali Melamine - *Redwood*
Wood Serving Boards

Steelite Maham Studio Spice Collection - Sea Salt

Steelite Anfora Puebla

American Metalcraft Isabella Melamine

For more details on enhancing your tabletop, contact your Gordon Food Service sales representative.

 **YIELD**
8 servings

 **PREP TIME**
25 minutes

 **COOK TIME**
30 minutes



MICHAEL VILORIA
CULINARY SPECIALIST

Michael started as a dishwasher over 40 years ago and progressed to Red Seal Endorsed Chef in 1992. He has managed both front- and back-of-house operations in hotels, casinos, independent and multiunit restaurants. Michael is well traveled and has a varied palate which helps him to support customers by building menus that are trendy and unique.



Spamon (Special Salmon) Hand Roll

INGREDIENTS

2 ct.	Markon® Medium Beets
2" piece	Gordon Choice® Fresh Ginger Root
1 Tbsp.	Kosher Salt
1 tsp.	Fine Sugar
1 lb.	Gordon Choice Salmon Tartare
2 c.	Sushi Rice
¼ c. + 3 Tbsp.	Rice Wine Vinegar
as needed	Trade East® White Sesame Seeds
as needed	Trade East Black Sesame Seeds
1 c.	Gordon Choice Real Gourmet Mayonnaise
8 ct.	Nori Sheets

PREPARE THE SPAMON HAND ROLL

1. Trim one beet. Finely grate on a surface lined with cheesecloth on top of parchment paper. Gather the grated beet in the cheesecloth, tightly twist the top closed and squeeze the juice into a mixing bowl.
2. Peel the ginger. Finely grate on a surface lined with cheesecloth on top of parchment paper. Gather the grated ginger in the cheesecloth, tightly twist the top closed and squeeze the juice into a mixing bowl.
3. In a small mixing bowl, combine the beet juice, half of the ginger juice, salt and sugar.
4. Add the salmon. Mix to combine, cover and refrigerate for future use.
5. Rinse the sushi rice until the water runs clear. Cook on the stove or in a rice cooker per package instructions. Transfer cooked rice to a sheet pan. Spread evenly and cool.
6. Add the ¼ c. rice wine vinegar and sesame seeds to the cooled rice. Place in a storage container for future use.
7. In a mixing bowl combine 1 Tbsp. ginger juice, 1 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar and mayonnaise. Cover and refrigerate for future use.
8. Trim the second beet and cut into matchstick pieces. Add to a mixing bowl with 2 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

SERVE THE SPAMON HAND ROLL

1. On one end of the nori sheet, spread 2 oz. rice. Top with 2 oz. salmon.
2. Garnish with pickled beets and ginger aioli.
3. Either roll into a cone shape or leave open-faced for the customer to roll.

 **YIELD**
3 2-oz servings

 **PREP TIME**
20 minutes

 **COOK TIME**
5 minutes



CHRISTINE DIVELY
CULINARY SPECIALIST

Christine has a passion for Mediterranean cuisine. She grew up in Turkey and Italy and has traveled extensively in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands and Belgium. She has a wide variety of culinary experiences from high-end to high-volume cooking. She has most notably worked for James Beard award-winning Chef Michelle Bernstein and catered to celebrities such as Tiger Woods and Celine Dion.



Sigara Borek

INGREDIENTS

12 oz.	Gordon® Choice Fresh Feta Cheese, crumbled
6 oz.	Gordon Choice Mozzarella Cheese, shredded
1 ct.	Gordon Choice Large Shell Egg, separated
3 Tbsp.	Markon® Italian Parsley, chopped
to taste	Trade East® Ground Black Pepper
as needed	Trade East White Sesame Seeds
as needed	Trade East Black Sesame Seeds
15 ct.	Phyllo Dough Sheets, thawed
as needed	La Padilla Sauté Oil
as needed	Kosher Salt

PREPARE THE SIGARA BOREK

1. Mix the feta, mozzarella, egg yolk, parsley and ground black pepper in a bowl.
2. Combine the white and black sesame seeds in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Lay 3 sheets of phyllo on a work surface, keeping the remaining sheets covered with a well wrung out, moist paper towel or kitchen towel. Cut the long width of phyllo in half, forming 2 rectangles.
4. Spoon 2 oz. of filling along the short edge of the phyllo. Roll the phyllo over the cheese mixture while compressing it to stay in place. Roll once, then fold the outer edges like a burrito. Continue rolling the phyllo. About 2" from the top, make two cuts to create a point. Wet the point of the phyllo with water and firmly roll to seal. Keep covered until all rectangles are filled and rolled.
5. In a large skillet, add about 1" of oil. Heat on medium heat to 325°F. Gently lower the cigars, working in batches, into the oil, leaving enough room to roll the cigars to brown on all sides.
6. Fry until crispy and light golden brown on all sides.
7. Remove from the oil onto a plate lined with paper towels. Immediately sprinkle with sesame seeds and kosher salt.
8. Stack four to six cigars on a plate and serve.



KURT KWIATKOWSKI,
CEC, CCA, AAC
CORPORATE EXECUTIVE CHEF

Chef Kurt has spent years in professional kitchens, including the award-winning Culinary Services Residential Dining at Michigan State University. He is an accomplished chef who has won dozens of awards, was voted Chef of the Year for the Detroit Chef De Cuisine, and was inducted into the American Academy of Chefs.

S'mores Board

 **YIELD**
4-8 servings

 **PREP TIME**
5 minutes

 **COOK TIME**
5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

¾ c.	Marshmallows or Marshmallow Creme
2 oz.	Caramel Topping
4 oz.	Hot Fudge Topping
2 oz.	Chocolate Hazelnut Spread
4 ct.	Graham Crackers, broken into quarters
10 ct.	Pretzel Crisps
10 ct.	Shortbread Cookies
2 ct.	Chocolate Candy Bars, broken into sections (optional)
5 ct.	Gordon Choice® Strawberries, cut in half (optional)

PREPARE THE S'MORES BOARD

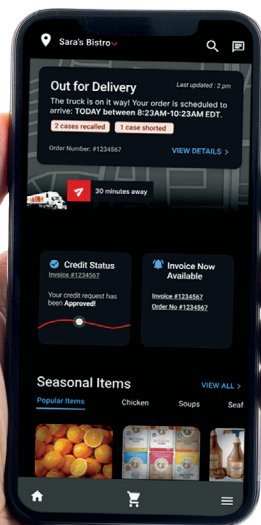
1. Warm the caramel sauce and hot fudge. Place into ramekins.
2. Add the marshmallows or fluff to a cast-iron skillet. Place under a broiler or salamander to toast.
3. Arrange the sauces, graham crackers, pretzels, cookies, candy bars and strawberries on a serving board.





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