

Keeping up with food trends can be frustrating and daunting – and once the list is out, is it still a trend? One thing foodservice operations can do is to focus on local, fresh, quality ingredients to help them stay ahead of the curve.

Versatile, fresh ingredients – such as Fresh California Avocados – will always fit a category on a trends list, and it opens a range of creative options for chefs: from classics with a twist to fusion and even innovative applications.

Just over half (50.8%) of US restaurants offer Avocado and/or Guacamole on the menu, up 25% since 2008; and this category is expected to grow. Of foodservice operators who use avocados, 82% choose to purchase fresh, and 80% of consumers want avocado *source of origin* stated on the menu. It is important to note that restaurants benefit from the halo effect when California is the source of origin. Most consumers perceive a restaurant offering dishes with California in the name will use *fresh ingredients* (83.4%) and *source high-quality ingredients* (80.2%), while 78.1% believe the restaurant features *consistently high-quality ingredients*.

Classics dishes are timeless and dependable. Classic dishes with a twist give customers a level of confidence knowing what to expect in terms of flavor and/or texture. The twist is the subtle surprise – be it an ingredient, flavor or cooking technique – that delivers a unique experience.

- Marco's Café in Portland OR puts their twist on the traditional grilled cheese sandwich. With rustic corn bread, brie and Asiago cheeses, layered with slices of Fresh California Avocados, and tomatoes, diners enjoy this Grilled Cheese for Grown-up sandwich
- Owner Merita Kraya of Euro Pizza Cafe in Fountain Hills, AZ puts pizzazz on her pizza with her Grecian Avocado pizza with Fresh California Avocados, kalamata olives and chicken

Fusion is still very big, and when done right, the dishes are incredible and memorable.

While fresh avocado usage in Latin America cuisine seems a natural extension, the use of Fresh California Avocado in Asian and Mediterranean cuisines is still fairly new. Chefs and restaurants will use traditional ingredients to bridge comfort level and expectations to newer menu items.

- Chef Bob Cina of Ironside in San Francisco, relies on rice flour in his tempura batter to deliver light and traditional tastes with his Tempura California Avocado with Jalapeno-Lime Aioli
- Associate Director of Culinary Arts of Stanford University, Andrew Mayne, serves up California Avocado Chicken Pita Pocket with Quinoa Salad and Yogurt Mint Dressing; slices of Fresh California Avocado provide a creamy contrast to the quinoa grain and its subtle taste complements the Yogurt Mint dressing

Not only are more foodservice operators adding avocado to the menu, but avocados are being added to more menu items. Now, we're seeing avocados not only on salads, but in burgers and sandwiches, appetizers and breakfast items.

Operators are increasingly leveraging avocado versatility, with greatest growth in bread appetizers (toast), rice entrees (bowls), blended beverages and breakfast.

Avocados are popular in California/Pacific and Traditional American dishes, and not surprisingly, in Southwestern and Tex/Mex dishes.

A recent study conducted by Menu Matters found that more than 70% percent of restaurant patrons nationwide identify avocados as a component in a dish if “California” is part of the menu item name or description. Almost two-thirds (64.3%) of consumers are willing to pay more for menu items featuring California Avocados. In fact, consumers are nearly twice as likely to purchase menu items made with California Avocado than items containing avocados from other sources of origin.

The presence of avocados increased substantially in the Breakfast/Bakery Cafes.

- Diners start the day right at CoolEatz in Palo Alto, CA chef/owner Jesse Cool’s Jesse’s Favorite Egg, California Avocado and Bacon Sandwich. Vibrant colors, bold flavors will wake-up the taste buds with thick slices of heirloom tomato slices of crisp bacon, eggs to order with chunks of Fresh California Avocados

Avocados are most popular in salads. This is followed by Hot Sandwiches and Cold Sandwiches.

- Bru’s Waffle in Santa Monica, CA menus a Crispy Chicken Salad with California Avocados
- Andrea McGinty, owner of Native Foods Café in Chicago, IL tosses Fresh California Avocados with kale, cabbage and apples for this on-trend Kale Salad with California Avocado salad

For more menu ideas and recipes, visit CaliforniaAvocado.com/Foodservice

Based on a 2018 Menu Matters and Datassential research report, “California, Avocados & Foodservice Opportunities”.