

PREPARED FOODS

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS & TECHNOLOGIES FOR FORMULATORS & MARKETERS

Food Truck Nation:

Zeal on Wheels

Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel, Chicago, conferred with *Prepared Foods* on the main reasons consumers keep waiting in line for the latest and greatest truck cuisine.

World Flavors

These reign on trucks, especially in major metropolitan areas. Consumers hunger for dishes “inspired by the street foods sold in stalls at markets around the world, such as gourmet tacos, crepes, *bao*, Greek cuisine and *falafel*.” Koji BBQ, for example, the truck widely credited with kick-starting the truck food movement, offers Kimchi Quesadillas. In Marfa, Texas, locals line up at Food Shark for fare that’s far from local: Marfalafels (*falafels* and hummus). In Houston, Texans clamor for The Eatsie Boys’ Pork Snuggies: slow-cooked pork belly with homemade *hoisin* sauce served on Asian buns.

Whether internationally inspired or all-American, ingredients and cooking methods found in traditional foods add modern interpretations that appeal to contemporary consumers and can be served on-the-go. At The Cinnamon Snail, for example, pancakes get a contemporary twist with varieties such as blue corn and fresh fig.

Everyday, Made Exceptional

This is Olson’s tag for classic comfort foods “made to die for,” or for classics reinvented with imaginative ingredients. Examples: chicken pot pie with bacon from Sue’s Sassy Pies in San Francisco; lobster BLT from Red Hook Lobster Pound in New York; grilled cheese sandwiches with upscale ingredients; and lobster as an ingredient

in general, in everything from the classic lobster roll to lobster mac-and-cheese.

Worth the Splurge

These dishes are the got-to-have comfort items, like Southern food; gooey, sinful desserts; anything fried. These popular items “appeal to diners who occasionally crave food so bad it’s good,” Olson says. Fitting that bill is Frysmith Food Truck’s French fries served as a meal with topping options including *kimchi*, chili made with beer, and chocolate- and *shawarma*-marinated steak.

Destination Burgers

Truck chefs capitalize on the insatiable burger lust by creating “destination burgers,” such as the Dee Snider from Grill ‘Em All in Alhambra, Calif.: a half-pound beef, chicken or veggie burger of one’s choice with peanut butter, strawberry jam, bacon and *sriracha*. Or, the Exciter: duck confit, *frisée*, truffle herb goat cheese, cranberry *gastrique*. And, at Chef Shack in the Twin Cities, lines form for the hand-patted, grass fed-bison burger on toasted *brioche*.

Slow-cooked

While diners on the run want food fast, they also want it slow. “Slow-cooked pork products, ribs and other labor-intensive, from-scratch food recipes have groupies in most major cities,” says Olson. In Dania Beach, Fla., The Slow Food Truck entices with braised beef and slow-roasted pulled pork. At Crock Spot, Denverites stand for such slow pleasures as jalapeño shredded beef, duck confit, Irish corned beef and turkey cardamom meatballs.



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