

Sandwich study spotlights vegetables

By Mike Hornick

Restaurants trying out new menu items may discover sandwiches featuring vegetables yield plenty of orders, a study by Culinary Visions Panel finds.

A vegetable sandwich with arugula, tomato, avocado, caramelized onion and melted cheese bound by a pair of crispy plantains ranked third among 10 innovations tested in the study, "Next Gen Sandwiches: Consumers' Interest in New Sandwich Concepts."

Other favorites contained meats or seafood, but not always as the prime ingredient.

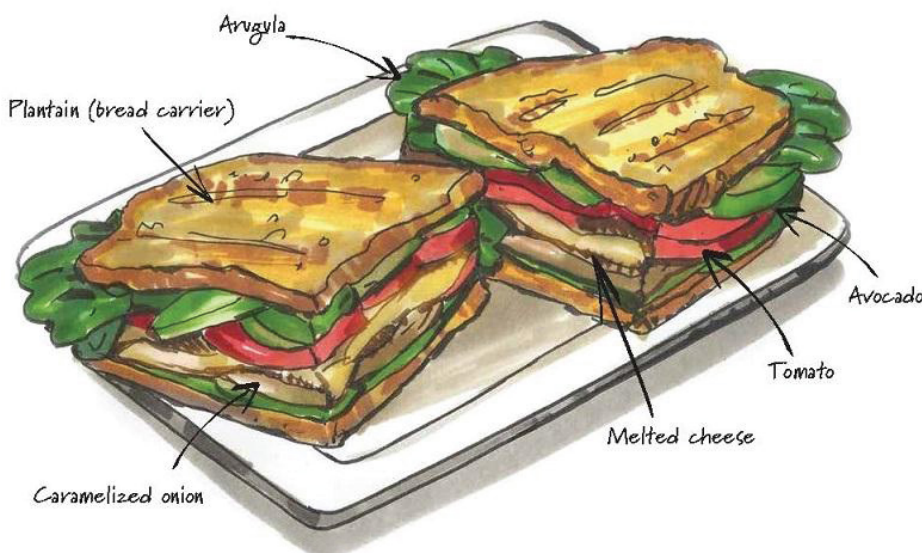
"We noticed that a lot of the vegetable-centric sandwiches were very popular," said Rachel Tracy, managing director at Chicago-based Culinary Visions Panel. "While there was some protein in them, they were more vegetable based."

"A lot of people preferred those over the more indulgent ones, but some of the indulgent ones did score pretty high," she said.

Strong preferences for indulgent or healthier sandwiches were about equally common among the 1,014 adults surveyed. Some 17% usually seek a healthy option, while 15% love loaded sandwiches. They also split down the middle on whether they like to try new combinations (21%) or always order a favorite (20%).

The top choice was an omelet sandwich, with bacon, spinach, pepper jack cheese and roasted red peppers wrapped in an egg. The survey found 33% would try it, compared to 30% for the vegetable sandwich.

Vegetable Sandwich



One of the more indulgent items, a stuffed hoagie, took second. Fourth was a Paleo sandwich, named for a diet trend and featuring shrimp, avocado spread, romaine, peppers plus fresh herbs in an almond flour wrap.

Vegetable-centered sandwiches found their strongest support among consumers ages 18 to 34, the survey found. It weighed age, gender, income and regional differences.

The most telling sign of the potential for vegetables appeared when consumers were asked to list their top 10 sandwich ingredients.

Six were vegetables: lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, avocado, and roasted red peppers. Lettuce and tomato were No. 1 and 2 respectively. The top 10 also included turkey, ham, roast beef and mayonnaise.

“This suggests the possibility that the next great sandwich concept could incorporate interesting vegetable combinations, and meat may not be necessary,” the study said.

Another report from market research firm Packaged Facts on culinary trends in sandwiches forecasts that leafy vegetables will be appearing more prominently as a sandwich component, alongside leaner proteins.

Tartines were one of eight sandwich types profiled by Packaged Facts.

“Although tartines can be made with all manner of ingredients, a new trend emerges when the garden is piled onto the bread to create a produce-based — often vegetarian, and potentially vegan — still life of a sandwich,” the report said.

Both reports were released in July.