


FLAVOR



THE MENU

The BITTER TRUTH

Optimizing the flavor potential of bitter profiles

BITTER OPPORTUNITIES

"For some people, bitter is not necessarily understood. It is just perceived as something bad on the tongue," says Rachel Tracy, managing director of Chicago-based Olson Communications. The company recently conducted a study on bitter taste preferences through its Culinary Visions Panel. However, Tracy points out that "bitter is the preferred taste for foodies," and suggests that chefs and operators with a more culinary-minded clientele may be more experimental when it comes to bitter flavors. She recommends using bitter undertones "to give flavor balance between sweet and salty."

Chef Bob Okura feels that the awareness and growing acceptance of bitter profiles points to an evolving American palate. He cites the popularity of dark chocolate and coffee as evidence of such maturing tastes. "It is really a matter of exposure and education," he says, that will bring "underutilized flavors" into the mainstream. As chefs and mixologists continue to embrace and finesse bitter ingredients and profiles, taste-trekking consumers will follow their lead.