

# 'Oxymodern' Contradictions Power Top Foodservice Trends

From unforgettable experiences to homespun kitsch

September 15, 2016, 04:35 pm By Meg Major, EnsembleIQ



In the food world, as in life, contradictions abound. And so it goes for the key drivers of the top foodservice trends, to which progressive grocers everywhere would be wise to remain attuned.

Some of the freshest insights are sandwiched into a new study from the **Chicago-based Culinary Visions Panel**, which collected learnings from a wide range of creative experts to understand what values are shaping modern consumer food trends.

For any major trends identified, equally powerful countertrends appeared," notes **Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel**, which describes the key components of tomorrow's menus as being powered by "oxymodern food trends."

To follow up its initial exploration, the panel surveyed more than 2,000 participants about their dining experiences away from home, and the following factors emerged:

## Unforgettable Experiences + Food as Fuel

Today's food-centric culture has paved the way for fully immersive experiences such as food festivals, street markets, fancy-food emporiums and food trucks. Here, **food is both the attraction and the entertainment**. The goal is to have food experiences worthy of sharing, both online and in person. Yet the fast-paced and overcommitted lives of today's consumers have also fueled **fast-casual and quick-service restaurant segments**.

## Loving It Local + Exploring the World

Continued **desire for local and sustainable food** has shown that consumers are willing to pay more for locally sourced food when dining out. Yet the world has become a more manageable playground for today's food-savvy consumer through exotic spices, unique ingredients and global cooking styles. Consumers enjoy **exploring new cultures through food**, and love traveling to food destinations.

## Healthfully Delicious + Luxuriously Indulgent

Diets are out, but consumers expect meals to be **both healthy and delicious when dining out**. Consumers are unwilling to trade taste for healthfulness, but they do prefer to limit certain ingredients in their diets instead of completely eliminating them. Despite all of the talk surrounding healthfulness, consumers also love restaurants that offer "over-the-top" menu items and believe that **indulgent foods must be worth the splurge**.

## Childlike Delight + Adult Sophistication

The quest for nostalgia has never been stronger while dining out. Consumers crave **foods that remind them of their childhoods**, simpler times and even items that are "just like grandma used to make." This doesn't change the fact that consumers also admire **artistic food presentations, sophisticated flavor combinations and avant-garde cooking techniques**.

## Refined Minimalism + Homespun Kitsch

Consumers like **foods they can taste and ingredients they can understand**. This means desiring fresh ingredients prepared with simple techniques and elegant presentations. Yet consumers are also drawn to the simplicity of rustic, home-style foods. Sophisticated foodies are hungry for authentic flavor experiences using **old-school, traditional cooking methods**.

The new study from **Culinary Visions Panel, a division of Olson Communications, is titled "What's Trending in Foodservice: Cultural Contradictions Driving the Trends."** Covered topics include experience-based dining, transparency of ingredients, balancing healthful with taste, and food presentations.