

## Checking out food trends for 2024

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As we approach the new year, it's a good time to check out what those in the know think will be the trends and shifts in the culinary world in 2024.

I had a few hints while sitting on a panel of industry professionals during the recent Retail Food and Consumer Lifestyle Visioning Panel event. I also consulted with Culinary Visions, a renowned culinary trends forecasting practice based in Chicago.

### Five key insights from Culinary Visions



An order of Peruvian ceviche is a delicious example of international flavors most consumers would enjoy at a restaurant.

**Culinary adventure continues.** Culinary adventure has become a welcome diversion for today's consumers, who enjoy exploring new foods and cuisines. According to Culinary Visions' research, 76% of consumers surveyed considered themselves adventurous eaters, both at home and when dining out. And 84% said they enjoy being creative in the kitchen.

**Collaboration inspires innovation.** Mutual respect and admiration among industry professionals has led to more partnerships among chefs, restaurant development groups, retail stores, farmers and suppliers. As the line between food service and retail channels continues to blur, consumers are appreciating the new options. For example, 71% of consumers surveyed found the idea of a box of groceries curated by a restaurant chef appealing as well as expressing interest in a restaurant chef and local farmer teaming up to create a meal kit.

**Mindful sourcing is appreciated.** Consumers are interested in understanding the origin of the ingredients in their food and beverages, and how those involved in bringing their favorites to them is able to make a sustainable living. Seventy-nine percent of consumers surveyed by Culinary Visions said they wanted to know as much as possible about the food they are eating and prefer to order items about which they know not just the country or region of origin, but the specific farms.

**Food creates community.** Sixty-five percent of consumers who participated in a Culinary Visions survey said they enjoyed dining out with friends more than sharing a virtual experience.

**Everyday life made easier.** Today's consumers crave ease in everyday life as much as variety and flavor in their meals and snacks. Sixty-eight percent of consumers agreed prepared sauces or flavoring components make home cooking easier. They also said they prefer to order takeout for items that are difficult to make at home. Most also prefer restaurants for international foods with flavors they cannot easily prepare at home.

## Visioning Panel trends

### Consumer lifestyles

**Meal kits.** While they continue to grow among groups that have become accustomed to home dining, the questions remains whether the business model is sustainable for large companies such as grocery stores, chefs and restaurateurs that have been offering quality meal kits that can be picked up locally.



Meal kits abound, and so do choices as chefs become involved in creating new cooking options for consumers.

**Prepared foods.** These options thrive as consumers search for easy meals for both small and large households.

**The cooking renaissance.** A trend fueled in 2020 pandemic days, families continue to cook. Young adults, however, are more apt to get out and socialize in restaurants and bars.

**Home delivery.** Momentum is continuing as it keeps making everyday life easier.

**Someone else can shop my list.** Click-and-collect technologies have become post pandemic routines, with digital ordering with pickup and delivery eliminating the need to enter a grocery store.

**Sustainable packaging.** Consumers are more aware than ever about the massive amount of waste created in individual households, and consumers are looking for more sustainable alternatives.

**Home entertaining.** Consumers are embracing a new era with imagination and enthusiasm.



Entertaining at home with a fan favorite, homemade chili with all the fixings is a popular homemade meal.

**Year-round farmers markets.** Fresher food is a attractive with markets and community supported agriculture increasing access throughout the country.

**Inflation-minded budgets vs. premium ingredients.** Inflation is prompting consumers to create more budget-friendly, healthy meals at home, as wider availability of unique and high-quality ingredients is helping them to eat better.

**Frozen foods** – Today’s freezers aren’t considered “desperation dining” anymore. Easy, exceptional meals are always on hand.

**Plant-based everything.** Consumers are offered a wider array of manufactured, plant-based products designed to attract omnivorous diners, as supermarkets add produce butchers to help consumers better understand a wider range of produce offerings.

## Generation-driven trends

**Healthy on the go.** From a protein punch on the run to functional snacks, Millennials and Gen Z folks are driving demand for functional foods to feed hectic, time-starved lifestyles.

**TikTok cuisine.** Social media is driving food experiences for a younger generation, including everything from prep tips to ick-factor mashups.

**Chefs as oracle of the day.** Chefs have become trusted sources of knowledge beyond menus, with celebrity chefs driving philanthropic ventures to influence others to do good.

## Cooking in the modern world

**Fearless cooking.** Sous vide is becoming a mainstream cooking technique.

**The magic of small.** Air fryers and instapots are bringing new interest to home meals, using appliances that make it easy.

**Homage to heritage.** Time-honored recipes are on the rise, with bread baking especially popular during the pandemic.

**Global flavors and techniques.** The growing interest in world flavors has sparked interest in cooking techniques that are authentic to specific cuisines.

**Family meals.** Home meals that include trusted recipes and multiple generations of family and friends are on the rise.