

# Industry Insights

A roundup of noteworthy Canadian foodservice findings for the week of May 4, 2026



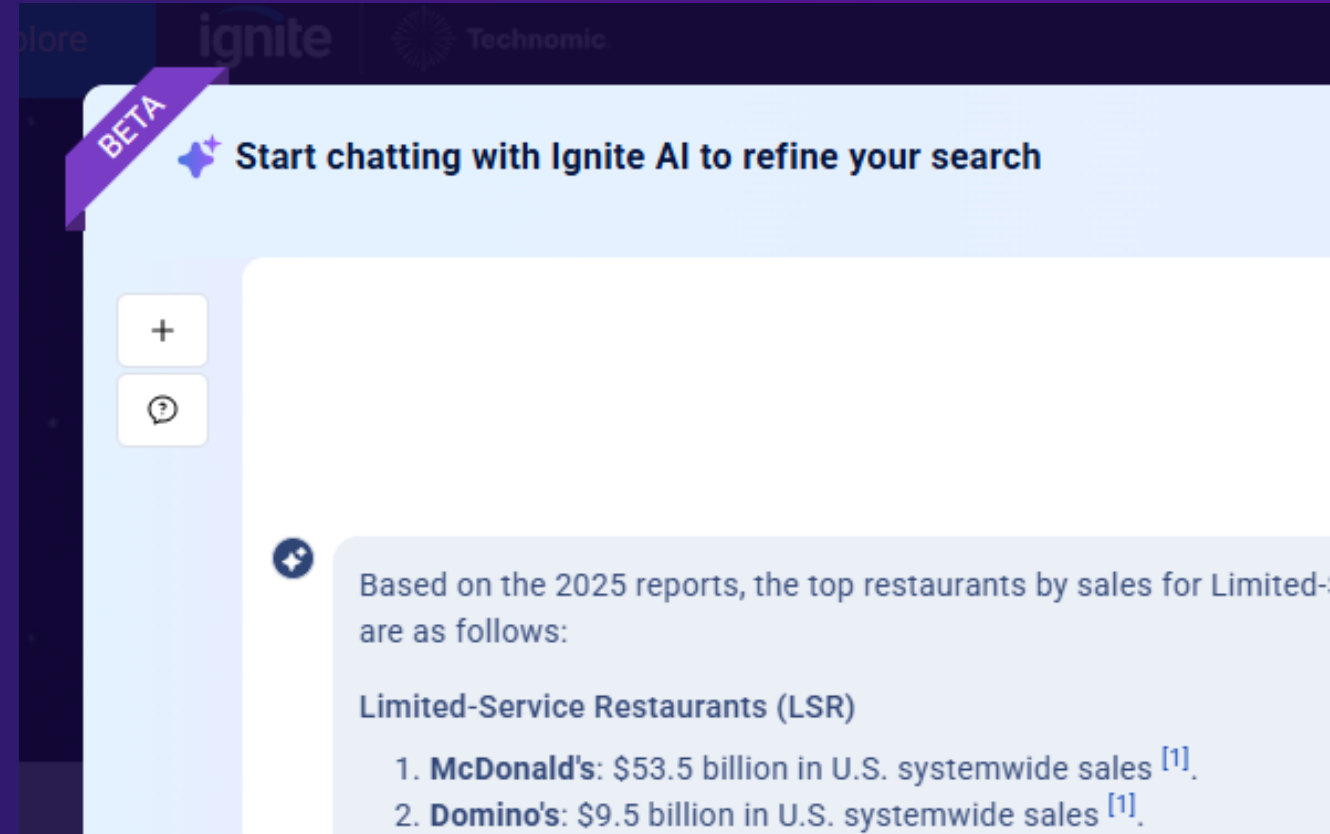
Image Source: Shutterstock

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# Ignite AI is live!

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The screenshot shows the Ignite AI chat interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "ignite" and "Technomic" logos. A purple banner with "BETA" is visible. The main chat area has a light blue header with a star icon and the text "Start chatting with Ignite AI to refine your search". Below this, there are two input fields: one with a "+" icon and another with a speech bubble icon. The chat history shows a message from the AI with a star icon, stating: "Based on the 2025 reports, the top restaurants by sales for Limited-Service Restaurants (LSR) are as follows: Limited-Service Restaurants (LSR) 1. McDonald's: \$53.5 billion in U.S. systemwide sales [1]. 2. Domino's: \$9.5 billion in U.S. systemwide sales [1]."

# More than half of chains added new stores last year

An analysis of the Top 200 chain restaurants shows that 56% of brands experienced net growth by adding at least one new location in 2025. In contrast, 22% of brands saw a net decline, losing one or more locations compared to the previous year. The remaining 22% of chains maintained a stable footprint with no net change in their number of locations.

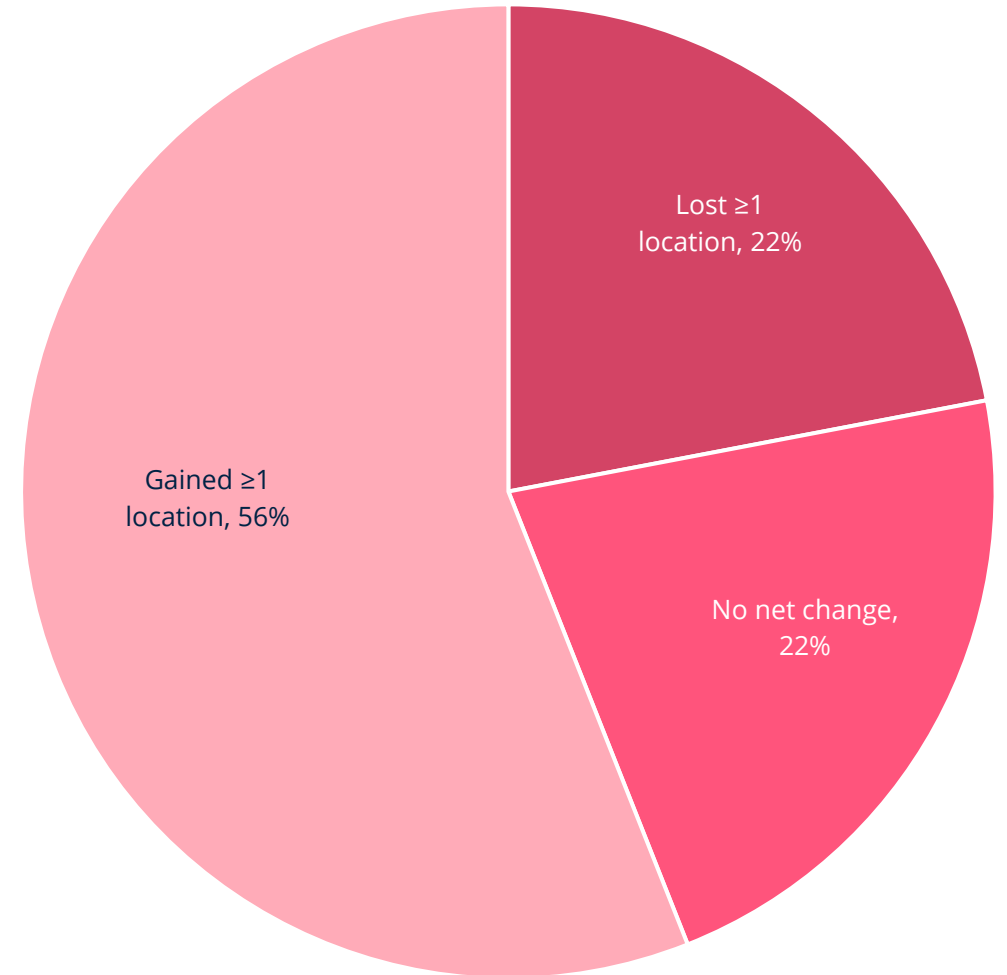
Leading the charge in location expansion were emerging brands, such as Firehouse Subs, BarBurrito and Freshslice Pizza, each of which added over 30 new stores in 2025.

For a deeper dive into location development trends across 250 of Canada's largest chains, leverage Ignite Company for comprehensive insights.

[Ignite Company clients: Click here for more](#)

Source: Technomic Ignite Company

**TOP 200 CHAIN RESTAURANTS**  
2025 VS. 2024 NET CANADIAN LOCATION CHANGE



## Ignite Menu

# Menus continue steady growth, led by add-ons

Menu size is growing year over year, up 1.8% this quarter. This is an increase from the 1.3% average item count growth in Q4 2025, but not as extensive as the growth seen a year ago (+7.8% for Q1 2025).

Currently, all mealparts are seeing growth, except appetizers (-0.3%). Add-ons (+7.1%) and kids menus (+6.8%) lead, both of which have consistently shown positive growth and have led the item count change chart since Q2 2025.

Add-ons are particularly a smart choice for operators during economically challenging times because they offer several strategic advantages, including lower perceived cost for customers,

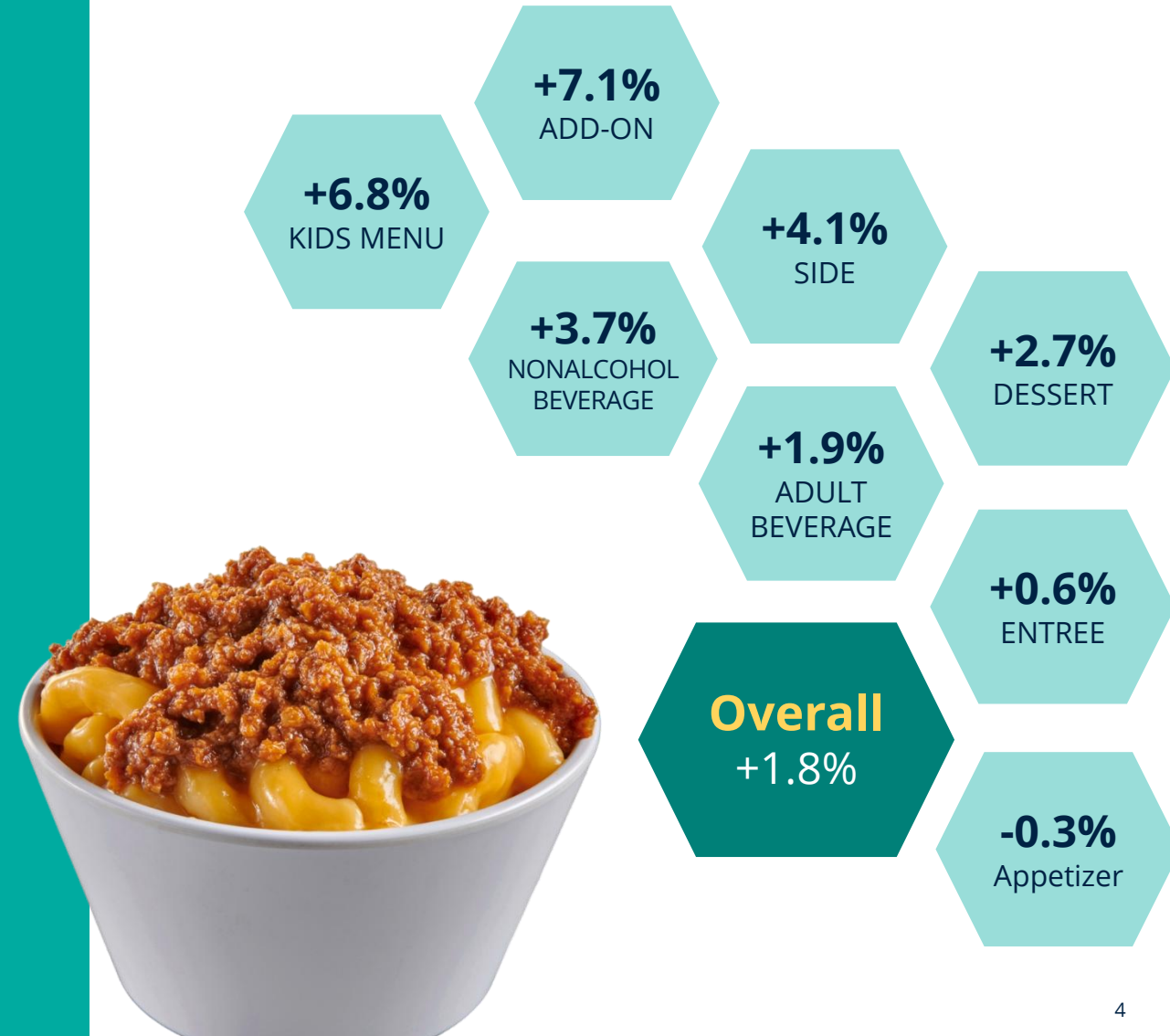
upselling opportunities, flexibility across menus, high profit margins and encouraging customization. For example, drink add-ons alone saw a 35.6% increase, and protein add-ons grew 16.5%.

Speaking of protein, the fastest-growing proteins on menus are seitan (+40.0%), bluefin tuna (+32.0%), dark meat (+30.0%), wagyu (+18.0%) and Canadian bacon (+11.5%). This list features a variety of protein sources—plant-based (seitan is a wheat-based protein), seafood and more traditional meats, illustrating that operators are looking to provide a plethora of protein choices for consumers' dietary needs and preferences.

**Ignite Menu clients: [Click here for more](#)**

Source: Technomic Ignite Menu, Q1 2025-Q1 2026  
Image Source: Shutterstock

## ITEM COUNT CHANGE % IN THE LAST YEAR Q1 2025-Q1 2026



# Households with kids outpace others in restaurant visits

Households with children are significantly more likely to visit or order from restaurants once a week or more, regardless of income level, compared to households without children. For instance, 75% of families earning over \$100,000 annually report frequent restaurant usage, compared to just 61% of households without children in the same income bracket. This pattern holds true across all income levels, indicating that family dynamics may play a more critical role in driving restaurant usage than income alone.

Historical data from Ignite Consumer further highlights this trend. Households without children have either maintained or reduced their

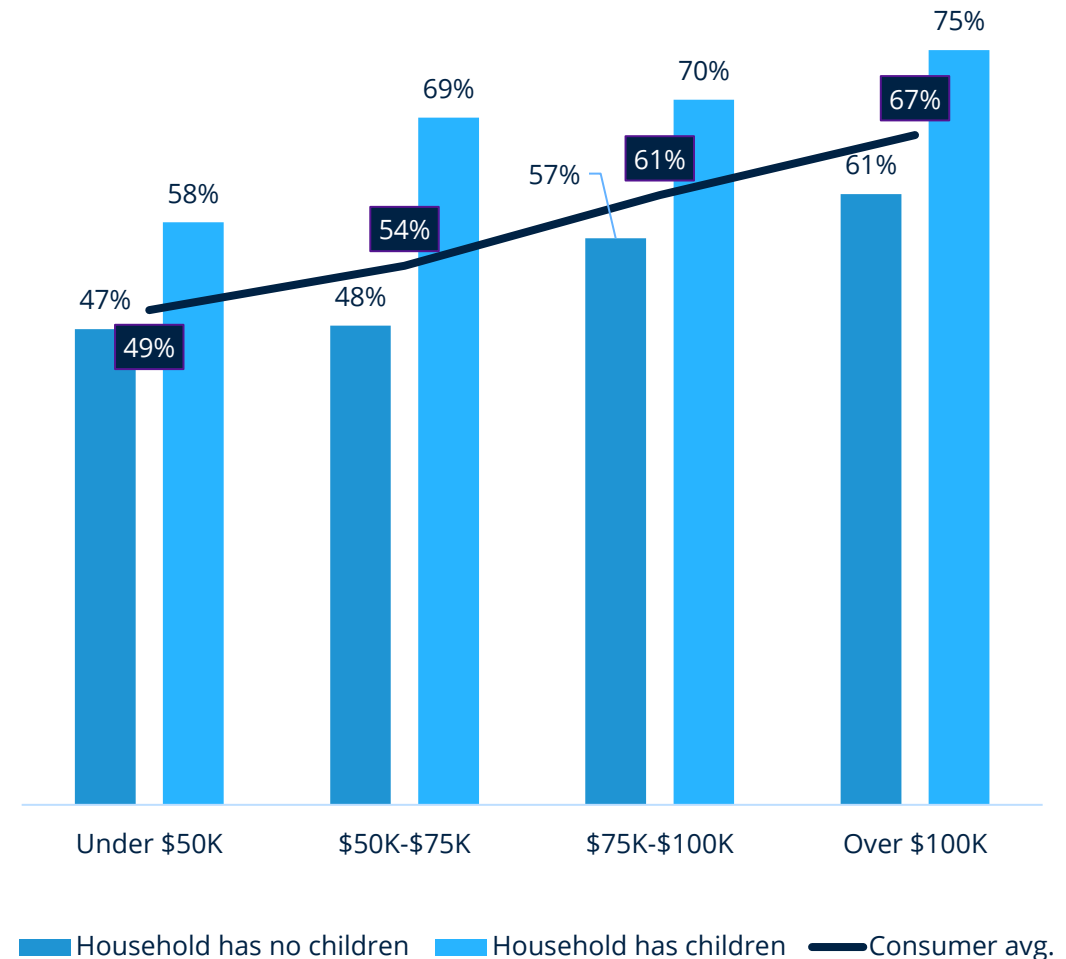
frequent restaurant usage over time, while households with children have consistently increased their usage year over year. Even lower-income families with children show a growing reliance on restaurants. In Q1 2024, 51% of families with children earning less than \$50,000 annually reported visiting or ordering from restaurants once a week or more. By Q1 2026, this figure rose to 58%. Similarly, families earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 saw an increase from 62% in Q1 2024 to 69% in Q1 2026.

This growing trend underscores the pivotal role families with children play in shaping the restaurant industry's guest base and future growth.

[Ignite Consumer clients: Click here for more](#)

Base: 6,500 Canadian consumers ages 18+  
Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer, Q1 2026

**RESTAURANT USAGE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND FAMILY STATUS**  
% OF CONSUMERS VISITING/ORDERING FROM RESTAURANTS  
ONCE A WEEK OR MORE



## Global Foodservice Navigator Program

# Where has fried chicken grown?

The recently released *Global Consumer Trends Study*, available as part of Technomic's Global Foodservice Navigator Program, is a deep dive into consumer preferences and behaviours in the foodservice, including which foods they order at least occasionally.

Global preference for fried chicken has grown by an average 5% since Q2 2022, with this growth meriting a closer look: At an average 18% growth, Middle East consumers saw by far the highest growth in ordering fried chicken at least occasionally.

Two of the top five markets were found in this region, including Saudi Arabia's first-place 25% growth. At an average 7% growth, Asia-Pacific consumers saw

the second-highest growth in ordering fried chicken at least occasionally.

Six of the top 10 markets were found in this region, including China, which landed in second place with 21% growth.

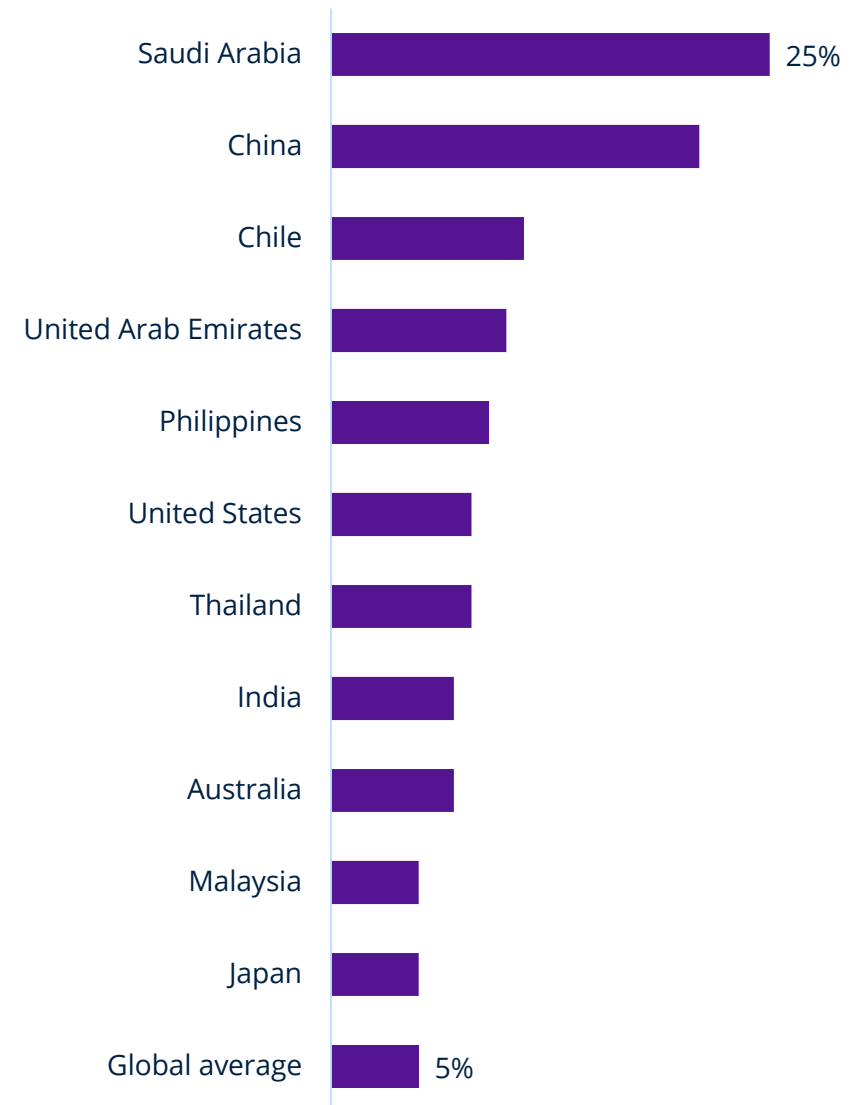
At an average 6% and 5% growth, North America and Europe consumers, saw the third- and fourth-highest growth, respectively. These averages approximately match the global average, with only the U.S. seeing above-average growth at 8%. Finally, at an average 1%, Latin America consumers lagged behind their counterparts elsewhere, with Chile a notable exception at 11% growth.

[Global Navigator clients: Click here for more](#)

Source: Technomic 2022-2026 Global Foodservice Navigator Program consumer surveys

Q: Which types of food do you order at restaurants or other dining establishments at least occasionally (once every 90 days)? Select all that apply.

## % CONSUMERS ORDERING FRIED CHICKEN AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY



## IGNITE AI PROMPT OF THE WEEK

In each Industry Insights, we ask Ignite AI a top-of-mind industry question and share the answer with you. Copy and paste our prompt or write your own to answer your industry questions in our Ignite.

# What are three adult beverage trends to watch in 2026 and what strategies should an adult beverage supplier apply in Canada?

[Technomic Ignite clients: Click here for more](#)

Source: Technomic Ignite AI

The Canadian adult beverage market will see significant trends that suppliers should consider to align with consumer preferences and market dynamics.

### Key Trends

- 1. Growth in Alcohol-Free Beverages:** Alcohol-free options, including cocktails/mixed drinks (+30% year over year) and beer (+16%), are experiencing robust growth. This trend reflects a shift towards healthier and nonalcohol alternatives among consumers.
- 2. Specialty and Innovative Cocktails:** Specialty drinks are gaining traction, with restaurant original cocktails seeing a 33% increase. Bold flavours such as chile (+69%), espresso (+29%), and passion fruit (+21%) are driving innovation in this category.
- 3. Wine Varietal Preferences:** Chianti (+35%) and sauvignon blanc/fum blanc (+18%) are among the fastest-growing wine varieties, indicating a shift in consumer preferences towards these specific types.

### Strategies for Suppliers

- 1. Product Innovation:** Develop and promote alcohol-free beverage options and specialty drinks with unique flavour profiles to cater to the growing demand for healthier and innovative choices.
- 2. Menu Optimization Support:** Collaborate with operators to optimize their beverage menus, focusing on high-margin and trending items like specialty cocktails and popular wine varieties.
- 3. Consumer Engagement:** Leverage marketing campaigns that highlight the health benefits and flavour innovations of your products to attract health-conscious and adventurous consumers.



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### Have questions?

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