

Industry Insights

A roundup of noteworthy Canadian foodservice findings for the week of May 18, 2026



Image Source: Shutterstock

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Ignite AI is live!

Ask questions, **get instant answers** with detailed sourcing directly from Ignite.

Try it now!

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. Below the banner, a message says "Start chatting with Ignite AI to refine your search". On the left side, there are two buttons: a "+" button and a speech bubble icon. The main chat area shows a response from Ignite AI, indicated by a blue star icon. The response text is: "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]."

The rise of Mexican chains in Canada

The footprint of Mexican concepts ranked among Technomic's Top 200 Canadian chain restaurants has grown from 442 stores in 2015 to 1,279 stores in 2025, nearly tripling the category's presence over the past decade.

U.S.-based giants Chipotle Mexican Grill and Taco Bell have significantly ramped up their Canadian expansion in recent years, while homegrown brands like BarBurrito and Quesada continue to strengthen their market position.

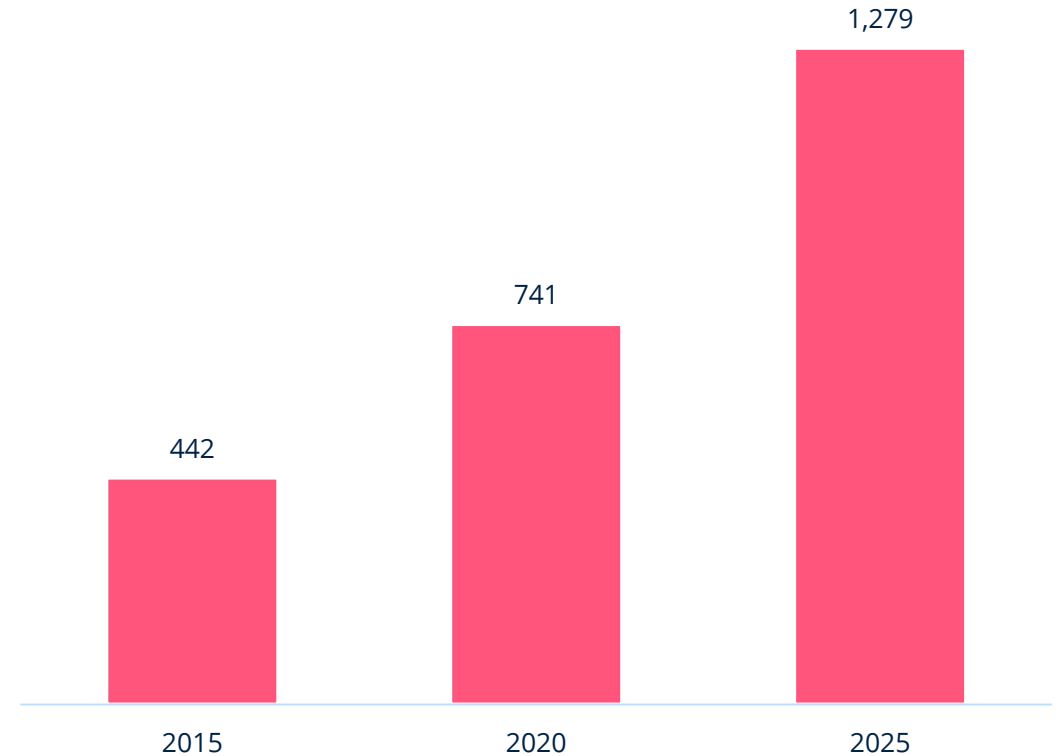
Overall sales growth for Mexican chains in the Top 200 reached 15% in 2025, markedly outpacing the cumulative 3.7% growth seen across the broader group.

Check out Technomic's newly released *2026 Top 200 Canadian Chain Restaurant Report* for more location development trends among Canada's largest chains.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Company

TOP 200 MEXICAN CHAIN LOCATIONS
TOTAL CANADIAN LOCATIONS BY YEAR



Ignite Menu

Forecasting seasonal harvest menus

Technomic's recently published *Canada Season's Eatings* report predicts utilizations and gives recommendations for fall flavours and ingredients.

Here are some recommended actions for fall 2026:

Add functional fall fare to indulgent food and drink

Get creative with functional autumn produce to balance cravings with nutrition. Infuse mushrooms into coffee for mental and digestive benefits or top chili with antioxidant-rich apples.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Menu
Image Source: Shutterstock

Substitute traditionally potato-based snacks with fall produce

Swap out potatoes with more nutritious ingredients in traditional recipes, such as fiber-rich squash fries or vitamin-rich Brussels sprouts chips, to target health-conscious consumers.

Get crunchy this fall

Showcase texture in innovative ways, such as roasting pumpkin seeds to garnish salads or soups, to enhance mouthfeel.



What matters to millennials when choosing a CDR?

Using Technomic Ignite AI, questions such as these can be quickly answered by analyzing survey responses from more than 24,000 verified foodservice guests. Here's a snippet of what Ignite AI had to say:

Experience and environment are defining priorities. Millennials at casual-dining restaurants place a significantly stronger premium on the physical and sensory environment than the overall foodservice base. Value through atmosphere/ambiance (+4.4 pts), decor (+4.0 pts), music (+5.4 pts) and venue versatility (+8.1 pts) are all areas where millennials overindex substantially. For casual-dining operators, this means the in-room

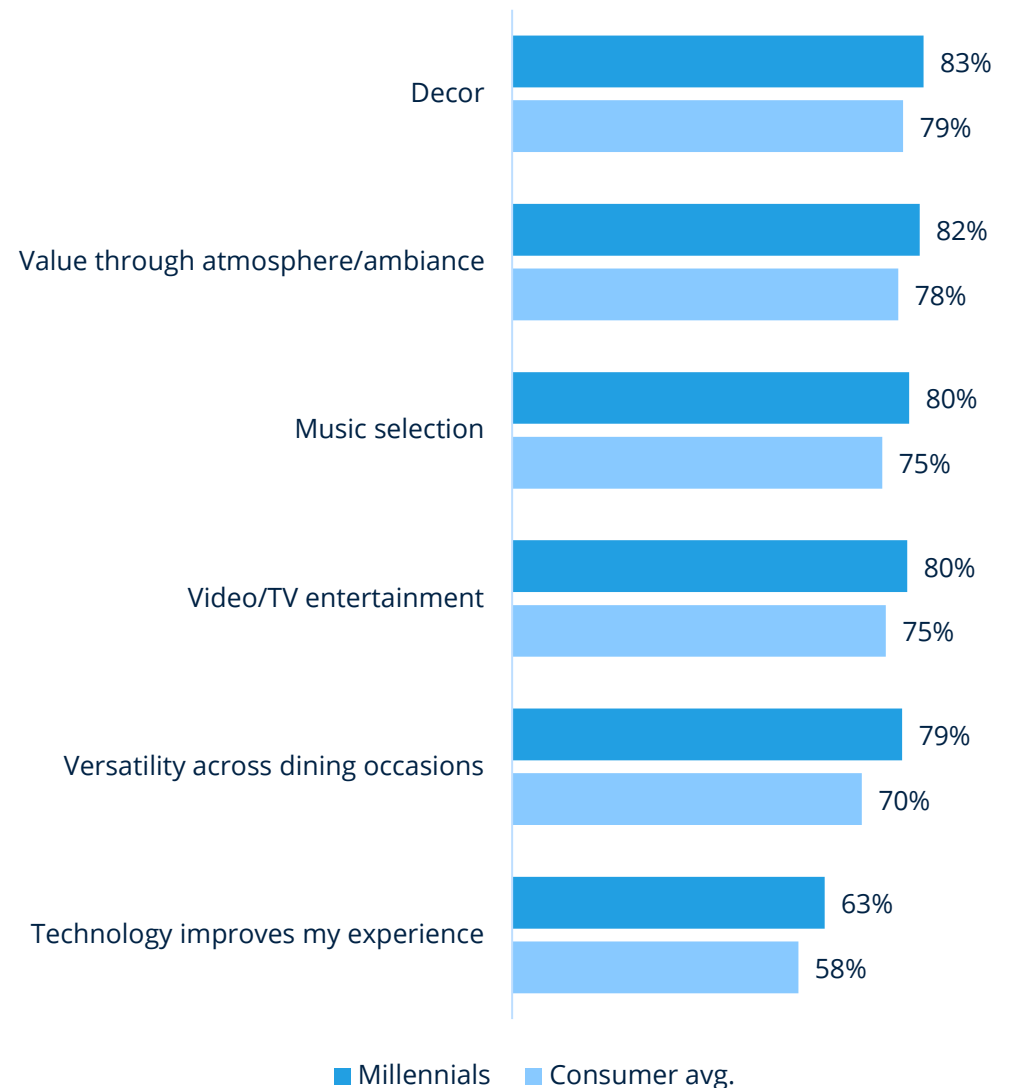
experience is not simply a backdrop—it is a core reason millennials choose the channel at all.

Venue versatility is the biggest differentiator. The single largest gap in the dataset is "this restaurant would be appropriate for a variety of different dining occasions" (+8.1 points). This reflects that millennials are selecting casual dining partly because of its social and occasion flexibility; they see it as appropriate for birthday dinners, business lunches, family meals and date nights alike. Operators who can communicate and deliver on this multioccasion positioning have a clear competitive edge with this cohort.

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

Base: 24,000+ Canadian consumers ages 18+
Source: Technomic Ignite AI and Technomic Ignite Consumer, Q2 2025-Q1 2026

**MOST IMPORTANT TO MILLENNIALS:
CASUAL-DINING RESTAURANT SELECTION DRIVERS**
% IMPORTANT/VERY IMPORTANT



Global Foodservice Navigator Program

Shareable sides and desserts

Technomic Global Foodservice Navigator Program's recent *Global Menu Trend Study* details influential flavours, preparations and industry trends, including the rise of quick-service meals designed for sharing. Below is a closer look at this trend.

Nearly 60% of global consumers say they order meals to share or split with family and friends. This includes about two-thirds of Latin America and Middle East restaurant-goers.*

About half of global consumers also say they order from foodservice specifically to socialize, with consumers in Europe and Asia especially likely to do so.**

In response, chains are emphasizing shareable sides, snacks and desserts as fun on- and off-premise experiences. Chains are positioning these LTOs as chances to indulge in nostalgia and youthfulness, as well as fun social experiences.

Splittable sides are often rolled out as jumbo-portioned fries or nachos, while mini entrees like sliders—sliders themselves a growing trend—are increasingly seen on menus made for sharing. Sweets are commonly billed as an excuse to celebrate with friends and family, offering new visit occasions for chains that consumers may not otherwise choose for dessert occasions.

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

*Q: Now, for which of the following do you order food or beverages from restaurants or other dining locations? Select all that apply.

*Source: Technomic August 2025 Global Foodservice Navigator Program consumer survey

**Q: For what type of occasions do you order food from restaurants or other foodservice locations? Select all that apply.

**Source: Technomic February 2026 Global Foodservice Navigator Program consumer survey

Image Source: [Taco Bell India Instagram](#)



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 toward 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/fume 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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Global Foodservice Navigator

Understand the global industry, from menu trends to consumers, in 25 markets.

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Since 1966, we have produced in-depth research focused on the foodservice industry.

We provide insights into consumer, industry and menu trends in the U.S., Canada and 23 markets around the world.

Our team of experts helps leaders in the industry make complex business decisions, set strategy and stay ahead of the curve.

Have questions?

Reach out to us today.

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