

Industry Insights

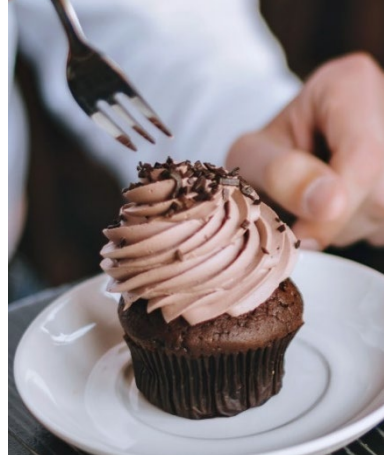
A roundup of noteworthy foodservice findings
for the week of March 10, 2025

Image Source: Shutterstock



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Understand what consumers want now and in the future with Consumer Trend Reports



2024 Topics

Center of the Plate: Beef & Pork

The Future of Limited-Service Restaurants

Lunch

Generational Differences

Delivery & Takeout

Beverage

Dessert

Breakfast

[Explore consumer insights](#)

McDonald's expands in the U.S. but remains shy of 2014 peak

McDonald's increased its domestic footprint by 100 locations in 2024, finishing the year with 13,557 restaurants across the U.S.

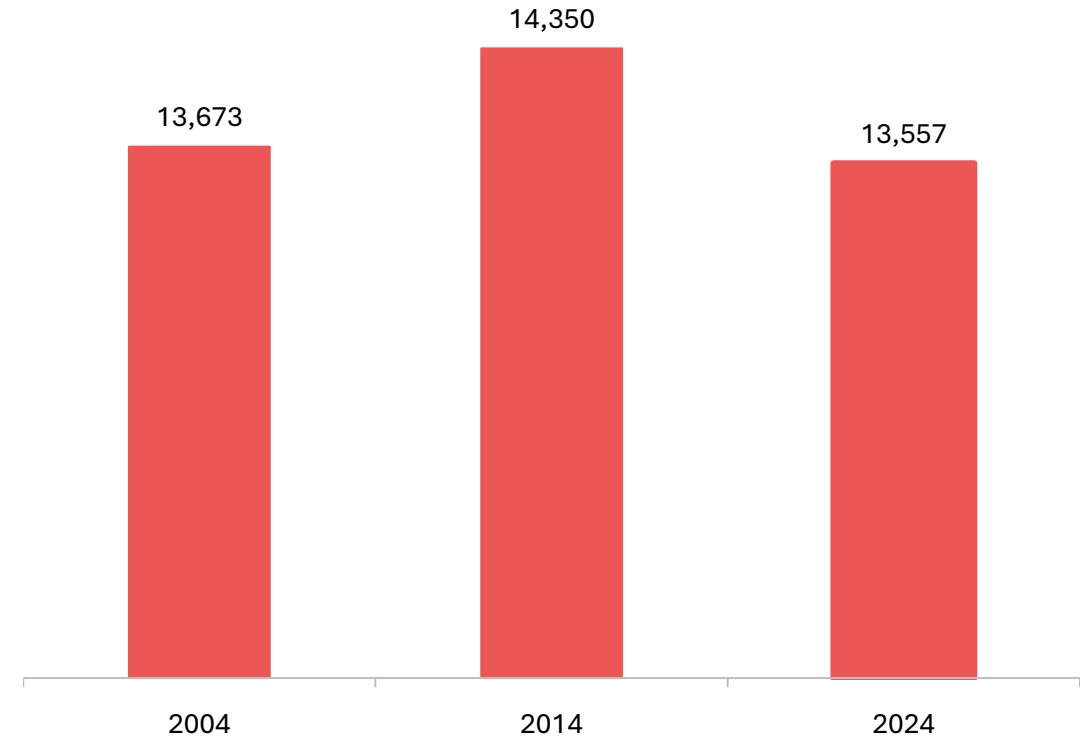
After hitting a peak of 14,350 U.S. restaurants in 2014, McDonald's saw its footprint shrink by over 800 locations between 2015 and 2021. However, domestic development has been on the uptick for McDonald's over the last three years as part of the brand's Accelerating the Arches strategy.

Outside of the U.S., new store development remained robust for McDonald's in 2024, as the chain grew its store count by 5.5% to a total of 29,920 international restaurants.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Company

MCDONALD'S
TOTAL U.S. LOCATIONS



Ignite Menu

The state of today's menus

Technomic's recently launched *State of the Menu 2025* report illuminates menu data and insights from Top 500 chain restaurants. Here are some key themes from recent menus.

LTOs continue to outpace core menu growth

While certain sectors continued to grow like we saw last year, core menus continue to increase in size. We're seeing greater year-over-year growth in core LSR breakfast and lunch/dinner menus, as well as FSR lunch/dinner menus, compared to last year; only FSR breakfast is seeing relatively flat rate of change. Although we're still not yet back

to pre-pandemic menu size, that gap is closing and will be close to closing fully by next year. On the flip side, limited-time offers continue to blossom at exponential rates at both LSRs and FSRs.

Special, unique and unexpected

Many of the trends that we're seeing on menus illuminate operators' desire to stand out from the competition. From offering up controversial menu items to making bizarre mashups to the significant uptick in specialty items across mealparts, dayparts and segments, operators are attempting to differentiate themselves through any means possible.

Balancing quality with cost

One casual-dining operator via Technomic's Q4 2024 Adult Beverage Planning Program operator survey put this dilemma of balancing quality with costs this way: "Consumers want Champagne experiences at Miller Lite prices." There's increasing consumer demand around quality, while at the same time, persistent price-sensitivity. Operators must get creative with the balance and promote value (and its many definitions) where possible.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Menu
Image Source: Shutterstock



Ignite Consumer

The importance of leveraging beverages to appeal to Gen Zers

Capturing the imagination—and potential lifetime customer value—of Gen Zers is an essential ongoing pursuit among restaurant operators. Ignite Consumer data reveals just how important beverage variety and quality can be in the quick-service restaurant (QSR) selection process. Increasingly, beverages are serious business among Gen Zers.

Data from 2023 shows that Gen Zers placed an average degree of importance

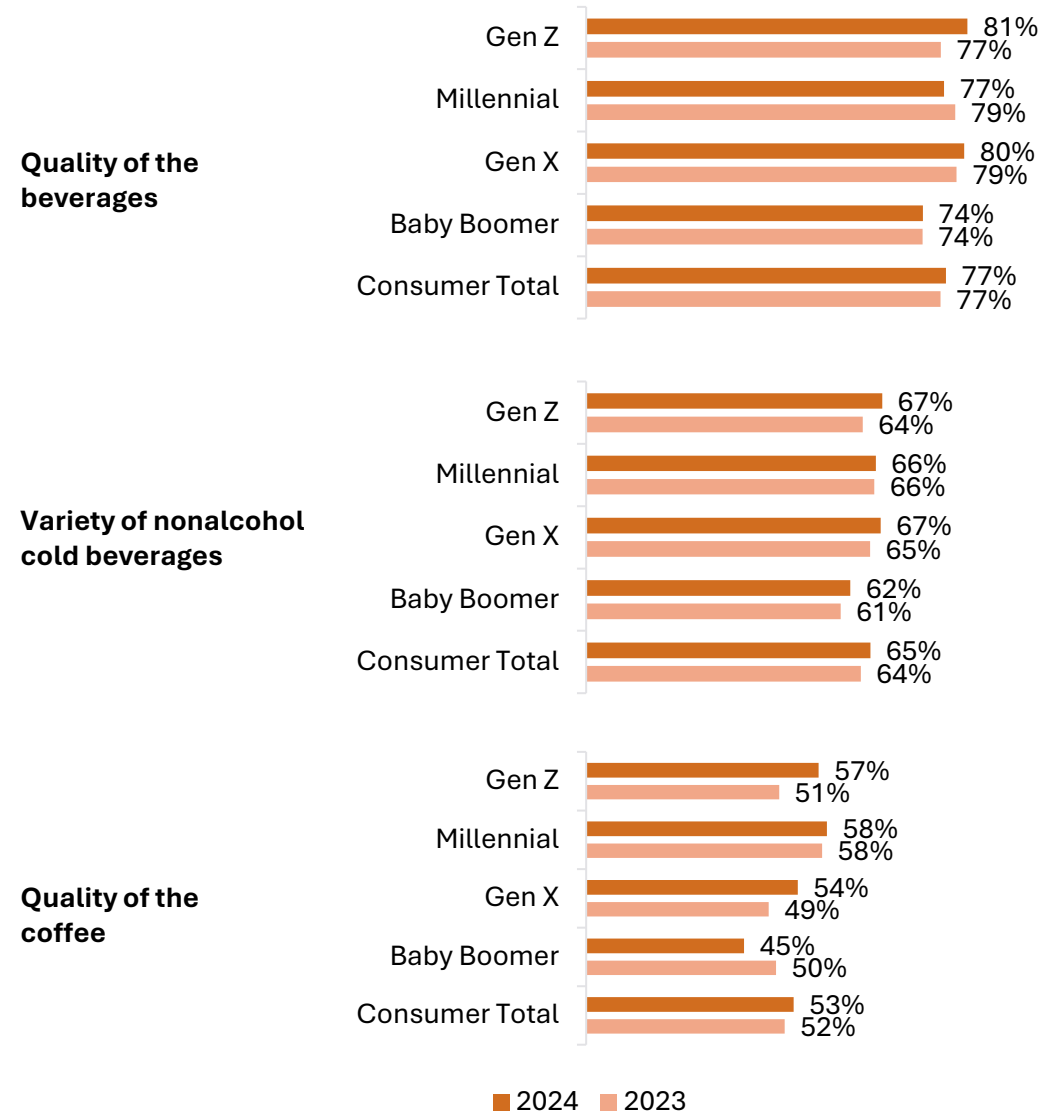
on beverage quality and nonalcohol beverage variety. Yet, in 2024, that importance is higher than all other generations when choosing a QSR.

In addition, the importance of coffee quality has jumped significantly for Gen Zers. The implication here is that no matter the beverage category, high-quality offerings and variety will motivate Gen Zers perhaps more than any other cohort when choosing where to dine or order from QSRs.

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

Base: Approx. 2,250 consumers per year for each attribute shown
Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer

IMPORTANCE WHEN SELECTING A QSR % IMPORTANT/VERY IMPORTANT



Mixue Ice Cream & Tea—largest chain in the world

McDonald’s has lost its claim to the highest number of locations worldwide to Mixue Ice Cream & Tea, which has more than 45,000 locations worldwide. The China-based bubble tea and ice cream operator recently launched its IPO on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, raising more than US\$400 million and seeing near-record oversubscription. What’s behind Mixue’s rapid growth?

Two factors stand out as notable. First, the chain’s strong emphasis on affordability and the logistical capabilities backing it up have played no small part in the rapid expansion since its 1997 founding. Drinks and ice cream

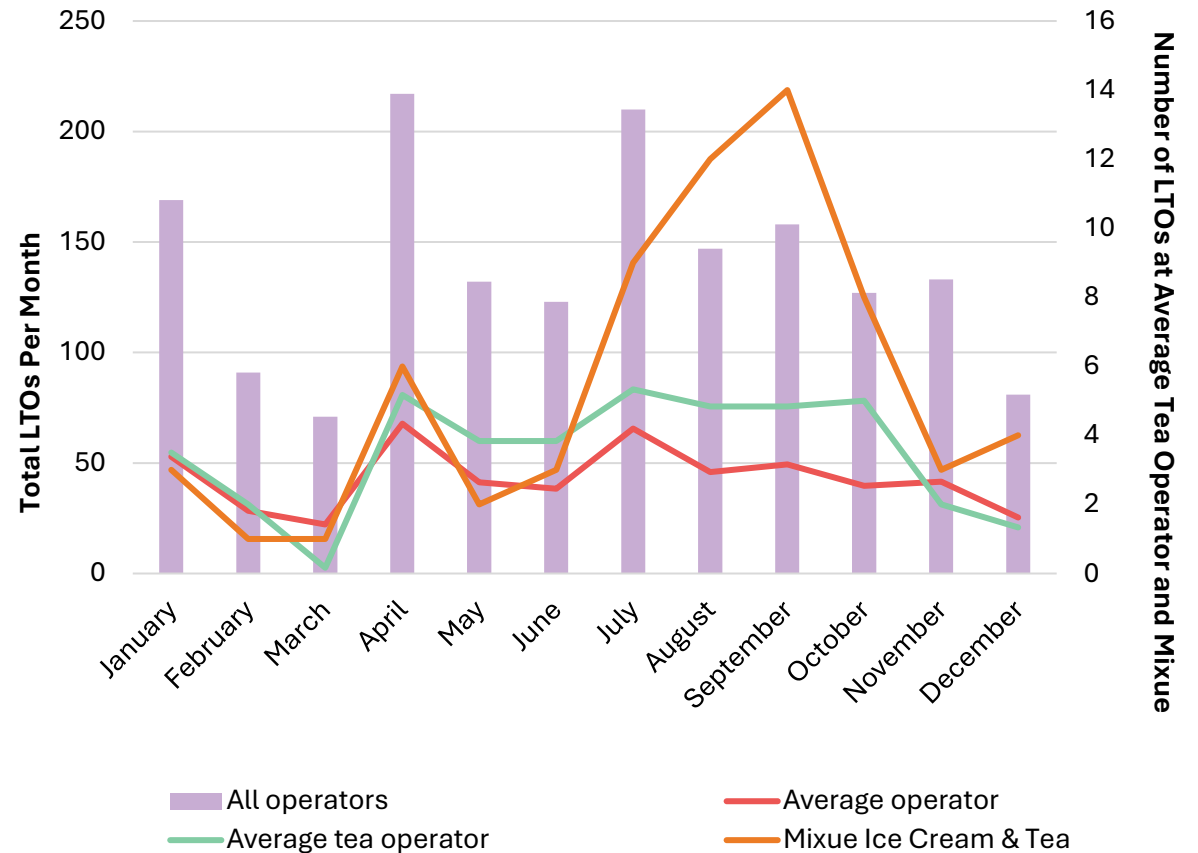
cones alike are typically priced in the single-digit yuan range.

Secondly, Mixue is well-known in its home market and abroad for its rapid menu development. In 2024, the chain introduced almost 70 new and LTO items in China—twice as much as Heytea alone and just over a quarter of all items released by tracked operators in the category. In contrast to other operators, Mixue consistently introduces items during particularly active spring and summer months, as well as the less-active winter season, with development typically outpacing that of its competitors.

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

Source: Technomic Global Foodservice Navigator Program

2024 MONTHLY MENU DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA



Consumer Trend Reports

Soup and salad trends shift amid inflation

About half of consumers overall and roughly seven in 10 consumers ages 18-34 say they have adjusted their soup or salad ordering behaviors in response to inflation. Many are opting to substitute with housemade options or forego soup and salad as sides when eating at restaurants.

At the same time, there is increased interest from consumers in combo meals and bundles that include soup and salad. Just over 40% of consumers say they are likely to purchase a soup or salad with a half-sandwich as a combo meal, and more consumers are incorporating these items as

accompaniments to lunch and dinner. This shift aligns with many restaurants turning to combo meals and bundles as ways to offer value-focused menu items, and consumers are responding with interest.

Get more data-driven insights on the retail foodservice space, including consumer attitudes, behaviors and perspectives with the *Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report*.

[Learn more about Consumer Trend Reports](#)

Source: Technomic 2025 Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report
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We provide insights into consumer, industry and menu trends in the U.S., Canada and 23 countries 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?

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