

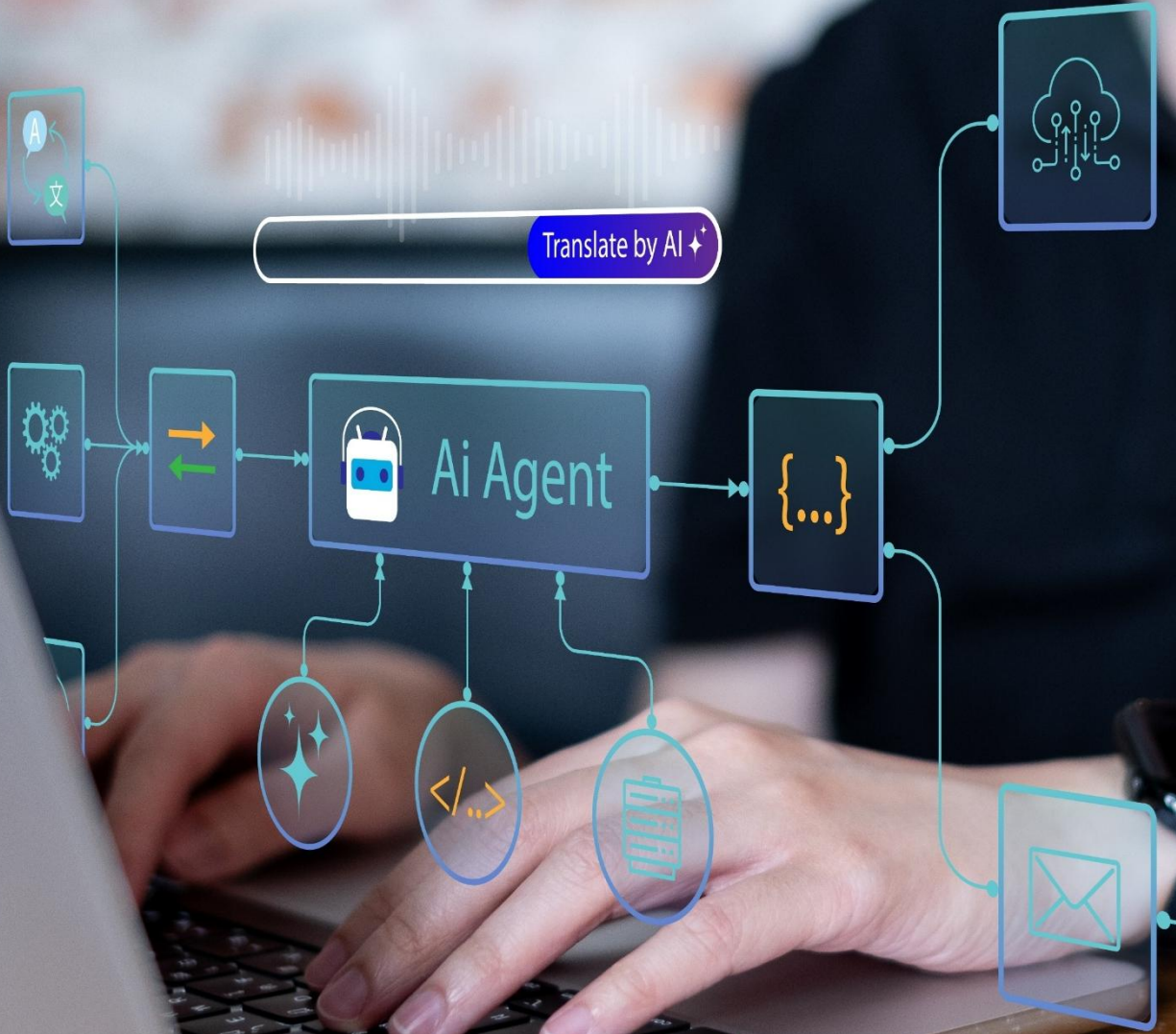
Industry Insights

A roundup of noteworthy foodservice findings
for the week of August 24, 2026



Image Source: Shutterstock

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What if you could ask your data anything?

Which chains are growing fastest?

What menu trends are gaining momentum?

Where are my best opportunities for growth?

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Chain restaurant sales are projected to lag inflation in 2026

Cumulative U.S. sales volume for Technomic’s top 1,500 chain restaurants is forecasted to reach \$497 billion in 2026, reflecting a 3.5% expansion on an annual basis.

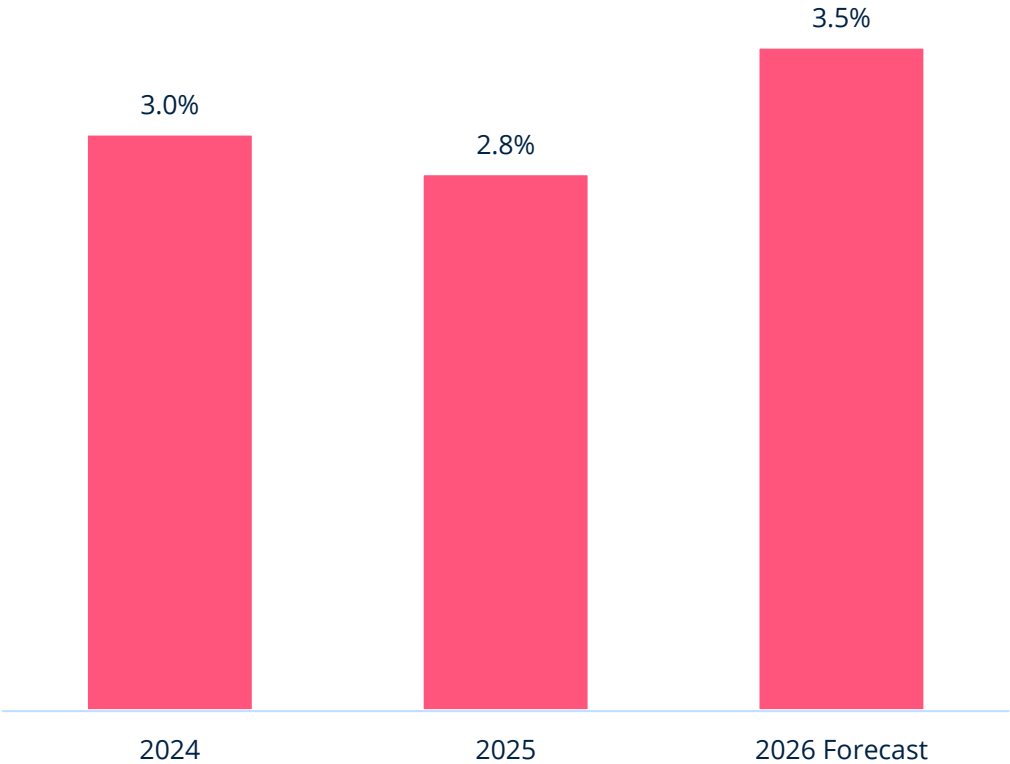
While 2026 chain performance is projected to improve modestly relative to the 2.8% sales growth observed in 2025, sales gains are on pace to increase at a slower pace than foodservice inflation, which has risen by 3.7% through the first half of the year.

Take advantage of the newly-released *Chain Restaurant Performance Outlook* for deeper sales and location forecasting insights for Technomic’s top 1,500 chain restaurants.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Company

TOP 1,500 CHAIN RESTAURANTS
ANNUAL U.S. SALES CHANGE



Consumers are seeking more flavor innovation and LTOs

While price, quality and convenience remain table stakes in the limited-service restaurant landscape, limited-time offers (LTOs) and unique flavors are also critical drivers of visitation. More than half of consumers (54% for fast food and 56% for fast casual) would be likely to visit a restaurant they don't typically frequent if it was offering a unique LTO. Consumer appetite for flavor innovation reinforces this trend. A majority want more menu items with new or unique flavors (51% for fast food and 58% for fast casual), with notable interest in globally-inspired flavors and mashup dishes.

This is particularly true for fast-casual consumers. They rank unique flavors

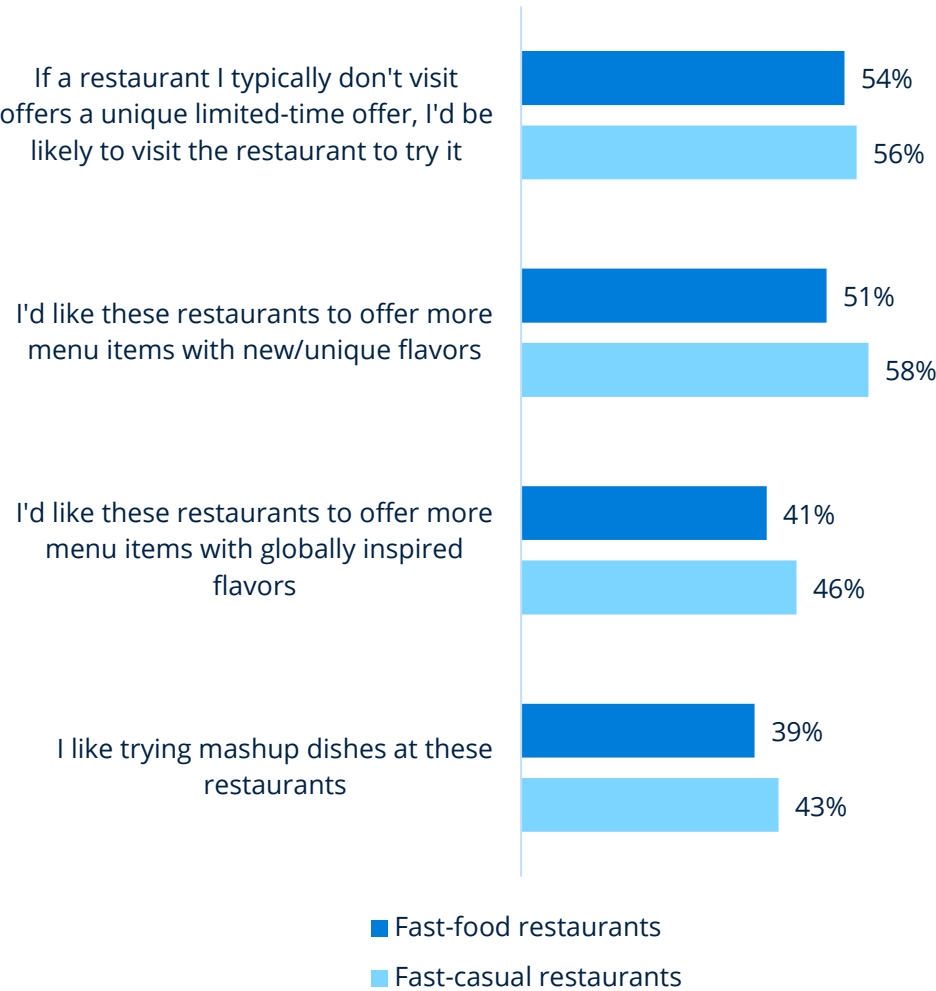
and ingredients higher than their fast-food counterparts and show stronger desire to try something new. However, ingredient familiarity remains important.

Seasonality also plays a role in consumer decision-making and presents opportunities for timely LTOs, with approximately half of consumers across both segments (50% for fast food and 51% for fast casual) indicating that the season and weather are important factors when ordering. As the competitive baseline becomes increasingly uniform, LTOs and flavor innovation are powerful tools for differentiation.

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

Base: Varies by statement; Approx. 1,000 consumers per statement
Q: Thinking only about your visits to [fast-food/fast-casual] restaurants, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Please use a scale of 1-5, where 1=disagree completely and 5=agree completely
Source: Technomic 2026 Future of Limited-Service Restaurants Consumer Trend Report

CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD UNIQUE LTOS AND FLAVORS
% SOMEWHAT/COMPLETELY AGREE



Menu forecasts to watch for in the next two years

Technomic's recently published *2028 Menu Predictions* report identifies the top 50 fastest-growing menu forecasts over the coming two years. Let's check out some key takeaways from this report.

Fusion sweet flavors such as hotyaki (+25%), strawberry balsamic dressing (+24%), agrodolce (+24%) and peach salsa (+24%) are expected to appear with increasing frequency on menus by 2028, showing consumer interest in complex and unexpected taste pairings.

Herb emulsions such as lemon and parsley butter (+38%), parsley mayonnaise (+25%) and Argentinian

red chimichurri (+25%) are on the fastest-growing list for Q2, combining fresh greens with fat for a flavor punch that elevates dishes.

Texturally luxurious but low-calorie cold foam (+50%), superfood dessert alternative chia pudding (+22%) and low-fat "yogurt cheese" labneh (+21%) are **guilt-free snacks and toppings** expected to increase in operator penetration by 2028, reflecting consumer demand for indulgent yet health-conscious treats.

Operators are increasingly expected to menu **spirit-based sauces** such as brandy mustard sauce (+50%), whiskey

glaze (+30%) and wine-based zabaglione sauce (+29%), enabling restaurants to craft complex, elevated flavors using bar ingredients already in stock.

Retro classics are making a comeback, showing operator interest in novelty through rediscovery of time-tested favorites. Tallow (+61%), a traditional animal fat cooking medium, nostalgic streusel topping (+23%) and Diane sauce (+21%), a vintage European pan sauce created in the 1930s, are all on the fastest-growing list.

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

Source: Technomic Ignite Menu
Image Source: Shutterstock



Where are coffee specialists growing?

Asia-born chains are dominating expansion, both within their home markets and abroad. Below are a few recent highlights:

Blue Tokai plans to reach 800 units in India by 2030. The [homegrown coffee QSR](#) ended 2025 with about 240 locations.

Ediya Coffee expanded into Canada. The [South Korea-based coffee QSR](#) currently has about 4,200 locations in its home market and a handful of countries abroad.

Lucky Coffee operator Mixue Group plans to open 2,000 units of the brand in China in 2026. The [multibrand operator](#) had more than 10,000 locations of the coffee QSR at the end of 2025.

Mammoth Coffee reached 1,000 locations in South Korea. The [South Korea-based coffee QSR with a focus on value pricing](#) got its start in 2012.

Nowwa Coffee expanded into Malaysia. The [China-based coffee QSR with a focus on health](#) has grown to more than 10,000 locations since its 2019 founding.

The Venti is set to enter the Philippines. The South Korea-based coffee QSR with a focus on value is partnering with [franchisee JJR Brothers](#) on the market entry.

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

Image Source: [Galleria Supermarket Toronto Instagram](#)

✦ TASTE OF KOREA ✦



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 our prompt or write your own to answer your industry questions in our Ignite.

Using data from

Consumer

Ignite AI provides insights from Technomic's research data. While we strive for accuracy, validate critical insights against sources.

How is snacking evolving in 2026?

Clear

Snacking is one of the most consistently growing visit occasion in foodservice. Two structural trends are reshaping the snack occasion: morning snacking is surging, and younger consumers are disproportionately driving demand.

1. Morning Snacking Is the Fastest-Growing Daypart

The most notable structural shift in snacking is happening in the morning. Morning snack visits grew 51% from Q3 2024 to Q2 2026 (from 857 to 1,298 visits), far outpacing afternoon snack

growth. As a result, morning snacking's share of all snack occasions climbed from 17.4% to 21.6% over the same period.

2. Younger Consumers Are Driving Snacking Demand

Snack occasions are significantly skewed toward millennials and Gen Zers compared to their overall foodservice presence, confirming that snacking is fundamentally a younger-consumer behavior in the current environment. Gen Z represents the core growth engine for snack

occasions. Formats, flavors and digital engagement strategies that resonate with this cohort are most likely to accelerate snack traffic.

GENERATION PROFILE OF SNACK OCCASION VISITORS VS. ALL VISITORS			
Generation	Snack Occasion %	All Visits %	Index
Millennial	35.4%	29.6%	120
Gen Z	32.9%	23.4%	141
Baby boomer	16.6%	27.6%	60
Gen X	14.3%	17.5%	82
Mature	0.9%	1.9%	49

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Source: Technomic Ignite AI

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

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Have questions?

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