



# MENU QUEST

The Pursuit of Culinary Distinction

**Smithfield**

## Trend Watch

### Time to fire up that grill! Summer's back!

Nothing says grilling like summer, and nothing says delicious BBQ on your menu better than pork. According to Technomic, barbecued and grilled are easily the leading operator preparation styles for pork dishes. Moving beyond, while still popular during the summer months are other preparation styles including low and slow cooking. These include items that are smoked or roasted and pulled, which are perfect preparations for utilization of cheaper cuts of meat on your menu. No matter how you prepare them, Smithfield's extensive portfolio of fresh or fully cooked pork products are perfect to help you offer guest-pleasing menu items that offer versatility, ease and convenience in any style of preparation.<sup>1</sup>



### Beyond the classics: How pork is trending on menus nationwide.

As today's foodies become more savvy about what they eat, from how it's made to where it's from, more and more are choosing pork as their preferred meat selection. Some reasons are because it's high in protein, vitamins, and amino acids. Pork's leaner cuts are very nutrient-dense, and several other cuts, such as tenderloin and loin chops, have healthier properties than even chicken. Not only that, but besides all of its better-for-you qualities, pork is extremely versatile and, most importantly, just plain delicious.

**NUMBER ONE**

*According to Foodable Network, "Pork was ranked No. 1 on the 'Most Loved Protein Ranking.' And pork menu item mentions are up by 34 percent in 2017 compared to the year before."*

*Technomic's Center of the Plate Trend Report adds that, "Recipe innovation on restaurant menus is one of the top drivers of increased beef (42%) and pork (44%) consumption."*





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## HERE'S WHAT'S NEWEST AND TRENDING FOR ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CENTER-OF-THE-PLATE PROTEINS:



### Heritage Breed Pork

Humanely raised with fewer antibiotics and with less impact on the environment, heritage breed pork, including superior-quality Smithfield DURoC, is fast gaining in popularity in food-service. It is also healthier and more high-quality, and tastes better, with an array of flavors and textures.<sup>2</sup>



### Low and Slow BBQ

Recently, there has been growing interest in cuts such as pork brisket, pork shoulder, pork ribs and pulled pork. Because of that, many operations have turned to low and slow preparations as a preferred cooking method. Low and slow is the perfect cooking method for cheaper cuts of meat because it renders them more palatable and desirable.<sup>3</sup>



### Classics Comeback

While consumers crave new and different, you can be sure they are also comforted by familiar favorites. Becoming popular again are items such as pot pie, pot roast, meatloaf and meatballs. Shareable choices are trending among younger consumers, as are ethnically influenced items like meatloaf burgers or Korean meatballs.<sup>4</sup>



### Barbecue Bowls

Because consumers generally choose lighter fare for lunches, such as salads and sandwiches, the frequency of BBQ items on menus dropped significantly. Until recently, that is. Because of the resurgence of BBQ overall, operators turned to lighter, healthier preparations to satisfy noon hour, as well as lighter dinner BBQ cravings. These include more barbecued beef and pork power bowls, and salads with proteins served atop rice, grains and greens. Meats include brisket, pulled pork, carnitas and barbacoa.<sup>5</sup>

## Heat up your summer menu by adding a spicy touch.

Indulgent sauces and zingy spices can transform a typical dish into an on-trend head-turner. Younger consumers, especially, are seeking more complex flavors that include more savory or hotter spices and sauces.<sup>6</sup>

**Pork:** While typically featured in regional American and ethnic dishes such as pulled pork with barbecue sauce, carnitas tacos and ramen, operators are raising their game by pairing pork with more indulgent sauces. Included are mushroom- and cheese-based sauces, as well as sweeter preparations flavored with honey, mango, plum and citrus. Chefs are also incorporating preparation methods such as braising and smoking, that infuse a lot of flavor during cooking. Cuts that adapt well to these methods include shoulder, ribs and cheeks.





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**Chicken:** Because it's a lighter protein, chicken tends to do well with lighter sauces, such as those based on fruits and herbs. However, inventive chefs are also serving it with more adventurous flavors, including ginger, jalapeño and garlicky black bean sauce. Since chicken is such a consumer favorite, people are more comfortable trying it with these more assertive flavorings. Regional barbecue chicken variations, such as Carolina vinegar-based sauce, Alabama white sauce or a chili-infused Texas-style sauce, are also trending.



### Regional Flavor Profile: Tex-Mex tops among taste buds<sup>7</sup>

Among the top leading regional American flavors are Creole/Cajun and Hawaiian; however, it's Tex-Mex that leads them all. And it's really no wonder that Tex-Mex is the most popular regional American flavor. Related to the overall popularity of Mexican cuisine, this flavor profile has reached the proliferation stage in the menu adoption cycle, making it mainstream just about everywhere, from chain restaurants to grocery stores. Below are some examples of applications found in foodservice that feature the two top-trending flavors.



#### TEX-MEX:

Tijuana Flats, a Florida based Tex-Mex chain, featured an LTO called the "hangover burrito," featuring chorizo, a fried egg, potatoes, cheese and jalapeños.



#### HAWAIIAN:

Cheeseburger Restaurants' new Kalua Pig Plate features Hawaiian sea salt-rubbed kalua pork. (Menu Idea: In lieu of kalua pork, substitute pork butt with kalua seasonings.)



**Smithfield makes available a variety of recipes for the grill that are perfect for LTOs as the weather gets warmer.**

**For additional information on the extensive Smithfield portfolio of quality products, visit [SmithfieldFoodservice.com](http://SmithfieldFoodservice.com).**

For everything you need to know about Smithfield pork, download our **Pork. Solved.** app.

