

# Trend Watch

## TOP TAKEAWAYS



### Comfort Food Transformed

America has a love affair with classic comfort food dishes — a trend that doesn't seem to fully dissipate but to evolve with consumers' palates. Robert Irvine, host of Food Network's "Restaurant: Impossible" shares his take on comfort food this year with TODAY Food:

*"I think it's going to be more comfort eating, more sharing plates. Also, using more vinegars, juices and herbs than ever before. So I think it's more comfort [food], but done fresher."*

Chefs can easily refresh the menu with new twists on American classics, and comfort food options lend themselves well to the sharable snacking trend. Pork items like smoked sausage, slow-cooked pulled pork and pork chops with country gravy have a nostalgic ring. Comfort food items featuring pork can be served in a variety of ways, menued as main dishes, served up as sharable snacks or featured as bite-sized mini items. Restaurants menuing snack-like items can draw in customers at any time of the day, and chefs can use these menu items as add-ons to regular meals and appetizers for increased profits.

The options are endless, and chefs are sparing no spice, sauce or brine to come up with new, delicious menu favorites.

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## CONSUMERS CHOOSING MORE SNACKS AND SHAREABLES

Packaged Facts recently released a new report titled "What America Eats: Paradigms Shaping Food Choices." The survey found that in 2014, two-thirds of adult respondents claimed they at least "somewhat agree" that they often snack between meals, an increase from 62 percent in 2004.<sup>2</sup> Packaged Facts further identified five snack and shareable menu trends:

**Mini items** — Smaller versions of entrées and classic menu items remain at the forefront of snack/small plate menu innovation.

**Bites** — Bite-sized items help restaurant-goers balance indulgence with moderation. Bite-sized menu item innovation caters to a range of "poppable" savory eats.

**Sliders** — While sliders have become an appetizer menu stalwart, they have also branched well beyond the confines of the burger.

**Sampler platters** — Sampler platters allow more customers to get greater variety while managing their cost per party. And restaurant operators can showcase their signature items in the bargain. Modernizing sampler platters translates to customizable options, signature items and creative sauces.

**Shareable items** — While sampler platters are designed for sharing and often promoted as such, restaurant operators are also positioning regular menu items as "shareable."

1. TODAY Food, "The next big food trend? We asked 7 star chefs for their best guess," <http://www.today.com/food/7-star-chefs-predict-next-big-food-trends-1D80Z31241>, Oct. 21, 2014.

2. CSPnet.com, "Five 'Snackable' Trends Subverting Traditional Mealtimes," [http://www.cspnet.com/category-news/snacks-candy/articles/five-snackable-trends-subverting-traditional-mealtimes?utm\\_source=SilverpopMail-ing&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Daily%20News%2012-22-2014%20\(1\)&utm\\_content=&spMailingID=47673057&spUserID=NTU4MDUyNTIyMjAS1&spJobID=583924432&spReportId=NTgzOTI0NDMySQ](http://www.cspnet.com/category-news/snacks-candy/articles/five-snackable-trends-subverting-traditional-mealtimes?utm_source=SilverpopMail-ing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20News%2012-22-2014%20(1)&utm_content=&spMailingID=47673057&spUserID=NTU4MDUyNTIyMjAS1&spJobID=583924432&spReportId=NTgzOTI0NDMySQ), Dec. 19, 2014.




## PORK IN THE NEWS



### Beefing Up the Menu...With Pork

A report by Nation's Restaurant News says ground beef prices have increased 26 percent in the past two years, with an increase of 10 percent expected in 2015.<sup>3</sup> This rise is affecting chefs' profits and encouraging them to look elsewhere for substitutes and solutions.

The versatility of pork makes the protein a perfect option for a beef substitution and for additional menu innovation. Chefs have access to so many different cuts of pork, each with its own unique flavor profile and cooking methods. But, in addition to traditional favorites, new cuts of pork are being experimented with, and producing stunning results. Using new, currently underutilized cuts of pork such as flat iron pork, pork medallions and cheek meat allows chefs to really innovate in the kitchen by adding their own signature flavors and experimenting with different cooking methods.

	Pork Cut	Cooking Methods	Flavor Profiles
	Flat Iron	Brining Braising Sous Vide Slow Cooked	BBQ Asian Italian Farm-to-Table
	Pork Medallions	Stir Fried Sautéed Grilled Pan-Seared Pan-Fried	BBQ Asian Latin Italian
	Cheek Meat	Braised Dry Rubbed Seared Marinated Cured	BBQ Italian Southwestern

## DATA TO NOTE



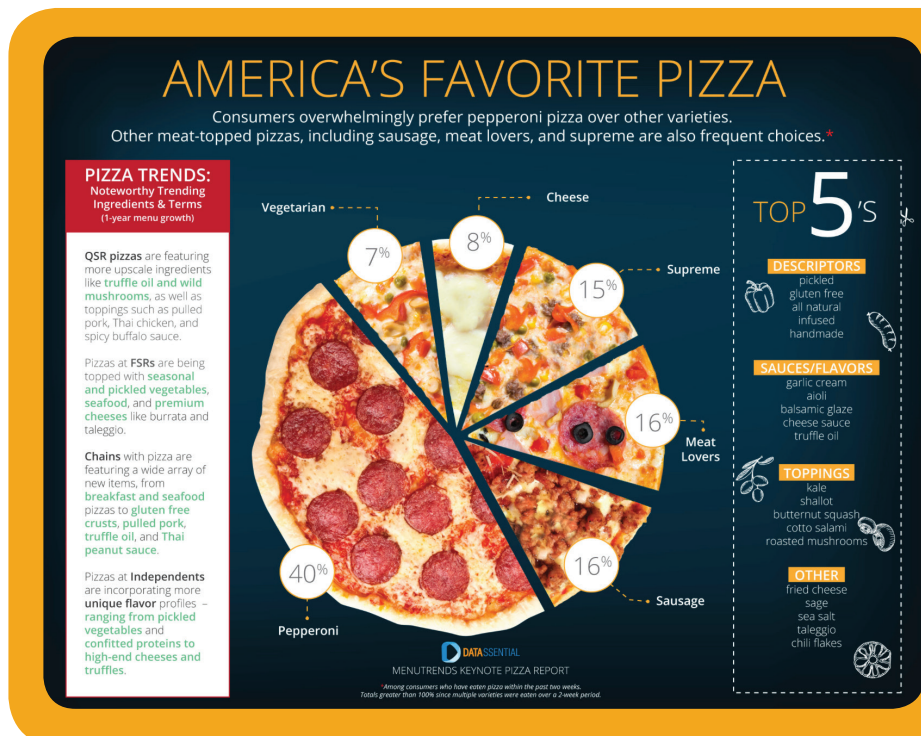
Spicy Southern Comfort® Pulled Pork BBQ Pizza  
UGA Hotel, Athens, Georgia

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## Pork Establishes its Place on the Pizza Menu

Pizza has been forever known as America's favorite food – and why shouldn't it be? Such a simple combination of bread, sauce and cheese topped with your favorite meat and veggies...what's not to love? Pizza continues to feel the love as its popularity is up by 9.6 percent over the past decade, according to research firm NPD Group.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Datassential released its latest report on the pizza category finding that two out of three Americans eat pizza every week. Forty percent of respondents chose pepperoni as their topping of choice on their last slice of pizza, followed by sausage and meat lovers, at 16 percent. The report finds that classic varieties do indeed remain most widely available and popular; however, unique varieties such as cotto salami, pepper bacon and pancetta are some of the fastest-growing proteins on pizza.<sup>5</sup>



4. Business Insider, "10 Foods Taking Over The American Diet," <http://www.businessinsider.com/10-foods-taking-over-the-american-diet-2014-11>, Nov. 12, 2014.

5. Food Business News, "Shaking up the pizza category," [http://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/news\\_home/Food-Service-Retail/2014/12/Shaking\\_up\\_the\\_pizza\\_category.aspx?ID=%7BE-D6E391C-B164-4F18-A2FD-B472E06E1AA5%7D&e=jjaacks@foodmix.net](http://www.foodbusinessnews.net/articles/news_home/Food-Service-Retail/2014/12/Shaking_up_the_pizza_category.aspx?ID=%7BE-D6E391C-B164-4F18-A2FD-B472E06E1AA5%7D&e=jjaacks@foodmix.net), Dec. 15, 2014.

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING



Ham Flatbread Pizza

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### A Pork Pizza Pie

With pizza's popularity continuing to rise, it's no surprise that chefs across the world are finding a spot on the pie for one of America's most loved proteins – pork! Seeking unique new tastes, chefs are thinking outside the bacon, and putting just about every cut of pork on the pizza pie. From pulled pork and pork belly to pork cheek and pork shoulder, it seems that every pork cut can be worked into a classic American favorite, or used to create an innovative twist.

### HERE'S A LOOK AT HOW CHEFS ARE USING PORK TO SPICE UP THIS CLASSIC MENU MAINSTAY:



#### **Pulled Pork Pizza**

Braised Pulled Pork, Cilantro, Red Onion, Cotija Cheese, Fresh Lime

Flying Squirrel Pizza Co, Seattle, WA



#### **Pork Sausage Pizza**

Pork Sausage, Fennel, Gorgonzola, Scallions, Red Onion

Bar Bocce, Sausalito, CA



#### **Guanciale Pizza**

House-Cured Pork Cheek, Ricotta, Scallions and Fennel Pollen

Sotto, Los Angeles, CA



#### **Red Eye Pizza**

Pork Belly, Egg, Fontina, Celery Leaf, Sugo

Hog & Hominy, Memphis, TN



#### **Apizza Amore**

Margherita Pizza plus Hot Capicollo (Cured Pork Shoulder).

Apizza Scholls, Portland, OR



#### **Southern Pie**

Fried Green Tomatoes, Spotted Trotter Sorghum Pork Belly Bits and Grandma's Pimento Cheese

Slice & Pint, Atlanta, GA