

Trend Watch

TOP TAKEAWAYS



Pork Belly Pastrami, Citizen Public House, Scottsdale, AZ

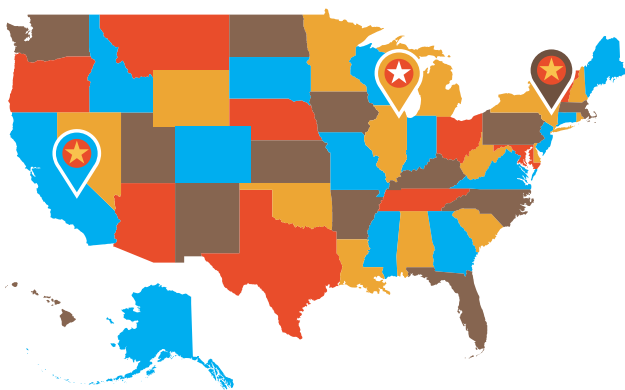
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Bacon's Older Sibling: Pork Belly

It's no secret that America has a love affair with bacon. But, as consumers get more daring in their culinary ventures, the passion is trickling into other more sophisticated cuts of pork. Enter pork belly. With just as much salty flavor as bacon, pork belly goes a step further, starring in more upscale menu items and offering richer flavor profiles.



Pork belly remains a niche product, however, as Food Genius reports that pork belly appears on just two percent of menus nationwide. New York has the most penetration, with 23 percent of restaurants menuing pork belly. California follows with 16 percent of restaurants menuing the item, and 10 percent of Illinois restaurants have started offering the trendy pork product.

So how are restaurants menuing bacon's fancier counterpart? Pork belly plays well with Asian cuisine. In fact, according to Food Genius, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai restaurants represent a combined total

of 29 percent of all pork belly dishes in the US. However, there is still a large market for pork belly in American cuisine, which accounts for 35 percent of all pork belly dishes.¹

Typically, pork belly is paired with vegetables and often a grain to offset the fattiness of the dish. It is not uncommon to see pork belly paired with another protein, such as eggs or seafood. While pork belly is often looked at as more upscale, chefs can use its versatility for just about any type of menu.



Sweet and Sour Pork Belly
 Spago, Beverly Hills, CA



Barbeque Pork Belly Sandwiches
 Animal, Los Angeles, CA

DATA TO NOTE



Consumption of Mexican Cuisine Growing: Tortas Shine on the Menu

Mexican cuisine has always been something of a foodie favorite, and it's surging in popularity. Research firm NPD Group reports that consumption of Mexican food increased 8.3 percent over the past decade.² Additionally, Technomic reports that Mexican limited-service restaurants have a 7.2 percent compounded growth per year from 2004 to 2013 – growing from \$9 billion to \$18 billion. Sales at full-service Mexican restaurants have also grown, increasing from \$5.6 billion in 2003 to \$12 billion in 2013.³

So what's with the surge in growth? It could be owed to a growing Hispanic population. It could also be largely due to consumer demand for bolder, spicier, fresher ingredients. Mexican cuisine gives chefs the ultimate freedom in the kitchen, especially when using pork products. Chefs can play with many variations of Mexican cuisine featuring versatile pork paired with an array of vegetables and spices.

One of the latest stars of the Mexican-inspired menu is the torta, a classic overstuffed Mexican sandwich that has been around for generations but is growing immensely in popularity now. Tortas are typically stuffed with shredded pork and topped with a variety of vegetables and sauces.

HERE ARE SOME GREAT EXAMPLES OF MEXICAN RESTAURANTS GETTING CREATIVE WITH PORK-STUFFED TORTAS:



Poquitos in Seattle, WA menus **Ahogada Torta**, a Mexican-style "drowned" sandwich with Poquitos Hombre Lager-braised pork carnitas, black bean puree, escabeche, avocado, cilantro, chipotle mayo and Oaxaca cheese on a house-made honey telera bun. Served "drowned" in a tomato-arbol chili sauce.



Cuco's Taqueria in Columbus, OH serves up many torta variations, including the **Pierna**, a torta stuffed with chile-marinated pork and onions, tomatoes, jalapeños, lettuce and mayonnaise.



La Superior in Brooklyn, NY menus a version of **Torta Ahogada**, featuring pork carnitas and beans on sourdough bread topped with extra hot arbol sauce and mild tomato sauce.

² 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.

³ Restaurant Hospitality, "Hispanic, Mexican operators heat up the marketplace." <http://restaurant-hospitality.com/food-trends/hispanic-mexican-operators-heat-marketplace>, Sept. 29, 2014.

PORK IN THE NEWS



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Pork Skin Is In

Snacking has been a hot topic, and pork's versatility is a natural fit, but lately consumers and chefs alike have been trying out something a little less traditional. Pork skin is getting its day in the spotlight.

The nutritional profile of pork skins, or pork rinds, has been misunderstood in the past, but consumers are now starting to overcome the fallacy. Pork Rinds are higher in protein and lower in fat than a serving of peanuts, making them a perfect appetizer or snack at the bar. Just one serving of pork rinds contains nine grams of protein and zero carbohydrates.⁴ Therefore, the snack has no glycemic index value.⁵ What's more is that more than half the fat in pork rinds is monounsaturated, or the "good fat."

Pork rinds are perfect for consumers who prefer a high-protein diet, and a great alternative for diabetics looking for a crunchy snack. Chefs are taking note and implementing them into a variety of menu dishes. Pork skins add crunchiness and crispiness to menu items without having to use nuts or other deep-fried options. They also provide a salty taste without having to actually use salt. Pork rinds also stand well on their own as a complimentary snack at the bar or an alternative nutritious appetizer item.

Look how 3 oz. of pork rinds stack up against 3 oz. of shelled peanuts. Guess which will attract your guests' attention.



⁴ Nutrition Data, "Snacks, pork skins, plain." <http://nutritiondata.self.com/facts/snacks/5362/2>

⁵ Livestrong.com, "Glycemic Index for Pork Rinds." <http://www.livestrong.com/article/519720-glycemic-index-for-pork-rinds/>, Feb. 27, 2014.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING



Pork Rind Tacos

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THE SPOTLIGHT'S ON PORK RINDS

Whether standing alone on the menu or used to flavor up a dish, pork skins are finding a place in restaurants across the country. Take a look at how pork rinds are gracing the menus of these on-trend establishments.



Awendaw Spoonbread

Hominy grits, artisan cornmeal, buttermilk and farm eggs baked with cracklin' and scallions.

Big Jones, Chicago, IL



Pork Tripe Ala Parmigiana with Pork Skin Breadcrumbs

The Purple Pig, Chicago, IL



Skin Trio

Chicken skin, pork skin, salmon skin, black bean aioli

Yusho, Chicago, IL



Spicy Pork Rinds

The Publican, Chicago, IL



Fresh Puffed Pork Skins

Curried jerk seasoning

Cane & Table, New Orleans, LA



Buffalo Pork Skins with Blue Cheese Dressing, Celery & Carrots

The Pig & The Pearl, Atlanta, GA