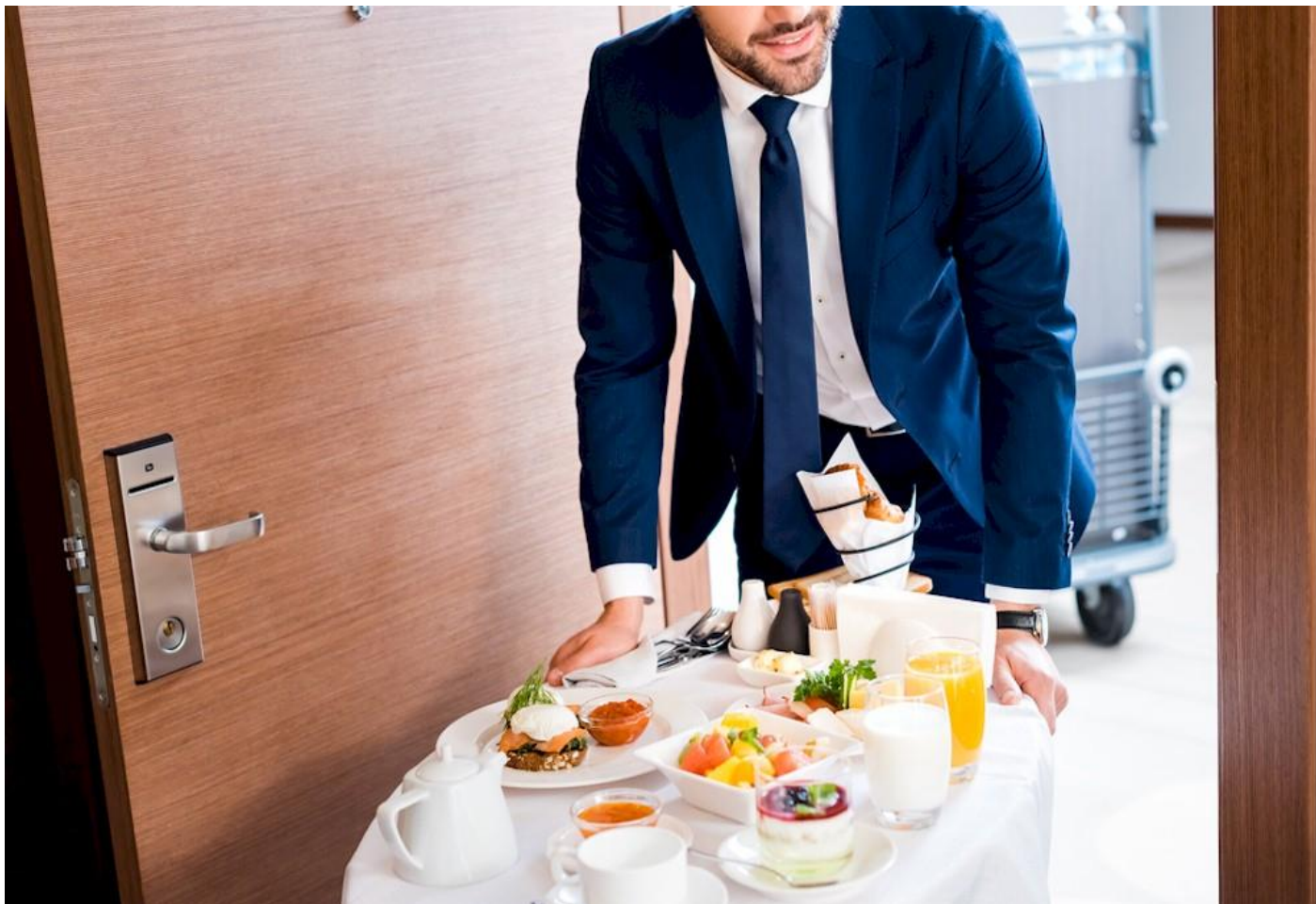


## Hotel Food and Beverage Trends: Eat, Drink, Repeat

By [Patrick Hildebrandt](#) Executive Chef, Texican Court Hotel | August 11, 2019



Guests are enjoying the revival of hotel restaurants. In fact, it's almost unimaginable now to open a property without having enticing food and beverage options. Beyond that, given the often-great location of hotels, one should strive to bring in both travelers and locals.

In other words, meeting the needs of those staying overnight, while also creating an exciting social scene or community hangout, is a recipe for success. To accomplish this, chefs and restaurant owners need to stay on top of the latest trends we're seeing in our industry.

### **Local Sourcing, Fresh Produce and Healthier Eating**

The future of hotel food and beverage requires a shift to new preferences and palates. It is time to change the way we handle change. No doubt, customers are more selective in their choices, and I'm seeing a handful of preferences emerging even faster than before. These choices include local sourcing, fresh produce and healthier eating.

Local sourcing means different things to different people. This can include artisan or craft, delivered directly by producer, family-owned producer, small-sized producer, fresh and natural, and/or within

150 miles. As a rule, locally sourced products are generally fresher, healthier and better for the environment; add interest to the menu; offer seasonal inspiration; and appeal more to both locals and travelers. While local sourcing can be challenging, it's not impossible. Since buying locally often means working directly with nearby producers and vendors, you have shorter supply chains, which can help you save money and ensure a better product.



*Texican Court Interior*

Bottom line, guests want healthy foods and are willing to pay more for them. This includes those that have no artificial coloring/flavors, are GMO-free and are considered all natural. Foods that are high in fiber, protein and whole grains – bonus points if they are fortified with calcium, vitamins or minerals – allow a hotel restaurant to more easily appeal to the growing number of health-conscious guests.

Many dairy-free substitutes continue to abound in popularity, with products like butter made from aquafaba (the cloudy liquid you likely pour off when you open a can of chickpeas and some other beans); and nut-based cheeses and yogurts. Oat milk is also becoming increasingly popular. It's a great vegan and super creamy milk alternative for cereal and one that blends nicely into coffee. A barista explained that oat milk is the No. 2 milk alternative behind almond milk and provides customers an abundant and sustainable alternative to the pricier nut kinds of milks.

Along the same lines, there's no limit to the new and exciting trends we've seen in ice cream. We've seen rolled ice cream, charcoal ice cream, French toast and bacon ice cream, Earl Grey Tea with shortbread cookies ice cream and even garlic ice cream. Low calorie, dairy-free frozen treats are at the top of the list for health-conscious consumers. Here's the scoop: Flavors such as avocado, taro, tahini and hummus are hitting the marketplace. Using these ingredients in ice cream is already popular in other countries.

Due to its favorable properties, the all-mighty white mushroom can now be applied to most food trends, including plant-based diets, vegetable proteins, functional foods, clean labels, convenience

and zero waste. Mushrooms are versatile and can be used in appetizers, spreads, soups, sandwiches, burgers, sausages, sauces, gravies, pasta, grains, entrees, sides and vegan pancakes, pies, cookies, puddings and chocolate.

Seemingly, Celtuce is the new kale. Also called "asparagus lettuce," "celery lettuce" and "stem lettuce," Celtuce is a cross between celery and lettuce that's especially popular in both mainland China and Taiwan. It's growing in popularity among U.S. chefs due to its versatility. The pale green leaves, which are tender, and white stems can be eaten raw (in salads) or cooked. It can be pickled, grilled, roasted or stir-fried. Celtuce has a mild hazelnut or buttered popcorn flavor with a chestnut-like crispness. It is full of health benefits and more accessible than you'd think.

Diets, such as keto, that favor fat over carbohydrates are still dominant but may be fading. Still, there will be more low-carb options. The Pegan diet – a hybrid of Paleo and vegan – may take hold. If you're not familiar, Paleo underscores the importance of eating meats, fruits and vegetables, and limits dairy, grains, legumes, potatoes, refined vegetable oils and alcohol.

Vegans restrict food from animals, which includes items like gelatin, honey, eggs, cheese and yogurt. While they do seem different, they do both promote vegetables and fresh fruits. A Pegan diet encourages people to eat whole foods that are organic and fresh and increase their overall vegetable intake.



*"Michi" Ceviche: Charred Shrimp, Grilled Onions, Cherry Tomatoes, Avocado and Michelada Sauce*

## **Enter Millennials and Generation Z**

Customers, generally Millennials from ages 23 to 38, seem to be more interested in spirit-free or lighter cocktails. I'm seeing bartenders replacing high-alcohol liquors with lower-alcohol wines in mixed drinks and making use of some craft, botanicals and distilled tonics, mixers, cordials and nonalcoholic spirits. It pays to be clever.

The generation after Millennials, Generation Z (Gen Z), includes those born from 1995 onward. At about 2.52 billion strong, Gen Z is the most populous generational cohort of all time. This group accounts for a quarter of the U.S. population, and by 2020, will make up 40% of all consumers. Understanding this generation will be critical to hotels wanting to succeed in the next decade and beyond. Health conscious, sustainable and fresh cuisine remain the mantra. Look for emphasis on street foods on the menu, meals of appetizers and snack foods, vegetables as the center of attention and chicken as the preferred protein.



*Tostadas topped with Black Bean Puree, Avocado, Cherry Tomatoes, Shredded Lettuce, Shredded Smoked Barbacoa and Queso Fresco*

### **Telling Stories through Food and Beverage**

Food and beverages are powerful vehicles for storytelling. Consumers are looking for the real deal. Everything from the menu, service and atmosphere needs to be authentic and true to your brand. As an example, Valencia Hotel Group's [Texican Court](#) has 152 retro-inspired rooms, an on-site specialty bar that serves regional and rare-find tequilas and mezcal along with craft cocktails, a S'mores package filled with all you need for roasting, three distinct courtyards, a circular-style pool, large wood-burning fire pits, rocking chairs outside each room and live music.

The hotel's design features Spanish mission-style architecture with a subtle layer of Texas, making it a unique blend of Mexican and the Lone Star State cultures. Our menu at Two Mules Cantina is styled after the rustic cooking and great diversity of cuisine found throughout the Southwest. It comprises a fusion of bold, hearty and spicy dishes that might have been eaten by Spanish colonial settlers, cowboys, Native Americans and Mexicans.

Two of our most requested dishes are Cochinita Pibil (achiote marinated, smoked and sous vide pork shoulder, served with "pan sauce," onions and grilled vegetables) and Smoked Barbacoa Mini Tostadas (tostada topped with black bean puree, avocado, cherry tomatoes, shredded lettuce, shredded smoked barbacoa and queso fresco).



*Texican Court Poptails*

[The Valencia Hotel Group](#) rolled out its inaugural poptail (a combination of spirits and Popsicles®) program at some of its properties in 2016. This seasonal promotion provides a fun twist on a childhood favorite that brings out the inner kid in guests. In doing so, Texican Court partnered with [The Pop Factory](#), a local artisanal shop only minutes away to offer 100% all-natural ingredient frozen whole fruit bars for the Texican Court's poptails. These treats are packed with vitamins and fiber, and contain no artificial flavors, colors or sweeteners.

The basic and clean flavors of these Mexican-style paletas naturales or natural frozen fruit bars is an excellent way to include a healthier option, rather than just using store bought frozen treats. It is also a creative way to incorporate a locally sourced option from the community that adds a regional flavor and authenticity to the poptail and supports the hotel's story and brand.

Social media is shaping the future of hospitality, and this isn't just limited to media, trade press and influencers, it's truly across all social circles. People want food and beverages that not only taste good but look good. The appetite for food photography, along with the passion for camera phones, has grown substantially since Instagram was launched in October 2010. In fact, according to a study by [Maru/Matchbox](#), 69% of Millennials take a photo or a video of their food prior to eating. This comes as no real surprise. Look for hashtags such as #foodporn, #foodie, #foodgasm and #delish. These garner thousands of followers and show no signs of slowing.

When prepared caringly, food communicates. It can link us to ancient eating rituals, grandma's favorites and/or culinary trends around the world. Try to create an experience in a voice and a tone that's authentic and has guests feeling like they are talking with a close family member or an old friend, or that transports them to a different time and place entirely.

Jazz up your senses, awaken your taste buds and warm your soul. Every single trend a hotel embraces with its own unique flavor serves as one more building block in the personality and the culture of the property. The investment of time, energy and resources in food and beverages

strengthens brand loyalty, retains and grows the customer base and builds stronger teams to lead the organization forward – all with a direct and immediate impact on the bottom line.



*Patrick Hildebrandt, Executive Chef of Valencia Group's Texican Court, has over a decade of first-class experience in the hospitality and restaurant industries. He was first introduced to the comradery and passion that the kitchen atmosphere invokes in high school when he was a dishwasher. Since then, he has worked his way up in kitchen positions that included chef tournant, chef de cuisine and executive sous chef. Chef Hildebrandt currently oversees Texican Court's food and beverage operations, including the tequila bar, Two Mules Cantina restaurant, the pool area as well as catering operations. He brings premier cooking experience to his position as the executive chef at Texican Court, having worked as a sous chef and executive sous chef at several establishments previously including Sweet Basil in Vail, Colorado, and the Empty Stomach Group in San Antonio, Texas. Prior to his current position at Texican Court, he was the executive chef at The Hollow in Georgetown, Texas. Mr. Hildebrandt can be contacted at 469-577-4599 or [phildebrandt@valenciagroup.com](mailto:phildebrandt@valenciagroup.com) Please visit <http://www.texicancourt.com> for more information.*

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