

# Three Food & Consumer Trends to Keep an Eye On as 2019 Nears an End

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I can't believe I just wrote that. Where did 2019 go? Well, we really have some three-plus months left, but that means almost 75 percent of it has gone by the wayside. Astonishing.

So, looking ahead, what are the latest trends and forecasts that will see us into 2020? We know that the restaurant business is a fickle one, and that we can rely on changing consumer demands, if nothing else. Let's see what our crystal ball foretells.

## Health Beyond Meats

While all of us in the industry and beyond have heard about the latest and greatest in terms of plant-based ingenuity that includes genetically engineered yeast, genetically modified soy, and heme that makes veggie burgers bleed, consumers are taking a second look at what they thought would be healthy alternatives.

After all the hoopla has died down, we are left with the realization that this food, though undoubtedly better for the environment than meat-based offerings, may not be that much better for people. It is, after all, packaged, processed, and refined.

According to the latest [Hartman Group Report](#), "The majority of consumers see plant-based alternatives as no different or better than conventional meat and dairy when it comes to being all natural, minimally processed, healthy, and good for the environment and animals."

There is, however, growing concern regarding conventional meat and dairy producers, including animal welfare and the abuse that can take place in factory farming. The concern lies in large-scale food production, making the farm-to-table movement, and seasonal and local plant-centric offerings ones that will continue to grow in concepts and demand.

## Entertain Me

While we've seen an increase in demand for restaurants that offer, not just a meal, but an experience, the coming year looks to be focused on entertainment in the guise of activities. These activities go beyond the arcade, movie theater, and bowling era, and include games such as bocce ball, virtual golf, ping pong, and shuffleboard. These types of venues have become known as eatertainments—a word that has not yet made it to the dictionary.

Then, there are those establishments that have created another world inside their walls. Consider the spy themed bar and restaurant known as the [Safehouse](#) with locations in Chicago and Milwaukee. After you find the entrance, you'll need a password to enter. From

there, you'll be transported into the world of a secret agent that includes magicians and scavenger hunts.

According to a survey conducted by [SevenRooms](#) and YouGov, almost 30 percent of Americans prefer a bar or club that has activity, food, and drink all in one place. Another significant statistic for you in the industry? Almost 25 percent wished that there were more venues near them that combined an activity with food and drink.

Keep in mind that these concepts require large operations. Topgolf, a golf-themed eat, drink, and play venue has locations that are 60,000 square feet with three or four levels.

## **Adventurous**

Consumers are seeking inspiration, authenticity, and adventure—and hoping to find it in their dining experience as well. So, just how does a restaurant deliver on those desires and how it will change in the coming year?

It seems that the latest consumers are looking for global experiences that can be found in genuine versions of world foods—not American adaptations. They are looking for authenticity, both in food and atmosphere. Consider this description about a Greek restaurant in [Yale News](#): “As soon as you enter Kalimera, you are transported across the Atlantic Ocean in the recluse of a “taverna”—a typical Greek restaurant that one would encounter on any Greek island...Soft lighting and Greek music greet you as soon as you enter...along with a beautiful wall painting of a huge olive tree.” This is the type of restaurant experience many consumers are craving—the transportation, through the senses, to another part of the world. Sensory experiences will definitely play a part in the coming year.

Another example of this is the “[Dinner in the Sky](#)” where guests eat while suspended in the air by a crane at a “flying dinner table.” What began in May of 2006 has morphed into a world-wide phenomenon, serving over 45 countries. While sight is definitely a part of this sensory experience, others operate in the dark.

The Black Hole restaurant in Cancun requires guests to wear dark, elegant clothing. They are guided into the pitch-black dark restaurant by waiters who are dressed all in black. No cell phones are allowed and, if you speak, it must be quietly. Guests are then served a 27-course meal of bites.

Dark dining is all the rage and growing—with no-lit restaurants popping up in Las Vegas, California, and New York City. The idea is that, with other senses removed, taste will become that much sweeter and enhanced, with no preconceptions to cloud the taste buds.

If nothing else, 2020 looks to be a year for the new and different. Coming up with a concept that rivals these unusual offerings will be an undertaking for those with tremendous imaginations and foresight. We look forward to it.

Topics: Data Intelligence, Restaurant Experience, Restaurant Sales Strategy