

Plant-based Proteins on the Menu - US - 2023

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This report looks at the following areas:

- Dietary restrictions, and how they inform plant-based dining at restaurants
- Diners' perception of plant-based proteins on restaurant menus
- Menu items that diners want to see plant-based proteins in
- Strategies for successful plant-based menu launches

Plant-based proteins are not star attractions on restaurant menus. Most diners are carnivores and omnivores and have very few reasons to actively seek them out. While plant-based proteins have a health halo, the high prices and perceived lack of desired tastes and textures make it difficult for diners to add them to their routine dining habits: only 21% feel comfortable paying higher prices for plant-based proteins.

Economic uncertainty and shaky financial health have forced diners to be more cautious about how they spend their dining dollars. In these circumstances, restaurants need to make a much more compelling case for ordering plant-based proteins to drive trial. Diners enjoy the idea of making healthy, environmentally conscious, and ethical choices, but when it comes to ordering plant-based proteins at restaurants diners are too far removed from the impact of these choices on everyday life to spend the extra money.

Ultimately, the final verdict on any dish is delivered based on taste, and diners don't think that plant-based proteins are on par with meat based dishes yet. Still, diners are interested in seeing more plant-based items on menus. Operators have an opportunity to leverage this curiosity and lean into the novelty of plant-based dishes. Building ordering frequency with plant-based proteins will take time, but simply rooting menu development in the goal of delivering a great tasting dish will help move the needle.



“For diners, plant-based proteins aren't winning against meat on core factors that define a great meal.

Operators need to aim beyond the goal of simply achieving taste and texture parity with meat, and offer diners something worth coming back for.”

– Varchasvi, Analyst, US
Foodservice and Mintel Menu Insights

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- **Making plant-based ordering approachable: Spotlight on Chipotle and Blaze Pizza**
- **Familiarity and novelty are not mutually exclusive: Spotlight on unique plant-forward menu items**

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- **Taste and health are the top considerations when ordering plant-based proteins.**
- **Omnivores and carnivores form the bulk of all diners. Plant-based dishes that deliver on taste give them a way to occasionally make the healthier choice.**
- **Plant-based proteins will bring novelty to familiar, indulgent favorites, and this is where most consumers want to see plant-based options.**
- **Diners conflate plant-based foods with health, while meat wins on taste and value.**
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