"International food adoption is a slow process in the US. Factors positioning it for growth, include a diverse population; the need for restaurants and products to differentiate and innovate; and the growing spending power of adventurous diners. Brands should be cautious about appropriating other cultures, straying from authenticity, and entering saturated categories."

- Jill Failla, Foodservice Analyst

This report looks at the following areas:

- Americans are slow to accept new international cuisines
- Younger consumers aren’t as smitten with Italian and Chinese cuisines as their older counterparts are
- Cultural appropriation is a growing concern
- It’s the season for seasonings
- Younger consumers are more adventurous diners
- Asian and Hispanic consumers over index for international food consumption
Overview

What you need to know

Definition

Executive Summary

The issues

Americans are slow to accept new international cuisines
  Figure 1: Food attitudes, any agree, summer 2009-18

Younger consumers aren’t as smitten with Italian and Chinese cuisines as their older counterparts are
  Figure 2: International food preferences – any type of purchase NET, by age, November 2018

Cultural appropriation is a growing concern
  Figure 3: International food restaurant offerings, by race and Hispanic origin, November 2018

The opportunities

It’s the season for seasonings
  Figure 4: Food attitudes, any agree, summer 2009-18

Younger consumers are more adventurous diners
  Figure 5: International food consumption motivators, by age, November 2018

Asian and Hispanic consumers over index for international food consumption
  Figure 6: International food consumption frequency, by race and Hispanic origin, November 2018

What it means

The Market – What You Need to Know

International cuisine adoption is slow

Consumers are embracing heavily spiced foods

Populations of frequent international food eaters are outpacing those of less-frequent eaters

Market Factors

Consumers are increasingly diverse
  Figure 7: Population by race and Hispanic origin, 2013-23

Employment is at all-time high among Hispanic populations
  Figure 8: Hispanic and National Labor Force Unemployment Rates, January 2007-November 2018

Opportunity exists to convert unenthusiastic cooks with international products
  Figure 9: Share of cooking segments, 2016-2018

Consumers increasingly prefer foods cooked with lots of spices
  Figure 10: Food attitudes, any agree, summer 2009-18

Key Trends – What You Need to Know

Ethnic fast-casuals proliferate

Popular international cuisines may go regional to appeal to youth

Restaurant-branded international CPG products gain traction
Fast casual works as an approachable format for international foods

- Bowl Fusion
- American Indian
- Latin American
- Asian
- Food halls
- Israeli cuisine proliferates

Indian finally goes mainstream

CPG continues to innovate international offerings in several categories

- Sauces
- Condiments
- Meals/entrees
- Snacks

Is the Mediterranean bubble about to burst?

Traditional international foods lose favor among young consumers

Cultural appropriation becomes a growing concern for some

Ayurveda

International kids menus

- Japanese Omakase and Izakaya
- Omakase
- Izakaya
- African cuisines
- Fast-Casual Fusion

Moroccan Crosses Categories

- Figure 12: Hodo Moroccan Tofu Cubes

Ethiopian

- Figure 13: Departure Snacks Ethiopian Berbere Dry-Roasted Almonds

South African

Most consumers would rather eat international foods at a restaurant than cook them

Mexican is more popular than Italian cuisine

Latin and African are emerging cuisines to watch

Over a quarter of consumers eat international foods a few times a month
The frequent international food eater is a city-dwelling Millennial

Asians and Hispanics are frequent international food eaters

Alyssa is a frequent international food eater

International cuisine consumption has declined slightly over last year

Cravings drive most international food purchases

Younger consumers are most likely to eat international foods because they like trying new things

Asians and Hispanics enjoy eating the foods of their ethnic heritages

Lack of exposure is the top barrier to international cuisine consumption

Mexican, Italian, and Chinese are the top international cuisines

African cuisines remain unfamiliar to most consumers

Consumers are most likely to purchase international cuisines from a restaurant

Women especially prefer more traditional international cuisines

Latin and African are emerging cuisines

Italian and Chinese food interest may eventually decline

Consumers show elevated interest in cuisines of their ethnic heritage

White and Hispanic consumers are equally interested in Mexican cuisine

Meal kits are an appealing format for international flavors
Restaurant-branded international foods could help drive purchases among the youngest consumers

Most consumers prioritize authenticity for international menu items

Moms want to see more international kids menu items

Younger consumers are most open to international fusion

Most Hispanic consumers want to see international kids menu items

Frequent international food eaters care the most about eating foods from chefs of the same ethnic heritage

Street foods are an appealing way to introduce international flavors to consumers

Older consumers would much rather eat international foods at a restaurant than cook them

Asian consumers are most interested in international street foods

Roughly three fifths of moderate or occasional international food eaters would rather eat international foods at restaurants than at home

Data sources

Consumer survey data

Appendix – Data Sources and Abbreviations

Abbreviations

Mintel Food and Drink Shopper Segmentation

Terms