



**FOOD SERVICE TRENDS
2026**

FOOD SERVICE TREND REPORT

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2026

Welcome to our latest trend report, and one that will hopefully give you a keen insight into what the market has in store for us in 2026.

When we look back at the year gone by, 2025 will be viewed as a year of adaptation, resilience and structural shifts in the UK food service industry. Amid inflation, rising costs, and economic pressure, the sector didn't collapse. Instead, it re-balanced, with quick-service and convenience-led formats leading the rebuild.

Whilst 2025 mightn't have been a 'boom year' for all operators, those willing to adapt and re-shift focus to more of a digital first approach in this ever-evolving social climate did see signs of growth and progression.

We saw an increased focus on 'targeted growth plans' from multiple major food service chains, which has now seemingly set the standard for a sector that drills down on service, and focusses on convenience driven experiences in 2026 and beyond.

Consumers haven't lost confidence in the sector despite the constant challenges they face in their everyday life, which is a clear sign of stability, and that the food service sector still has solid foundations and can be viewed as an exciting place to operate.

If you would like to discuss anything you read in this trend report in more detail then please don't hesitate to contact myself, your account manager, our customer service team or one of our expert development chefs.

Thank you,



Nigel O'Donnell
Nigel O'Donnell
Managing Director

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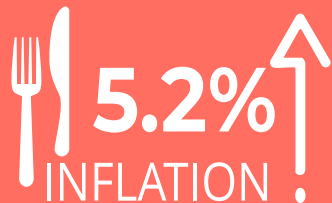
ECONOMIC TRENDS TO SHAPE 2026

MACRO-ECONOMIC BACKDROP FOR 2026



The UK economic growth outlook is modest:

Recent forecasts point to around 1.0–1.2% GDP growth in 2026



Food and “away-from-home” (AFH) price inflation:

AFH-sector (including restaurants, pubs and takeaways) inflation has been estimated at around 5.2%, driven in part by rising labour and operating costs



Labour costs still rising:

Recent wage/legislation changes continue to affect businesses with many employers reporting increased staff costs

Produce costs still rising too:

UK inflation has taken a toll on the cost of menu staples such as eggs, milk, cheese, oils and nuts



Pressure on Investment & Expansion:

Small businesses finding it harder to justify large investments in new ventures such as expansions and shop refurbishments



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY IN 2026

Potential Price Pressure & Menu Inflation:

Many restaurants, pubs and takeaways will likely be forced with 2 options:

Raise Costs: Raising menu prices becomes harder as consumers feel the pinch on household budgets. Small businesses will need to balance price increases with perceived value



Reduce Portions: Reducing portions is an option in order to maximise the quality of your output. However, in a climate where consumers are craving value for money, this could be perceived as risky



2025 CONSUMER DINE OUT STATS

HEADLINES & BEYOND

£101bn  **Dine-Out Market**

Total UK 'Dine-Out' market set to reach £101 billion by the end of 2025[^]

 **324k**
Dine-Out Sites

Total number of Dine-Out sites to reach 324k (slight net growth on 2024)[^]

3.3%
Food-To-Go
2.5%
Dine Out

Growth higher in Food-To-Go sector (fast food, convenience, sandwiches, bakery, pastries etc) than traditional 'Dine-Out'

2025 Forecast 3.3% Growth FTG vs 2.5% DO[^]

£8bn



Meat Centred Meals

More than 2/3rds of adults in Great Britain have eaten a meat-centred meal outside of the home in 2025

This equates to around £8 billion^{**}

 **#1**
 **#2**

Burgers ranked #1 in GB adults Dine-Out option for 2025, with 66% of all diners eating one. Pizza ranked second with 49%^{***}

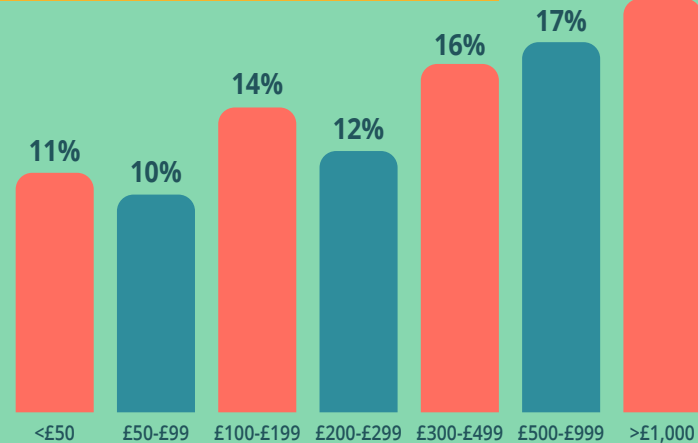
[^]Dine Out Magazine Article January 2025

^{*}Restaurant Online Data, March 2025

^{**}Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Report 9th October 2025

^{***} Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Report 7th October 2025

Consumers monthly disposable income



Weekly Takeaway Ordering

62%
2025



58%
2024

Top 3 Takeaway delivery providers in the UK

% of takeaway lovers who use the following delivery providers



87% of the UK population eats fried chicken monthly+ (Middleton Food)



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CHICKEN IN 2026 ?



Premium Chicken

A clear movement away from cheap takeaway shops and a focus on more gourmet options



Late Night Dining

Extended opening hours for popular chicken brands, coupled with chicken 'snacks' from traditional late night takeaways



Convenience & Delivery

More apps, more deliveries, more customer satisfaction



Investment Flood

Increased capital to the sector (KFC recently committed 1.5b investment into the UK) shows chicken shop popularity is as big as ever



New Flavours

New flavours featuring global cuisines grows Gen Z interest in chicken

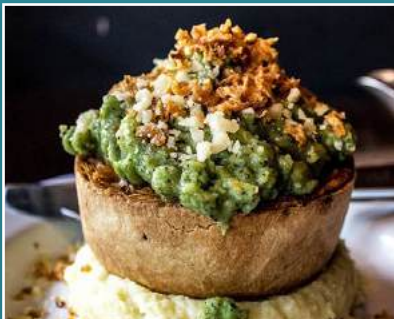


Digital Revolution

Many QSR's are focusing on consumer retention through rewards apps and bespoke digital ordering platforms

4 TRENDS TO TAKE THE INDUSTRY BY STORM!

The Rise Of Affordable Indulgence



Bold Global Flavours



Pick & Mix Meals



Dining Built For Delivery



THE RISE OF AFFORDABLE INDULGENCE

ELEVATED BRITISH COMFORT FOOD

Consumers want value and comfort - but not boring comfort! Elevate your menus with big hitters like:

Gourmet Pies & Sausage Rolls



High-Quality Reworks Fry-Ups, Sunday Lunch & More



Smoked, Braised, Hearty Meat Dishes



Why It'll Work!

Rise in inflation leaves consumers looking for best value for money. This leads to a need for indulgent decadence without the hefty price tag

58%

58% of diners cut back on eating out in 2025 due to rising costs
*Restaurant Online



Restaurants and foodservice operators that offer **comforting, familiar dishes at reasonable price points** will appeal to those who want a treat but can't justify high-end meal prices

BOLD GLOBAL FLAVOURS

2026: THE YEAR SPICE MOVES FROM NICHE TO NATIONWIDE!

A mix of Gen Z palates and global influence will see a boom in new flavours across the industry. Expect the following to go mainstream:

Gochujang Everything!



Asian Inspired Pickles: Fermented Chillies, Pickled Vegetables & Kimchi



Swicy Favourites: Spiced Maple, Chilli Caramel & Chipotle Honey



Why It'll Work!

These global flavours are deemed to be the 'Gateway Spice' for mainstream UK diners. Not too spicy, not too left field, just the perfect amount of intrigue to influence the spending habits of the consumers

90%

90% of UK consumers are open to trying new international cuisines and flavours
*Feast Magazine



Japanese and South Korean flavours are amongst the top growth areas globally, and are expected to have a huge influence on the UK market in 2026

*Insight Trends



PICK & MIX MEALS CONSUMERS WANT FLEXIBILITY!

With budgets tight but appetites rife, look for a boom in customisable meals! No longer a one-for-all menu, customisation is key to keeping consumers happy in 2026. Look out for a rise in:

Mezze-Style Menus. Tapas, Mediterranean & more



Bento-Boxes & Grazing Boards



Premium Snack Platters



Why It'll Work!

Flexible menus and premium sharing options tick all the boxes for 2026. Tight budgets and fussy eaters are all accounted for. Pick & Mix meals works for group meals, solo diners and the rising popularity of 'snackification'

32%

Sharing Platters & Tapas account for roughly 32% of all UK restaurant menu items

*Verdict Foodservice



Chicken remains the most used ingredient in UK sharing platters, appearing in 18% of all menu ideas, cementing chicken as the UK's protein of choice

*Insight Trends



DINING BUILT FOR DELIVERY

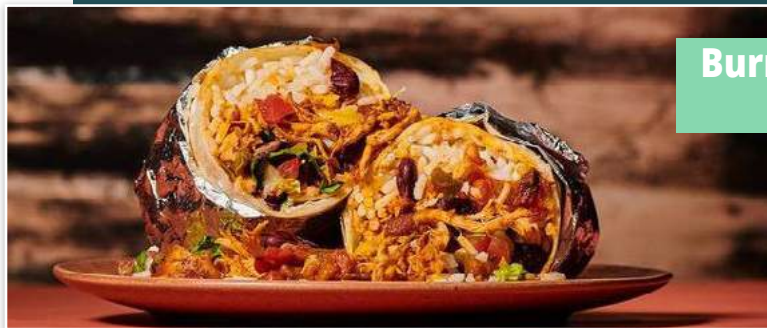
MENUS TO BE SHAPED AROUND DISHES THAT TRAVEL WELL!

The ever-growing UK delivery market shows appetite is there for that perfect takeaway. With tighter budgets and a need for quality, QSR's are turning to menu ideas they know will travel well like:

Poke, Acai & Buddha Bowls



Burritos, Wraps & Sandos



Chicken Wings, Tenders & Katsu Curry



Why It'll Work!

Consumers now assume restaurants must excel in delivery. From this, tried and tested menu ideas like poke bowls, burritos, loaded rice bowls, katsu dishes and other portable comfort meals will remain highly relevant, and will likely continue to grow in the UK delivery landscape heading into 2026

14.3bn

UK food delivery market is expected to reach 14.4 billion by the end of 2025
*Lumina Intelligence



In Deliveroo's 2025 UK trending list, over a third of all trending takeaway dishes are chicken based, with wings, wraps and chicken bowls the big hitters
*Insight Trends



TIPS FOR MANAGING SUCCESS

Agile, value-oriented, flavour-creative and digitally-savvy food service businesses will have a strong advantage in 2026

4 top tips for success are:



Shift Toward Value / Budget-Friendly Eating Out

With household budgets remaining tight, food service operators will need to focus on the demand for lower on-costs. This would see a rise in 'value' meals, quick, fast bites instead of traditional sit down meals.

1



Focus on Cost-Effective Menus

In order to maximise business revenues, food service operators will need to look towards optimising menus to feature a wide array of offerings using a core staple range of products. Using one product in a myriad of ways is one sure way to increase consumer confidence whilst managing the budget.

3



Increase in Delivery / Takeaway / Hybrid Formats

With consumer spending under pressure, yet the desire for quality and convenience at an all time high, many QSR's will continue to push ahead with their delivery service, ensuring that the quality of food on offer can be enjoyed from home, rather than the traditional dine-in option.

2



Know Your Audience and Adapt Accordingly

Whilst economic outlooks may look bleak, there is still the need for 'fine dining' and 'premium' QSR, restaurant and takeaway offerings to appeal to the more affluent consumers in society. This trend would see a shift of delivering a quality and premium service for those with higher disposable incomes looking for more niche dining opportunities in 2026.

4

SUMMARY

We hope you found our 2026 Trend Report useful and that it provides inspiration for your food business as you move forward into the New Year.

With another challenging year ahead for the industry, it's essential that we stay closely connected and continue sharing the valuable insights we uncover. Our aim is to provide you with the vital findings that can genuinely support you and strengthen your business.

Our support network for our customers is unwavering, and we continue to have a strong focus on quality, service and innovation.

In 2025 we brought you 2 new products in The Original Crunchy Fillet and our double award-winning Crunchy Boneless Chicken Wings. With even more exciting projects on the horizon for 2026, be sure to keep an eye out for them and the innovative menu ideas they'll bring to the industry.

If you have any further questions about the report, the industry forecasts, our products or our menu ideas then again feel free to contact myself directly, or speak to your account manager, a customer service representative or a development chef directly today.

Thank you,



Nigel O'Donnell
Nigel O'Donnell
Managing Director

Grow Your Business

New Products Launched



**DOUBLE
AWARD
WINNING
BONELESS
WINGS**



**THE
ORIGINAL
CRUNCHY
FILLETS**



**View Menu
Ideas**



**View Our Full
Product Guide**



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