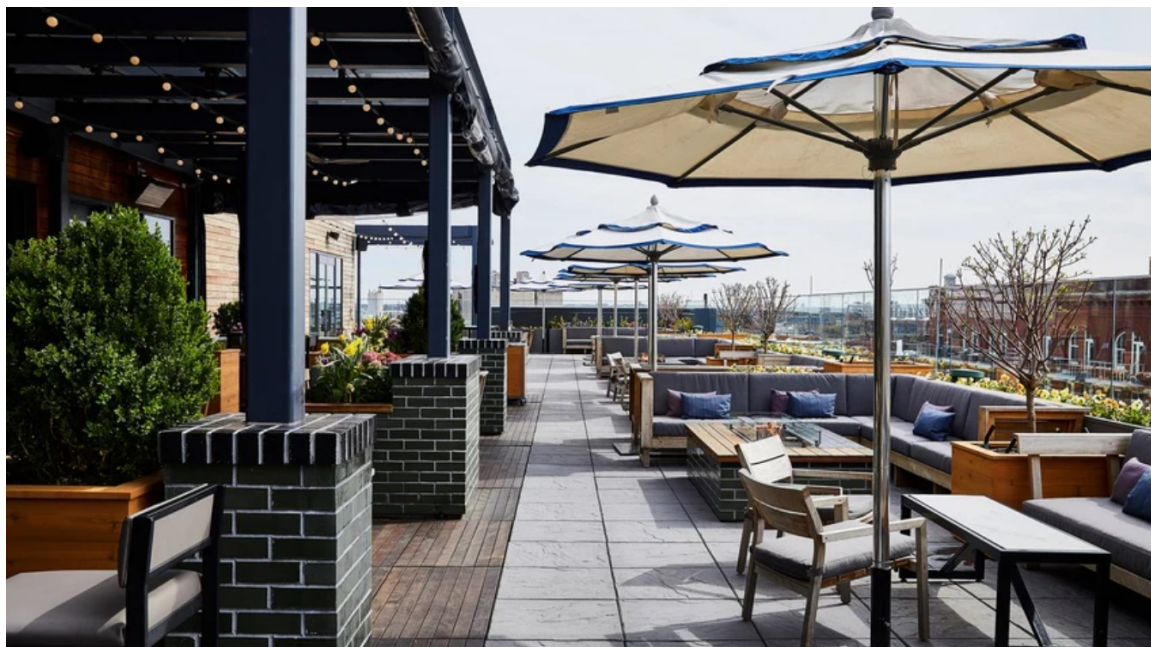


FOOD & BEVERAGE

Kimpton predicts new F&B trends for 2021

By Jena Tesse Fox | Nov 18, 2020



The Outsider Rooftop sits on top of the Kimpton Journeyman Hotel in Milwaukee.
Photo credit: Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants (The Outsider Rooftop - Kimpton)

To refresh its seventh annual "Culinary & Cocktail Trend Forecast" for 2021, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants looked back at how the pandemic has impacted food-and-beverage trends of 2020 and shared predictions for how evolving consumer behavior will shape 2021 trends.

“We know that diners’ needs have changed—the COVID-19 pandemic has brought out the foodie or at-home chef in many of us. While diners first leaned into comfort and nostalgia, heading into the new year we’re seeing a return to health and wellness-inspired culinary and cocktail creations,” said Scott Gingerich, Kimpton’s SVP of restaurants & bars. In 2021, Kimpton expects a new wave of trends to emerge, from the rise of garden goods to a resurgence of health foods, as the pandemic continues to shift the way diners eat, cook and imbibe.

To uncover takeaways from 2020 for this year's trend report, data analysts reviewed in-restaurant, takeout and room service orders from more than 75 Kimpton restaurants and bars and combined those insights with predictions and analysis from F&B leaders across Kimpton restaurants worldwide.

Culinary: 2020 Takeaways

Treat yourself, restaurant edition. While consumers cooked more than ever before this year, they missed more elevated or complex meals. This led to a surge in restaurant orders of dishes guests couldn't execute as easily at home—including prime rib, roast duck, freshly shucked oysters and paella.

“Home-cooked” takeout. Kimpton saw a rise in demand for do-it-yourself restaurant-quality food that can be easily prepared or heated up with simple instructions at home. Consumers ordered ready-to-heat soups, taco kits and sandwiches and to-go cocktails where they simply combine the ingredients, add ice and garnish.

Rise in nostalgic comfort food. The most popular roomservice orders included burgers, pizza, grilled cheese and pasta. The data showed that salads saw one of the sharpest declines in food items purchased from March to September across all restaurants.

Culinary: 2021 Predictions

Health food will reign supreme—again. Over the past several weeks, Kimpton has already seen a shift away from comfort food toward healthy dishes with fresher ingredients and even more vegan and vegetarian options. Expect healthy, hearty bowls using grains like bulgur or farro, with roasted vegetables and mushrooms and punchy, herbal dressings. Freeze-dried fruits and veggies also will see a surge in popularity. Lastly, expect carob to make a comeback—the plant-based, low sugar, antioxidant-rich ingredient is fantastic as a natural sweetener.

Garden pesto and edible cactus will be the new banana bread. Home gardens are all the rage, with people adding fresh herbs, citrus, chilies and veggies to all their dishes. The next iteration of this is homemade oat milk, pesto, jam and pickled everything. Burgeoning home chefs are dehydrating, canning, fermenting and pickling more than ever before. People are also starting to grow and eat some cacti species, adding unique flavors and health benefits to an array of dishes. Grilled cactus can be part of a flavorful fajita dish or elevate a tossed salad with unexpected texture in each bite.

Local is the new sustainable. There is a growing sense of community and support for local businesses and suppliers, and the desire to band together and help local communities push through these difficult times. People will also prefer locally sourced foods that represent the area of the restaurant.

Cocktail/Beverage: 2020 Takeaways

Pour me a strong one. Single servings of agave and mezcal were one of three—alongside sparkling wine and Riesling—beverages that saw a big spike in orders. Kimpton also saw a rise in elevated cocktails on-property because many guests weren't as comfortable making these at home. It's no surprise that to-go and large-format cocktails have also been more popular than ever for takeout. Additionally, the category of "happy hour" (enjoyed outdoors, in-room or to-go) in Kimpton data saw a 17 percent increase year over year, indicating that consumers are looking for more economical options in this challenging economic climate.

Making a sour year sweeter. Bottles of Riesling and sparkling wine both saw increases in purchases, two of only seven offerings across all categories that experienced year-over-year increases. Riesling saw the largest beverage growth, across both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, with a 32 percent increase.

Drinks education is a hit. Wine and cocktail education was a huge trend in 2020, with virtual cooking, cocktail-making and wine-tasting sessions gaining popularity for people during quarantine. This trend, which was adopted by Kimpton via virtual social hours, gave bartenders and sommeliers a chance to connect with consumers directly, sharing the stories behind the wines and drinks they create.

Cocktail/Beverage: 2021 Predictions

Mocktails and cleaner cocktails. Consumers will be looking for fresher, "healthier" cocktails in 2021. Expect to see a demand for dual-purpose mocktails and cocktails with lower alcohol by volume with ingredients like honey, ginger, green tea, lemon, vegetables and herbs. Hard kombucha, spiked seltzers and CBD in drinks, boozy coffee, natural wines and lower-calorie wines also are here to stay.

Bring on the elaborate cocktails. Because it's all about balance, consumers still will treat themselves when they want to indulge. Fewer drinking occasions means imbibers will be more likely to try a memorable concoction. Many will prefer cocktails with premium spirits that incorporate more unusual or uncommon ingredients.

All-encompassing “drinks sommelier.” Kimpton insiders predict the evolution of the sommelier as someone that is a master of more than just wine. A “drinks sommelier” will be an expert that guides diners through the nuances of premium rum, whiskey, and tequila, in addition to wines, beers and sake. These sipping spirits have piqued the interest of cocktail lovers for their diversity, character and complex flavors.

Wanderlust-inspired wines. Due to the newfound knowledge from wine education courses during quarantine, consumers are looking for diversity in their wines and products. Kimpton predicts wines from new regions will emerge from places travelers dreamed of going in 2020, including Moldova, Croatia, Hungary, Morocco, Lebanon, South Africa and even Mexico. People are more open minded about trying new regions and producers.

Dining Experience: 2020 Takeaways

More outdoor dining options. Safer, socially distant outdoor dining unsurprisingly is in demand, leading to restaurateurs investing in new outdoor spaces, layouts and creative experiences. These new or enhanced spaces have created the closest thing to a pre-pandemic dining experience that most people have missed while in quarantine.

Streamlined menus. To minimize food waste and simplify things for restaurants, Kimpton saw tighter and smaller menus, with an emphasis on verbal daily specials to help expand menus when needed.

Let’s keep this private...dining and drinking. While banquet dining and business-driven group dinners decreased, private dining soared with a large increase seen year over year as consumers were looking for COVID-friendly isolated dining.

Dining Experience: 2021 Predictions

Creative dining options to suit any climate. Restaurateurs will continue adding new outdoor dining experiences, even in markets with cold weather. Expect to see every outdoor space reimaged to create unique experiences for guests, like snow globe dining.

More intimate, highly personalized event spaces. From an events perspective, guests are looking for intimate, highly personalized experiences in spaces that are comfortable, warm and have an inviting atmosphere.

Ambiance matters more than ever. Going out is more of a treat than ever before and as a result, consumers will see more tented, heated rooftop spaces, leveraging high-quality sound systems and playlists to create that perfect atmosphere for guests. Restaurateurs and bar owners will go all in on lighting, greenery, landscaping, heating and cooling and amazing framed-in views.