



Technomic Identifies Six Canadian Foodservice Trends for 2012

CHICAGO, Nov. 10, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Shifting consumer preferences and growing competition continue to play bigger roles in Canada's foodservice industry, with numerous implications for menu, technology and venue innovations at Canadian restaurants. Looking forward, Technomic sees these six trends as growing in importance in 2012:

1. Revisiting the classics: Limited-service restaurants are tinkering with some of Canadians' favourite foods, thinking up new variations of classic quick fare such as burgers and pizzas. With "better burger" chains leading the way, more restaurants will find ways to dress up classic Canadian comfort foods with artisan and premium ingredients. We're primed to see more tricked-out poutines, pizzas with exotic and unexpected toppings, new takes on the classic donair, and new concepts devoted to luxe burgers with lush accompaniments.

2. Chefs scale back: While fast-food chains are busy rolling out gourmet and indulgent comfort foods, chefs at full-service and fine-dining restaurants will be wowing diners who want approachable food that's flavourful yet wholesome, indulgent yet not in a gorge-yourself way. Chefs will be crafting dishes with fewer ingredients, simpler preparation techniques and locally-sourced products. Not only does the scale-back approach allow chefs to showcase the flavours of a small set of carefully chosen ingredients, it also emphasizes the skillful preparation required to take a few simple items and create a culinary masterpiece. Utilizing fewer ingredients will also allow chefs to showcase center-of-the-plate stars like locally-sourced meat and seafood.

3. Kids' menus come of age: The healthfulness of the food that children consume remains a growing concern of parents. Operators will continue finding ways to revamp their kids' menus to appeal to children and parents alike. Over the next year, more restaurants will update their kids' menus by adding baked or grilled dishes instead of fried items and replacing high-calorie sides with more healthful options. Chefs will also continue dropping staid children's fare such as chicken nuggets and hot dogs in favor of more sophisticated dishes better suited to little ones' budding palates.

4. Disposed to disclose: More than ever, restaurant-goers want to know exactly what they're consuming, from the origin of the beef they're eating to the exact calorie content of the margarita they're sipping. This intensifying interest in food and beverage health, coupled with increasing pressure for regulation on menu labeling, means that restaurants will have to start disclosing information about the calories, fat and salt that goes into their food. At the same time, restaurants will continue highlighting their use of local, natural and wholesome ingredients to bolster health perceptions of their food and drink.

5. The new tech connection: The rapid emergence of smartphones has opened a new door through which operators can reach their target audience. Today's consumer gravitates toward what's quick and easy, and operators have adapted their practices to provide convenient restaurant tools available at the touch of a finger. Apps, social-media pages and daily deals are just the beginning. Look for restaurants to begin adopting more cutting-edge technologies—such as location-based platforms like Foursquare and near-field communication payment services—to develop even deeper connections with their guests.

6. Format flexibility: Independents and chains alike are taking their concepts down new avenues to better reach today's consumer. Convenience is now a critical component in the overall eating-out value equation, and operators will create added convenience with new and innovative dining venues. More operators will embrace new concept models ranging from food trucks and high-tech urban prototypes to fast-casual and scaled-down offshoots of full-service eateries. These flexible venues will help operators immerse themselves in high-traffic areas and bring the concept closer to the consumer.