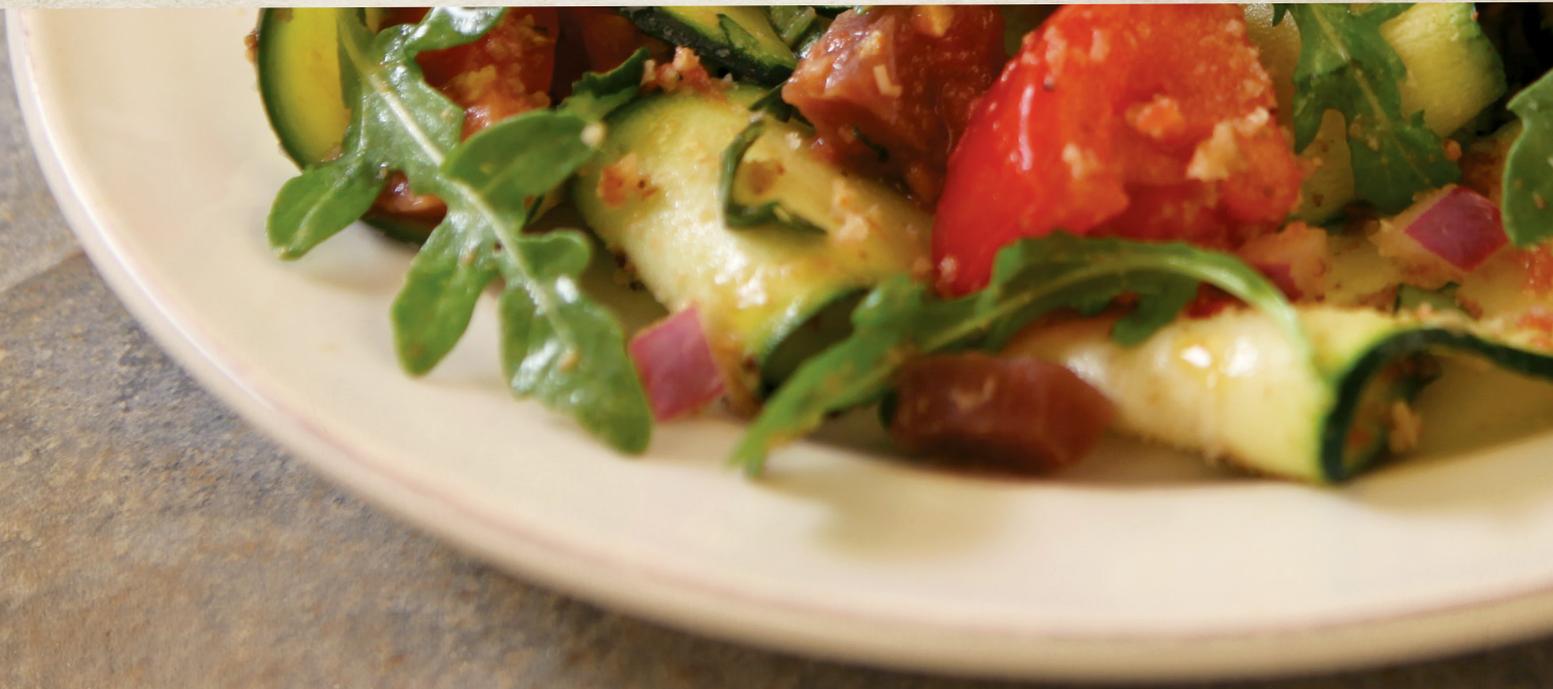




*Above All, A Better Tomato.®*

*Healthy Eating on the Menu*



**A**mericans eat out more than ever before. In fact, a third of Americans' daily calories are consumed outside of the home<sup>1</sup>. While Americans are willing to spend more on food, they have become more discerning, requiring chefs to up their game when it comes to menu options. In particular, Americans are interested in their health and are seeking restaurant items that offer nutrition as well as flavor; they no longer want to look at restaurant eating as pure indulgence.

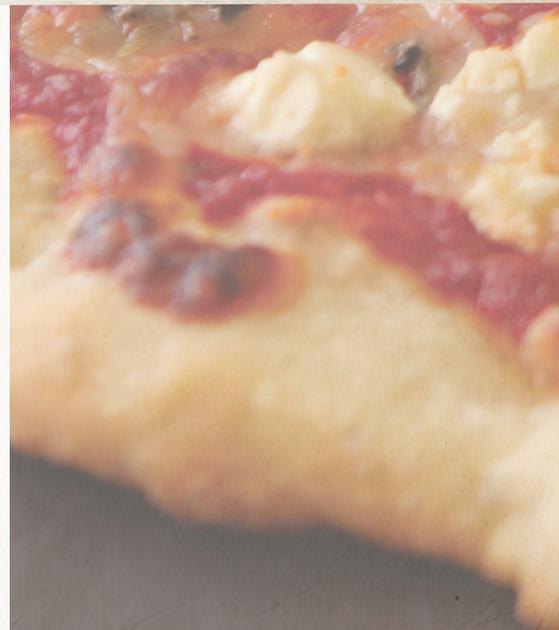
### *Diners are hungry for healthy options*

Global sales of healthy food products are expected to hit \$1 trillion this year<sup>2</sup>. Healthy eating is of particular interest to millennials, the 74.9 million Americans ages 18 to 34 who now, according to the US Census Bureau<sup>3</sup>, represent the country's largest generation. A 2016 report from PricewaterhouseCoopers<sup>4</sup> found that 47% of millennials changed their eating habits for the healthier over the last year, and some 53% expected to further change their eating practices in the next year. This group in particular thinks of food functionally, or as a means to achieve health. Functional foods span a variety of cuisines and food groups, and marketing these to consumers can increase interest and even boost sales.



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It's not just millennials who are thinking about their health. Appealing to all market segments is still important. Baby boomers are more apt to look to vegetables or low-fat items, while parents are increasingly concerned with the healthfulness of their children's food, especially when eating out. Across all segments, many consumers report they are willing to pay more for healthy items, according to Nielsen data<sup>5</sup>, though this is especially true of millennials.



1. USDA Economic Research Service, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-choices-health/food-consumption-demand/food-away-from-home.aspx>
2. Euromonitor <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2012/11/health-and-wellness-the-trillion-dollar-industry-in-2017-key-research-highlights.html>
3. U.S. Census, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>
4. PricewaterhouseCoopers, [http://pwc.blogs.com/press\\_room/2016/08/healthy-eating-is-increasingly-on-consumers-agendas-with-millennials-leading-the-way.html](http://pwc.blogs.com/press_room/2016/08/healthy-eating-is-increasingly-on-consumers-agendas-with-millennials-leading-the-way.html)
5. Nielsen, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/younger-consumers-endorse-healthy-foods-with-a-willingness-to-pay.html>



## *Choose words – and menu design – wisely*

While consumers report they want to eat healthy items, they don't often choose menu items marketed as healthy. Instead, their selections are typically those that catch their eye on the menu and have the most enticing descriptors, according to research published in the *Journal of Hospitality Management*<sup>6</sup>. Since customers' eyes are often drawn to less-healthy fare, researchers suggest using graphics, color or interesting fonts to draw attention to healthy items such as whole grains or veggie-topped foods on the menu.

Physical placement of healthy items on the menu is important, too. Customers most often order items in the four corners of the menu, as well as the top and bottoms of columns. These items sell 25% more often than those in the middle of the menu. But most importantly – and counterintuitively – don't overtly call a menu item healthy. While people are interested in their health and want to choose healthy items, they psychologically avoid items marketed as such, as they have long associated “healthy” items with lack of flavor.

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6. *Journal of Hospitality Management*, <http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/discoveries/menu-secrets-can-make-you-slim-design>

## *Chefs serve up health with nutritious additions and mindful subtractions*

Luckily for consumers, chefs are offering more and more innovative menu items that balance consumers' desire for healthfulness and taste. For instance, fast-casual pizza chain MOD Pizza features The Bob, a pizza that includes spicy chicken sausage, roasted corn, cauliflower and red onions. The pizzeria also offers the pizza salad – a dish that allows customers to create their own salad served on an Asiago pizza crust. Oggi's, a sports-themed restaurant chain, features a light lasagna roll-up, which includes zucchini, yellow squash, red onions, roasted red peppers and artichoke hearts rolled in a lasagna noodle along with marinara and a cheese blend, all served over sauteed spinach, offering customers all of the great flavors of lasagna with more nutrients and fewer calories.

Menu choices and ingredients that indirectly conform to consumers' health and diet goals can also influence sales. At pizza chain Pie Five, for instance, customers can order the Athenian pizza, which includes olive oil, feta cheese, grilled chicken, garlic, banana peppers, red onions, basil, Kalamata olives and sun-dried tomato puree. This nod to the Mediterranean diet is a healthy-yet-inviting offering that could appeal to a wide range of diners. At West Coast fast-casual eatery Tender Greens, guests can customize a variety of offerings, having them as either a sandwich, a hot plate or a salad, and side items include good-for-you grains, including farro and quinoa.

Using and marketing ingredients that consumers equate with health, including items that are additive-free, non-GMO, local and organic, can make menus more enticing. Tender Greens uses locally sourced produce and advertises this fact to guests. In addition, offering products targeted to specific dietary needs is increasingly common and beneficial to the bottom line. The number of Americans following a gluten-free diet tripled between 2009 and 2014, according to a recent study<sup>7</sup>, and a third of consumers follow some sort of “free-from” diet<sup>8</sup>, such as cutting out gluten or dairy. Customers at Mellow Mushroom can order pizza with gluten-free crust or vegan cheese, which opens up the pizza market to consumers who previously abstained from the category due to dietary needs or preferences. Mellow Mushroom, in fact, has a complete gluten-free protocol to prevent cross-contamination so those with celiac disease can enjoy the restaurant's offerings.

7. Journal of the American Medical Association, <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2547202>

8. Packaged Facts, Food Formulation Trends: Ingredients Consumers Avoid, <https://www.packagedfacts.com/about/release.asp?id=3782>

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## *Appealing to the next generation*

While adult consumers across the United States adopt and avoid various ingredients, they are simultaneously rearing the next generation of restaurant patrons and directing kids' food options and choices. With these expanded personal palates, parents expect more from kids' menus and for selections to include healthy foods. Approaching a kids' menu with a more thoughtful approach – and treating children like future customers – can pay off in the long run. In fact, the National Restaurant Association's What's Hot 2017 report identified gourmet items in kids' meals as a top-20 trend<sup>9</sup>. Within the kids category specifically, chefs surveyed by the association identified healthy meals, whole grains and even entree salads as rising trends on kids' menus. Oven-baked items, fruit and vegetable sides and ethnic and gourmet items were among the other top kids' menu trends named by chefs.

Whole-grain pasta is a great way to appeal to kids' palates and incorporate more healthful ingredients. Using red sauce instead of a cream-based sauce also lightens the dish. Offering a vegetable side can make the meal more well-rounded. To increase the healthfulness of other kid favorites, such as pizza, operators can use whole-grain crust and plenty of veggies.

*Treating children like future customers  
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At Pieology, the rustic veggie pizza includes a whole-wheat crust, house red sauce, olive oil, roasted red peppers, red onion, green pepper, corn and garlic, which can be a healthful pick for the whole family. At Tender Greens, the kids' menu is simply a scaled-down version of its adult offerings, and kids can choose any protein to be made as a sandwich, quesadilla or grilled cheese, along with a side of seasonal vegetables and mashed potatoes.

## *Taste and innovation are keys to success*

While chefs and consumers are increasingly focused on health, it's taste that will continue to win customers' satisfaction and repeat business. Innovating throughout the menu – including on healthy items – will entice functional-focused millennials and fat-leery boomers alike. Comfort foods will remain a draw, as well, and positioning these to remain familiar and satisfying while having some healthful twists, will allow pizza, pasta and the like to remain popular for all occasions and across demographics.

<sup>9</sup> National Restaurant Association What's Hot Report, <http://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/News-Research/WhatsHot/What-s-Hot-2017-FINAL>



## *About Escalon:*

A division of Kraft Heinz, Escalon produces fresh-packed California tomatoes and tomato sauces made especially for foodservice operators with an abiding passion for better. Escalon's complete line of more than 30 products includes formats ranging from whole peeled pear tomatoes to fully prepared sauce to organic and Hispanic-style tomatoes. For more information or to sign up for Escalon's insight-packed Better Together newsletter, visit [www.escalon.net](http://www.escalon.net).



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