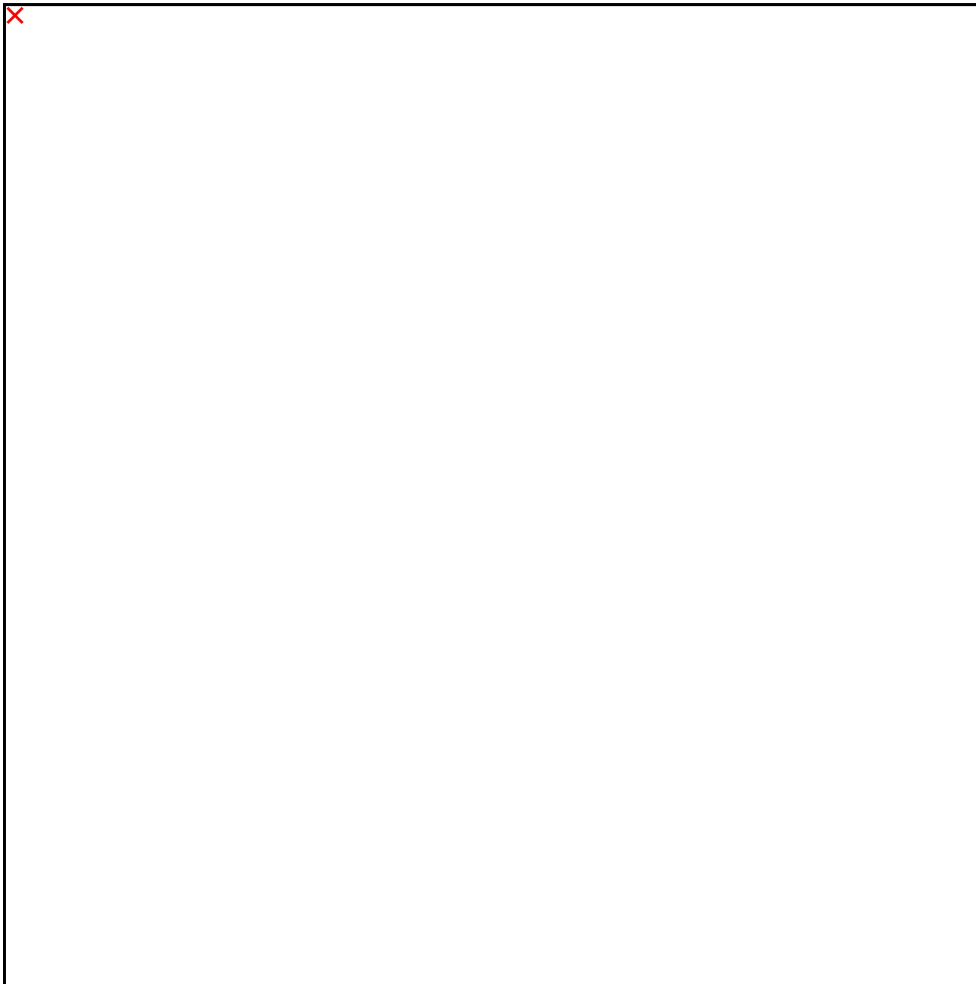


# BENCHMARK® Announces the Top Ten Dining Trends for 2020

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The Woodlands (Houston), Texas, September 2019 ... BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company, is looking to the future with its just-released Top Dining Trends for 2020. The trends were observed by Benchmark's executive chefs and culinary experts at the company's 80 luxury hotels, resorts and restaurants coast to coast, off shore, and internationally.

"More than recognizing trends, Benchmark properties are evolving food and beverage programming to not only remain relevant amid consumer demand but ensure we are operating responsibly," says Olivier Gaupin, Benchmark's Director of Culinary Operations.

Patrick Berwald, Benchmark's Vice President of Food and Beverage goes on to say, "in addition to offering engaging experiences to each and every one of our guests, Benchmark's position on food and beverage is to offer the opportunity to learn, focus on wellness and be part of something greater."

## **2020 Dining Trend #1 | The Notorious C.B.D.**

The CBD food trend has exploded in the last twelve months. Coffee shops and cafes in many American cities are now boasting a startling array of offerings infused with CBD oil, aimed at attracting customers interested in trying new eco-friendly, plant-based ingredients. Restaurants have also begun to incorporate the oil into their menus, both for drinks and food. What's CBD or Cannabidiol? It's a naturally occurring, non-psychoactive compound found in the resinous flower of Cannabis, a plant with a rich history as a medicine - going back thousands of years and known to reduce pain, stress and anxiety. CBD-infused drinks are also quickly gaining momentum as serious contenders in the popular beverage market, including sparkling waters, coffees, teas, energy drinks, beer, wine and mixed alcoholic beverages.

## **2020 Dining Trend #2 | The Incredible Sprouting Plant Ecosystem**

More and more people are choosing to move away from beef, pork, and poultry, but honestly, these proteins aren't going completely away any time soon. Many in society, though, are making a conscious decision to make a dietary switch into the plant-based ecosystem. Plant-based food alternatives are being provided for meat and dairy. They are using the art of cooking and food invention to recreate meat and dairy flavors from non-meat and non-dairy products like soy, peas, cashews, and almonds. In 2020, we expect this trend to grow rapidly. This culminates from years of research and studies, to make plant-based food items equally delicious and as desirable as real meat and dairy products. Many restaurants have encouraged veg-forward eating habits. By 2020, we predict that they will have a dedicated menu for plant-based food items.

### **2020 Dining Trend #3 | Puffed the Magic Snack**

We have always been told chips are an unhealthy snack option and to stay as far away from them as possible. There are new products on the snack food market, however, that are providing healthier versions than chips. With ingredients like chickpeas, beets, quinoa, and kale, these snacks are going to make “snacking” alright even if you have the whole bag of chips. They may not be the most appealing aesthetically but are going to satisfy snack cravings effectively. Expect this crunchy trend to build in 2020.

### **2020 Dining Trend #4 | Jackfruit – Possible & Beyond**

The newest go-to meat substitute is jackfruit. Already being used as an alternative for barbecue pulled pork, jackfruit is a southeast Asian fruit that is a great source of iron, calcium, and B vitamins. The texture of jackfruit mimics the texture of pulled pork and will soon become a force in the food industry as a meat alternative.

### **2020 Dining Trend #5 | Fruit Forward**

Among the usual sweet flavors found on beverage menus, unique fruit flavors, such as cactus, are taking mixology ideation by storm. More specifically, spiny cactus fruits such as prickly pear and dragon fruit are peaking consumer interest. Prickly pears are a seeded fruit that yields an intensely flavorful ruby colored juice, while dragon fruit (AKA pitaya or strawberry pear) is also attracting the attention of consumers because of its sweet and sour flavor profile. Consumers are also exploring more unique fruit flavor varieties, including bergamot orange, yuzu, calamansi, citron, makrut lime, pomelo, Meyer lemon, blood orange and ugli fruit (a Jamaican form of the tangelo) to name a few.

### **2020 Dining Trend #6 | Dairy Remix**

Step aside almond and soy, oat milk has emerged as the golden child of all the alternative milks. It's terrific in coffees, and baristas can barely keep it in stock. So, it makes sense that companies are piggybacking off its success and launching other oat milk products as alternatives to dairy, to help minimize the environmental impacts associated with animal husbandry.

### **2020 Dining Trend #7 | Sparkling Results**

Sparkling water demand is exploding, driven in part by consumers who are concerned about sugar but still looking to satisfy their craving for carbonation. Operators looking to harness these trends and turn them into more traffic or higher check averages should not only offer beverages that feature unique flavors, low-alcohol (or no-alcohol) sparkling waters and more, but they should also make sure to promote these types of drinks on social media. By ensuring diners – particularly younger influencers - know what new and exciting drinks are available, operators can count on attracting these new and affluent repeat beverage consumers.

### **2020 Dining Trend #8 | Bright & Bold**

In terms of flavors and colors, consumers are looking for bright, bold, appealing hues. Color generates emotional appeal with food-it may be as important as taste. Skilled food and beverage operators have an eye for what beverages succeed on social media, where color is critically important, looking for products that are “Instagram-friendly”. Color and functionality collide with ingredients such as blue algae, beet, matcha, butterfly pea flower tea – popular in Southeast Asia. Butterfly pea flower tea is high in antioxidants and naturally changes color from blue to purple when acidity is added to it.

## **2020 Dining Trend #9 | More Traceability**

As news about climate change, disappearing rainforests and plastic in the oceans dominate the news cycle and our social feeds, consumers are demanding sustainability in all forms of packaging - quickly making this integral to today's food and beverage operating model. Whether it's swapping out Styrofoam and plastic for paper or bamboo, or buying ingredients from sustainable sources, sustainability will sweep the entire industry in 2020. The heightened focus on single-use plastics is not just a fad but a reality that goes beyond the purge of the plastic straw.

## **2020 Dining Trend #10 | Ugly Produce**

Food is a terrible thing to waste. It's bad for people and the planet, and yet 40% of all the food produced in the US goes uneaten because it is imperfect. From farms to fridges, food waste is a massive problem that has infiltrated every level of our food system. Now, consumers are finally accepting misshapen, bruised, and just down-right ugly foods as totally edible. Start-up food companies that send boxes of said fruit and vegetables directly to the customer's home will encourage consumers to buy produce that is nutritious and tastes fine, but is physically flawed in some way.

### **About BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company.**

BENCHMARK®, a global hospitality company, is a leader in the development, management, and marketing of independent, soft branded, and experiential hard branded resorts, hotels, and conference centers. In addition to the company's award-winning full service Benchmark Resorts & Hotels, its lifestyle and luxury Gemstone Collection, and its industry-leading Benchmark Conference Centers. BENCHMARK is also an investor in etc.venues, a leading provider of contemporary city centre venues for meetings, signature events, and conferences. Benchmark's combined portfolio features more than 80 unique projects across three continents. The company is passionately committed to delivering personal, inspiring, and memory-making experiences, driving total revenue and profitability, and cultivating an award winning, "Be The Difference" culture for all its employees. Benchmark, is based in The Woodlands (Houston), Texas, with offices in London, England; Miami, Florida; Park City, Utah; Scottsdale, Arizona; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Seattle, Washington; and Tokyo, Japan. [www.benchmarkglobalhospitality.com](http://www.benchmarkglobalhospitality.com) To become a fan on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels](http://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels), [www.facebook.com/GemstoneHotelCollection](http://www.facebook.com/GemstoneHotelCollection). Follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels](http://www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels), [www.twitter.com/GemstoneHotels](http://www.twitter.com/GemstoneHotels), on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/benchmarkresortsandhotels](http://www.instagram.com/benchmarkresortsandhotels), [www.instagram.com/gemstonehotels](http://www.instagram.com/gemstonehotels), and on Pinterest at [www.pinterest.com/benchmarkhotels/gemstone-hotels](http://www.pinterest.com/benchmarkhotels/gemstone-hotels). At LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/benchmark-a-global-hospitality-company/>

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