

# CHEF'STORE INDUSTRY REPORT:

## The Evolution of Desserts in Restaurants



## **60 PERCENT<sup>1</sup>** OF RESTAURANT OWNERS AND OPERATORS SAY THAT OFFERING DESSERT OPTIONS HELPS DRIVE UP PROFITS.

Desserts hold a special place within a restaurant, often serving as the grand finale to a memorable dining experience. From traditional favorites to avant-garde creations, the landscape of desserts in restaurants has undergone a remarkable evolution, reflecting shifting consumer tastes, culinary innovation, and cultural influences.

By strategically incorporating desserts into their menus, restaurants can increase their average check size per customer. Since desserts typically have a higher profit margin compared to other menu items they are a profitable way for restaurants to improve sales, in fact, **60 percent<sup>1</sup>** of restaurant owners and operators say that offering dessert options helps drive up profits.

Read on to see how restaurants can capitalize on this evolution to enhance customer satisfaction, drive revenue, and distinguish their culinary offerings in an increasingly competitive market.



Part of looking to the future is knowing what has been well-received in the past. Understanding previous trends in confections lets you know if it's time to shake up some classics or revamp your offerings.

## Dessert Timeline: From Then to Now

Over the past decade, desserts in restaurants have undergone a fascinating evolution, marked by distinct trends. From the nostalgic charm of cereal milk desserts in 2008 to the avant-garde techniques of molecular gastronomy and haute cuisine in 2010, the landscape has continuously evolved.





## AMERICA'S SWEET TOOTH IS TAKING A BIG BITE OUT OF DESSERTS

The dessert market is expected to grow in the coming years, and diners are eating it up. **53 percent of consumers<sup>2</sup>** reported enjoying desserts in the past day, and **18 percent have sweets once a week<sup>3</sup>**. Check out what dessert ideas are hitting menus and tap into potential revenue-driving sweet eats.

### Frozen Desserts are Heating Up

Frozen desserts could grow at a **CAGR of 5.8 percent<sup>4</sup>** globally by 2032.

- The worldwide market is anticipated to reach **\$176 billion<sup>5</sup>** in the next 8 years.





## What's Cool Right Now

Want to know what frozen sweets dominate dessert searches and satisfy customers' sugar cravings now and in the future?

- Ice cream reigns supreme and is projected to account for nearly **50 percent**<sup>6</sup> of the frozen dessert market.
- **39 percent**<sup>7</sup> of consumers are looking for global flavors in their cold treats.
- Plant-based desserts are gaining in popularity. Searches for vegan frozen confectionery **have risen 164%**<sup>8</sup> over the past four years.

## Plant-Based Sweets Takes Root

Plant-based eating is a major lifestyle trend in the U.S. **23 percent**<sup>9</sup> of adults consider themselves flexitarian and consume plant-based foods as part of their diet. **7 percent**<sup>10</sup> eat vegan exclusively. So, it's no wonder that dairy-free desserts are taking menus by storm.

- In 2020, the vegan dessert market was worth **\$2.68 billion**<sup>11</sup>.
- Currently, the vegan dessert enterprise is valued at **\$2.77 billion**<sup>12</sup>.
- By 2027, the plant-based dessert market is predicted to grow at **10.1 percent**<sup>13</sup> with a forecasted revenue of **\$5.97 billion**<sup>14</sup>.

## What's Growing on Dessert Menus?

According to [Greener Ideal](#)<sup>15</sup>, the top three vegan desserts are plant-based cheesecake, chocolate cake, and ice cream.

### Dessert Menus Get Spicy

Want to know what frozen sweets dominate dessert searches and satisfy customers' sugar cravings now and in the future?

- Global flavors, complex heat, and spices are showing up on menus everywhere.
- The global flavor food market is predicted to reach **\$23.97 billion by 2031**<sup>16</sup>.
- Sriracha has seen a **35 percent 4-year growth**<sup>17</sup> in menus, making it a valuable component for spicy sweets.
- In **2024 and beyond**<sup>18</sup>, expect to see multidimensional heat components like chili crisp in chocolate-based desserts.
- **71 percent**<sup>19</sup> of diners want bold new chocolate experiences.
- Nearly **one-third**<sup>20</sup> of consumers consume functional foods daily, like ginger, turmeric, and dark chocolate. **51 percent**<sup>21</sup> would like to see these offerings on menus.



### What's Spicing Up Sweets?

Global flavor heavy-hitters like star anise, chipotle, cayenne, ginseng, ginger, turmeric, matcha, and yuzu will appear on dessert menus in the form of cakes, pastries, cookies, and ice creams.



# TURNING DESSERT INTO REVENUE

Desserts play a pivotal role in the culinary landscape of restaurants. The evolution of desserts is evident that these sweet offerings are not just the final touch to a meal but potent revenue generators and key components of a restaurant's brand identity.

By embracing innovation, creativity, and consumer preferences, restaurants can leverage desserts to enhance customer satisfaction, drive repeat business, and ultimately boost their bottom line. As the dessert landscape continues to evolve, restaurants need to stay attuned to changing tastes and trends, ensuring that their sweet offerings remain both delightful to the palate and profitable to the business.

## Sources

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