



# 2025

## TREND REPORT

**SPICEOLOGY**®

Check out our spicy takes on  
the top trends of 2025.



If you are reading this trend report, you're probably like us: unable to resist the allure of year-end flavor forecasting from publications like Food & Wine or Tastewise, with breathless titles like "The Next Big Thing."

But how many of these reported trends are actually making their way into chefs' brains, into their dishes, and onto the table?

This year, we devoured trend reports like they were dipped in birria. After compiling common trends we noted across the range of them, we fielded a national survey of our chef customers to understand which dining trends truly deserve a place at the table and which are a flash in the pan. We also looked at differences in how those trends play out by region and by restaurant type.

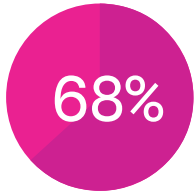
*P.S. Of course, chefs being chefs, many of them used the opportunity to tell us again that chefs don't follow trends. Noted.*



Chef Christian Gill  
Social Media & Culinary  
Content Manager

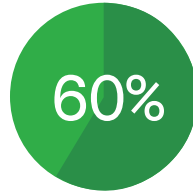
# THE TRENDS

Percentage of Chefs adding it to their menus:



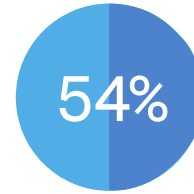
## Newstalgia

nostalgic dishes with a modern twist



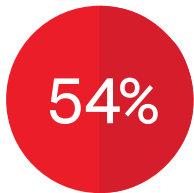
## Bolder Flavors

like smoke, char and intense spice



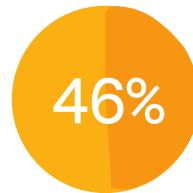
## Swicy

ongoing interest in sweet and spicy combinations



## Inventive Flavors

fusions or unexpected pairings



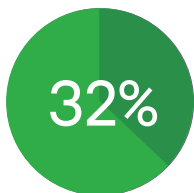
## Hot & Spicy

more heat and diverse pepper options



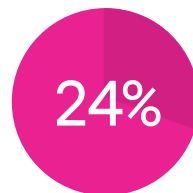
## Big Briny Flavors

especially from fermentation



## Snacking

as a key menu item, especially international snacking



## Calming Flavors

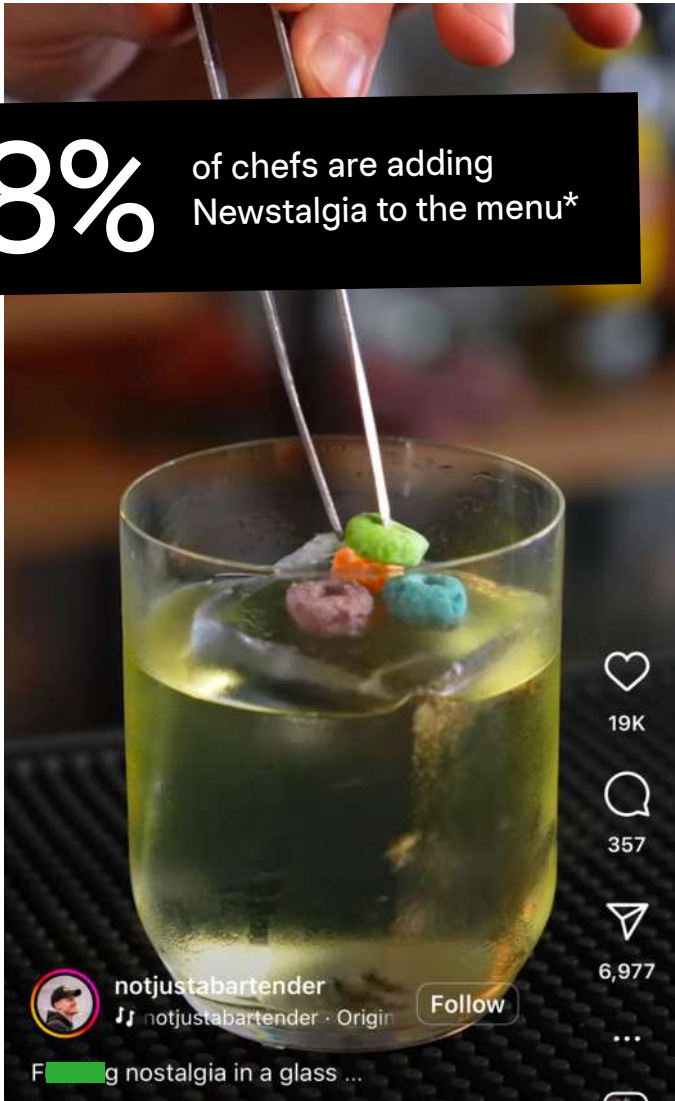
floral notes such as lavender, hibiscus, and other botanicals

**So, we're going deep on the top 5 and sharing some tasty ways our chefs (and chef friendlies) would put these trends to work. Chicken N' Waffle on a stick anyone?**

# NEWTALGIA

68%

of chefs are adding Newstalgia to the menu\*



Newstalgia has been trending since the pandemic and shows no signs of slowing, because it taps a vein of comfort-seeking

behavior in a troubled world. We reported on this in last year's report, and we won't be too surprised if it shows up next year!



Who's adding it to the menu?

**Fine Dining** - Chefs in these establishments were **47% more likely\*** to add Newstalgia to the menu.

“ One of my favorite things to do is take “old school” recipes and give them new life with a blend. What’s more classic than a Caesar salad? Adding trending flavors like Buffalo and Nashville Hot allows me to get excited about the “basics” again. Diners will too.

— Chef Tony Reed  
Director of Culinary



In the Dish

CULINARY INSPIRATION

# Buffalo Lemon Pepper & Nashville Hot Chicken Caesar Salad



\*Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey

TREND #2

# BOLDER FLAVORS - SMOKE, CHAR AND INTENSE SPICE

*Bolder flavors appeal to those seeking adventure and a vibe.*

**60%** of our chefs are adding Bolder Flavors to the menu\*

*Who's adding it to the menu?*

**Fine Dining** - Chefs in these establishments were **29% more likely\*** to add bolder flavors to the menu.

And, there's a regional impact here too: Chefs in the **Midwest** are **20% less likely\*** to add bolder flavors, but chefs in the **West** are **24% more likely\*** to embrace the bold.

“With a bevy of foods and beverages aimed at mood, flavors that evoke different kinds of moods and that are associated with either feelings of relaxation or stimulation will move into the spotlight”

— Jennifer Zhou  
Senior Director,  
Flavors ADM

# Char + Sweet = Balanced Eats

We challenged our chefs to char some shizz, balance with some sweet and make something delicious. The three dishes in consideration?



**Tomatador + Smoky  
Honey Habanero  
Charred Tomato Soup**



*Charred Smoky  
Honey Habanero  
Grilled Carrots*

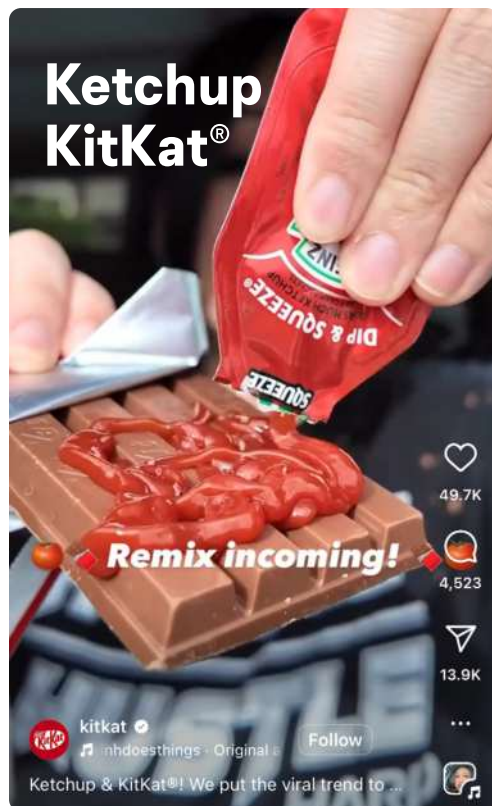


*Charred Onion  
Gravy Seasoned  
with Dirt*

Who's adding it to the menu?

There's a reason it's called the Wild, Wild West... Chefs on the West Coast are **23% more likely** to get wild.\*

## Kraft® Mac & Cheese Flavored Ice Cream



### TREND #3

“ Chefs are testing the limits as they look for ways to add fun, irreverent dishes to menus that resonate with younger consumers and perform well on social media.

— Mike Kostyo,  
Vice President, Menu Matters

# Wildly Inventive Flavor Fusions and Unexpected Pairings

If you don't like mac and cheese ice cream, dill pickle drinks, or ketchup KitKats®, blame Gen Z. According to Innova Market Insights, a third of consumers (regardless of age) are drawn to

new, unique and different flavors. But it's Gen Z that values creativity far and above, coming in 1.5 times more likely than Baby Boomers to demand “crazy” flavor combinations.

\*Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey





In the Dish

# Really Ranch Smoked Salmon Cream Filled Donut



## CULINARY INSPIRATION

# Two Words: Ranch. Donut.

How about a Really Ranch donut? That was the question posed to our chefs while discussing how to tackle this trend. And, thankfully, Spiceologist and Pastry Chef Eva Z. rose to the occasion.

“Donuts and ranch - Are there two more beloved Americana items? I loved this challenge. This flavor mashup was absolutely delicious. Trust.”



— Eva Zapata  
National Account Manager  
& Pastry Chef, Spiceology

**54%** of chefs are adding Inventive Flavor Fusions to the menu\*

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of global consumers follow viral food and beverage trends on social media.\*\* **37%**

\*2024 Spiceology Chef Survey  
\*\* Innova Market Insights - Top Ten Food and Beverage Trends 2025

TREND #4

SWEET + SPICY

# Swicy

*“Swicy” Foods are Among 2025’s Biggest Food Trend Predictions*

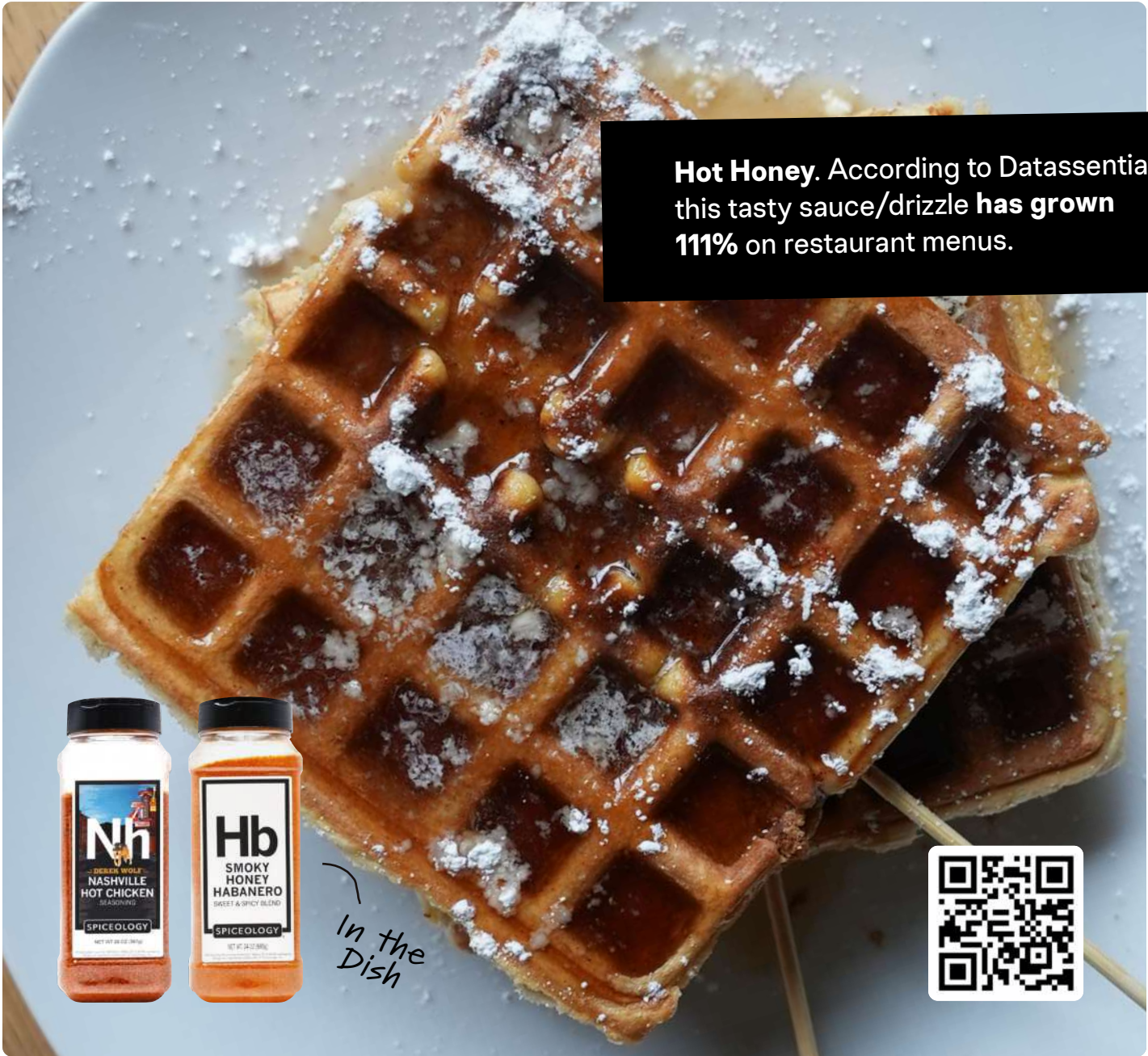
— FOOD&WINE

This flavor-based trend is exactly what it sounds like. Swicy showed up in last year’s trend report and seems to be an unstoppable flavor combo. As the trend continued into 2024, it was about increasing the heat. We’re excited to see what 2025 brings (We hear it might be the addition of smoke.)

**54%** of chefs are adding Swicy to the menu\*



\*Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey



**Hot Honey.** According to Datassential, this tasty sauce/drizzle **has grown 111%** on restaurant menus.



\*Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey

CULINARY INSPIRATION

# Nashville Hot Chicken N' Smoky Honey Habanero Waffles on a Stick + Smoky Honey Hab Syrup

46%

of chefs are adding Hot & Spicy to the menu\*

TREND #5

# Hot & Spicy

LESS SPICY



**Yes to Spice,  
but Let's Not Be  
All "Hot Ones"<sup>™</sup>  
About It.**

**C**hefs noted that interest in spiciness has become more nuanced, complex, and diverse, with several calling out "smoky spice," "sweet spice," and "Szechuan spice" as well as such specific heat profiles as "Achiote, Paprika, and Ancho chile."

**K**roger shared a similar customer shift away from scorching heat to flavor first with the rise of Calabrian chiles, guajillo peppers and hatch chiles.

\*Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey

# Maximizing Flavor vs. Chasing That Scoville High



MORE SPICY

Who's adding it to the menu?

**HOT** Fast Casual Dining - Chefs in this category were **29% more likely\*** to be testing diners heat tolerances.

**NOT** Fine Dining - Chefs in this category were **80% less likely\*** to crank up the heat.

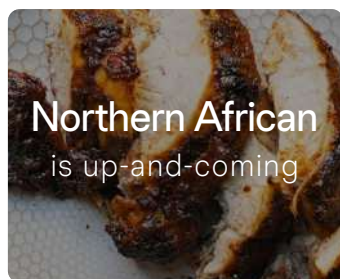
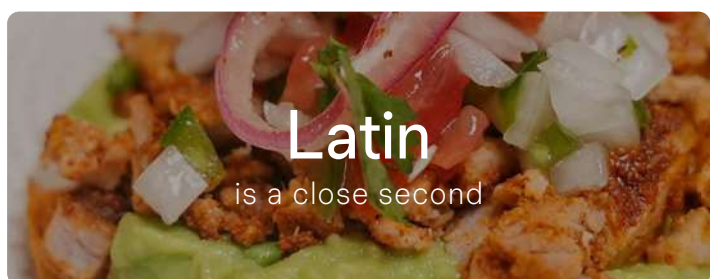
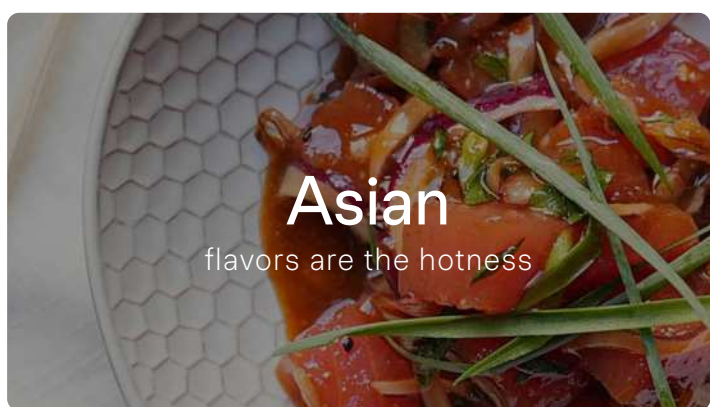


**Tomatador Ham & Cheese Stuffed Piquillo Peppers**

In the Dish

HONORABLE MENTION

# GAZING EASTWARD (AND SOUTHWARD) FOR INSPIRATION



In addition to asking chefs to weigh in on common trends, we asked these culinary creators an open-ended question: What trends are you seeing in terms of diner interest in particular flavors or dishes, and what seasonings are you favoring to create those dishes?

The macro trend toward global flavors has been widely noted, but our chefs broke it down for us

*Within these broad categories, Korean and Peruvian stand out as the most-cited cuisine traditions.\**



Korean BBQ Wings with Spicy Maple Glaze

KOREAN-INSPIRED FOR THE FLAVOR WIN

One of our favorite Flavor Focuses dove deep into Korean cuisine. In case you missed it, take a read here. Our chefs went nuts over the challenge of how to add a little Korean-inspired flavor to the menu.



Korean BBQ Hot Dog

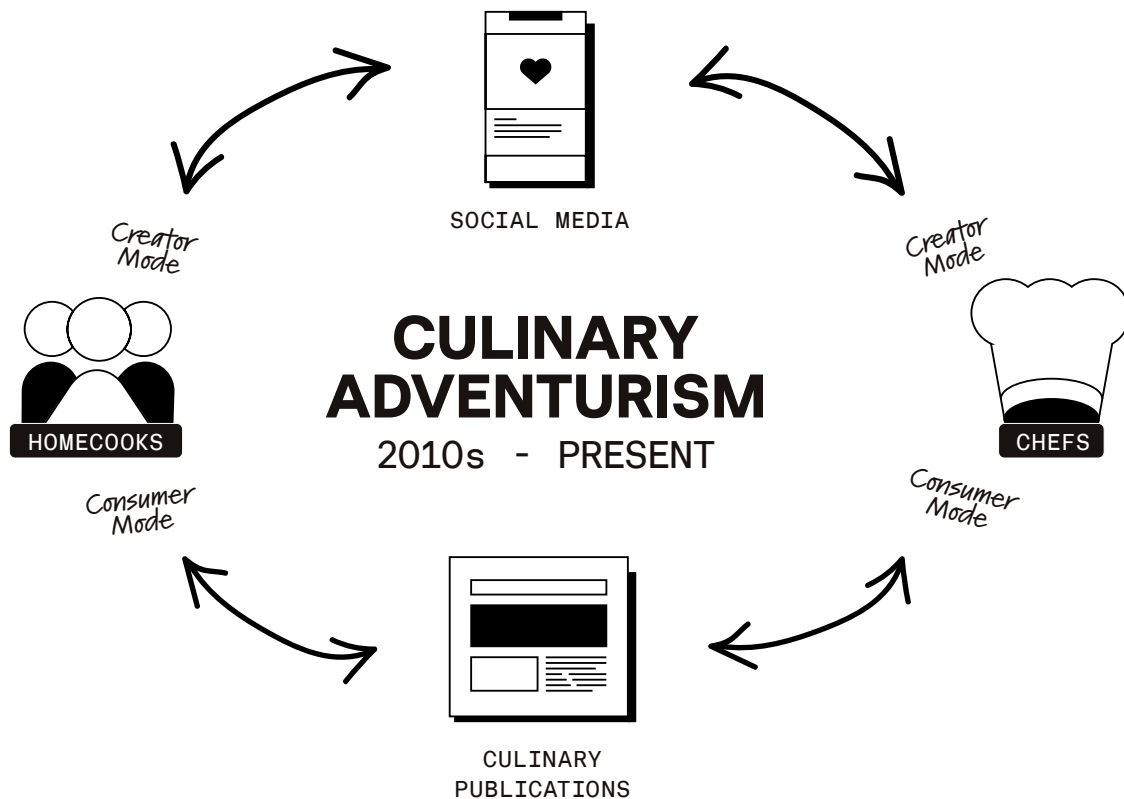


Korean BBQ Chopped Cheese Rice Cakes



Korean BBQ Crab Cakes

# Where Chefs Find Their Inspiration



**D**uring last year's Trend Report interviews, we were struck by how often chefs pointed to social media as a source of inspiration for what diners are interested in eating. It led us to put forward our theory of

Culinary Adventurism, noting the virtuous cycle of chefs picking up social media trends, amplifying them through their own popular dishes, and creating buzz that further amplifies the same trend.

**W**hile social media is indeed the great culinary muse of our time, it is just one dimension of how chefs get inspired. Other "muses" complete the picture.

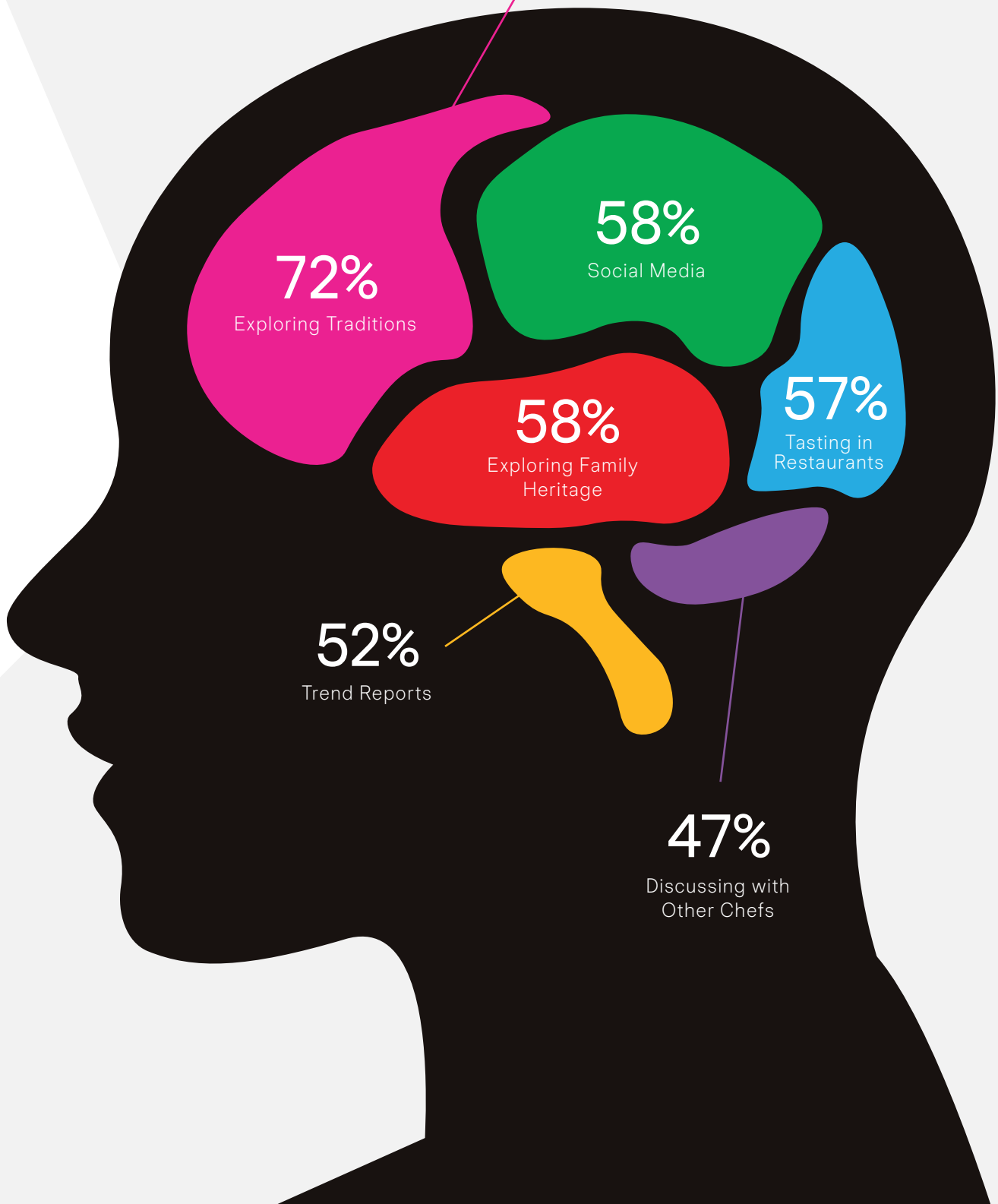


Social media is just one dimension of how chefs get inspired. We asked our chefs to break down all the places they draw inspiration, and here's what they told us.

72%

of chefs draw inspiration from "exploring culinary traditions," which is a useful reminder that culinary history shapes what we cook and eat much more than the latest trends or fads.\*

\* Spiceology 2024 Chef Survey



# So, what will you add to your menu?



Here's to a  
spicy 2025.

