



Fact Sheet: Trends in Spices

- Spices offer a highly flavorful way to make meals more appealing without sacrificing nutrition and without all the sodium.
- The USDA has promoted and supported using spices in flavor stations as an option for reducing sodium while increasing acceptance in school meals through its “What’s Shaking?” campaign.
- According to a study by Technomic, ethnic options, such as Indian- and Asian-inspired cuisine, are gaining popularity and interest among students in higher grade levels. Spicy foods are also gaining traction among all age groups.
- Current trends in spices and seasonings include an increase in the use of peppers beyond jalapenos, sour notes from vinegar and citrus, and the use of smoky flavors to enhance not just meat, but also vegetables.
- If you think kids can’t handle fiery food, think again. Just like adults, students of all ages enjoy varying levels of spice—some may shy away, but others will say “bring on the heat!”
- According to Mintel, having “vegetables” noted on a menu is not noteworthy, but “fire-grilled vegetables” or roasted vegetables with unique seasonings/sauces may attract more consumer attention.
- According to Mintel, when fast casuals entered the foodservice scene, they created a new level of expectation surrounding customization that has only continued to grow in importance. As more consumers crave new flavors when dining out, customization at casual dining restaurants allows diners to decide how adventurous they want to get with new flavors. For example, Buffalo Wild Wings has a section on its menu called “Customize Your Eats,” which allows diners to add any of their listed dry seasonings and sauces to a specific dish. Its spice options also range from sweet and mild to extra blazing hot. This allows consumers to select not only select their flavor preferences, but also their heat preferences.