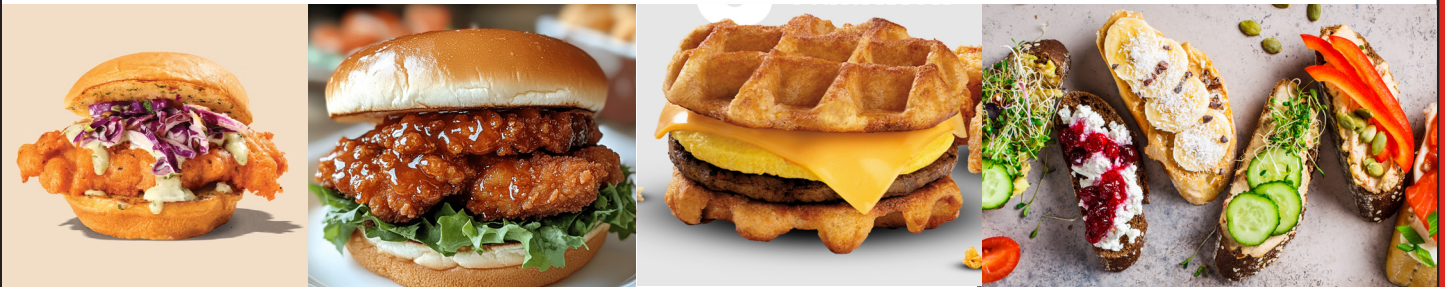


KAGOME

SANDWICH TREND REPORT 2026



“Sandwiches: the original portable feast...”

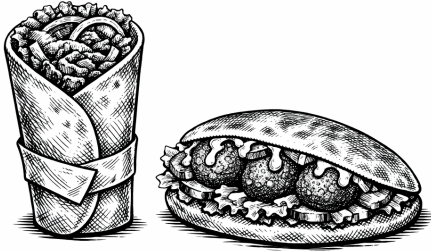


Sandwiches are the quiet heroes of human ingenuity: two pieces of bread transforming chaos into a contained, portable meal that respects both time and hands. Their brilliance lies in adaptability—any culture, budget, or dietary need can be layered between bread, making the sandwich endlessly democratic. In today’s fast-paced, on-the-go world, this simple invention still matters because it lets nourishment keep up with life, without asking us to slow down. This newsletter explores the major sandwich trends shaping menus around the world. We start by highlighting how Middle Eastern flavors and plant-forward ingredients are driving interest in wraps like shawarma and falafel. You’ll also see how global fusion is influencing sandwiches through bold combinations of Latin, Asian, and Southern flavors. We take a closer look at the rise of unique carriers, from bao buns and Dutch crunch bread to waffles and corn tortillas.

The content then dives into the fastest-growing sauces and flavors that are elevating sandwiches, including spicy, creamy, and globally inspired options. We also spotlight the breads and cheeses gaining momentum, from brioche and Hawaiian buns to buffalo mozzarella and vegan cheeses. Premiumization is another key theme, as operators and brands lean into high-end ingredients to add value and excitement.

Health-forward choices and better-for-you options are also discussed as consumers seek balance without sacrificing flavor. To ground the trends, we share key statistics that show how often consumers are eating sandwiches and what drives innovation. Finally, we wrap up with examples of highly rated, limited-time sandwiches that bring these trends to life.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR SANDWICH TRENDS?



Middle Eastern and Plant Forward

Wrapped carriers (shawarma), plant forward (falafel), and plentiful flavorful sauces such as taziki, toum, tahini, shug, tarator, and yogurt garlic.



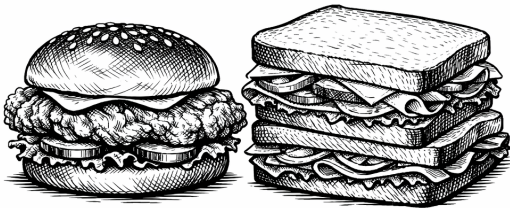
Global Influence & Hints of Sweet

Latin and Asian flavor and ingredient influences such as Cuban sandwiches, jibarito, Mexican cheeses, banh mi, and bao bites are emerging on menus. That includes sauces with a touch of sweetness such as chipotle honey or gochujang.



Unique Carriers and Bold Flavors

Bao buns, brioche buns, and Hawaiian rolls are seen on menus with wraps, such as lavash or roti, increasing in notoriety. Bold flavors and global takes on spicy chicken, spicy honey with specific peppers, and comeback sauce all are increasing on menus.



Lunch Meat Classics & Fried Chicken

Innovation with the ubiquitous fried chicken sandwich now comes from sauces and breadings, while lunch meat classics remain popular with fresh baked bread. Switching to innovative marinara sauces to pair with chicken parm subs is also grabbing attention.

SANDWICH TRENDS GLOBALLY

Bold Flavors and Flavor Fusion

Across the globe, fusion flavors are gaining momentum. Bold ingredients from different cultures are being combined in new ways. Items like bulgogi, guacamole, Italian sausage, and Southern fried chicken are appearing on menus worldwide.

On any given day roughly
44% of U.S. adults will eat a sandwich

Premiumization

Many restaurants and CPG brands are elevating sandwiches with premium ingredients like high-end cheeses, aged meats, truffle oil, and fresh-baked sourdough—reshaping a once-simple menu staple into a more luxurious offering.

Healthy Eating

Health-focused eating trends are gaining momentum across food and beverage, and sandwiches are no exception, offering consumers an easy, affordable way to eat well without sacrificing satisfaction. With healthier bread options, fresh toppings, and protein-rich add-ons widely available, global sandwich brands are making it easier than ever for consumers to stay on track.

BY THE NUMBERS

52% of operators rely on unique sauces, condiments, or dressings to differentiate their menus

Push for innovative twists on sandwiches contributes to nearly **15%** YoY growth in social media conversations about sandwiches

Roughly **44%** of U.S. restaurants have sandwiches on their menus

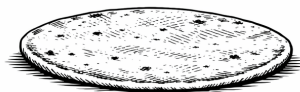
FASTEST GROWING SAUCES AND FLAVORS FOR SANDWICHES

Everything Bagel
Nashville Hot
Vodka Sauce
Hot Honey
Honey Sauce
Gochujang
Jalapeño Aioli
Alabama
Creamy Garlic
White Sauce
Comeback Sauce
Butter Sauce



FASTEST GROWING BREADS AND CHEESES FOR SANDWICHES

Corn Tortilla
Egg Bread
Gluten Free Bun
Dutch Crunch
Lavash
Nine Grain
Waffle
Buttermilk Biscuit
Brioche
Sesame Seed Bun
Hawaiian Bun



Vegan Cheese
Parmigiano
Cotija
Beer Cheese
Cheddar jack
Queso
Shaved Parmesan
Cheez Whiz
Mexican Cheese
Queso Fresco
Buffalo Mozzarella



LTO SANDWICHES HIGHLY RATED BY CONSUMERS



PASTRAMI EGG SANDWICH

-by Bruegger's Bagels, cage-free eggs with pastrami, Swiss cheese, and garlic aioli on a kettle-boiled Everything Bagel.



BAJA FISH SLIDER

-by Rubio's, beer-battered wild-caught Alaska pollock, charred jalapeño tartar sauce, and avocado tomatillo slaw. All on a toasted King's Hawaiian© bun.



PNW FISERMAN'S

SANDWICH -by Burgerville USA, two pieces of battered and fried Alaskan black cod, Creole sauce, American Cheese, tomatoes with dill pickle spice, tartar sauce, pickles, and lettuce.



SIRLOIN STEAK

SANDWICH -by Habit Burger and Grill, garlic-herb marinated beef topped with aged white cheddar cheese, caramelized onions, barbecue sauce, and aioli on toasted sourdough.

AVOCADO SRIRACHA BLT

-by Chick-Fil-A, a breaded Original Chicken filet on Sriracha Swirl Toast with lettuce, tomato, seasoned avocado mash, hardwood smoked bacon, and a side of cayenne ranch sauce.





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