

# KAGOME

## SAUCE TRENDS REPORT 2026



# “Life is like a dish, it’s the sauce that makes it memorable.”

Sauces are no longer just a finishing touch — they’re becoming the main event. This edition of Kagome’s newsletter dives into emerging, under-the-radar sauces poised to break into the mainstream, from globally inspired condiments to unexpected flavor mashups. We explore fresh consumer data revealing how signature sauces and dressings influence brand loyalty, menu choice, and perceived value. Operators are also rethinking sauces as a low-cost, high-impact way to drive differentiation and limited-time excitement. Plus, we glimpse at how Gen Z, Millennials, and older diners differ in their condiment cravings — and what that means for menu innovation in the year ahead.



## Top Sauces, Condiments, and Dressings Consumers Use as Dip or Dipping Sauce

Salsa  
Cheese Dipping Sauce  
Guacamole  
Ketchup  
Buffalo/Wing Sauce  
Ranch Dressing  
Tartar Sauce  
Honey Mustard Dressing  
BBQ Sauce  
Sweet and Sour Sauce



Source: Datassential

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# WHAT ARE SOME OF THE FASTEST GROWING SAUCES ON MENUS?

SAUCE	1-YEAR GROWTH	4- YEAR GROWTH
HOT HONEY	+45%	219%
SALSA MACHA	+133%	+120%
MANGO HABANERO	-2%	+119%
ONION CONFIT	+25%	+100%

## BUZZING SNACK ON SOCIAL



**Basque Nachos** -Despite the name, this dish is not an authentic Basque recipe from the Basque Country. It's a U.S. and social-media-led fusion idea using elevated Spanish-style ingredients like jamón serrano or jamón ibérico, Manchego cheese, and briny pickled peppers or olives - a riff on traditional nachos but with Spanish flavors. Perhaps basque dipping sauces will pair next?

**Pil Pil** -A magic emulsion of olive oil, garlic, and guindilla chili which provides a rich and flavorful base for the salt cod dish, Bacalao a Pil Pil.

**Green Sauce** -Made with garlic-infused olive oil, and parsley, this is used to dress fish and vegetables, enhancing their natural flavors.

**Vizcaina Sauce** -A classic Basque red sauce made with red onions, garlic, and choricerro peppers, typically thickened with bread and sometimes includes tomatoes for added flavor.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**52%**

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

**60%**

of consumers look forward to getting at least one of: a signature sauce, condiment, and/or dressing at a particular restaurant.

**4 in 5**

operators say that sauces, condiments, and dressings that are easy for staff to use is essential to business.

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to be interested in a signature sauce, condiment, or dressing than the older generations.

When it comes to condiments and dressings, consumers want to decide how much goes into their food. Operators can meet this need by offering single serving cups, packets or serving containers that allow consumers to take control.

# RISING SAUCES AND FLAVORS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR...

**Adjika** -(also known as ajika), pictured on right, is a very hot spice paste from Georgian cuisine. It is made from chili peppers, garlic, and various herbs and spices.



**Ajvar** –Is a famous Balkan culinary specialty made from roasted sweet red bullhorn peppers

and eggplants. Depending on the capsaicin content in bell peppers and the amount of added chili peppers, it can be sweet (traditional), piquant (the most common), or very hot. Ajvar can be consumed as a bread spread or as a side dish.

**Au poivre** -A classic French preparation featuring cracked black peppercorns pressed onto steak and finished with a rich pan sauce of cream and brandy.



**Chamoy** -A sweet, sour, salty, and mildly spicy condiment from Mexico, made from pickled fruit, chilies, lime, and salt, often drizzled over fruit or snacks.

**Chermoula** -A vibrant herb sauce and marinade, pictured on left, made with cilantro, parsley, garlic, cumin, paprika, lemon, and olive oil, commonly used for fish and seafood. Origin: North Africa (especially Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria).

**Chimichurri** -A fresh, uncooked sauce of parsley, garlic, oregano, vinegar, and olive oil, traditionally served with grilled meat. The origins of the sauce come from Argentina and Uruguay.

# RISING SAUCES AND FLAVORS CONTINUED

**Fry Sauce** –A dipping sauce often served with French fries or other food in many places in the world. It is a combination of tomato ketchup and mayonnaise.

**Guasacaca** -A fresh avocado-based sauce, from Venezuela, that blends herbs, vinegar, garlic, and peppers, commonly served with grilled meats.

**Jeow Som** –A tangy, spicy Lao dipping sauce made with chilies, garlic, fish sauce, lime or tamarind, and sometimes palm sugar.



**Ssamjang** -A thick, savory-spicy paste from Korea that combines doenjang (soybean paste), gochujang (chili paste), garlic, and sesame oil, used in Korean lettuce wraps (ssam).

**Sawsawan** -A Filipino term for dipping sauces, often a mix of vinegar, soy sauce, calamansi, and chilies tailored to the dish.

**Shatta** -A fiery chili Levant condiment made with fresh red or green chilies, garlic, lemon, and olive oil, adding heat to savory dishes.

**Toum** -A bold, fluffy garlic emulsion originating from Lebanon and the Levant region made from garlic, oil, lemon juice, and salt, similar in texture to aioli but egg-free.



**Zhug** -A vibrant, spicy green chili sauce blended with cilantro, garlic, cumin, and cardamom, used to enliven meats and breads.



INTERESTED IN CREATING  
YOUR OWN SIGNATURE SAUCE?

CONTACT US TODAY AT:

[Ideations@KAGOME.COM](mailto:Ideations@KAGOME.COM)



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