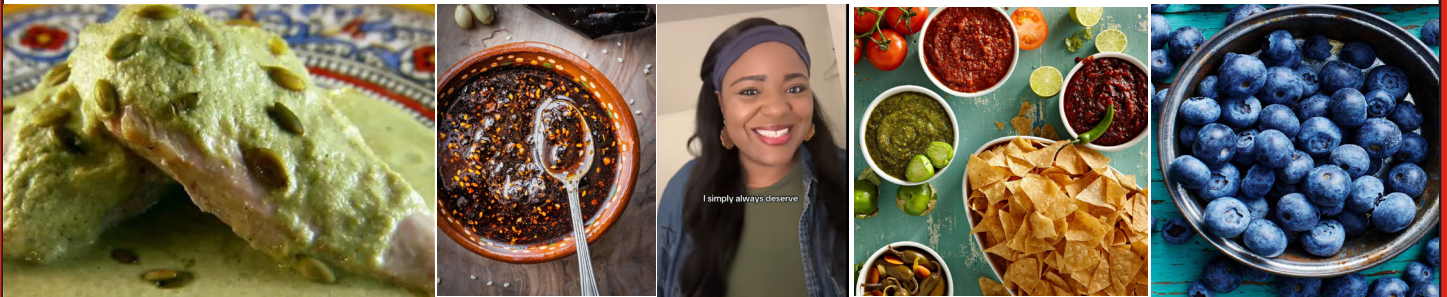


KAGOME

TREND REPORT Mid-Summer 2025



Mid-Summer Trend Report

*”Small delight in hand-
Sweet escape from daily grind,
Happiness rising!”*



Summer is in full force, bringing with it longer days, warmer weather, and plenty of inspiration for fresh, seasonal meals. As we move through July and into August, vibrant produce like tomatoes, corn, zucchini, peaches, and berries are at their peak, offering endless possibilities for colorful and flavorful dishes. It’s the perfect time to celebrate the bounty of the season and get creative with your menu. Alongside summer ingredients, we’re also taking a closer look at some foundational sauces in Mexican cuisine—staples that bring depth, tradition, and bold flavor to countless dishes. From rich mole to zesty salsa verde, these sauces are cornerstones of one of the world’s most beloved culinary traditions. We’re also exploring the rise of “little treat culture,” a fun and relatable trend showing up across social media that’s all about finding joy in small, everyday indulgences. Whether you’re diving into a new sauce recipe or treating yourself to something sweet, this season is full of delicious opportunities.

Regulatory Updates for Food Manufacturers:

In April, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Robert Kennedy Jr., announced that petroleum-based artificial colors are going to be phased out of the entire U.S. food supply. The dyes being phased out include the following: **Red 3 & 40**, **Blue 1 & 2**, **Yellow 5 & 6** and **Green 3**.

What's in Season

July

Apricots
Artichokes
Asparagus
Avocados
Blueberries
Blackberries
Cherries
Corn
Cantaloupe
Cucumbers
Melons
Peaches
Peas
Pineapples
Plums
Radishes
Raspberries
Rhubarb
Spinach

Spinach
Strawberries
Summer Squash
Tomatoes
Watermelon
Zucchini



August

Apples
Apricots
Avocados
Beets
Bell Peppers
Blackberries
Blueberries
Cantaloupe
Cherries
Corn
Carrots
Celery
Cucumbers
Celery
Eggplant
Green Beans
Tomatoes
Figs
Honeydew
Mangoes
Nectarines
Pears
Pineapples
Plums
Yellow Squash



Peaches
Raspberries
Watermelon
Zucchini

FOUNDATIONAL SAUCES IN MEXICAN CUISINE



Mexican cuisine has core sauces, each with many derivatives and variations representing the many regions of Mexico. *Cooking sauces* are, as you can take a hint from the name, cooked and can provide the basis for a recipe. Salsa roja, salsa verde, adobo, mole, and salsa macha are examples of classic Mexican cooking sauces, known for their endless regional variations.

There are also *table sauces*, often spicy, which are served at the table for individuals to enhance the dish at hand. Salsa can refer to any type of sauce in Spanish—from hollandesa, to salsa catsup, to salsa agridulce. Pico de gallo, the chunky salsa using raw tomatoes, or a smoother cooked tomato purée, is what Americans tend to think of when a salsa is mentioned. Both are also considered table sauces, as is guacamole. Bottled hot sauces also fall into this category.

Sauces play a defining role in Mexican cuisine; they are flavor builders, adding depth, complexity, and character to a dish. Just like the French mirepoix (onion, carrot, celery) or the Cajun holy trinity (onion, bell pepper, celery), this Mexican version is a flavor base that chefs and home cooks rely on—often beginning with onion, fresh or dried chili, and garlic.

Mexican cuisine remains the leading and fastest-growing segment among ethnic food categories in North America, with forecasted growth of 7.6% CAGR into 2030.

The global Salsa Market is projected to grow to 5.6 billion by 2033.
-Verified Market Reports

CLASSIC MEXICAN SAUCES STILL GAINING RECOGNITION WITH CONSUMERS



Pipián sauce, in the family of sauces known as *moles*, and has a distinctive, nutty, earthy flavor. Depending on what ingredients are included the color can be white, to green (tomatillo and cilantro), to red (red chili). The key ingredients are pumpkin or squash seeds that are roasted or dried, which acts as a thickening agent for the sauce. The seeds are ground and mixed with spices and chilies. The pipián sauce is made into a paste by adding lemon juice, which also gives it a piquant quality. This sauce can be used as a rub for protein before it has been cooked or poured over meat after cooking.



Mole sauce is liked/loved most by Gen X followed closely by Millennials but almost half of consumers still don't know of the sauce at all.



Salsa Macha is a rich sauce from Veracruz, Mexico made from finely chopped dried comapeño chiles, garlic, nuts, and seeds fried in oil. Datassential lists it at the *Inception Stage* of Menu Adoption Cycle. This oil-based sauce is similar to Asian chili oil and is used as a topping for eggs, avocado toast, pizza, a burrito bowl, tacos, and even ice cream. The heat of this chile gives *salsa macha* its name—“*macha*” (the feminine of “macho”) means “brave” or “tough,” a nod to the intense spice only the bold could handle.

The trend of small indulgences, known as ‘Little Treat’ culture, presents a valuable opportunity—has your brand tapped into it?



Shake Shack's Debai Chocolate Pistachio Shake



Tiktok Strawberry chocolate treat 12.2M likes

“Recent studies keep showing that **giving yourself rewards can help improve your work and happiness.** For example, Woolley and Fishbach (2018) discovered that **getting rewards right away can make you more motivated because it links the reward directly with the task.**”
-*Psychology Today*

Little treat culture is a trend where people reward themselves with small, affordable indulgences—like a fancy coffee, a cookie, or a smoothie—just to brighten their day. It’s not about big spending or special occasions, but about enjoying life’s little pleasures. This behavior has become especially popular among younger generations, like Gen Z and Millennials, who see these moments as a form of self-care. For food service businesses, this is great news. Offering fun, affordable, and Instagram-worthy treats can attract loyal, repeat customers. These “little treats” often lead to impulse buys, increasing daily sales. According to The New York Times and Eater, small indulgences have become more popular in times of economic stress, when people seek comfort without breaking the bank. Cafés, bakeries, and quick-service spots can thrive by leaning into this trend. Creating seasonal, limited-edition, or visually appealing items taps right into what little treat lovers want. Overall, it’s a feel-good, low-risk way for businesses to connect with customers and boost revenue.

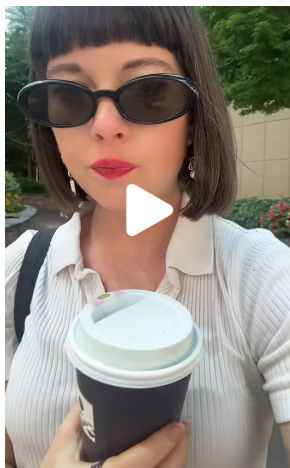
'Little Treat Culture' Self-Care and Motivation Reflected on Social Media



“Little Treat Culture has single-handedly gotten me through residency. Every morning I get my overpriced coffee, that’s treat #1...”
@abbiecantwell, MD



“The brands doing well right now are the ones that know how to tap into a culture that desperately needs rewards for small wins.”
@eugbrandstrat



“Everyday at 3:30 I ask myself the same two questions. Question 1 -Can I afford to go get a little treat?...the answer is always no. Question 2 Do I deserve to go get a little treat?..the answer is always yes...”
@ashlyngreer4



“I saw a tweet the other day that said, ‘I also deserve a treat when I’ve had a bad week but I also deserve a treat when I’ve had a good week. I simply always deserve treats’ I absolutely feel that way!”
@madetorise

69% of consumers say little treats are how they bring joy into their lives while still trying to stay financially responsible.



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