



Technomic take: Consumer behaviour in the year ahead

By Technomic Inc.

The Canadian foodservice industry is poised for a rebound. In 2025, overall foodservice performance is expected to exceed that of 2024 as consumers return to their favourite restaurants in greater numbers.

A Greater Divide

The gap between independent and chain restaurants is set to widen. While independent operators continue to face profitability challenges and resource constraints, they will find a measure of stability in 2025. Chains, however, emerged from the pandemic with their customer bases and balance sheets intact, positioning them as now ready to make investments in menu innovation, off-premise programs, technology and elevated service experiences. This divergency will lead to a more pronounced disparity in performance between the two segments over the near term.

Courting Controversy

Operators will increasingly lean into chaos cookery to differentiate from competitors and capture consumer interest, especially via social media-friendly limited-time offers. Expect to see more buzzworthy yet potentially polarizing items, such as olive oil coffees or 4/20-inspired offerings. Shock-factor (some even seemingly inedible) ingredient callouts will abound on menus, especially

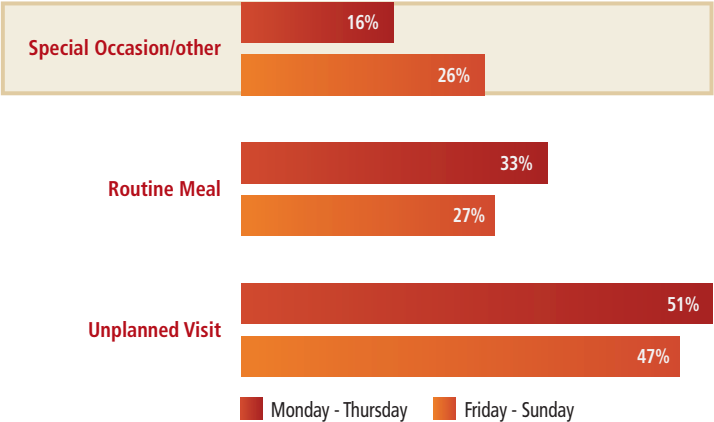
at independents, including MSG, acid (such as lactic acid or acid phosphate), and animal entrails and other unconventional parts. Operators will turn to more over-the-top, indulgent mashups (think a s’mores burger or turducken-style protein pairings) to attract culinary adventure-seekers.

The New Consumer Mindset

Canadians will turn to restaurants as an escape from everyday pressures. Dining out provides a more affordable way to unwind and indulge, driving an uptick in restaurant visitation. It’s predicted that this rise will be particularly notable for weekend occasions, when guests are eager to splurge on culinary experiences. Data from Technomic’s consumer research supports this idea, as weekend occasions tend to be more celebratory in nature than weekday occasions. Expect chain restaurant operators to invest in dining room upgrades and exceptional hospitality.

Additionally, younger diners are shifting from unplanned restaurant visits toward routine dining occasions. Some younger guests may be cutting back on spontaneous visits to better manage their budgets, while others may be more focused on their health and therefore not indulging cravings with spontaneous occasions.

How Would You Best Describe Your Recent Chain Restaurant Occasion?



Base: 6,100 recent restaurant guests per quarter Q4'23-Q3'24 Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer

How Would You Best Describe This Recent Chain Restaurant Occasion?

Age Group	Reason for Occasion	Q4/23	Q1/24	Q2/24	Q3/24
18-34	Routine meal/everyday occasion	26%	29%	33%	32%
18-34	Special occasion	31%	32%	32%	33%
18-34	Unplanned/ spontaneous visit	42%	39%	34%	34%
18-34	Other	1%	1%	1%	1%
35+	Routine meal/everyday occasion	32%	30%	32%	31%
35+	Special occasion	23%	24%	24%	25%
35+	Unplanned/ spontaneous visit	42%	42%	41%	41%
35+	Other	3%	4%	3%	2%

Base: 6,100 recent restaurant guests per quarter Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer

About half of chain restaurant visits are not planned, making these by far the most common type of occasion overall. However, special occasions drive one in four visits on weekends, considerably higher usage than during the week.

The percentage of guests ages 18-34 who classify their recent occasion as a routine meal or everyday occasion increased by 6 percentage points over the course of one year. Meanwhile, unplanned/ spontaneous visits have decreased by 8 percentage points year over year among these younger individuals.

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