

# THE FLAVOR IS KEE

UNLOCKING MENU POTENTIAL



## HOT, HOT, HOT! ASIAN FLAVORS BRING THE HEAT.




Throughout 2021, spicy food continued to dazzle diners, from viral chili crisp to the one-chip challenge, which humbled even the most daring eaters. But even with all that heat, consumers' palates are only becoming more adventurous. Thrill-seekers are increasingly interested in more specific regional flavors, many of which made their first appearance on Chinese menus. In this newsletter, we'll show you how to take advantage of this spicy opportunity, plus we'll highlight some of our favorite region-specific products that can work for your operation, no matter what's on the menu.

**GETTING SPICY** **62%**  
of customers love or like spicy flavors or foods.<sup>1</sup> By now, it's clear that consumers enjoy and seek out spicy flavors and foods of all kinds.

**62%**  
OF CONSUMERS AGREE THAT MOST SAVORY FOODS TASTE BETTER WITH SOME LEVEL OF SPICINESS.<sup>2</sup>

 **35%** OF SPICY MENU CALL-OUTS ARE FOUND ON CHINESE MENUS

It's hardly surprising; for thousands of years, Asian cuisine has relied on fiery pepper products of all sorts, shapes and sizes. A recent Datassential SNAP report proves it:

-  **10%** found on American menus
-  **9%** found on Thai menus
-  **7%** found on Japanese menus



You're getting warmer...keep reading if you want more inspiration, tips and tricks for spicing up your menu.



## SAVORY + SPICE = EVERYTHING NICE

It's not just about the heat. It's about the flavor, too. Asian ingredients can always be a source of inspiration. They can add complexity to American classics to win over new followers and satisfy spice addicts.



PIZZA SAUCES



MAYONNAISES  
OR DIPPING  
SAUCES



FRIED CHICKEN  
OR CHICKEN  
WINGS



MACARONI &  
CHEESE



**CHEF TERESA ONCEL**  
Corporate Chef, Lee Kum Kee

### CHEF TALK

**Q:** As diners are looking for more complex-spicy flavors, what can operators do to amp up their current menu offerings?

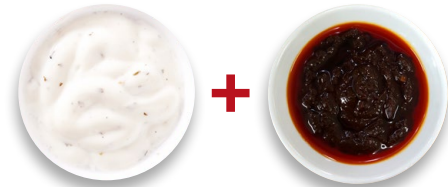
**Chef Teresa:** As diners continue to explore the landscape of food, we are seeing a shift from single flavor dimension (i.e., just plain spicy) to a more complex and multifaceted flavor sensation (spicy and umami; spicy and sweet).

Most importantly, complex doesn't need to be complicated, and operators may already have the base ingredients to pull this off. Depending on the daypart or menu segment, adding an extra layer of complexity can be as simple as mixing the following flavor combinations:

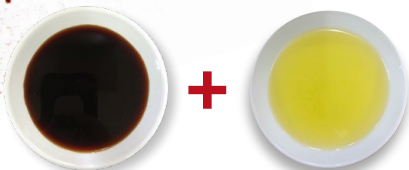
HONEY + GOCHUJANG



RANCH + SICHUAN BROAD BEAN SAUCE



BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE + SICHUAN  
PEPPERCORN OIL



NACHO CHEESE + CHILI BEAN SAUCE





## SPICE IT UP WITH OUR FAVORITE PRODUCTS

Lee Kum Kee has something for every application and spice fanatic, but here are a few notable products, loosely ranked in order of spiciness, from mild to extra hot.



**+30%**

Thai sweet chili has seen growth on US menus in the last 4 years!<sup>3</sup>

### THAI SWEET CHILI SAUCE

**WHAT IS IT?** A sweet and mildly spicy sauce made from a blend of chili peppers, zesty garlic and pineapple juice.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** A great way to introduce Asian flavors to any menu. Delicious as a glaze for fried chicken, it also can be used as-is tossed in salads, or a condiment for spring rolls, crispy wontons and other fried foods.

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:



**+59%**

Sichuan has seen growth on non-ethnic menus in the last 4 years!<sup>4</sup>

### SICHUAN BROAD BEAN SAUCE

**WHAT IS IT?** Sichuan Broad Bean Sauce goes through a two-year fermentation process, offering a burst of unique chili and meaty flavors. Made of Pixian Douban, a mixture of broad beans and chili peppers.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Since it's vegetarian, it's also a good way to add bold flavor to plant-based dishes. Delicious when incorporated into a BBQ sauce or even ranch dressing.

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:



**+200%**

Chili crisp has seen growth on non-ethnic menus in the last year!<sup>5</sup>

### CHIU CHOW CHILI OIL

**WHAT IS IT?** Our answer to chili crisp, and one of Hong Kong's favorite spicy condiments! Fried chilies and garlic seasoned with soy sauce and submerged in a savory oil.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Excellent for dips and adding a kick to ranch or mayo. Try as a topping for pizza or an Asian version of a HOT chicken sandwich!

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:



**65%**

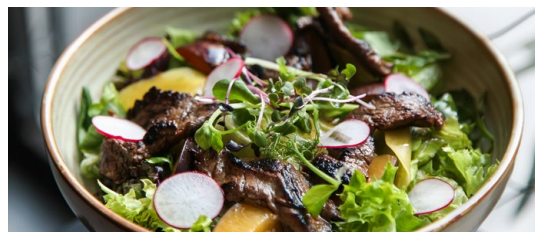
of US consumers know of Sichuan (Szechuan).<sup>6</sup>

### SICHUAN PEPPERCORN OIL

**WHAT IS IT?** Aromatic peppercorn oil with a unique piquancy and distinctive mouth-tingling effect.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** If you know Sichuan peppercorns, you know. Adds "mala" the tingly, spicy-yet-numbing heat to anything it touches.

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:



Ma Po Tofu has seen 20% growth in the last 4 years,<sup>7</sup> so the time is right for adding umami spice to other proteins and even pastas.

### CHILI BEAN SAUCE (TOBAN DJAN)

**WHAT IS IT?** Chili Bean Sauce requires one full year to ferment. The unique umami taste and spicy flavors are sourced from the fermented mixture of chili pepper and soybeans. It's the KEE ingredient to the globally renowned Mapo tofu dish of Sichuan.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Deliciously complex, savory and spicy. Chili Bean Sauce offers the best of both worlds with umami and heat.

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:



**+117%**

Gochujang has seen growth on US menus in the last 4 years!<sup>8</sup>

### GOCHUJANG

**WHAT IS IT?** A staple Korean-style spicy condiment combining chilis, fermented soybeans and pear.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** This one is a real umami bomb with a hint of sweetness. Great as a condiment for bibimbap, rice bowls, stir-fried dishes, and Korean-style burgers.

#### THINK OUTSIDE THE WOK:





**SICHUAN, CHINA**

Regional Sauces: Sichuan Peppercorn Oil, Chili Bean Sauce (Toban Djan), Sichuan Broad Bean Sauce



**CHINA**

**KOREA**

Regional Sauces: Gochujang



**GUANGDONG, CHINA**

Regional Sauces: Chiu Chow Chili Oil



**THAILAND**  
Regional Sauces:  
Thai Sweet Chili Sauce



**FEEL THE HEAT**

No matter what menu you're working with, Lee Kum Kee offers a wide range of authentically crafted chili sauces and condiments that support exciting, globally inspired menu offerings and delight guests everywhere.

**ARE YOU ALREADY A SUBSCRIBER?**

If not, stay up to date on the spiciest foodservice trends, insights, and solutions by [signing up](#) for our quarterly newsletters.

**SOURCES:**

- <sup>1</sup> Datassential, SNAP September 2021
- <sup>2</sup> Food Navigator USA ([www.foodnavigator-usa.com/News/Promotional-Features/Why-the-Hot-Spicy-Food-Trend-is-an-Exciting-Opportunity](http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/News/Promotional-Features/Why-the-Hot-Spicy-Food-Trend-is-an-Exciting-Opportunity))
- <sup>3,4,7,8</sup> Datassential Menu Trends
- <sup>5,6</sup> Datassential FLAVOR

