

# THE FLAVOR IS KEE

UNLOCKING MENU POTENTIAL

## IN 2023, EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

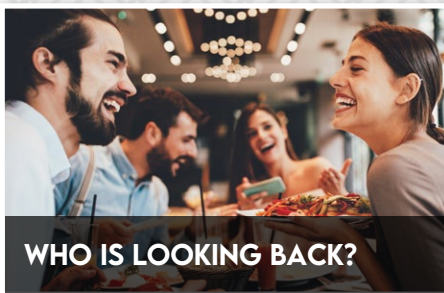
This year, consumers had so many delicious ways to remember and celebrate the good old days thanks to newstalgia—one of the biggest food and beverage trends we’re seeing right now. Newstalgia encourages innovative menu interpretations around the familiarity of tried-and-true nostalgic classics; in other words, a twist on something consumers already know and love.

### KNOWN & COMFORTABLE + EXCITING & NEW = NEWSTALGIA

Newstalgia is all about turning a beloved menu item up a notch or two. If that sounds too challenging, all it takes is a little flavor know-how. Lee Kum Kee has some great solutions for keeping up with the times...while going back in time. Keep reading.

73%

of U.S. consumers enjoy things that remind them of their past.<sup>1</sup>



#### WHO IS LOOKING BACK?

With nostalgia booming in the food and beverage industry, many consumers—Millennials in particular—are looking back to less stressful, happier times of their childhood.<sup>2</sup>



#### BUT WHY?

Part of the answer is stress relief and comfort during uncertain times. Familiar dishes, drinks, and snacks contribute to feelings of comfort and safety, reminding consumers of the original experience. Also known as the Proust Effect, sensory experiences have the power to bring back those memories at the very first bite.<sup>3</sup>



#### HOW CAN OPERATORS BENEFIT?

Leaning into the Newstalgia trend is easier than you think. Focusing on a classic favorite or menu staple hooks customers; putting a flavorful spin on it can make it extra tantalizing. Below are some trending menu items to spark inspiration.



↑190%

In the QSR space, “[People] ...have been searching for the nearest spot where they can go to relive some of their childhood fast-food memories; searches for fast food were up 90%.”<sup>4</sup>

## RAMEN

Healthier versions of instant ramen are still trending, including vegan ramen with a nearly endless potential of protein, vegetable, and ingredient combinations.<sup>5</sup>

# STEPPING BACK IN TIME IS TRENDING<sup>6</sup>

Throwback comfort food isn't only delicious, but it also acts as a foundation for operators to create something even more flavorful and enticing than the original.

Gussied up with with panko, caviar, and something packed with umami like XO sauce, fancy **DEVILED EGGS** are having their moment of fame.<sup>7</sup>



**DEVILED EGGS**  
**+33%**  
on Casual Dining menus over the last 4 years

**SWEET AND SOUR**  
**+22%**  
for Wings over the last 4 years



**RAMEN**  
**63%**  
Love or like it



**EGG ROLLS**  
**+20%**  
on Chain menus over the last year



**CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD**  
**+22%**  
on Midscale menus in the last year



**CHICKEN PARMESAN**  
**+39%**  
on Chain menus in the last year



**BBQ CHICKEN PIZZA**  
**86%**  
Know it



**CAESAR SALAD**  
**74%**  
Love or like it



A buzzy new TikTok trend is all about "girl dinners," the combo of a **CAESAR SALAD** and a side of fries, which are primed for fun dipping sauces.<sup>8</sup>

**MEATLOAF**  
**69%**  
Love or like it



**TERIYAKI CHICKEN**  
**+20%**  
on QSR menus over the last 4 years



## GET INSPIRED



**MEATLOAF** Chef Lisa Davidson, Senior Director of Culinary Innovation at FAT Brands, coats thick slabs of meatloaf in panko breadcrumbs, fries them, then drizzles Lee Kum Kee Sauce for Orange Chicken over the crispy slices and serves it up with sesame mashed potatoes. Get the recipe [here](#).



**DEVILED EGGS** Chef Brad Bergaus, Corporate Chef and Director of Innovation at Taco John's, routinely embraces the challenge of adding unconventional global ingredients to traditional favorites. His recipe for pickled deviled eggs uses Lee Kum Kee Black Pepper Sauce as the "brine" for the eggs. Get the recipe [here](#).

**ANDY KAO**

Former Executive Chef,  
Panda Express

## CHEF TALK

We asked Andy Kao, former Executive Chef at Panda Express and creator of their famous Orange Chicken, a few questions.

**Q: For many people, Asian ingredients are already associated with comfort food. Any tips for striking the right balance with every consumer?**

**Chef Kao:** Asian ingredients have gained increasing popularity. My advice is to offer a diverse range of choices to cater to different preferences and flavor profiles. Additionally, incorporating fresh produce into your offerings can accommodate the growing interest in balanced diets. For instance, individuals can savor a hearty, indulgent orange chicken while enjoying a side of mixed vegetables to achieve a well-rounded meal.

**Q: As an expert in Hunan cuisine who has spent a career working with Asian ingredients, what are some of your favorite pantry items to use?**

**Chef Kao:** When catering to our customers, I utilized ingredients that resonate with the flavors of Asian cuisine, including Sriracha sauce, peppercorns, and sesame oil. Some of the sauces my family and I enjoy during our home-cooked meals include truffle oil, oyster sauce, fish sauce, and gochujang.

**Q: Now that you're retired, what are you eating? Do you have any delicious combinations or pairings that you'd like to share?**

**Chef Kao:** In my retirement, I've been dedicating more time to preparing wholesome meals for my family, which include lots of produce and root vegetables. Lately, we've been relishing healthy meals with big flavors and delicious aromas, which is key to making healthy food appealing. A few examples: fluffy and savory leek and egg white pancakes, steamed cod with ginger and scallions, the classic Chinese stir-fried tomato and eggs, and steak with broccoli. Personally, I have a special fondness for mapo tofu when I'm cooking just for myself.

**Q: Lee Kum Kee offers the following Asian classic flavors. Any tips on how to use these nostalgic flavors in NEW ways?**

**Chef Kao:**

**Sweet & Sour Sauce:** I favor incorporating sweet and sour sauce preparing fried food, especially fish fillets; on occasion, it can yield surprisingly delightful results when used in pineapple fried rice.

**Teriyaki Glaze:** This fantastic sauce is delicious on anything grilled, baked or deep fried. I recommend using on grilled beef, grilled chicken, baked salmon and seafood skewers.

**Sauce for Orange Chicken:** I find the sauce for orange chicken to be similar to Sweet & Sour Sauce in that it is excellent with deep fried dishes, but with its extra kick of flavor it is also great for baked items; for example, as a glaze for salmon.

*Thank you, Chef! Always a pleasure.*



# LEE KUM KEE HAS OLD SCHOOL FAVORITES, WITH NEW SCHOOL WAYS TO USE THEM

With Lee Kum Kee's classic ready-to-use sauces, operators can offer options that remind consumers of the dishes they enjoyed when they were younger. But by using them in a creative way, they'll be able to keep customers curious and coming back for more.



**ORANGE CHICKEN**  
**+30%**  
on Chain Menus in last 4 years<sup>9</sup>

## SAUCE FOR ORANGE CHICKEN

### WHAT IS IT:

A ready-to-use sauce that's sweet and bright with amazing citrus flavor; the quintessential ingredient for orange chicken.

### NEW SCHOOL +1:

Add Sriracha to spice up the sweet orange flavor for sticky-spicy chicken wings.<sup>11</sup>

### TREND IN ACTION:

Use Sauce for Orange Chicken as a brushed-on glaze for succulent [Sweet & Spicy Candied Bacon](#).



**68%**  
of U.S. consumers love or like Orange Chicken<sup>10</sup>

Operators can introduce spicy foods by adding heat to a more traditional menu offering.<sup>11</sup>



**TERIYAKI CHICKEN**  
**+283%**  
on U.S. menus in the last 4 years<sup>12</sup>

## TERIYAKI GLAZE

### WHAT IS IT:

With a balanced blend of sweet and salty flavors, our Teriyaki Glaze is great for glazing or brushing onto poultry, meat, seafood, and vegetables.

### NEW SCHOOL +1:

Mix with our super savory Black Pepper Sauce to boost the depth of marinades, brushed-on glazes, and anything stir-fried.

### TREND IN ACTION:

Part teriyaki beef bowl and part BBQ sandwich, a teriyaki brisket sandwich appeals to anyone in the mood for tender sliced beef loaded with extraordinary flavor, but with a twist.



**69%**  
of U.S. consumers love or like Teriyaki Sauce<sup>13</sup>



**SWEET AND SOUR CALLOUTS**  
SEE A  
**+22%**  
growth on Chain menus in the last year<sup>14</sup>

## SWEET & SOUR SAUCE

### WHAT IS IT:

Another ready-to-use classic that's a perfectly balanced combination of sweet and tangy. Use it on any protein or all by itself as a dipping sauce.

### NEW SCHOOL +1:

Sweet & Sour plus hot mustard creates a tantalizingly delicious sauce that works with wings, pan-fried dumplings, and more.

### TREND IN ACTION:

Leftover rice gets an instant upgrade with [Hawaiian-Style Fried Rice](#) featuring shrimp, pineapple, and Sweet & Sour Sauce to pull all the flavors together.



**67%**  
of U.S. consumers love or like Sweet & Sour Sauce<sup>15</sup>

DISCOVER MORE EXCITING NEW TREND DATA [HERE](#).

#### SOURCES:

<sup>1</sup> Whole Foods Market Forecasts Top 10 Food Trends for 2023, October 2022

<sup>2</sup> <https://in-sight.symrise.com/article/the-new-nostalgia-of-foods>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lionsdeal.com/blog/nostalgic-foods-set-to-make-a-comeback-in-2023>

<sup>4</sup> <https://spoonuniversity.com/lifestyle/food-trends-of-2023>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nrn.com/consumer-trends/flavor-week-ramen>

<sup>6</sup> Datassential Menu Trends, August 2023

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bonappetit.com/story/fancy-deviled-eggs-trend-2022-restaurants>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/food/story/step-aside-girl-dinner-caesar-salad-french-fries-102556917>

<sup>9,12,14</sup> Datassential Menu Trends, 2023

<sup>10,15,15</sup> Datassential Flavor, 2023

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.getflavor.com/the-heat-of-the-moment>

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