



# SPOTTED... JAN 26

A sneak peek into consumer demands, flavours, and future trends, spotted in January 2026.

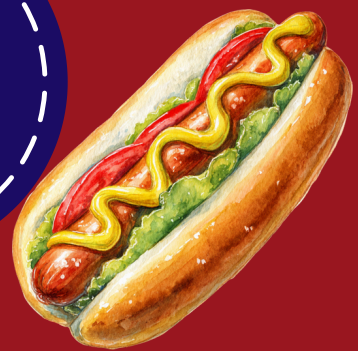
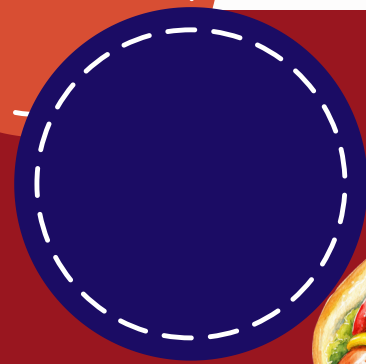
Americana. Convenience is king. Eating out in 2026.

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# AMERICANA... WHAT'S DRIVING THE TREND?



American food has long had a foothold in the UK, but in recent years its influence has shifted from novelty to mainstream.

Burgers, fried chicken, wings and BBQ flavours are no longer seen as occasional indulgences. American-style comfort food has become embedded in the UK's casual dining culture, particularly within fast-casual restaurants and takeaway formats.

American food trends thrive on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where visual appeal is everything. Loaded fries, oversized burgers, buffalo wings and brightly coloured desserts perform exceptionally well online.

While burgers and fries remain staples, there's growing curiosity around regional American food styles. Southern BBQ, Tex-Mex flavours, mac and cheese with gourmet twists, and US-style deli condiments are all gaining traction. This reflects a broader shift: consumers want depth and authenticity, not just fast food. American cuisine is increasingly understood as diverse, regional and adaptable.

## SMASH BURGERS



## CINNAMON ROLLS

**Doughpamine** cravings? Look no further than last year's success story: the soft and gooey cinnamon roll. Now, it can be argued that America isn't its official birthplace, but there's no denying the richer, sweeter and frosted versions in the US, along with Seattle-founded Cinnabon, have propelled this style to become the poster child. The bakery star continues to see a hive of activity from East to West, and while flavour twists are seemingly limitless, those seeking Americana-based nostalgia can feast on PB&J and s'mores to apple pie and banana pudding-inspired creations. Elsewhere, the coveted cinnamon roll flavour is spotted across both food and drink.

## CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

**The OG. The best-seller. The forever favourite.** Popularised by Ruth Wakefield of Toll House Inn back in the late 1930s, it's fair to say the iconic American chocolate chip cookie has stood the test of time. And while the biscuit tin staple will never go out of fashion, its nostalgic credentials and versatility for reinvention keep it in the spotlight. That said, many seek to retain its integrity with the onus firmly on subtle elevations - think brown butter, high-quality chocolate, a touch of flaky salt, a little miso for umami depth or espresso to enhance the cacao undertones. And then there's the plethora of shapes and sizes with cookie fries the current obsession taking socials by storm.

## SLOPPY JOE

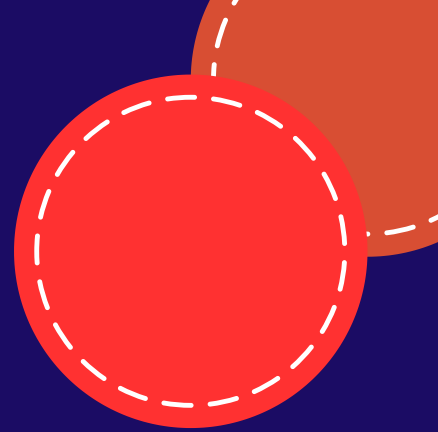
This unapologetically messy childhood favourite is making a comeback in the US and attracting a fanbase beyond its borders. Reinvention of this comforting Americana icon is rife with focus on quality ingredients and cooking technique (aka like you remember, but better) along with flavour twists and format mash-ups. Cue a menagerie of Sloppy Joe creations from stuffed garlic bread, grilled cheese and mac 'n' cheese to loaded fries, nachos and as a dip for everything from mozzarella sticks and fried chicken to Yorkshire puddings. Fast casual spots are also getting in on the action, dropping limited-edition ranges to garner buzz.



## CORN DOGS

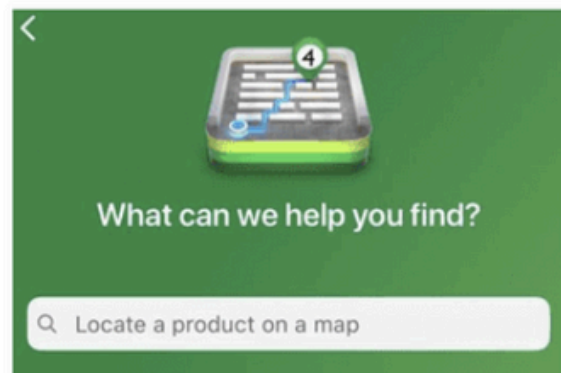


# NEW CONVENIENCE.... NEW SOLUTIONS

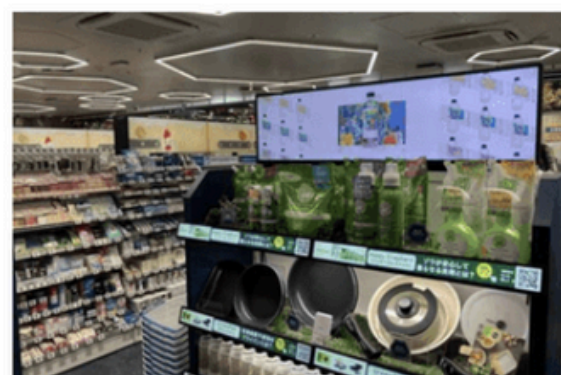


Co-op has opened a chain of 'micro stores' in busy locations focusing on food-to-go, with unstaffed evening 'dark trading' to come  
**Co-op Group**  
(UK)

tfp



Woolworths' mobile app features a product finder that will guide shoppers to a product within a specific store, and can also be voice-operated  
**Woolworths**  
(Australia)



The first 'Real x Tech' store to open in Tokyo features interactive screens above shelves, robotic stock replenishing and remote avatar checkouts  
**Lawson/KDDI/Mitsubishi Corp.**  
(Japan)



Coke&Go AI-powered vending machine allows users to tap their device and remove a product; AI identifies which product has been taken and charges accordingly  
**Coca-Cola**



Doughlicious quick-cook heat-and-eat cookie dough skillet dessert that is gluten-free, vegan and contains a plant-based collagen blend  
**The London Dough Co.**  
(UK)



Robot delivery 'dogs' have been trialled in Zurich, delivering on-demand food orders across the city  
**Just Eat/RIVR**  
(Switzerland)

With people struggling to find time in their busy lives, convenience is now KING.

Convenience food in the UK has come a long way from late-night crisps and microwave meals. Today, it's one of the most dynamic parts of the grocery and food-to-go market — shaped by changing lifestyles, smarter technology and a growing appetite for quality as well as speed.

New frozen and grab and go solutions are maximising efficiency without sacrificing quality or nutritional balance. Technology is also driving quicker solutions through the use of home air fryers, AI apps, grocery drones, and ordering/ delivery tech advances.

Another defining trend is the growth of smaller, more agile store formats designed around quick visits rather than big weekly shops. Many of these mini stores now operate as hybrid retail and foodservice spaces. Shoppers can grab a coffee, a hot breakfast, lunch, dinner and a few groceries in one stop. The lines between supermarket, café and takeaway continue to blur. This reflects a wider shift in behaviour: people are shopping more frequently, buying less each time, and prioritising proximity and speed over range.



# WE ASKED THE UK POPULATION ABOUT THEIR 2026 EATING OUT HABITS...

*Full report coming soon...*



TABLE SERVICE  
IS STILL THE  
PREFERRED  
OPTION

64%

Despite digital adoption, traditional table service remains the gold standard for most consumers. Menus need to be clear, intuitive and flavour-led, supporting staff in making confident recommendations.

HIGH PROTEIN  
OPTIONS ARE KEY

40%

Health is not niche — but it must be integrated, not advertised aggressively. Consumers want food that feels “better for them” without compromising on taste.

MORE MOBILE  
LOYALTY  
REWARDS

56%

Consumers welcome technology when it simplifies the experience, but remain cautious about AI-driven personalisation.