



The value and versatility of
CHICKEN
on today's menus

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Clean, all-natural protein can be the centerpiece of a range of flavorful, healthful dishes

Chicken can be a powerful and versatile sales driver for restaurant operators, provided they pay attention to the attributes consumers are looking for and create recipes that appeal to consumers' adventurous and ever-more-sophisticated palates.

Consumers love chicken and eat it frequently. Nearly three-quarters of consumers—70%—eat chicken dishes weekly, and among those who eat chicken, 42% order it from foodservice at least once per week, according to Technomic's 2019 Center of the Plate: Poultry Consumer Trend Report.

As consumers have become increasingly in tune to the health and nutritional attributes of the foods they eat, they turned to chicken. Nearly eight in 10 consumers—78%—say they believe chicken is “healthy” or “very healthy,” according to Technomic's 2019 Poultry report.

Consumers' interest in health is also reflected in the attributes they are seeking in their chicken, the report finds. Consumers said they are interested in poultry that is identified as being “real” (77%), “clean” (71%), and “natural” (68%).

Other claims that consumers say influence their purchasing decisions include:

- Steroid-free (66%);
- Antibiotic-free (61%); and
- Sustainably sourced (53%)

Consumers are also interested in chicken dishes that are hormone-free and GMO-free, the research found.

Young consumers in particular are interested in these attributes. While 31% of all surveyed consumers say they “strongly agree” that restaurant operators should provide details about how their chicken is sourced, that proportion rises significantly, to 43%, among 18- to 34-year-olds, Technomic's 2019 Poultry report finds.

These trends jibe with the shift among consumers toward more healthful eating overall.

Technomic's 2017 Healthy Eating Consumer Trend Report finds that six out of 10 consumers agree that “clean” product claims align with greater healthfulness. That research also finds that consumers' definitions of “clean eating” are focused on the absence of additives, such as preservatives, hormones, antibiotics and artificial ingredients.

Additionally, the report finds that about 40% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for items that have clean ingredient labels, especially those with natural and organic claims, but also including claims around a lack of preservatives, hormones, antibiotics and other additions perceived as less than healthy.

Interestingly, customers are also much more likely to believe that natural and less processed foods are likely to taste better as well, with 42% saying they believe “clean” ingredient labels signify a positive impact on the taste of a product. And, 86% of consumers said they want restaurants to be more transparent about their ingredients.

At the same time, the research showed that operators agree that “coming clean” can be a plus for their businesses. More than eight in 10 operators (82%) said they believe clean labels will have at least a moderate impact on their business in the future, and 89% said they believe health and wellness concerns will have an impact.

For operators looking for a solution, **Tyson®** offers everything they need. **Tyson®** is committed to serving a complete lineup of products made from chicken raised with *No Antibiotics Ever*, instead of using probiotics and other antibiotic alternatives to help with the chickens' digestive health. For consumers who want protein with cleaner labels, **Tyson®** chicken fits the bill, so “clean-eaters” can feel good about their purchases and their eating choices.

Restaurant chains come clean

During the past few years, several restaurant chains have pledged to begin offering cleaner ingredients, including chicken, and some have already achieved that goal. Many have focused antibiotic-free chicken as one of the first steps they take toward cleaner, healthier menus.

The focus on antibiotics is in response to concerns that the overuse of antibiotics on healthy animals contributes to antibiotic resistance, which in turn can lead to infections in humans that do not respond to antibiotic treatment.

Nearly 80% of consumers are opposed to the use of antibiotics on animals that are not sick, according to [an October 2018 Consumer Reports survey](#).

Panera Bread has been a leader in offering clean ingredients, and in 2016 completed its goal of having a 100% clean menu. The company has used only antibiotic-free chicken since 2004, and now says that 100% of all the turkey and chicken it sources is both antibiotic-free and vegetarian-fed.

Chipotle Mexican Grill has also offered chicken raised with *No Antibiotics Ever* and other meats as part of its overall positioning around clean ingredients.

Among chicken chains, *Chick-fil-A* stands out for its pledge to be antibiotic-free by the end of 2019. The Atlanta-based chain is adopting the *No Antibiotics Ever* (NAE) criteria as defined by the FDA, which stipulates that no antibiotics can be used at all in the lifecycle of the chicken, starting with the egg.

The Atlanta-based company recently said it had converted 80% of its supply to NAE chickens, and that it was on track to meet its goal of 100% NAE chicken by December 31.

“As the nation’s largest chicken chain, ensuring a stable supply of this type of chicken requires building the infrastructure from the ground up, as the supply of chickens raised with No Antibiotics Ever simply does not exist yet at this scale, which takes time,” Chick-fil-A said in a statement on its website.

Other restaurant chains that have rolled out antibiotic-free chicken or pledged to do so include:

- *Dickey’s Barbecue Pit* rolled out chicken that is antibiotic- and hormone-free, vegetarian-fed and humanely raised in 2016.
- *Papa Murphy’s Pizza* said it became the first national pizza chain to go antibiotic-free in 2016.
- Last year *Pizza Hut* said it would transition to chicken “free of antibiotics important to human health” by 2022.
- [McDonald’s in 2016 said](#) it had removed antibiotics that the World Health Organization has deemed important to human medicine from its U.S. chicken supply chain, and it has since pledged to expand the elimination of antibiotics designated by the WHO as Highest Priority Critically Important around the globe by 2027.

Chicken on the menu

It’s not enough to menu clean-label chicken, however. Operators also need to incorporate it into dishes that suit the lifestyles and satisfy the cravings of today’s consumers.

For some operators, this could mean portable chicken dishes such as sandwiches and wraps, and recipes that meet demands for nutrition and health. Consumers’ ever-expanding appetite for globally influenced flavors and ingredients, however, also means that operators can and should experiment with chicken dishes that reflect cuisines from around the world.

According to Technomic’s 2018 Ethnic Food & Beverage Consumer Trend Report, among the 87% of consumers who ever order ethnic foods or foods with ethnic flavors, 32% would be willing to pay extra for authentic ethnic fare, and 36% like to explore regional varieties of mainstream ethnic cuisines to try new foods and flavors.

The report also finds that 35% of consumers say they are eating more unique types of ethnic foods and beverages now than they were two years ago.

Some of the ways chicken is being incorporated into ethnic dishes include the following, as reported in FSD’s 2019 Menu Forecast:

More than eight in 10 operators said they believe clean labels will have at least a moderate impact on their business in the future.

• **Glazed Moroccan Chicken Kebobs with Grilled Watermelon** — Ideal as an appetizer for a single customer or a group, these kebobs, which can be prepared with [Tyson® Precision Cooked™ NAE All Natural¹ FC Chicken-Portioned Breast](#), are glazed with watermelon molasses and grilled, and are served with grilled watermelon chunks.

• **Teriyaki Chicken with Avocado & Brown Rice** — True Food Kitchen offers this plant-forward dish as part of its eclectic menu of healthful items. Operators interested in menuing it can use [Tyson® Precision Cooked™ NAE All Natural¹ FC Chicken-Portioned Breast](#).

• **Hot Chicken Cheese Sandwich** — The Rustic capitalizes on the Nashville hot chicken craze with this spicy fried chicken sandwich, which comes with American cheese and dill pickles on either Texas toast or a bun. Make this dish with [Tyson® FC Nashville Hot Breast Filets, Right Size® Select Cut*](#).

• **Chipotle Chicken Ropa Vieja Empanadas** — Another spicy hand-held item that was created by chef Miguel Aguilar for the Tacos After Dark event at the South Beach Wine and Food Festival in Miami. This recipe uses shredded chicken thighs combined with house-made chipotle ketchup. [Tyson® Precision Cooked™ NAE All Natural¹ FC Chicken-Thigh Ready-to-Pull](#) is perfect for this recipe.

• **Couscous with Chicken, Vegetables & Caramelized Onions** — Another healthful Moroccan dish, created by chef and cookbook author Joanne Weir for a workshop on Moroccan cuisine, pairs chicken with couscous and vegetables. To make this dish, use [Tyson® Precision Cooked™ NAE All Natural¹ FC Chicken-Thigh](#).

FSD's 2019 Menu Forecast also highlighted the confluence of healthy eating and ethnic flavors, with several noncommercial examples that included chicken as a featured ingredient.

Among the ideas cited by members of the FSD culinary council:

• **Jerk Marinated Chicken** — Reflecting an increase in Caribbean dishes at Minneapolis Public Schools

• **Tandoori Chicken Salad Wrap in Grilled Naan Bread** — An Indian-inspired dish cited as a trend that is “just catching on” at North Carolina State University.

The National Chicken Council offers an assortment of chicken recipes, both American and international, that incorporate on-trend ingredients and flavors. Many are also reflective of today's health-conscious consumers. Consider, for example:

• [Warm Chicken-Lentil Salad](#) — With 36 grams of protein per serving and only 690 calories, this combines flavor and nutrition.

• [Chicken Sliders with Mango BBQ Sauce and Jicama Slaw](#) — The fresh, tropical flavors on this dish make it ideal for a summer menu special.

It's clear that the nation's most popular protein packs the nutritional value and has the versatility to satisfy today's consumers. When operators combine this with sourcing that includes clean attributes such as all-natural and *No Antibiotics Ever*, they can be confident they have a winning recipe for success.

¹Minimally processed, no artificial ingredients

*Select Cut products give operators options when premium-priced products no longer fit their budget. Their customers can enjoy a whole-muscle bite at a value price to the operator and consistent sizing for accurate portioning and cost control.