

APRIL 2024

Generational Preferences: Unveiling Global Flavor Trends

RESTAURANT EDITION

Introducing more global offerings to your menu can attract customers and boost traffic. Recognizing the different cuisine preferences that appeal to each generation makes for more strategic customer-centric menu design. Continue reading for insights on Gen Alpha through Boomers and uncover which global flavors to leverage on your menu.

Foodservice gets personal.

Whether it's due to differences in life stages or how the world is evolving, there is no denying that each U.S. generation is unique. Consumer data reveals cross-generational affinity for unique Asian (Japanese, Korean and Thai) and Mediterranean cuisines (Greek, Spanish and "Mediterranean" as its own cuisine category), while familiar cuisines—like Mexican, Italian and Chinese—maintain their popularity. **The innovative opportunities for operators lie in paying attention to what makes each generation *distinct*.** Read on to discover everything restaurants need to know about global preferences by generation.



Gen Alpha

BORN 2011-PRESENT



Gen Z

BORN 1997-2012



Millennials

BORN 1981-1996



Gen X

BORN 1965-1980



Boomers

BORN 1921-1964

Gen Alpha

- Ages 0-11
- First generation to be born completely in the 21st century
- Mostly Millennial parents
- Over half have a smartphone or tablet
- Many eat on-trend ingredients, including plant-based foods



Child Eating Sliced, Tender [Chimichurri](#) Steak with a Side of [Herbed-Butter Rotini](#)

DATA DIVE:

Number of times Gen Alpha's parents get their children restaurant food¹

68%

1-2 TIMES PER WEEK

20%

3-5 TIMES PER WEEK

8%

DO NOT EAT OUT

4%

6+ TIMES PER WEEK



Kids' Menus Are Going Global

OPPORTUNITY

A recent development in kids' menu trends known as "authentic global", offers a unique opportunity for operators. These offerings don't compromise on robust flavors or vegetables to cater to young palates. Often, these are the very dishes that locals enjoy in the dish's country of origin.²

The Least Picky Eaters in History, Could It Be?

EXPERT INSIGHT

Nearly 60 percent of Gen Alpha's parents are aware of [baby-led feeding](#), a new, popular feeding approach that recommends skipping purées and promotes giving infants solid foods as early as six months old. This means at least a third of the youngest Gen Alphas have already been exposed to diverse flavors and textures, which experts believe may help make this new generation significantly less picky as eaters.¹

¹Datassential, A Guide to Gen Alpha, Sept. 2023

²Datassential, The World of Kids' Menus, Feb. 2024

Gen Z

- Ages 12-27
- Many are teens and adults with jobs
- First generation with over 50 percent identifying as non-white
- Digitally fluent and social media savvy
- Crave novelty and new experiences
- Love spicy foods and ingredients



Sambal Caramel Wings | Made with SupHerb Farms [Sambal](#)

DATA DIVE: Index of Gen Z cuisine consumption vs. other generations

Korean	149
Caribbean	137
Middle Eastern	135
Indian	133
Vietnamese	130



63%

Eat Korean Food at/from **Restaurants***



8%

Eat Korean Food at **Home***

**Of Gen Z who consume Korean food*



DATA DIVE: Top 3 unique global cuisines that Gen Z wish chains offered



32%
Japanese Food



29%
Spanish Food



27%
Korean Food

OPPORTUNITY

There is substantial evidence that indicates strong market potential for expanding menu offerings in Asian cuisine to cater to Gen Z diners, particularly Korean and Japanese flavors.



Millennials

- Ages 28-43
- Parents to young children
- Increased spending power
- The original “foodie” generation
- Seek out new and premium items
- Love global foods and flavors



Cauliflower Steak with S'chug and Tangerine | Made with SupHerb Farms *Jalapeno Pesto (S'chug)*

DATA DIVE: Index of Millennial cuisine consumption vs. other generations

Vietnamese	124
Indian	121
Cuban	119
Korean	118
Thai	117



44%

Eat Vietnamese Food at/from **Restaurants***



7%

Eat Vietnamese Food at **Home***

**Of Millennials who consume Vietnamese food*



DATA DIVE: Top 3 **unique** global cuisines that **Millennials** wish chains offered



26%
Japanese Food



26%
Mediterranean Food



25%
Greek Food

OPPORTUNITY

Millennials love global flavors and traveling the world with their taste buds. Consider tapping into more niche, culinary authenticity to appeal to this generation (e.g. offer a *Vietnamese* inspired dipping sauce vs. generic pan-Asian).



Gen X

- Parents to older children or empty nesters
- Peak spending power
- Spend the most money on food
- Enjoy cooking at home
- Love differentiated takes on familiar foods



Thai Coconut Curry Noodle Salad
| Made with SupHerb Farms [Creamy](#)
[Ginger Pepper Sauce](#)

DATA DIVE: Index of Gen X cuisine consumption vs. other generations

Thai	104
Greek	102
Spanish	101
Mexican	101
Italian	101



50%

Eat Thai Food
at/from **Restaurants***



13%

Eat Thai Food
at **Home***

**Of Gen X who consume Thai food:*



DATA DIVE: Top 3 unique global cuisines that **Gen X** wishes chains offered



27%

Mediterranean
Food



24%

Greek
Food



21%

Thai
Food

OPPORTUNITY

44 percent of Gen X love/like Thai cuisine; make sure you have enough Thai flavors/dishes on your menu to attract Gen X diners.

Datassential 2023



Boomers

- Ages 60+
- Retired empty nesters
- Seek out functional foods
- Prefer classic and European dishes
- Turn to comforting flavors and familiar formats but open to twists!



Four Cheese Tuscan Mac 'N Cheese | Made with SupHerb Farms [Tuscan Tomato](#)



DATA DIVE: Index of Boomer cuisine consumption vs. other generations

Italian	101
Chinese	95
Mexican	93
Mediterranean	93
Greek	91



71%

Eat Italian Food at/from **Restaurants***



75%

Eat Italian Food at **Home***

**Of Boomers who consume Italian food*



DATA DIVE: Top 3 unique global cuisines that Boomers wish chains offered



23%

Mediterranean Food



22%

Greek Food



14%

Japanese Food

OPPORTUNITY

Boomers love Mediterranean flavors and formats. Consider unique variations of classic Mediterranean offerings and getting creative with Mediterranean fusions (i.e. *Italian-Portuguese, Spanish-French*) and/or regionality (i.e. *Tuscany, Parisian*)!



Restaurants dominate global cuisine consumption.

Italian is the only major global cuisine that Americans, overall, are more likely to make at home than eat at a restaurant. While consumers across the board are more likely to seek Asian foods away-from-home. According to consumers, the top reasons they do not prepare certain global cuisines at home are due to lack of cooking skills/technique (44 percent), unfamiliar with ingredients (44 percent) and perceived challenge (36 percent)—saying “it seems hard”.¹

Vietnamese Pho

OPPORTUNITY

Consumers don't know how to make many of the global cuisines they crave.¹ For restaurants to continue to benefit from this gap, they need to continue to innovate and offer new global options.



DATA DIVE: Consumption of cuisines eaten at/from restaurants vs. made at home¹



EXPERT INSIGHTS

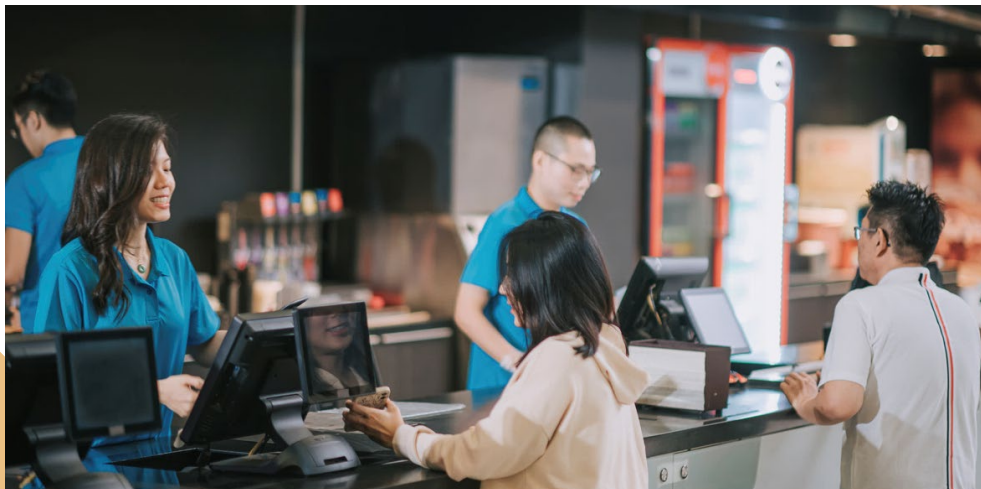
- ▶ Vietnamese has the largest skew overall with consumers over *seven times* more likely to eat it at a restaurant than to prepare it at home.¹
- ▶ Vietnamese cuisine is on the rise driven largely by the growth of Vietnamese café culture in the U.S.²

¹ Consumer Research Conducted by Datassential for SupHerb Farms, January 2024

² [SupHerb Farms 2024 F&B Trend Report](#)

Consumers say large chains lack the international flair they crave.

It's no surprise that consumers do not associate large chain restaurants with unique global dishes. Instead, they equate them with the three most popular international cuisines: Italian (41 percent of consumers), Mexican (41 percent) and Chinese (34 percent). **As the modern consumer continues to evolve, so do their expectations for fresh and innovative dining experiences, including unique global flavors** (see below data dive). With this demand, many national chains have been tasked with the precarious balancing act of developing new menu items that are both well-known and loved as well as new and exciting.



POPULAR GLOBAL SAUCES OFFERED AT NATIONAL CHAINS

1

Pesto



2

Sriracha



Datassential, Menu Adoption Cycle – Sauces, 2023



EXPERT INSIGHT

Across generations, about a quarter of consumers wish large chains offered more Mediterranean and Greek options, two cuisines known to be light and healthy.

DATA DIVE:

Unique global cuisines consumers wish large chain restaurants offered

	TOTAL	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BOOMERS
<u>Mediterranean</u>	25%	23%	26%	27%	23%
<u>Greek</u>	23%	21%	25%	24%	22%
<u>Japanese</u>	23%	32%	26%	21%	14%
<u>Caribbean</u>	20%	26%	23%	20%	11%
<u>Thai</u>	20%	23%	24%	21%	12%
<u>Spanish</u>	19%	29%	23%	19%	10%
<u>Korean</u>	18%	27%	23%	17%	8%
<u>French</u>	16%	23%	16%	14%	13%
<u>Indian</u>	16%	25%	19%	16%	9%
<u>Cuban</u>	14%	14%	18%	14%	9%
<u>Middle Eastern</u>	13%	16%	16%	13%	9%
<u>Vietnamese</u>	11%	14%	15%	11%	4%

A FINGER-LICKIN'-GOOD NATIONAL CHAIN EXAMPLE

Buffalo Wild Wings' Caribbean Jerk Wings are a great, globally inspired example of a successful approach to customer-centric menu design. The chicken wing format is widely known by consumers (98 percent have heard of wings) but significantly *less* consumers have heard of Jamaican jerk (68 percent); Buffalo Wild Wings' global take on wings offers a fresh twist on a familiar format that piques consumer interest.



💡 **98%**

of consumers know wings

♥ **80%**

of consumers love/like wings



💡 **68%**

of consumers know jerk

♥ **34%**

of consumers love/like jerk

Datassential 2023

WHAT IS JERK?

A fragrant, spicy and smokey mixture of savory onions and garlic plus fiery jalapeños with a warm allspice and tangy background.



Psst...
See page 12 to learn which global sauces are trending!

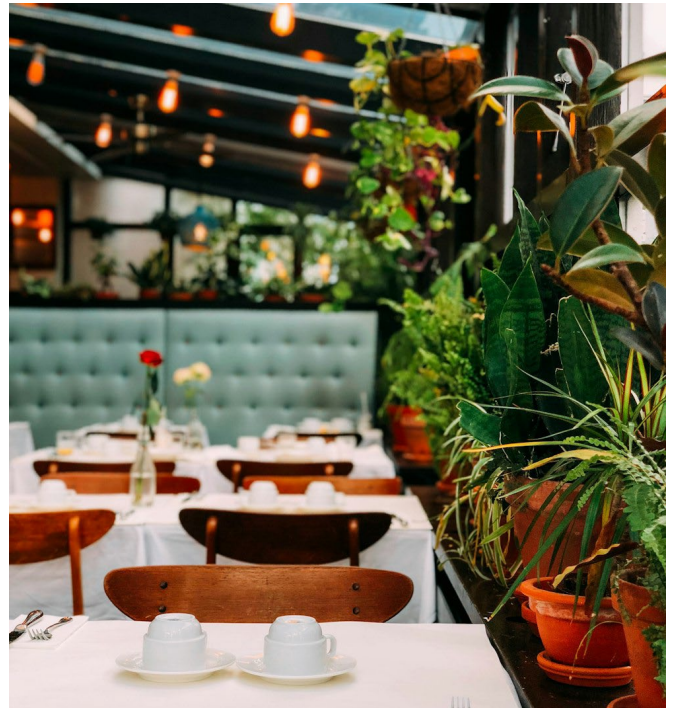
OPPORTUNITY

Restaurants should tap into global sauces and apply them to familiar formats.



Tapping into unique global flavors can help emerging foodservice brands stand out from the crowd.

Emerging restaurant chains occupy a unique position in the foodservice landscape, where the ability to innovate and adapt can serve as a *significant* competitive advantage. Unlike their larger counterparts, these more nimble entities have the flexibility to experiment with new global flavors, capitalizing on trends and customer feedback without the inertia that often accompanies established menus at national chains. **Taking calculated risks with these offerings not only can lead to the discovery of signature dishes that define a brand but also demonstrates a commitment to culinary evolution and customer engagement. By seizing opportunities for innovation, emerging chains can carve out a distinct identity, foster loyalty and drive growth in an industry where differentiation is key.**



OPPORTUNITY

Emerging chains should innovate with early-trend global flavors for unique, impactful offerings that create exciting and memorable dining experiences.



Harissa Brussels Sprouts with Pomegranate |
Made with [SupHerb Farms Moroccan Harissa](#)

Versatile, on-trend global sauces:

- ▶ [Chimichurri](#)
- ▶ [Harissa](#)
- ▶ [Mojo](#)
- ▶ [Sambal](#)
- ▶ [S'chug](#) (Zhug, Zhoug, Jalapeño Pesto)

LEVERGING CONSISTENT, SPEED-SCRATCH INGREDIENTS FOR FOODSERVICE SUCCESS

Many consumers trust restaurants to recreate their favorite meals from around the world.¹ However, maintaining execution consistency is a challenge for many foodservice establishments. This inconsistency is noticeably impacting customer experience, leading to a decline in customer satisfaction and, as a result, customer loyalty is wavering. Check out the opportunities below to uncover how emerging chain operators (50-200 units) are currently addressing this challenge with solutions that enhance their back-of-house consistency and help earn their chains repeat traffic.


A restaurant's ability to deliver the same quality and taste every time a dish is ordered is paramount in ensuring that customers keep coming back. Restaurants need to address these issues to retain their patrons and uphold their reputation in an increasingly competitive market.

– CHEF SCOTT ADAIR, DIRECTOR OF CULINARY AT SUPHERB FARMS



Globally Inspired Speed-Scratch Products: [Culinary Blends](#), [Culinary Pastes](#), [Culinary Sauces](#)



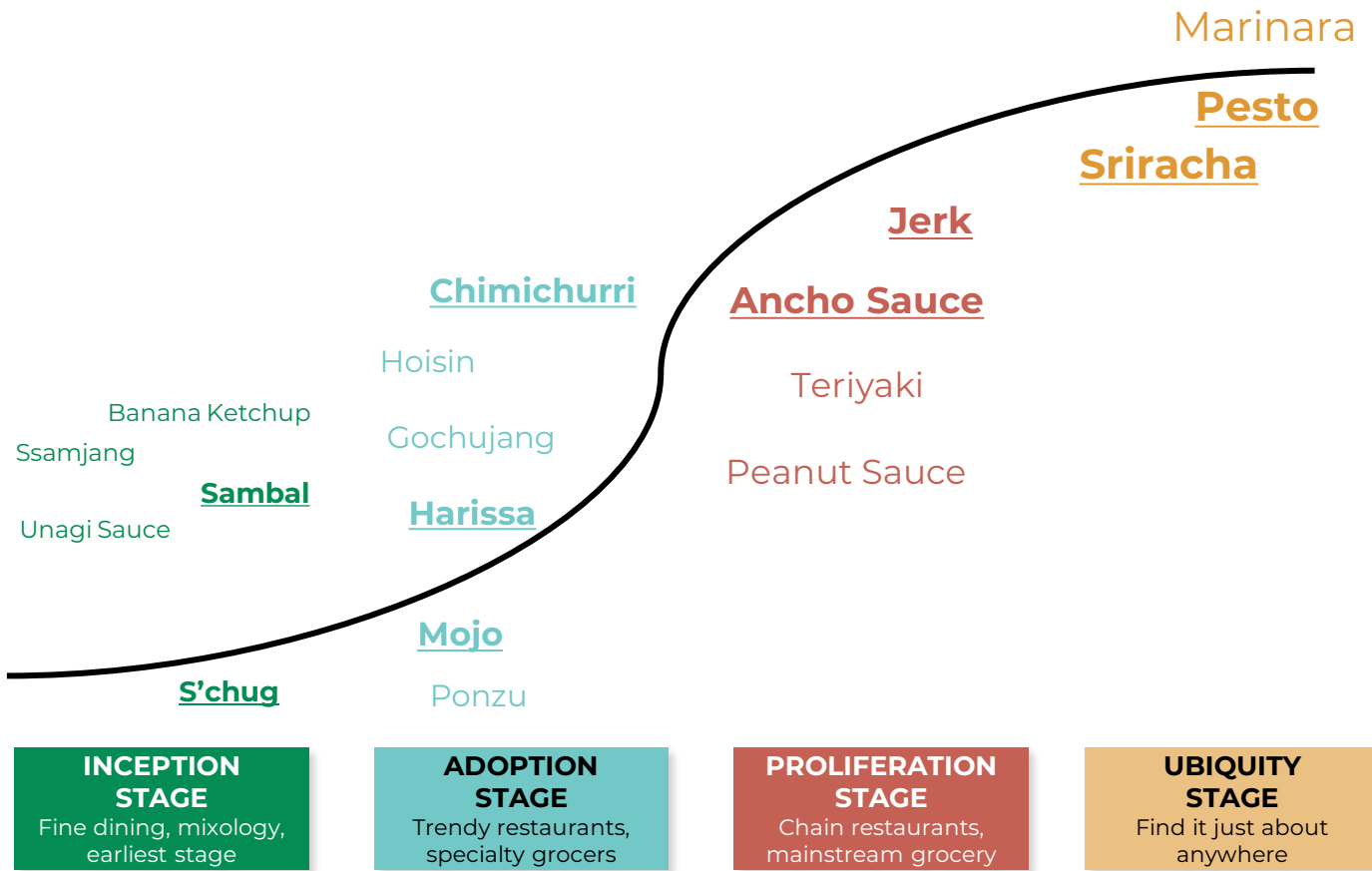
OPPORTUNITIES 

- ▶ A tactic that many operators are adopting to improve consistency includes simplifying their menus and improving prep efficiency with [fully-or-partially prepped, versatile, speed-scratch culinary ingredients](#). More consistency makes for more satisfied customers and enhanced loyalty.²
- ▶ For many operators, both emerging and national chains, offering an array of intriguing globally inspired dishes and [sauces](#) (either as LTOs or permanent menu items) is an important part of a successful strategy to draw more traffic.²

¹ Consumer Research Conducted by Datassential for SupHerb Farms, January 2024

² Kinetic 12, Emergence Report, Q3 2023

Menu Adoption Cycle of Global Sauces



Datassential, Menu Adoption Cycle Data, 2023

SELECT THE RIGHT GLOBAL SAUCES FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

Decision Tree Guide

What kind of taste experience are your customers looking for?

Cutting edge and seeking the newest taste experiences.

S'CHUG



TIP: Look for global sauces in the "inception" and "adoption" stages. The earlier in the menu adoption cycle, the more innovative the item.

Late adopter but still interested in trying trendy flavors.

ANCHO SAUCE

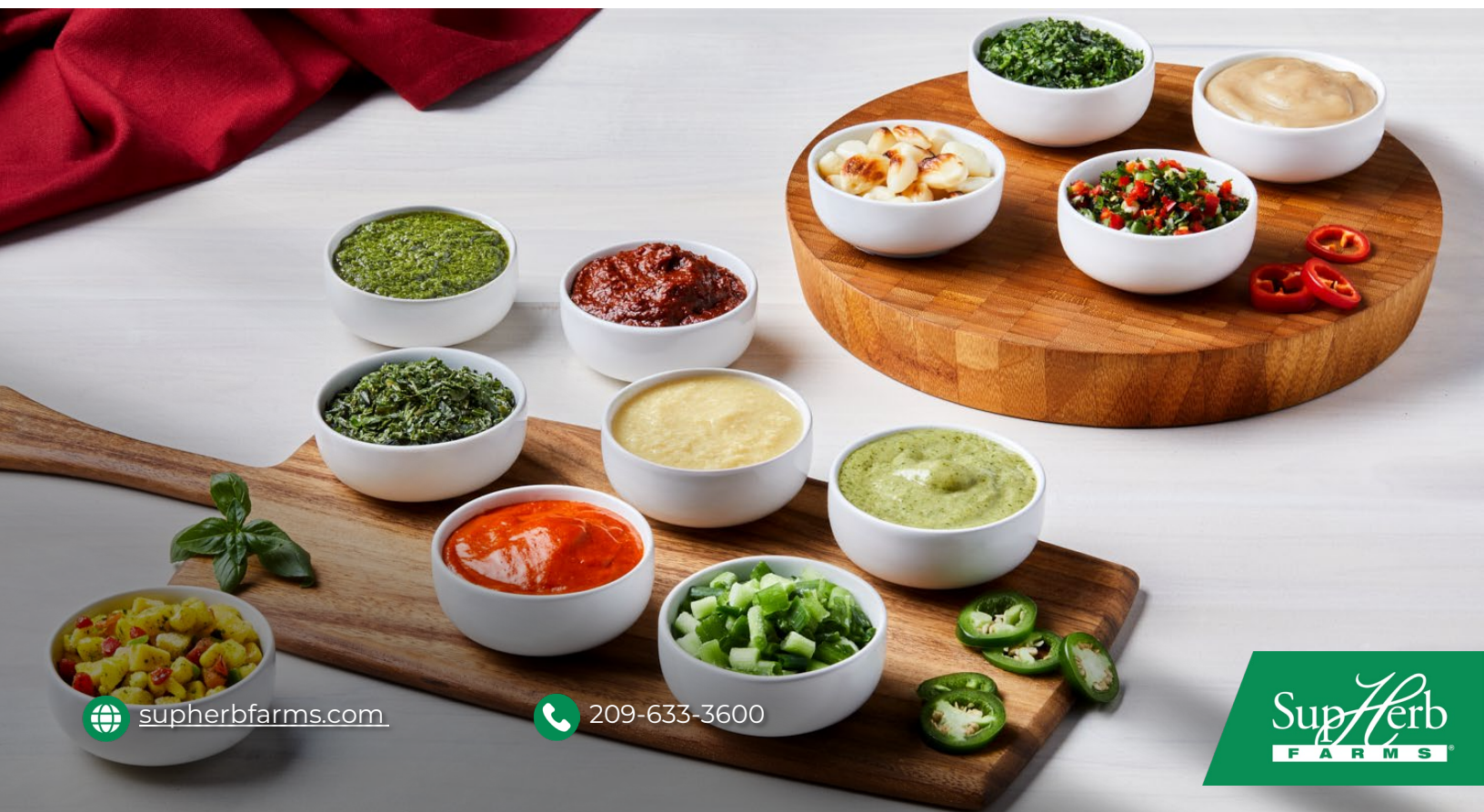



TIP: Look for global sauces in the "proliferation" or "ubiquity" stages. The later in the menu adoption cycle, the less "trendy" and the lower the risk.



Globally Inspired Flavor Solutions™

SupHerb Farms® supplies *IQF Herbs*, *Frozen Specialty Vegetables* and globally inspired *Culinary Blends*, *Culinary Pastes* & *Culinary Sauces* to restaurant chains, grocery retailers and best-in-class food brands who are passionate about sourcing farm fresh flavor.



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