



Food Forecast

2025



The coming year is bound to be a pivotal one for the food service industry. The landscape will be as competitive as ever, and economic variables like inflation and lending costs will continue to impact business operations. New restaurants will need a clear focus of their concept and audience in order to be successful. Navigating all this will require creativity, skill, and tenacity—traits that define Baldor Specialty Foods' community of chef customers.

It's our job at Baldor to help our customers meet the challenges of running a foodservice business by providing them with the best selection and quality of ingredients with which to execute their visions. We aim to take the guesswork out of sourcing so they can focus on what they do best: create positive culinary experiences.

Our expert Merchandising team employs the highest standards in procuring a well-curated selection of ingredients from the best brands domestically and across the globe.

Together, they have compiled a product catalog that includes more than 6,000 items across produce, grocery, bakery, dairy, meat, poultry, and fish for our nearly 16,000 customers, from restaurants to grocery stores to event spaces. We service a significant portion of the Eastern Seaboard, from Maine to Virginia, and our business continues to grow. Baldor recently opened a new warehouse facility in the Washington, DC, area so that we can work with an even broader footprint of chef customers. And as a testament to the quality of our selection, we are proud to call 75% of our region's Michelin-starred restaurants our customers.

We want to equip our community with the products they need to be on the cutting edge of trends and flavor in an increasingly diverse culinary landscape. Our Merchandising team visits trade shows, meets with vendors, pores through industry reports, and talks to chefs to come up with this list of trends. Here is what we expect to see unfold in our industry and beyond.

2025 Trends in Foods

Our Directors of Merchandising are available for comment on any of the below topics.

CLIMATE SMART

Climate Smart is an emerging classification for food products that tackles the climate crisis with a three-prong strategy—to mitigate, reverse, and adapt to the current threat of extreme weather and other climate-related concerns in our food supply. We expect to see more Climate Smart marketing to consumers and with that, a greater awareness of the impact on our food supply. "Our customers are asking for more transparency, and we're responding by expanding our offerings from suppliers who align with those values," says Emily Murphy, Director of Specialty Merchandising. Baldor's inventory is stocked with climate-smart partners like **Joyce Farms** who invest heavily in regenerative agriculture. **First Field** is a New Jersey-based canned tomato producer that is working to develop climate-resilient tomato seeds. In the beverage space, **Open Water** is focused on reducing the environmental footprint of bottled water by reducing the distance it needs to travel, and **Loop Mission** is reducing landfill waste by upcycling imperfect produce for their bottled juices.

FRENCH IS BACK

Jon Hansburg, Baldor's Director of NY Food Service Sales, noticed that French restaurants were resurging in the second half of 2024, but with a distinct new-guard approach. "I haven't seen any of those old-school, white tablecloth shrines to French cuisine in a while. Now it's a younger generation of chefs—and diners—who are engaging with classic dishes on their own terms and at a more approachable price point." Le Veau De Or was recently rejuvenated with mid-tier pricing, and even the French master Daniel Boulud is going in a different direction with his latest venture, a 16K-square-foot steakhouse and marketplace. And our sales data supports the trend: Baldor has seen 40% year-over-year growth in **sirloin flap meat**, the main steak used for steak frites.



SOUR POWER

The sour trend continues to accelerate in mainstream markets: **Yuzu** was the first runaway success, with its distinctive lime-lemon-grapefruit flavor that you can now find in everything from sparkling water and yogurt to marmalades and miso. Baldor offers customers fresh American-grown yuzu from **Rising C Ranches** in Central California as well as **cold-pressed yuzu juice** and **candied yuzu peel** through our new partnership with California-based **YUZUCO**.

The mass popularity of yuzu has opened the door to a new

sour flavor, **sudachi**, a tart, acidic cousin to yuzu that's also native to Japan and also brought to us by YUZUCO. It has a lime-like flavor with distinct notes of pink peppercorn and cumin, and a floral aroma that makes it a good ingredient in cocktails, dressings, marinades, and desserts. Thanks to a few forward-thinking NYC chefs, Baldor is all in on this next-level citrus. "If you're not experimenting with sudachi yet, it's time to catch up," says Murphy. "The sour revolution isn't slowing down anytime soon."



DESIGNER PRODUCE

Designer produce refers to new varieties of fruits and vegetables that have been developed to deliver surprising or unusual flavors or textures—things like **cotton candy grapes from Grapery**, **Tropical Bliss strawberries from Driscoll's**, or **Koyo strawberries from Oishii**. This trend is only getting stronger and deeper as consumer and chef demand increases. In addition to the above items, Baldor carries vegetables from the **Row 7 Seed Company** (which Chef Dan Barber co-founded) and **Norwich Meadows Farm** partnership. Together they are on the cutting edge of seed breeding,

revolutionizing flavor with varieties like **Badger Flame Beets**, **Habanada Peppers**, and **Sweet Garleek** (the latter the darling from 2023). **Spinach Lettuce** and **Dino Lettuce** were brand-new, limited-edition crops in 2024, and 2025 will bring the release of even more exploratory produce. "Fruits and vegetables that are grown for flavor are worth the premium because they transform eating from routine to remarkable," says Matt Rendine, Director of Produce Merchandising. "Bursting with sweetness, complexity, and aroma, these varieties are a reminder that real flavor is an experience, not just a taste."



FIG LEAF

We've noticed an unusual piece of produce popping up on menus coast to coast: Fig leaf. From verdant fig leaf-infused oils to sweetened creams, it's the latest cult flavor among chefs and pastry chefs alike. Fig leaf imparts a mild vanilla, almost coconut flavor when extracted. The large, dark green leaves themselves are inedible, but they can be used to wrap fish or other proteins and vegetables before cooking for added flavor.

EXTRA BRUT COCOA POWDER

When an ingredient suddenly jumps by 50% in sales, we know there's a trend that's taking off. Extra Brut is a term that's normally reserved for Champagne, but in this case, it refers to **Cacao Barry's Extra Brut Cocoa Powder**, a rich, aromatic, proprietary Dutch-processed cacao with high fat content (22-24%), low acidity, and robust taste. The company sources its beans from countries in West Africa and uses a fermentation and drying process that gives it a complexity of flavor that goes above and beyond other Dutch-process powders.

"The real standout is its versatility," says Murphy. "Chefs are using it to elevate everything from sweets to savory applications. Whether it's a chocolate sauce for a steak or the base of a show-stopping dessert, this cocoa powder is quickly becoming a must-have in kitchens across the city."



AN 80S DECADENCE REVIVAL

Restaurants are looking to provide diners with an option to splurge: In NYC, think CoqoDaq's fried chicken with caviar supplement; Four Twenty Five's extensive caviar service; or Le B's CTF—caviar, truffle, and foie gras all in one dish. Raw bar and seafood concepts also continue to grow in popularity, which Kevin Lindgren, Director of Protein Merchandising, thinks are what's behind the 65% increase in **Beluga caviar** sales this year. Not only that, but 25% more of our chef customers overall are ordering at least one of the many caviar products we carry from suppliers like **Caviar Star** and **Caviarland**.



UNIQUE TROPICAL DELIGHTS

Baldor is selling more tropical fruit than ever before, with pomegranates, kiwis, and coconuts leading the way. We're getting so many customer requests for more unusual tropicals that we're expanding the category: We added **mamey**, **breadfruit**, **longan**, **mangosteen**, and **pink guavas** to our offerings this year, with more new additions coming in 2025. Demand for **dragon fruit** is also strong and growing; we now offer three fresh varieties (pink skin with white flesh, pink skin with red flesh, and yellow skin with white flesh) as well as organic frozen cubes from **Pitya Foods**, a B Corp company based in San Diego.



PISTACHIOS

At one point, it seemed like every new restaurant had a plateful of finely sliced, pistachio-studded mortadella on its menu, so it was only a matter of time until the pistachio broke loose and stepped out on its own. Or maybe the recent popularity of **pistachio milk** in the alternative milk category is driving interest in pistachios overall. Regardless, our inventory has plenty of unique pistachio products to meet this trend, like **La Tourangelle pistachio oil** and **pistachio halva** from Seed + Mill.



JACKFRUIT AS A MEAT ALT

After a bit of a lull in the past year or two, there's renewed interest in plant-based proteins, as chefs look to cater to a wider range of dietary needs. Jackfruit is getting particular attention thanks to it being a minimally processed whole food that's extremely versatile to cook with. Jackfruit—grown in Asia, Africa, and South America—is the largest tree fruit in the world, weighing up to 40 pounds, with a thick, bumpy green rind and stringy yellow flesh. Unlike traditional meat alternatives like tofu, seitan and tempeh, jackfruit is free of both soy and gluten. It can be used in main courses

or desserts; consumed fresh, dried, canned or frozen (which is why it's showing up in snacks and prepared foods at supermarkets); and easily absorbs other flavors and spices. Smashburger helped bring it into mainstream foodservice with the launch of a jackfruit burger this year, and market data anticipates demand growing through 2029. We source our **shredded jackfruit** from **The Jackfruit Company**, based in Colorado. Their jackfruit is grown in India and Vietnam and harvested young, while it still has a muted flavor and meat-like texture (and before it fully ripens into a sweet tropical fruit).



HOT PEPPERS
GETTING HOTTER

Diners continue to show an affinity for spicy foods, and we're seeing rising heat for hot and flavorful fresh peppers. This can partly be explained by greater interest in global cuisines like Thai, Korean, and South Asian that naturally use more spice in their cooking, but a lot of the trend is purely an appetite for heat. "We have seen growing demand for extremely spicy peppers like the **Carolina Reaper**, which is considered one of the hottest peppers," says Rendine. Our inventory of fresh hot peppers also includes unique varieties like **Red Fresno**, **Grenada**, and **Sugar Rush Peach** with varying levels of heat and fruity flavors, perfect for pepper sauces and salsas.

THE BALDOR HOT LIST

We've seen significant growth in the past few months in these specialty items:

PRODUCT	% GROWTH
Marigold Flower Blossoms	164%
Hawaiian Basil	129%
Finger Limes	113%
Jumbo Blueberries	99%
Cotton Candy Grapes	88%
Organic Japanese Negi Scallions	70%
Goldenberries	70%
White Nectarines	66%
Kumquats	65%
Lamb Roasts	61%



ABOUT BALDOR SPECIALTY FOODS

Baldor Specialty Foods is one of the largest importers and distributors of fresh produce and specialty foods in Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. With a focus on local, peak season and small farms, Baldor curates a selection of more than 6,000 items—including produce, meat, poultry, fish, dairy and specialty items—and manages more than 16,000 major restaurant, food service, retail and corporate accounts from Portland, ME to Richmond VA. Beginning as Balducci's fruit stand in Greenwich Village in 1946, Baldor maintains its original promise—curate and deliver the best and freshest foods in the world. With quality you can trust and service that delivers, Baldor seeks to provide great specialty foods and logistics that give their customers an edge. To learn more, go to www.baldorfood.com.