Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, a home of cutting edge trends, CCD Innovation (formerly Center for Culinary Development), is a food and beverage product development company that blends culinary creativity with strategic marketing expertise. Our strength in identifying the latest food trends, from both culinary and consumer-behavior perspectives, makes us uniquely qualified to help our clients create food product solutions that satisfy consumer expectations.

Top Ten Trends to Watch
An annual overview of top influential food and beverage trends

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Horn toot alert: CCD Innovation forecasted major culinary movements in its 2016 Top 10 Trends report. Leading the way: imperfect produce finds fans and food waste hits the mainstream; complicated coffee wins over consumers; sea vegetables shine; automated restaurants pop up around the country; and eating for a healthy microbiome emerges as a dietary choice. According to Datassential, ghost pepper skyrocketed with 48% more often on menus in 2016, while in the past decade, coconut showed up 66% more often on menus.

There are already clear trend front-runners surfacing for 2017. Here, find the latest foods worth watching, from poke to popcorn to plant meats, as well as significant shifts in the snack and beverage categories. We are following these trends—and many more—and will track their evolution as the year progresses.

In this report find our picks for what’s trending now and well into 2017.
Two-for-one dining rooms. That’s right, restaurants are combining two different concepts or service styles in the one location. Typically, these restaurants feature casual counter service during the day while offering an elevated eating experience at night. It’s also an opportunity for chefs to get their creative juices flowing; an entirely separate concept gives them the ability to test innovative dishes and ingredients.

Jumpstarting the trend Pineapple & Pearls in Washington, D.C. By day the space functions as a coffee bar, at night chef Aaron Silverman presides over a tasting-menu-only dinner service.

Or consider the recently opened Senia in Honolulu. The dining room offers casual fare with shareable a la carte and family-style dishes in a convivial space. But the restaurant takes it up a notch with their tasting menu served at a chef’s table and counter right in the heart of the kitchen, where diners interact directly with the chefs preparing their meal.

Cost is a driving force with this trend, as is innovation: twofers allow chefs and restaurateurs to explore different dining directions, such as Daily Provisions, the soon-to-open “coffee shop and bakery by day, dinner party by night,” a new concept by Danny Meyer’s Union Square Hospitality Group.

At Chicago’s Entente find one kitchen crew behind two distinct menus designed for two distinct dining rooms, one featuring more casual a la carte items, the other a fine dining-esque tasting menu. And Chinese Tuxedo in New York will soon house an Australian-inspired vegan café, The Good Sort, during the day.

A trend with traction in an age of rising rents and labor costs, look for more restaurants to pull double duty in 2017 and beyond as restaurateurs look for more ways to bring wildly different but equally delicious dining experiences together under one roof.
Gone Nuts:
A Dairy-Free Go-to Ingredient

Since alternative dairy milks now account for 20% of the $24 billion dairy case market, little wonder we’re seeing new products in this supermarket section. Nut cheeses, nut milks and nut butters are increasingly striking a chord with consumers, especially those opting for a dairy-free and/or plant-based diet. In fact, a study conducted by Grand View Research, Inc. projected the global dairy-alternatives market to grow over 16% to $35 billion by 2024.

Top nut cheese choices include three San Francisco Bay Area finds: Miyoko’s Kitchen, which features a line of cashew-based cheeses that range from mild, soft and creamy to aged, sharp and hard; Kite Hill’s almond-milk based, cream cheese-style spread, ricotta and brie-like soft ripened; and Fromagerie Essème’s cashew based cream cheese. Unlike other plant-based cheeses with a bad rap in the taste and texture department, these cheeses get the thumbs up from food critics and consumers alike.

The increasing prevalence of nut-based foods is likely attributable to a general move away from animal products, due to concerns about antibiotics, growth hormones and industrial agriculture.

Nut milk producers are introducing new nuts, new blends and new flavors, too. Nut milk stand outs include Australian-based Milkadamia Macadamia Milk by Jindilli Beverages; and two California company contenders: Dairy-Free Creamer Almonds + Coconuts from Nutpods; and Cacao Rose Almond Cashew Milk, courtesy of The Living Apothecary.

Long-time non-dairy milk producers continue to offer innovations. Take, for instance, Silk’s five flavors of cashew milk, Pacific’s hazelnut milk, So Delicious coconut milk Good Karma’s flax version and Suzie’s quinoa milk spin. The addition of these milks—note new packaging, too—delivers a completely new, creamier eat experience to a saturated category.
Plant Meats: Improved Imposters

New meat substitutes are gaining critical acclaim from a tough food crowd. Bestselling cookbook author Mark Bittman says Beyond Meat, a pea-protein based meat, had him fooled into thinking he was sampling the real deal— in this instance, chicken.

Consumers are looking for satiation through a sustainability lens, too. In a win-win situation, plant-based diets benefit both individual health and the environment.

Plant-based meat analogs aren’t just for vegans and vegetarians. Google Trends shows that searching for “plant-based diets” increased by more than double in the U.S. year over year creating a hockey stick effect.

Enter Impossible Foods. This Silicon Valley-financed, Redwood City, California-based company promises to replicate beef in all its juiciness by reverse-engineering the texture and taste of meat using a laboratory-designed combination of proteins, fats and amino acids derived from wheat, soy, coconut, potato and other plant sources. There’s even plant “blood” to whet the appetites of meat eaters.

Started by a former Stanford University biochemistry professor, Patrick O. Brown, (who also co-founded nut-based cheese company Kite Hill), Impossible Foods made a big media splash when it launched a plant-based burger in the fall of 2016. The patty has found a home in four popular, high-end independent restaurants of note: Traci Des Jardins’ Jardinière and Chris Cosentino’s Cockscomb in San Francisco; Tal Ronnen’s Crossroads Kitchen in Los Angeles; and David Chang’s Momofuku Nishi in New York.

Could this burger dripping plant “blood” win over ardent carnivores? Stay tuned.

In the interim, veggie burgers are making a comeback, reimagined to rival their cow counterparts. Consider the cult following for Superiority Burger in New York. And shredded jackfruit is getting rave reviews as a pulled pork substitute. Watch for more to come from this Southeast Asian fruit, too.

Drivers

Health & Wellness, Sustainability, Tech Investment, New Values Equation

Resonators

Fits within the new values equation—better for me, better for the environment

Activators

Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods, Superiority Burger, jackfruit
POKE: Lands on the Mainland

The popular Hawaiian raw fish staple, known as poke (pronounced poh-key), is taking the mainland by storm. Poke is popping up not just on either coast, but inland as well, with new poke-centric restaurants launching in Denver = Poke City, Pittsburgh = Täko and Chicago = Aloha Poké Co.

The fast-casual trend builds on the country’s love affair with sushi, dovetails with the meal-in-a-bowl movement and offers a fast, fresh, affordable dish full of flavor at places like Wisefish Poké and Sweetfin Poké (mainlanders like accents it seems). The word poke means “to cut crosswise into pieces.” Traditional poke features raw cubes of ahi tuna or salmon marinated in soy sauce and sesame oil. The dish includes nourishing add-ons such as seaweed, avocado, edamame or cucumbers and is typically served over rice.

In Hawaii, poke is both a casual dish available at grocery stores, gas stations and surf shacks, and an elevated course on fine dining menus. High-profile new independent restaurants showcasing Hawaiian-inspired fare, including Liholiho Yacht Club in San Francisco and Noreetuh in New York City, feature poke on their menus.

Mainland poke places are reinventing the original. And consumers are eating up the creative concepts. National chain Pokéworks, features poke burritos and salads and offers alternative protein sources such as chicken and tofu. At the restaurant Joy District in Chicago, poke comes in a crispy waffle cone. Packed with protein, light and healthy, poke also lends itself to Chipotle-style customization.

And in a fresh twist, a new wave of poke parlors in New York called Sweetcatch aims to import an authentic aloha experience, featuring poke takeout by the pound.
Tech: Finds Future in Food

Food is quickly becoming a service, not a product. Driving tech innovation in this arena: New ways to access food. The intersection of food and tech appeals to major Silicon Valley venture capital firms, including GV, formerly Google Ventures (whose portfolio includes Impossible Foods, Juicero, Blue Bottle Coffee), Khosla Ventures (Hampton Creek), Andreessen Horowitz (Instacart) and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers (Juicero, Door Dash). 4-hour Workweek guru Tim Ferriss, among others, have sunk serious cash into the cricket protein bar company Exo.

The Los Angeles headquartered start-up Juicero, a technology-driven vehicle for in-home, cold-pressed juice delivery, is also getting a boost from tech funding, extracting more than $120 million in investments from tech titans.

Juicero requires a kitchen juicer that costs $700 and exerts 8,000 pounds of pressure on chopped fruits and vegetables that are delivered in small pouches directly to customers’ doors. The chain restaurant Le Pain Quotidien has also jumped on the Juicero bandwagon, serving up cold-pressed organic juice starting with its West Coast locations.

Tech innovation in food continues to power ahead. Case in point: the ascent of venture-capital backed start-up Soylent, the nutritional dinner-replacement drink that’s the beverage of choice among the Silicon Valley set on around the clock schedules who see food as fuel and eating as optional.

Soylent made a splash with its beverage but ran into hiccups with the release of the Soylent snack bar, which, it should be noted, requires chewing. The 250-calorie bars, touted as the latest advance in futuristic foodstuffs, include soy protein isolate, corn syrup, oat flour, canola oil, glycerin, whole algae flour, isomaltulose, vitamins and minerals. Time will tell if the mass market will embrace such highly-engineered foods.
Brunch has upped its game, with restaurants thinking well beyond Belgian waffles, eggs Benedict and Bloody Marys. Late-night snacks, day-round comfort foods and regional American favorites are choice options on menus featuring chicken and waffles, breakfast tacos and grilled cheese. Global influences are providing new twists that are also being embraced by brunch menus. These global forms and flavors are worth noting: Think Korean fried chicken & waffles, chilaquiles and bibimbap.

Brunch is fast becoming the weekend meal of choice for extended families. And as Millennials start their own families, they are passing on this favorite pastime tradition. This is also a sought-after meal slot for wedding receptions and corporate meet-ups.

As more Americans have flexibility in their work schedules, there’s growing demand for brunch beyond Sunday and brunch items on the menu in the evening, too. Michelin-starred restaurant Meadowood, recently held a “Night Brunch” event over the holidays that featured savory items such as corn cake with chorizo and smoked yolks with scallions and ended on a sweet note: toasted chocolate sourdough bread with faux nutella. And fast food chains are getting in on the all day, any day brunch game. For example, Jack in the Box debuted its Brunchfast menu in the fall of 2016.

Brexican is a draw at Tacubaya in Berkeley with items such as chilaquiles, crispy fried tortillas scrambled with eggs, onions and salsa. Brunch at Oakland’s Juhu Beach Club includes the Croque Memsaib with fried eggs, chai-spiced brown sugar bacon and tamarind ketchup. The Indian-inspired restaurant also dishes up a doswaffle, a hybrid South Indian dosa (chickpea flour) and Belgian-style, gluten-free waffle.

And freshness matters: Fresh pressed juices, green smoothies and power bowls are adding a health halo at brunch, which is historically known for the holy trio of carbs, protein and alcohol.

Drivers: Community, Global Flavor, Adventure, Comfort, Indulgence

Resonators: Social setting offers families and friends adventurous comfort food

Activators: Independent and ethnic-influenced restaurants, Millennials, young families, urban professionals
Once considered a niche luxury, grass-fed is becoming mainstream as consumers seek beef, milk and other dairy products that don’t come from cows raised in feedlots. In fact, much of the meat is actually sourced outside the United States. New Zealand and Australia are the main sources as these countries have more available pasture. Sourcing overseas, though, raises the question: is grass-fed sustainable and does it mesh with the values of today’s locavore consumers?

Grass-fed is no longer only available as premium-priced meat sold at natural grocery stores such as Whole Foods, and upscale burger joints, like Atlanta-based chain Farm Burger. Now find grass-fed at the fast-casual chain Chili’s, which sells grass-fed burgers, and mac & cheese maker Annie’s Homegrown, which uses milk from grass-fed cows. Even ballparks, convention centers and Wal-Mart offer grass-fed meat.

Grass-fed beef fans sing the praises of its robust and rich flavor. The market for grass-fed beef, which some say is better for human health, as well as animals and the environment, has grown 25 to 30% a year for the past decade. Over the same timeframe, consumption for traditional beef products has continued to decline, according to Forbes.

The Winter 2017 Fancy Food Show highlighted grass-fed products such as Bonafide Provisions’ Grass-Fed Bone Broth, Perky Jerky’s Grass-Fed Beef Sticks and Grass-fed beef and milk is sourced from cattle raised on a diet free of hormones, antibiotics and steroids. Grass-fed beef refers to cattle raised in a pasture, eating grass or “forage” like hay, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Grass-fed certification standards that support transparency and legitimize and protect the label for farmers committed to raising cows on pasture are in the works. A label to keep tabs on.
Air-popped, gluten-free and high in fiber—hello, health halo—popcorn is the fastest growing snack in the United States.

The classic, benign American snack is getting a second act as food producers elevate popcorn’s platform with intriguing flavor pairings and add-ons. And the combinations are endless.

At New York City’s gourmet popcorn shop, Pop Karma, find a Kyoto-style mix with seaweed and miso for added nutrients. The store sells seasonal flavors too: Bacon Apple Bourbon Caramel, Porcini Cheddar, or Pumpkin Spice Caramel, anyone?

Many high-end and independent restaurants now have their own in-house popcorn to play with both taste and texture. New York restaurant Distilled sprinkles a “magic dust” mixture on theirs, comprised of nutritional yeast, garlic powder, toasted cumin, gochugaru (red chili flakes) and sea salt.

For the popcorn lover with a sweet tooth, New York’s Dirt Candy dessert menu features a corn cake with salted caramel popcorn ice cream. The dish combines ice creaminess with the sharp crunch of popped kernels for a tasty and texture-rich treat.

Masala Pop Chai Masala Popcorn with Assam Tea features a mixture of tea, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and black pepper for spice lovers. For those who like it hot, Huy Fong Foods, the makers of the original Sriracha hot chili sauce, teamed up with Pop! Gourmet Popcorn to bring Sriracha-flavored popcorn to the table.

Boulder Canyon Authentic Foods, owned by Inventure Foods, launched a RTE popcorn line in 2016 called Real Thin Pop. Featuring premium oils like olive, avocado and coconut, Real Thin Pop seasonings are applied using a method that results in 25% fewer calories and 70% less fat than leading popcorn brands, according to the company.
For years many Americans have heeded the public health warning that too much salt is bad for heart health. New research suggests that some fans of the flavor enhancer may take that advice with a grain of you-know-what.

Current guidelines from health agencies set daily dietary sodium targets between 1,500 and 2,300 milligrams (that’s about a teaspoon) or less, well below the average U.S. daily consumption of about 3,400 milligrams.

But a scientific review of recent studies suggests that drastic cuts in sodium levels for otherwise healthy people may actually increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Here’s what else the meta-analysis found: Salt intake in people with normal blood pressure does not appear to be a risk factor for hypertension.

Now that we better understand that salt is not enemy #1, chefs, producers and retailers are celebrating with specialty salts. Ready to fill the shaker now? Sea salt—with its range of flavors—is the finishing flake of choice among culinary professions. Consumers are encouraged to go beyond the much-loved Maldon and mineral-rich Pink Himalayan.

New York-based Amagansett Sea Salt hits the palate like Pop Rocks and tastes like sea breeze. The company sells salts infused with truffles, wine, seaweed, herbs and spices.

Oregon’s hand-harvested Jacobsen Sea Salt offers finishing salts infused with garlic, ghost chili and habanero. A darling of the Portland dining scene, Jacobsen’s also sells a salt infused with Willamette Valley pinot noir and another using Stumptown coffee.

Salt evangelist Mark Bitterman stocks more than 120 artisanal salts at The Meadow, with stores in Portland, Oregon and New York. From parchment-fine flakes and course crystals to crunchy nuggets and smooth salt blocks, Bitterman, who literally wrote the book on salt, is on a mission to educate eaters about its many varieties and uses.
The craft cocktail movement has helped inspire the production of premium mixers, for a couple of reasons. Social settings promote boozing, but designated drivers and the non-alcoholic set want options beyond a glass of soda, ice and slice of lime. And, now that restaurant food delivery brings the restaurant experience home, consumers want the bar too. These elixirs and tonics allow home mixologists to enjoy a complex libation with a simple addition of alcohol.

Consider UK-based tonic maker Fever-Tree. Rooted in the artisanal gin trend, the company has launched a new product every year since its beginning a decade ago. It’s now the mixer of choice for professional and at-home bartenders, who appreciate the tonic’s supporting, rather than overpowering, role. Flavors include Indian Tonic Water, Elderflower Tonic Water and Bitter Lemon.

For adventurous at-home mixologists, new products like Bittermilk—a line of cocktail mixers made by bartenders with premium ingredients—wildly popular flavors harken back to retro drinks, now au courant: Charred Grapefruit Tonic with Bull’s Bay Sea Salt; Smoked Honey Whiskey Sour; Tom Collins with Elderflower and Hops; and Bourbon Barrel Aged Old Fashioned. Each product features a bittering agent, a sweetener and acid to achieve a balanced cocktail. The labor is in the bottle: Imbibers need only add the spirit of their choice, stir and enjoy.

Other products designed with the at-home entertainer in mind include Owl’s Brew, which feature tea bases that mix well with vodka, tequila, rum, whiskey, gin, wine or champagne. Drinkers choose their booze of choice and then enhance with tea-based mixers such as The Classic (English breakfast tea with a tart twist); Grapefruit Collins (lemon verbena with pepper and grapefruit); Wicked Green (green tea with heat); or White and Vine (white tea with watermelon & pomegranate).
Credit acclaimed Danish chef René Redzepi, the godfather of New Nordic cuisine/NOMA fame, for popularizing cooking with bark, pine, fir and other tree bits.

At San Francisco’s iconic Zuni Café you’ll find a fig-and-goat-cheese appetizer drizzled in roasted pinecone extract. On the menu at Rich Table, also in San Francisco: Douglas fir pierogis with chicory and brown butter. Berkeley, California-based Shrub & Co. pairs Douglas fir with cranberry in one of the company’s elixirs.

Bar stars across the country showcase the flavors of the forest in drinks like tree bark bourbon, Douglas fir-infused brandy and a G&T featuring spruce bough tips, which add herbaceous tones.

A taste of trees: Look for seeds, sap, leaves, needles and barks on menus in 2017.

Long a background player, sour heat is stepping up to make a statement on the plate and in snacks. The pickling renaissance has played a role marrying heat and sour as Millennials search for global flavor adventure. Consider Big John’s Habanero Chips or Hickory Brussels Sprouts by Preservation & Co. specialty grocer Trader Joe’s jumped in with their Somewhat Spicy Dill Flavored Kettle Chips.

Southeast Asian sambal also fits the bill. It is a bright red, paste-like dipping sauce that’s primarily made from chiles and includes other ingredients like shrimp paste, fish sauce, garlic, spring onions, sugar, lime and rice vinegar. New York producer Auria’s Malaysian Kitchen Hot Chili Sambal makes an all-natural, preservative-free version.

In the year ahead, sour heat gets serious friends, so prepare to pucker up.

Shichimi Togarashi, also known as Japanese 7 Spice, includes chilies, peppers, dried orange peel, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, hemp seeds, ginger, garlic, shisho and nori. The versatile condiment covers fries, rice, noodles, tempura and grilled foods.

With a mild heat, its nutty, citrusy, sea flavor tastes great on top of eggs, avocado toast or rice crackers. Traditionally find this blend on udon, ramen, sushi and meat dishes like chicken yakitori.

Think Asian applications: At Roy’s in Rancho Mirage, California, tempura-crusted ahi rolls sit in a togarashi melted butter sauce. And in Portland, Oregon, Popcorn gets a spice kick with togarashi at the restaurant Clyde Common.

Togarashi is a welcome addition to the spice blend playbook for adventure-seeking home cooks and restaurant diners alike.
Corn Moves to Dessert

Nothing says summer like corn on the cob. But what about corn-flavored desserts? Ice cream and corn is an increasingly popular combo as corn gets the sweet treatment.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Smitten Ice Creamery serves mellow yellow scoops paired with a vibrant raspberry puree. Humphrey Slocombe offers a corn and blackberry flavor. Tara’s Organic Ice Cream’s version made from fresh kernels is best eaten served in a handmade sesame-studded cone.

New York’s reigning paleta guru, Fany Gerson of La Newyorkina, makes Mexican street-corn paletas by request—her version includes lime and chile—for a sweet, spicy treat with a hint of heat.

Look for even more kernel-flavored sweets to crop up in summertime, when corn is abundant.

Cardamom Climbs

The world’s third most expensive spice (after saffron and vanilla), cardamom is popular in sweet and savory dishes, baked goods and beverages. Typically part of a blend, cardamom is now in the spotlight. Green cardamom has a strong, unique taste, with an intense fragrance. Black cardamom has a smokier aroma, with a mint-like coolness. From Oprah's Chai and Bon Appetite's curry paste, to Sencha Natural's breath mints and Sacred's gin, cardamom is popping up in all kinds of food and beverage products.

Scandinavia has had a thing for the spice since the Viking days, India has embraced cardamom since ancient times, and now U.S. chefs and home cooks are catching on, using cardamom in everything from the Chai Pani Restaurant Group’s modern Indian cuisine to Three Twins ice cream.

Expect cardamom to peak strongly in 2017.
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