



The Journal



10 Healthy Food Trends in 2024



Over 2000 Hotel projects are in progress in the U.S.A: data revealed

A hotel development boom is predicted in the US this year, with more than 2,000 hotel projects set to commence construction in 2024.

New figures from hotel intelligence company **Lodging Econometrics** (LE) show that work is scheduled to begin this year on 2,234 projects, representing 257,729 rooms. The number signifies an impressive 8% and 9% rise in projects and rooms respectively year-over-year.

This trend follows on from Q3 2023, when 1,063 projects, encompassing 140,331 rooms, were in progress, equating to an 8% growth in projects and a 4% uptick in rooms year-over-year. By the close of 2023's third quarter, the U.S. was home to 59,569 operational hotels, offering more than five million rooms.

2023 saw the launch of 345 new US hotels, equivalent to 41,114 rooms. LE had anticipated the introduction of 182 new hotels and 24,790 rooms in the fourth quarter of 2023, although it did not specify whether that number had been reached by year-end.

If the predicted numbers were correct, the US would now boast 59,751 hotels and 5,672,136 rooms, marking a 1.2% year-over-year increase. This year, LE projects a steady incremental growth with 664 new hotels and 79,286 rooms, reflecting a 1.4% rise year-over-year.

The data shows that the US hotel industry is close to hitting an all-time high in terms of projects in their early planning stages. Those currently number 2,407, with 274,616 rooms, representing a 7% growth year-over-year. These figures come very close to breaking previous records, falling short by just 27 projects and 5,296 rooms. The LE data also revealed that hotel renovations and conversions experienced a boom last year, with an unprecedented 1,100 projects undergoing refurbishments or transformations as of Q3 2023.



Gaylord Pacific Hotel and Convention Center is Rising in Chula Vista

Dive Brief:

The U.S. hotel construction pipeline hit a record high of 5,964 projects, or 693,963 rooms, in the McCarthy fourth quarter of 2023, according to Lodging Econometrics' 2023 year-end U.S. Construction Pipeline Trend Report. In the quarter, the pipeline surpassed the previous project count high, which was 5,883 projects in Q2 2008. In the fourth quarter, hotel conversions and renovations dominated the pipeline, with a combined record of 2,028 projects, or 303,330 rooms. Additionally, in Q4, the upper midscale segment had the highest project count of all chain scales in the pipeline, reaching an all-time high of 2,245 projects, or 218,112 rooms. And the market with the largest hotel construction pipeline was Dallas, followed closely by Atlanta.

The fourth quarter results signal upward growth for hotel construction despite a still-challenged lending environment, according to Lodging Econometrics. Hotel conversions, in particular, have garnered strong interest from developers in recent months and are expected to continue to do so in the first half of 2024.

Dive Insight:

There were 1,118 hotel projects, or 141,768 rooms, under construction in the U.S. in the fourth quarter of 2023, up 11% by projects and 5% by rooms year over year.

The number of U.S. hotel projects scheduled to start within the next 12 months — 2,259 projects, or 261,582 rooms — also increased year over year, up 9% and 11%, respectively. And projects in the early planning stage hit all-time highs in Q4, standing at 2,587 projects, or 290,613 rooms — year-over-year increases of 9% and 4%, respectively.

Hotel conversions and renovations, which made up a large chunk of the total pipeline, saw growth as well. Combined, conversion and renovation activity increased 5% by projects and 21% by rooms year over year. And project and room counts were both up 6% from the previous quarter, another record-setting quarter for conversion and renovation activity.

Lodging Econometrics SVP Bruce Ford previously told Hotel Dive that the hotel conversion pipeline will continue to grow throughout 2024, as conversions remain one of the fastest ways to grow portfolio scale in the current lending environment.

Emerging brands like IHG's Garner and Spark by Hilton, both of which launched in 2023, will likely bolster conversion pipeline growth this year. Ford previously said he wouldn't be surprised to see more conversion-oriented brands launch in 2024 to keep up with demand. As for where hotel development is happening, Dallas led other U.S. markets with the largest hotel construction pipeline. In the fourth quarter, the city had a record-breaking 193 projects, or 22,291 rooms, signifying "Dallas' robust growth and confidence in the hospitality sector," according to Lodging Economics.

Atlanta followed closely behind Dallas, setting its own record with 151 projects, or 18,730 rooms. Hospitality experts previously told Hotel Dive a robust meetings and events industry is driving the city's hotel boom. One highly anticipated project in the city, Signia by Hilton Atlanta, opened earlier this month ahead of schedule.

Nationwide, Lodging Econometrics predicts lending volume to increase slowly in the first half of 2024 and then gradually pick up pace in the second half of the year. This could have positive implications for new construction and acquisitions, as well as conversions, the report detailed. (courtesy of Hotel Investment TODAY)

The Top 10 Healthy Food Trends to Expect in 2024

Sustainable, eco-conscious eating, saving money, and plenty of plants will be on the menu for all of us this coming year.

By Stephanie Thurrott and Kayla Blanton, Medically Reviewed by Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDCES

The past year has had some noteworthy food moments: Who could forget girl dinner, immunity-boosting wellness shots, and cottage cheese and pickles in absolutely everything? Now, though, we can look forward to what exciting new culinary innovations lie ahead.

Many of those innovations take their cue from ongoing research that highlights the role food and nutrition play in the risk of developing chronic diseases, and how diet impacts day-to-day functioning, energy levels, and even mood and mental health. Experts predict that there will be a continued emphasis on new and better plant-based foods, as well as those that nurture our guts with pre-, pro-, and post-biotics.

To discuss these and other emerging trends, we consulted Kelly Kennedy, RDN, staff dietitian for Everyday Health, Sammi Brondo, RD, a dietitian based in New York City, Lauren Twigge, RD, owner of Lauren Twigge Nutrition, and Diana Wind, RD, a nutritionist at Inspira Health. Here, they share their thoughts on the most important healthy food trends we're likely to see in 2024.

1. Economical Eats

Food prices have begun to pump the brakes, but they're still not what they used to be. There is a silver lining for home cooks, however. All food prices are expected to increase 1.2 percent in 2024, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but while eating away from home costs are expected to rise nearly 5 percent, the price of eating at home is anticipated to actually fall slightly.

"A lot of people, especially people with larger families, are going to have to look for affordable options in order to stay on budget," says Kennedy. "I definitely think people are going to be watching where they place their food dollars more closely." Inexpensive protein sources, like tinned fish, canned beans, and legumes, could remain popular, while more expensive cuts of meat may secure their place in the back seat.

2. More Protein, Less Meat

On that note: In 2023, plant-based meat options were all the rage. A year later, consumers won't need the disguises of a faux burger or sausage link to continue embracing nonmeat protein sources. "The protein trend is here to stay in 2024, but I think shoppers are increasingly looking beyond the meat aisle, or even the plant-based meat aisle," says Brondo. Instead, they'll be reaching for whole food sources like eggs, tofu, cottage cheese, beans, and even bread to meet their protein goals, she adds. For many, this addresses two concerns: those of animal and environmental ethics and those of saving money. (According to a report from Gro Intelligence, beef prices are expected to reach new records in 2024, and chicken prices will remain volatile.)

Whole Food Markets' 2024 Trend Report corroborates Brondo on this, adding that simple, protein-forward products with mushrooms, walnuts, tempeh, and legumes are expected to steal the spotlight over complex meat alternatives with a laundry list of ingredients. This trend falls in line with the growth we've already seen in the plant-based diet arena, and the boom is expected to continue — in fact, a Research and Markets report says the plant-based food market is projected to exceed \$75 billion by 2028, up from \$41 billion in 2022.



3. Plant-Based Seafood

What started as toes dipped in the plant-based seafood pond via veggie sushi rolls and the like is becoming a full-on submergence thanks to the tin fish trend that overtook in 2023. In response, plant-based packaged food brands are bringing vegetarian and vegan consumers their own versions of the salty snack in the form of carrots as lox, trumpet mushrooms flavored as scallops, and the root vegetable konjac in sushi rolls and poke bowls, per Whole Foods Market.

4. Eco-Conscious Drinking

An interest in minimizing food waste in favor of environmental conservation will carry over from 2023, this time with a focus on sustainable water sourcing. According to Whole Foods Market, new water brands are using water from fruit byproducts that would otherwise be discarded. A new Regenerative Organic Certification also requires soil health initiatives that will help conserve water. Additionally, nongovernmental organizations are showing their support of farmed oysters to allow for both the natural filtration of water by aquaculture and the restoration of coastal ecosystems.

Food waste has come under more scrutiny in recent years, but is still a big issue, with more than one-third of the U.S. food supply going to landfills or compost heaps, according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In the past, meal planning has helped families manage household waste, Kennedy says, but, now, manufacturers are also tackling the problem.

5. Functional Foods

If you haven't yet paid upwards of \$10 for an immunity-boosting juice shot at your local smoothie shop, you're in luck — there's plenty of time to jump on the trend. The U.S. market for functional foods is expected to grow nearly 9 percent from 2022 to 2030, according to an industry report, and Twigge says 2024 will be their biggest year yet.

Functional foods are “a foodstuff that provides a health benefit beyond basic nutrition, demonstrating specific health or medical benefits, including the prevention and treatment of disease,” per the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Taking that definition a step further, Twigge adds that people are increasingly turning to food as medicine. “In fact, the importance of this topic is becoming so apparent that the White House recently developed a Food as Medicine Initiative that aims to reduce nutrition-related diseases and food insecurity with the goal to improve health and racial equity,” she explains. Not to mention, the popularity of *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones*, a 2023 Netflix docu-series about global diets, traditions, and practices for longevity has sparked a heightened interest in the topic.

Some other examples of functional foods include magnesium-containing nuts and milk for muscle relaxation, Twigge says, or chocolate with added chamomile and valerian for potentially improved sleep. There are also countless foods fortified with probiotics and fiber for gut health, but don't feel like you have to seek out frilly packaging with big promises to cash in on the power of nutrition. “Specific nutrients like fiber [found in beans], antioxidants [found in citrus fruits], and probiotics [found in fermented or pickled foods] are great examples of things to look for when choosing functional foods,” Twigge says, “as these nutrients have been well documented to support health and reduce risk for disease.”

6. Choline

“Vitamin D, magnesium, and collagen have all had their time in the spotlight, and next year I think it will be time for choline to shine,” says Brondo. Choline is a nutrient required by the brain and nervous system for mood regulation, memory, and muscle control, per the National Institutes of Health. Additionally, it helps form the membranes around the body's cells, and although the liver produces a small amount, most choline is absorbed via food sources like beef, chicken, eggs, and broccoli, says Brondo. It's also available in supplement form.

“Choline is also especially important during pregnancy, as it helps support proper brain and spinal cord development,” Brondo says. “The importance of it is finally starting to be recognized more. Most people don't get enough of this nutrient, and it's not always in prenatal supplements.” So look load up on choline-rich foods and make sure your prenatal vitamin includes choline.

7. Food for Your Gut

People are interested in caring for their gut health, even though there are still a lot of questions around which foods are best and whether to take supplements. “Gut health will continue to be a growing area of interest for the years to come as the connection between gut health and total body health is established,” says Twigge. “In fact, research supports that a healthy gut microbiome can have benefits beyond just digestive health and can support brain health, mood, sleep, reduce risk for diseases, and more.”

Probiotics — which include yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, fermented cheeses, tempeh, miso, pickled vegetables, and even drinks like kombucha — have always been the leader on peoples’ gut-loving food lists. However, Twigge stresses that fiber-rich prebiotics are just as important for maintaining a healthy microbiome, which is why she predicts they’ll be the niche’s rising star in 2024.

“Prebiotics, a type of fiber found in plant foods, act as food for the probiotics and can support healthy gut microbiota,” Twigge explains. You can find them in bananas, blueberries, artichokes, oatmeal, spinach, and onions, to name a few, she adds. “As with most nutrients, your best bet is to vary your intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains,” she continues, just to make sure you don’t run into any nutritional gaps. “I think we will continue to see prebiotics and probiotics added to more and more foods in the next year to make it easier for people to reach for gut health promoting foods,” she says.

8. No Sugar or Artificial Sweeteners

The time may have finally come for the alternative sweetener empire to see its downfall. With the recent release of the World Health Organization (WHO)’s assessment of aspartame’s health risks, particularly it being a potential carcinogen, people are reigning in their pink and yellow packet consumption — even Diet Coke lovers are throwing in the cans. Of course, real sugar is off the table, too, for its own potential dangers, so the best remaining options are to prioritize natural sweeteners (date syrup, for example) or forfeit sweetness altogether in favor of other tantalizing tastes that pose less of a threat.

According to forecasts from the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), the new it-girls of flavors are likely to be bold, bitter, savory, sour, or a combination of them all in the form of treats like vegetable-forward cocktails and earthy spice blends.

9. Elevated Spice Levels

Speaking of spice, the heat-tolerant section of our taste buds are in for a rude awakening this year. “We have already seen this trend slowly growing with the increase of junk food chips in hot, salty flavors and eye-catching packaging targeting youth,” says Wind. “Hopefully, big companies will turn some of their magical flavor combinations into healthier fare.”

According to IFT, spicy, peppery options will be among the bold flavor profiles to replace sweetness on menus as well.

10. Multicultural Meals

After a few years of DoorDashing the same three comfort meals during bouts of quarantine, people have a craving for new and diverse dishes, per IFT — specifically those that combine techniques of various cuisines. IFT calls it “third culture cuisine,” the exotic flavors of which tie in nicely with the aforementioned bold palate venture. Some examples of these foods — which you might spot on restaurant menus, if you haven’t already — include birria ramen, boba ice cream, and Japanese guacamole, among others.

The Takeaway

Food trends in 2024 are expected to prioritize more plant-based proteins and affordable meals. Innovations like plant-based seafood and functional foods are also coming into the spotlight, reflecting a focus on health and sustainability. Spicy flavors may also start to build in popularity in health foods as they have in potato chips and other junk foods.

Brain-healthy supplements such as choline and gut-nourishing prebiotics and probiotics will continue to become more accessible, and the use of sugar and artificial sweeteners is also declining. Food options that combine meals and techniques from different cultures are also on the rise

