

FOOD TRENDS FOR 2026

EXPECT FRESHER, SIMPLER AND
MORE GLOBAL CHOICES



By Becky McKinley
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Is it possible that it is 2026? Where have the last 25 years gone? One-fourth of a century? I am still remembering Y2K like it was yesterday.

Twenty five years ago, the world looked and tasted very different. Half the foods we consider normal today barely existed in mainstream grocery stores. Many of the conveniences we rely on today were not invented yet.

As the year 2000 came upon us, these are the trends that we embraced.

We were fixated on everything low fat, fat free and sugar free. Butter was the villain and margarine filled our fridge.

Frozen dinners, Lean Cuisine and microwaveable treats were the height of convenience. Notice I did not say height of flavor just convenience.

Most families cooked Americanized Italian, Mexican or Chinese dishes...Remember La Choy chopped Chinese vegetables in a can? Limp and colorless but the best we had at the time.

Diet plans and businesses remained the most aired commercials in January 2000. We had Atkins, South Beach, SlimFast shakes, calorie counting. We focused on Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig and a dozen other supportive businesses.

We all made our list and made our weekly grocery trip checking under the top sticker to see if there was a cheaper price hiding underneath. I must sadly admit, I did often remove the top sticker.

Cooking shows existed but were passive-viewers watched but few cooked along. Julia Childs was our biggest role model at the time.

The one tradition I miss the most is the formally set dinner table. I loved the monogrammed napkins, the beautiful china and recipes made from scratch. I miss the family gathered around the table discussing the day's events.

Last but not least, we have moved from a totally meat centered meal to more of a plant forward plate. I will admit, I am a meat centered girl. I love the meatloaf, pork chops and steak from my youth. I do not miss the canned vegetables of course!

Enter 2026 – Trends To Follow

As we embrace year 2026, healthy fats, real butter, lots of olive oil, avocado, nuts and food that taste like great food give us satisfaction as well as a health conscious diet. We have gone from How do I avoid calories to How do I enjoy food that nourishes me?

In 2026, gone are most microwave meals replaced with fresh, semi-homemade 10 to 20 minute meals. Enter, Blue Apron, Hello Fresh, Instacart and TikTok hacks. I use my microwave mostly for melting butter and heating that day old cup of coffee. (Only in an emergency!) Point being, convenience is still king.

In 2026, we have gone to globalization of our cooking. We use gochujang, curry pastes, harissa miso, tahini, kimchi (what we equate to sauerkraut), za'atar and sambal. All regulars in any grocery store. It is clear global flavors have moved from restaurants into everyday home kitchens.

Wellness in 2026 is now gentler and more holistic; but the real game changer today is GLP 1. It has significantly changed the landscape of dieting.

In 2026, our weekly grocery store trip has turned into online shopping or fresh farmers market or meal delivery from Uber eats or the likes. Procuring food has become local and digital.

In 2026, everyone is a famous chef or food influencer. Hour long shows have now turned into 15 second clips on YouTube or TikTok. Cooking is crowdsourced and personality driven. There is no longer a barrier between professional chef and a home cook!

2026 is all about the board, snack board, butter board, charcuterie board...Rotisserie chicken is easily turned into a 5-star meal! Paper napkins are expected! Who wants to work hours removing those lipstick stains?

As we move ahead, the trends are clear. Food will keep getting fresher, simpler and more global. Home cooks will continue to blend convenience with creativity. We will keep cooking not because the "have to" but because we want to gather, celebrate and connect with the people we love.

I would like to share some simple tips to elevate your daily cooking skills. A simple hot honey or the addition of a teaspoon of curry takes your old recipes over the top. Next is a menu with recipes that will surely embrace 2026 food trends and ultimately please your family or guests.

RUBY RED GRAPEFRUIT SALAD

4 C. mixed greens, spinach or leaf lettuce

1 avocado, peeled, pitted and chopped

1 large grapefruit, peeled and segmented

¼ C. chopped almonds

(I use the sugared ones from the grocery that are in the salad section)

3 T. olive oil

1 T. champagne vinegar

1 T. honey

Salt and pepper to taste

Toss the mixed greens with the avocado, grapefruit slices and almond slices. Whisk together the olive oil, champagne vinegar, and honey.

Drizzle the mixed greens with the dressing and toss until completely coated. Add salt and pepper to taste.

HOT HONEY PORK TENDERLOIN

A SWEET HEAT SHOWSTOPPER READY IN 25 MINUTES.

1 Pork Tenderloin (1 to 1-½ lbs.)

Do not use a pre-seasoned tenderloin

1 T. olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tsp. garlic powder

1 tsp. smoked paprika (I order mine from Milk Street)

3 T. hot honey or more to taste

1 T. apple cider vinegar or lemon juice

Heat Oven to 400 degrees.

Rub tenderloin with oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder and smoked paprika. Sear in a hot skillet for 2 to 3 minutes per side.

Whisk together hot honey and vinegar. Brush tenderloin with glaze and transfer skillet to the oven.

Roast for 15 to 17 minutes brushing with more hot honey halfway through. Rest for 5 minutes and slice. Drizzle with remaining glaze.

GREEN CHILE MAC AND CHEESE

1 lb. elbow or cavatappi pasta

4 T. butter

3 T. flour

2 C. whole milk or ½ and ½

1-½ C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese

1 C. shredded pepper jack cheese

1 C. roasted chopped green chiles (Hatch is preferred)

½ tsp. smoked paprika

Salt and Pepper to taste

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Optional topping is crushed tortilla chips or toasted breadcrumbs, or toasted chopped pecans.

Cook pasta in salted water, drain and set to the side.

Make the roux by melting the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook 1 minute. Slowly pour in the milk whisking until smooth and thickened. Add the cheeses stir until melted. Add the chopped green chiles, smoked paprika and salt and pepper.

Fold in the cooked pasta until fully coated. Add some of the pasta water if you think it needs to be thinned a bit.

Transfer to a baking dish and top with breadcrumbs (my choice) and broil for 1 to 2 minutes.

HONEY ROASTED CARROTS

WITH CITRUS AND PECANS

*1 lb. carrots, peeled and sliced
2 T. olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
2 - 3 T. hot honey
1 T. orange or lemon juice
¼ C. chopped pecans*

Heat oven to 425 degrees. Toss carrots with olive oil, salt and pepper. Roast on a cookie sheet for 15 minutes.

Mix hot honey with citrus juice and drizzle on hot carrots. Roast an additional 5 minutes or until glossy and caramelized.

Garnish with toasted pecans.

MOLTEN CHOCOLATE CAKES

WITH HOT HONEY WHIPPED CREAM

*1 stick butter
6 ounces bittersweet chocolate
2 eggs
2 egg yolks
¼ C. sugar
2 T. flour*

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Butter and lightly cocoa four 6-ounce ramekins. Tap out the excess cocoa. Set the ramekins on a cookie sheet.

In microwave melt butter with the chocolate. Remove and stir every 30 seconds until chocolate and butter have melted. Set this to the side to cool.

In a medium bowl of an electric mixer beat the eggs and the egg yolks and sugar at high speed until the egg mixture is thickened and pale in color.

Whisk the chocolate and butter until smooth. Fold the cooled chocolate mixture into the eggs along with the flour. Spoon into the prepared ramekins and bake for 12 minutes. Let the cakes cool for 1 minute, then cover each with an inverted dessert plate. Carefully turn each one over and let stand for 10 seconds and then unmold. Serve at once with sweetened hot honey whipped cream.

Make your whipped cream as usual and add 3 T. Hot honey while whipping. Add more sugar to taste. *AW*

**GIVING DRY A TRY:
NAVIGATING JANUARY
WITH ATHLETIC'S NON-
ALCOHOLIC BEERS**



Claire Grammer

FOR JUDGE RANDALL COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 1

Justice with Integrity. Service with Heart.



About Claire

For 21 years, I have built a successful legal career rooted in integrity, hard work, and a deep passion for justice. Through my extensive work in family law, civil litigation, prosecution, and criminal defense, I have seen firsthand how the decisions made in our courts truly impact lives, families, and futures. That's why I'm running for Randall County Court at Law #1, because experience matters and I have the background and skillset to ensure justice and fairness are upheld. I believe in justice with integrity and service with heart.

My commitment is to ensure that everyone who comes before the court has the opportunity to have their case heard with discernment, and the law is applied fairly and consistently.

Claire's Vision

My vision is simple: a court that serves with fairness, transparency, & compassion. A court that upholds the law while never losing sight of the people behind the cases. I believe in justice that is not only impartial but also accessible and efficient for everyone in Randall County.

Why This Court Matters

The Randall County Court at Law #1 handles cases that touch the heart of our community - family law, juvenile cases, protective orders, civil disputes up to \$325,000, and criminal misdemeanors. These cases aren't just legal matters; they are real people's lives, and they deserve an experienced judge who will approach every case with integrity, impartiality, and respect.

Ways to Get Involved

I humbly ask for your support as I seek to serve this community as your next Randall County Court at Law #1 Judge. There are several ways you can support my campaign:

- ★ **Vote for Claire on March 3rd**
- ★ **Contribute to the campaign**
- ★ **Display a yard sign or large sign**
- ★ **Contact family, friends & neighbors**
- ★ **Send prayers**

🌐 **grammerforjudge.com**

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Early Voting: February 17-27

Election Day: March 3