

FLAVOR & THE MENU

TOP 10 TRENDS FOR 2016

Butter Goes Bold

Butter is a next-level flavor carrier, offering tremendous opportunity both as a condiment and a component.

By Katie Ayoub

Miguel McDaniel makes beer-flavored butter by churning butter with a local brewery's white IPA. He serves it with toast on his brunch menu at Pizza Party in Brooklyn, N.Y., and also suggests pairing it with a soft pretzel on a bar snacks menu. At Meat Market in Miami Beach, Fla., diners can choose from a menu of premium steak butters. For an additional \$2, they can upgrade their grilled meats with a pat of chile-mole butter, marrow butter, lobster butter or bleu and boursin butter. At Cannery Row Brewing Company in Monterey, Calif., housemade cheddar-bacon biscuits are given a signature touch with a side of chipotle-maple butter. And at 701 restaurant in Washington D.C., Executive Chef Ben Lambert pumps up flavor in a seafood pasta by swirling in housemade ramp butter.

Butter is back. Or better yet: Butter has been reborn. Against this cultural backdrop, where flavor innovation rules, flavored butter proffers a perfect combination of familiarity and adventure. Carried on butter's luscious back, more exotic, adventurous ingredients become safely enticing. Thrilling instead of intimidating. Chicago's Takito Kitchen livens up asparagus with sesame-miso butter. Apart from the cool factor, miso provides a valuable assist here in amping up umami, deftly moving a dish into craveable territory.

"Butter has always been a great flavor carrier due to the ease in which flavors can be incorporated, as well as its satisfying mouthfeel. One of my new favorites is infusing butter with a hot sauce, clarifying the butter, then using it to toss with freshly fried tots or lightly breaded and fried vegetables." - RAY MARTIN

The possibilities within this trend are endless, but these are the creative twists that are making waves now. Ramping up heat, some chefs are adding on-trend ingredients like Sriracha, harissa, gochujang, poblano, ancho chile and guajillo. For umami, chefs are looking to savory add-ins like miso, mole, bone marrow and steak sauce. For a sweet pairing with a hint of smoke or other depth, they're turning to honey, maple syrup



Multiple flavor trends high on the craveability scale in one dish: The fried chicken is topped with Sriracha butter at Hard Water in San Francisco.

and vanilla. And for a vegetal play, perhaps riffing on the classic beurre maître d'hôtel that stars fresh parsley, they're adding ramps, other herbs and even kale. There's also the fun category of eclectic flavorings, like Pimm's, pear and smoked lobster butters.

Butter up at The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen

by Nate Pollak, CEO/Founder, The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen, San Francisco

Flavored butters are an outstanding way to add a world of flavor to a grilled cheese sandwich, buttered bread or toast, as well as other butter-based recipes like béchamel for mac and cheese, soup roux, or even biscuit batter. Pan-searing beef or other protein in a flavored butter adds a welcome flavor dimension.

Herbal Butters

We generally use fresh herbs, not dried, as the flavors tend to be much stronger. The key when using fresh herbs is to make sure that they are finely chopped, or, as with thyme, ground into very small pieces in a spice grinder. This ensures even distribution and consistency when the herbs are whipped into the butter. - Use one bunch of each fresh herb per two pounds of butter.

For the Piglet (pictured above), we use a rosemary butter as rosemary is almost always a perfect complement to a lean, savory meat like ham, chicken or lamb. It's earthy and savory, and it brings out the full umami of the gourmet ham-and-cheese experience.

Spiced Butters

For spice-based butters like ground chipotle or smoked paprika butter, you don't need any processing. Simply whip the spice into the butter. Chipotle butter brings a wonderful smoky, savory, spicy flavor to our Cubano sandwich. - Use two tablespoons of spice per two pounds of butter.



Sublime butter variations created by Kendall College's Christopher Koetke (clockwise from right): avocado, lime and cilantro butter; classic maître d'hôtel butter with parsley; chipotle-adobo sauce butter.

Flavored butter helps kick up a profile. At The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen in San Francisco, they lend character to different menu items. Chipotle butter subtly seasons the Cubano sandwich, with Jarlsberg, Monterey Jack, coffee-rubbed pulled pork, Duroc ham, stout mustard, bread-and-butter pickles and pickled red onions. The Piglet grilled cheese stars cheddar, Duroc ham, apple mustard and rosemary butter.

This trend is catching the wave created by flavored condiments like ketchup and aioli. Diner expectation has helped accelerate flavor innovation here. French fries now get a tricked-out dipping sauce, from harissa ketchup to chimichurri aioli. Sandwiches boast spreads spiked with chile sauces or fresh herbs. Customization is pushing flavored butters forward, too.

Flavored butters aren't just being propelled by the "what's next?" sensibility that drives a lot of culinary innovation today. It's bolstered by a number of sustaining trends, giving it momentum and longevity well beyond novelty. "This trend sees a lot of overlap with other trends, from modern steakhouses with bone marrow butter, to new-school fried chicken featuring honey

butter, to artisanal toast with nostalgic cinnamon butter." says Brian Darr, managing director at Datassential. "And of course there's the continuing trend of fresh, local, farm-to-table ingredients, since flavored butters are typically housemade."

Flavored butter's link to artisan cannot be overstated. Diners look for signs of culinary craftsmanship across the menu. Blending an ingredient or two into butter is an elegant way to get there. Just as savory jams and pickled items express hand-crafted values, so does a well-placed flavored butter, whether housemade or brought in.

5 Ways to Win with Flavored Butter

by John Csukor, KOR Food Innovation

1. Make it meaningful

Select flavors that are powerful enough to get one's attention but do not take away from the natural nuances of the base or originating butter. A slightly salted, cocoa-scented butter would make a really nice topping for a delicate carne asada or bistec a la plancha.

2. Make it count

Portion responsibly; sauce a dish with a good ratio of flavor and balance of nutrition so as not to overwhelm. A little rosette is just enough to flavor up most dishes, especially if the butter has balance of flavor to begin with.

3. Make it sweet

Play off butter's sweet creaminess and lean in that direction. Maple and honey are hot now, so that is a great start to layering on the myriad flavors that are all the rage right now.

4. Make it saucy

Consider the balance and treat the butter like a sauce. Balance the natural sweetness with meaningful, undissolved crunchy black salt, a wisp of slightly tart bitter pomelo juice or oil and some toasted cumin. This would be a brilliant finishing "sauce" for a plancha-seared fish.

5. Make it good

Just like any ingredient, start with the best. Select your favorite from a list of qualities that butter is most known for and flavor up from there. In general, white to light-cream butter has lower fat and neutral flavor; dark yellow is fattier, and cultured butter is creamy, smooth and a little grassy.

Flavor-Building Ideas:

- Gochujang and honey butter on a garlicky seared chicken paillard
- Sriracha and toasted sesame butter on a cracked pepper-seared scallop
- Harissa honey and za'atar butter over cumin-spiced, char-grilled lamb chops
- Aleppo pepper, smoked-salt maple butter over wood-fired Brussels sprout petals

RICH, CREATIVE FLAVOR

While the fun in this trend comes from the flavor infused into the butter, it would be a sin not to give due credit to butter itself. Everyone knows the magic that butter performs. Julia Child once said, “With enough butter, anything is good.”



At Edward Lee’s Succotash in National Harbor, Md., the dry-aged, bone-in ribeye gets a spicy-umami punch from gochujang butter.

Although that mindset has evolved in professional kitchens, the flavored butter trend harkens back to that absolute, while modernizing it through the added touches. Straightforward flavors, like the honey butter served with fresh biscuits on AMC’s new Dine-in-Theatres menu, can add an unexpected upgrade to a simple dish. Bold blends, such as the wasabi-yuzu-kosho butter at Wolfgang Puck’s Cut in Las Vegas, can add wow factor. “A melting dollop of compound butter is an immediate attention grabber, yet compound butter can also be used behind the scenes as a way for chefs to quickly add fat and flavor simultaneously,” says R&D chef Jeff Newman of The Culinary Edge.

Chef Lambert of 701 turns to flavored butter to dial up flavor and cross-utilize product. “I make flavored butters that use up leftover ingredients,” he says. He blends the ingredients with an ice cream machine, looking for a smooth, silky consistency. Along with his ramp butter for pasta, he has also featured a lobster bucatini with sea urchin butter. “By using butter as the carrier for a pretty exotic flavor, it’s not intimidating,” says Lambert. “They’ll try it because they can get behind the butter, and they’ll

remember it because it’s different.” On the homier side of things, his bread service sees an accompaniment of memorable, craveable, housemade sea salt-honey butter.

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Deb Paquette, executive chef/partner at Etch in Nashville, serves a popular butter tasting as an appetizer. Diners get four distinct flavored butters with a French baguette for \$9. “They love it because it’s unique and something they wouldn’t do at home,” she says. Recent offerings include cashew-ginger, mushroom-Taleggio-tarragon, steak Diane and saffron chorizo. The steak Diane blends butter with a rich reduction of beef stock, red wine, thyme and Dijon, while the saffron chorizo version has rendered back fat, red wine vinegar, saffron and chorizo seasonings.

Paquette also relies on flavored butter as a component to her dishes. Her steak entrée is topped with a béarnaise butter. “It’s great on french fries, too,” says Paquette. Another flavor bomb is delivered through her pork belly-sake butter, served over pork tenderloin.

High-impact Butters

by Gail Cunningham

Moving away from the old-school beurre maître d’hôtel featured on white-tablecloth restaurants of the past, modern butters break all the rules with new and unexpected flavors that work across the menu. Here are some creative combinations to consider:

Creole + Roasted Garlic + Lemon

Add New Orleans attitude to your menu with a Creole butter seasoned with rich, roasted garlic and caramelized lemon, Louisiana hot sauce and Creole seasoning. This is delicious over grilled oysters, scallops or as a signature butter paired with crusty bread.

Avocado + Citrus

Season butter with smashed avocado, zesty chile-lime seasoning and chopped cilantro, shape into a log and chill. Serve over grilled skirt steak, chicken and fish, or slather on grilled Mexican street corn with Cotija cheese.

Bacon + Blue cheese

Pair the bold, craveable flavors of crumbled blue cheese and salty-crisp bacon with unsalted butter, coarse black pepper and minced chives. Serve as a signature topper for grilled steak, shrimp, chicken, specialty burgers and roasted potatoes.

Sriracha + Honey

Blend unsalted butter with golden honey and fiery Sriracha sauce for a sweet and spicy flavored butter; spread on a split hot-from-the-oven biscuit and top with a crispy chicken filet and bread-and-butter pickles for a hearty “anytime” breakfast sandwich.

Lemon + Rosemary + Asiago

Combine lemon zest, fresh rosemary, sea salt and grated Asiago cheese with unsalted butter. Slice into coins and serve over grilled fish, roast chicken, haricots verts and grilled vegetables. Or spread over grilled flatbread for an appetizer.

Tangerine + Dark Chocolate

Combine European-style unsalted butter with tangerine zest, orange marmalade and chopped pieces of best-quality dark chocolate. Spread over a warm croissant or brioche as a signature brunch option.

In fact, one of the biggest expressions of this trend is the reinforcement of flavor. Paquette's pork belly butter over pork tenderloin is one example. Girl & the Goat's Stephanie Izard serves grilled shrimp with shrimp butter. Bison Sliders at MK in Chicago get added depth with bone marrow butter.



Simple, yet not, the apples and radishes with miso butter are an inspired combination at Yona in Arlington, Va.

Flavored butter often pulls from the on-trend Asian pantry for excitement, perhaps because it's a perfect foil to carry farther-reaching flavors. As example, look to Edward Lee's gochujang butter served over his Roseda Farm Dry-Aged Bone-In Ribeye at Succotash in National Harbor, Md. Or Charles Phan's fried chicken with Sriracha butter at Hard Water in San Francisco. Or the potato gnocchi served with stewed tomatoes, butter beans and ginger butter at Poole's diner in Raleigh, N.C. Following a similar path, Latin ingredients—complex, intriguing and packing heat—are a go-to with this trend. Chile de árbol butter accompanies the jumbo shrimp and grits at Paloma in Stamford, Conn., and at The Leaning Pear in Wimberley, Texas, roasted poblano butter tops the hanger steak.

Honey butter is perhaps the ambassador of the sweet side of this trend. In fact, Honey Butter Fried Chicken in Chicago positions its menu on the craveable, genius application of honey butter on the chicken. But other sweet ingredients express this trend well and show great menu potential, especially in the breakfast/brunch

category. Vanilla butter has transcended its classic pairing with lobster and can be seen on spelt pancakes at Little Park in New York. At Black Barn, also in New York, the brunch menu features fried chicken with Parmesan-rosemary waffles and Vermont maple butter. And at Platform T in Denver, an offering of fresh-baked scones with housemade maple butter underscores how direct the pathway can be into this trend.

Distilled down to its essence, the flavored butter trend symbolizes how far culinary innovation has come in the last decade or so. Fine dining used to lay sole claim to compound butters. *Beurre maître d'hôtel* was fancy and somewhat finite—parsley butter over steak or fish was *de rigueur*. Now, chefs are pushing boundaries, adding more adventurously flavored butter to pastas, on toast, over grilled meats, alongside bread baskets and more.

"Flavored butters have been re-imagined by today's chefs across all sectors to deliver flavor, global ingredients and great value," says The Culinary Edge's Newman. Parsley butter atop a grilled piece of fish gives way to Champagne butter, found on grilled whole fish at Beaker & Gray in Miami. Grilled trout at Fixe in Austin, Texas, comes topped with smoked butter. Summer squash pappardelle at Death & Taxes in Raleigh, N.C., surprises with embered butter. Even more eclectic blends—like the Pimm's butter served with filet medallions and pommes frites at Trinité in Houston—offer a simple signature treatment and element of surprise. The concept has come so far that the compound butter classic is now a forefather, a brilliant idea that flourishes—surprising and delighting in all of its iterations.

Best Practices for Bold Butters

by Kathy Casey

- Bring butter to room temperature before adding in flavors.
- Pack your butter with flavor; make butter the carrier and the flavoring ingredients the main subject of the butter.
- When adding spice to butter, consider that the fat will mask spicy flavors, so you'll need to bump up the amount added.
- When creating flavored butter for a topping, the profile should be over the top—then a little dab will add big flavor to the dish.
- For a topping butter, consider adding in flavorful liquids like wine, reduced citrus juice, soy or mirin. Whip at high speed to marry the flavors; the butter will break, but keep whipping—it will come together again.
- Try roasting items like mushrooms and onions, then finely chop and whip into butters for concentrated flavor.
- Toast or lightly fry spices like curry powder, smoked paprika and chile powder before adding to flavored butters.
- For sweet butters, use high-quality flavored syrups like blackberry and toasted hazelnut for consistency.