

TRENDWATCH
HOTEL 2017

Inspiring Great Buffets



**“Good food is very often,
even most often, simple food.”**

Anthony Bourdain

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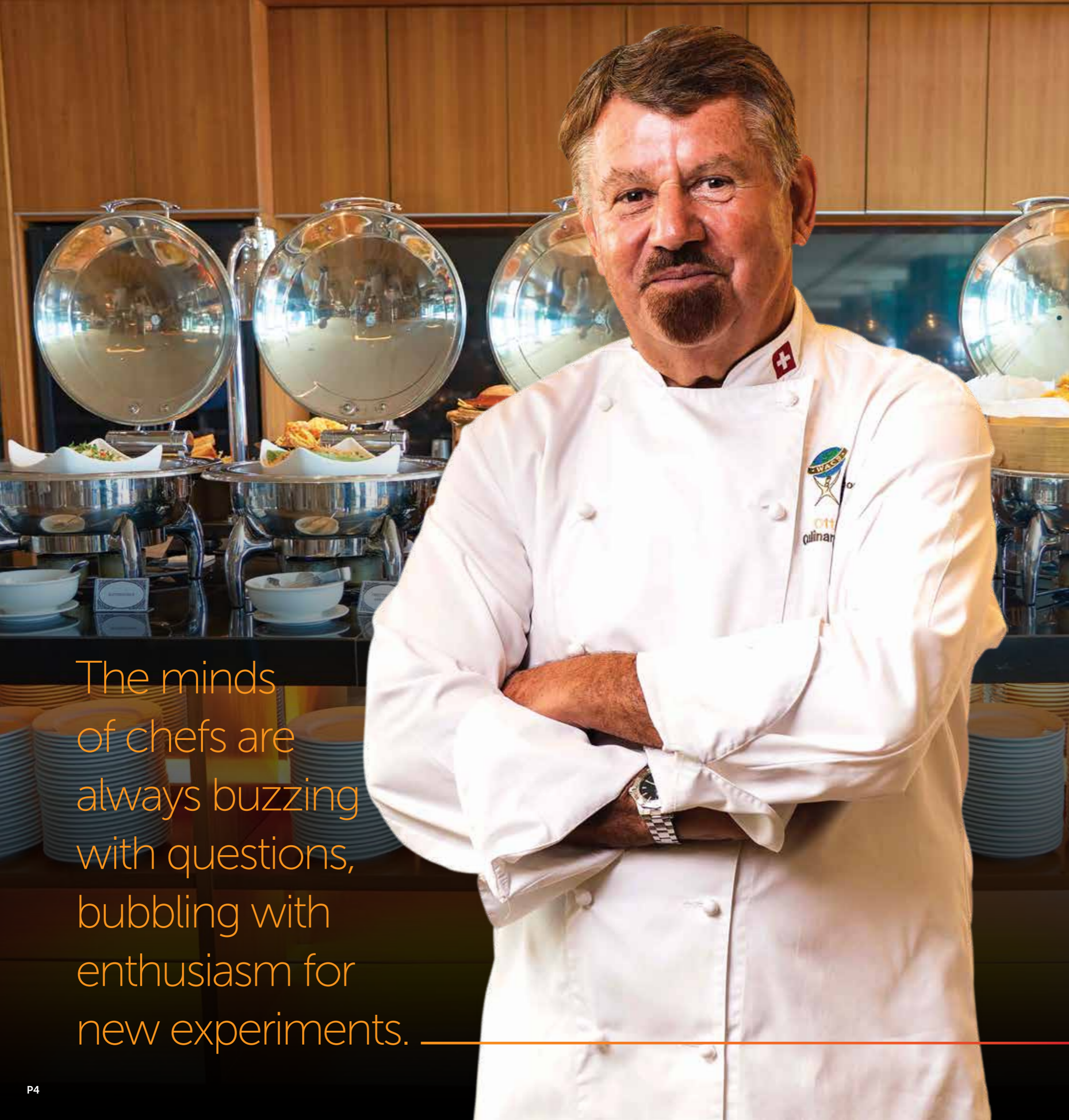
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UPCOMING EVENTS



The minds of chefs are always buzzing with questions, bubbling with enthusiasm for new experiments.

foreword

Cooking, without any doubt, is a creative endeavour. How can I blend different flavours into something unique yet delicious? How do I tell stories with the food I cook? What is the most attractive way to plate my dish? The minds of chefs are always buzzing with questions, bubbling with enthusiasm for new experiments.

For countless chefs around the world, myself included, Unilever Food Solutions (UFS) has been our creative partner – our muse, if you will – offering expertise and ideas that help us push the envelope in the kitchen.

This publication, just like its predecessor, *TrendWatch Hotel 2016: Buffets Around the World*, is chock-full of insights that will inform your cooking and kitchen operations. You will see that healthy and eco-conscious dining has become more popular than ever, for example, guests are gravitating towards more vegetables and pulses, often favouring a less-waste, root-to-leaf approach.

The food industry is exciting precisely because things don't stand still. In recent years, increased global travel and social media exposure have led to more adventurous guests who want to thrill their palates with authentic global cuisines.

How can chefs and hoteliers rise to the occasion? By seeing these trends as opportunities to be ever more inventive. It is timely then that UFS has once again given us a trusted source of ideas. Get inspiration from the latest trends and innovations found in *TrendWatch Hotel 2017: Inspiring Great Buffets*. Let your ideas for the buffet table take flight!

Otto Weibel
Director, Ottscott Pte Ltd



Travellers have more choices now than ever. To win their hearts and wallets, chefs and hoteliers will have to deliver higher levels of service.

preface

At Unilever Food Solutions, we are inspired by the chefs and hotel professionals we work with; at the same time, we aim to spur them on to new culinary and professional heights. That was why last year we put together *TrendWatch Hotel 2016: Buffets Around the World*.

The 2016 book was well received by chefs and hoteliers. They told us that the featured hospitality and dining trends, as well as the inspirational recipes, gave them much food for thought. We hope that the sequel, *TrendWatch Hotel 2017: Inspiring Great Buffets*, will do the same too.

Asia will remain the world's favourite business travel destination for the coming years. And Southeast Asia will continue expanding rapidly as a MICE hotspot; it is set to welcome 10 per cent of global MICE participants by 2018.

Among these visitors, an increasing number will likely be 'bleisure' travellers who combine business with pleasure. This growing segment holds huge opportunities for hoteliers, for these visitors are inclined to spend more on hotel offerings that afford convenience and authentic experiences. More and more Chinese and Muslims are also expected to travel in Southeast Asia in the years ahead.

These are exciting, but also challenging, times. Travellers have more choices now than ever. To win their hearts and wallets, chefs and hoteliers will have to deliver higher levels of service. Here is where *TrendWatch Hotel 2017: Inspiring Great Buffets* can help: our insights into travel trends will enable you to meet the specific preferences of the various visitor groups.

We also want to inspire you with the recipes in this book, so that you can continue to engage your guests and connect with them at the buffet table. These connections, we are sure, will help you unlock possibilities and build stronger brand loyalty.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "Ira Noviarti".

Ira Noviarti
Vice President, Southeast Asia,
Unilever Food Solutions



GUEST trends

Southeast Asia will be welcoming more travellers from three key groups in 2017 and beyond.

By 2018, Southeast Asia will host more than 12 million MICE visitors, about 10 per cent of the world's MICE travellers. Malaysia and Singapore have also been ranked as top destinations for Muslim travel in 2016. In addition, Southeast Asian cities have been leading the growth in terms of nights spent by Chinese travellers in the Asia-Pacific region.



EYES ON
mice

Southeast Asia is slated to host more than 12 million for MICE (meetings, incentive travel, conventions and exhibitions) tourism by 2018 – 10 per cent of the world's MICE travellers. Hoteliers and governments alike are gearing up by putting the right skills, policies, and facilities in place.

The coming years are looking bright for tourism and especially MICE. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts a 3.3 per cent growth per annum in global tourism between 2010 and 2030; for the Asia-Pacific, the growth is even stronger at 4.9 per cent.

Asia is now the largest business travel region in the world, according to McKinsey and Co. Out of the US\$1 trillion global spending on business travel, one-third goes to Asia.

Southeast Asia is a major contributor to this growth. According to the UNWTO, the region will be able to host more than 12 million MICE visitors by 2018 – 10 per cent of the world's share. Hoteliers and governments alike have been preparing to meet this demand.

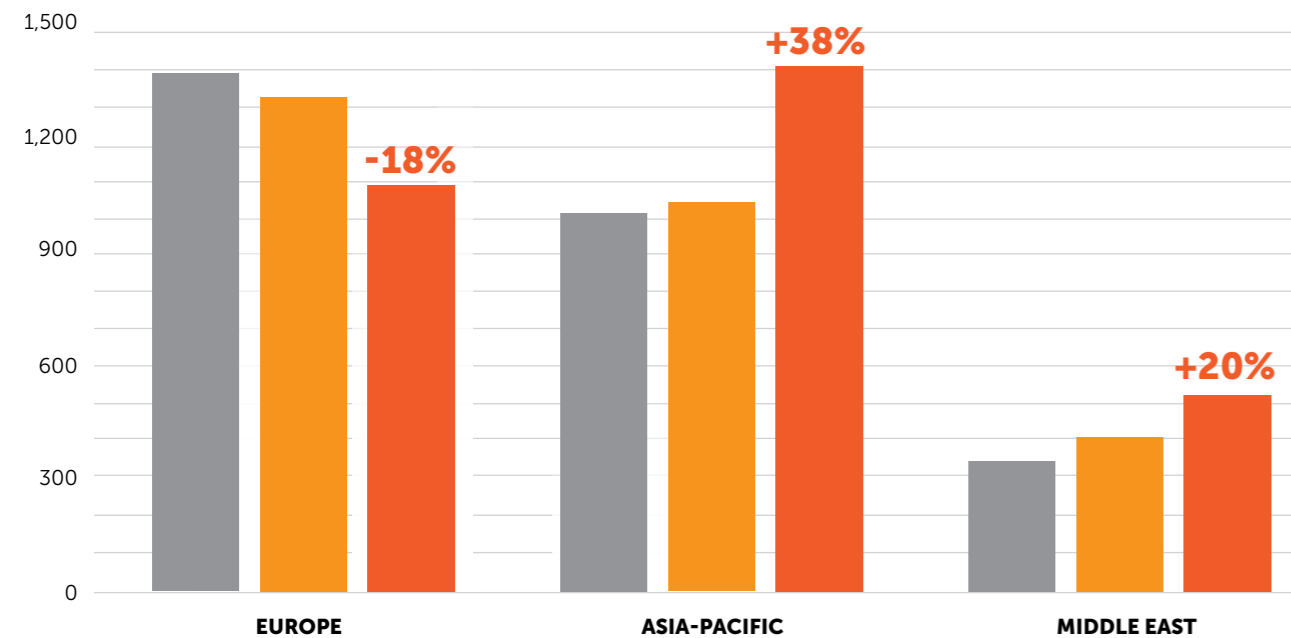
Hoteliers Gearing for Growth

Between 2014 and 2016, the Asia-Pacific saw a 38 per cent jump in 4- and 5-star hotel construction. Indonesia leads the charge with more than 120 upcoming hotels as of 2016.

At the same time, hoteliers have been upping their customer service game. One growing trend is to differentiate offerings for different types of travellers, such as Asian business travellers – a big, lucrative segment in Southeast Asia’s MICE market – and Chinese and Muslim travellers.

“One growing trend is to differentiate offerings for different types of travellers, such as Asian business travellers.”

4- and 5-Star Hotels Under Construction (2014–2016)



2014 2015 2016

Source: TopHotelProjects, GmbH (2015)

Asian Business-Traveller Archetypes



Source: McKinsey & Co.

Governments Paving the Way

Here’s another reason for the bright outlook: the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan. The plan aims to shape ASEAN into a single, appealing destination with full commitment from the respective tourism boards.

The second phase of the plan (2016–2025) includes initiatives to raise the skills of tourism workers and set higher standards on tourism services and facilities (more details at ASEAN.org). The MICE sector is set to gain from these developments.

Governments are making it easier for visits too – for business or otherwise. For example, Malaysia is giving visa exemptions to Chinese visitors (with conditions); Myanmar now allows visa-free visits for Singaporeans.



The New World of 'Bleisure'

In the past, business and leisure travel are seen as different. This is changing: according to a 2015 trend report by the travel website Skift, 60 per cent of international travellers take 'bleisure' trips, adding two vacation days to each business trip. A large segment of these travellers are millennials, who are used to mixing work and leisure.

'Bleisure' travellers do not mind paying more for convenience, authentic experiences, and healthier food. Hence, hotel offerings for tourists are attractive to business travellers too.

Stay Tuned for More:

MICE and tourism numbers are expected to rise in Southeast Asia. There is also surging interest from Chinese and Muslim international travellers. We will get to know these two groups in the following pages.

“ 60 per cent of international travellers take 'bleisure' trips, adding two vacation days to each business trip. ”



Going for Growth

On the whole, Southeast Asia MICE is poised for growth. A brief look at the major players:

Thailand

- For 2014–2015, international MICE visitors grew by 19 per cent to about 1.1 million; the number was 1.3 million for Oct 2015–Sep 2016
- Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau has launched a special campaign to woo Europe's meeting planners, as well as other financial support programmes for events

Singapore

- Ranked Asia's number one convention city for 14th consecutive year by International Congress and Convention Association
- Welcomed a record 16.4 million visitors in 2016, a 7.7 per cent increase from 2015
- Hosted more than 410 business events in 2016, 15 per cent more than in 2015; these contributed US\$429 million in tourism receipts, up 28 per cent from 2015

Malaysia

- Business traveller sector has been growing by 5 per cent year on year
- For 2011–2020, Malaysia secured 1,815 big events with 3.54 million delegates, contributing about US\$339 million to its economy

Vietnam

- According to *Exhibition World* magazine, the exhibition sector here grew more than 7 per cent in 2015, above the regional average of 5.6 per cent
- Danang is the hottest MICE venue in Vietnam; arrivals are rising steadily and the city now boasts a hundred 3- to 5-star hotels

Indonesia

- The exhibition sector also grew by more than 7 per cent in 2015
- The newly formed Indonesia Convention and Exhibition Bureau is seeking to bring in 2 million more visitors by 2019





THE AGE OF Muslim travel

It's boom time for Muslim travel, now making up 10 per cent of the global travel market. Through faith-sensitive services, hoteliers can give more than a warm welcome to Muslim travellers.

In TrendWatch Hotel 2016, Buffets Around the World, we saw a burgeoning Muslim travel market and one of the fastest-growing travel sectors.

Around 117 million Muslims made outbound trips in 2015, with 10 per cent being business travellers. According to the 2016 Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), this number is projected to reach 168 million, and spending to hit US\$200 billion, by 2020.

Asia receives the most Muslim arrivals – 67 million in 2015. Its popularity is no surprise, for it is home to some of the world's most Muslim-friendly destinations. Malaysia and Singapore have been ranked by the 2016 GMTI as top destinations among Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority countries, respectively.

Tapping Enormous Potential

The Muslim travel market's potential is not lost on tourism authorities and hotels worldwide. Even non-Muslim-majority countries are fighting for a bigger slice of the pie with Muslim-friendly offerings; hospitality players in Southeast Asia may find

some inspiring ideas from their efforts (see 'Catering to Muslim Travellers: Some Examples').

At the same time, hoteliers can be aware of the changing Muslim traveller profile. Besides factors like easier access to

travel information, this sector's growth is driven by younger and more affluent Muslims who are more willing to pay for premium services and experiences, and are more inclined to try out foods from different cultures.

Top ASEAN Destinations in the Global Muslim Travel Index 2016

The criteria used in this annual index centre on three themes: family-friendly holiday and safe travel destination; Muslim-friendly services and facilities at the destination; and Halal awareness and destination marketing.

OIC DESTINATIONS			NON-OIC DESTINATIONS		
	2016 Rank	2015 Rank		2016 Rank	2015 Rank
Malaysia	1	1	Singapore	1	1
United Arab Emirates	2	3	Thailand	2	2
Turkey	3	2	United Kingdom	3	3
Indonesia	4	6	South Africa	4	4
Qatar	5	5	Hong Kong	5	7
Saudi Arabia	6	4	France	6	5
Oman	7	7	Taiwan	7	10
Morocco	8	9	Japan	8	11
Jordan	9	8	Sri Lanka	9	15
Bahrain	10	14	United States	10	8

OIC = Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Source: MasterCard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2016

The New Age Muslim Millennial

According to the Tabah Foundation, Muslim millennials already comprise the largest demographic in the Arab world today. On the whole, they are middle-class professionals with larger disposable incomes, who enjoy engaging local Muslims and value personal development within travel experiences. They are on social media and use mobile apps, such as HalalTrip and Zabihah, for Halal travel and food information (see 'Halal Digital').

On the whole, today's Muslim travellers have access to more choices. To win their brand loyalty, hotels need to meet their travel needs – particularly faith-based ones.

“According to the Tabah Foundation, Muslim millennials already comprise the largest demographic in the Arab world today.”



Faith-Based Offerings

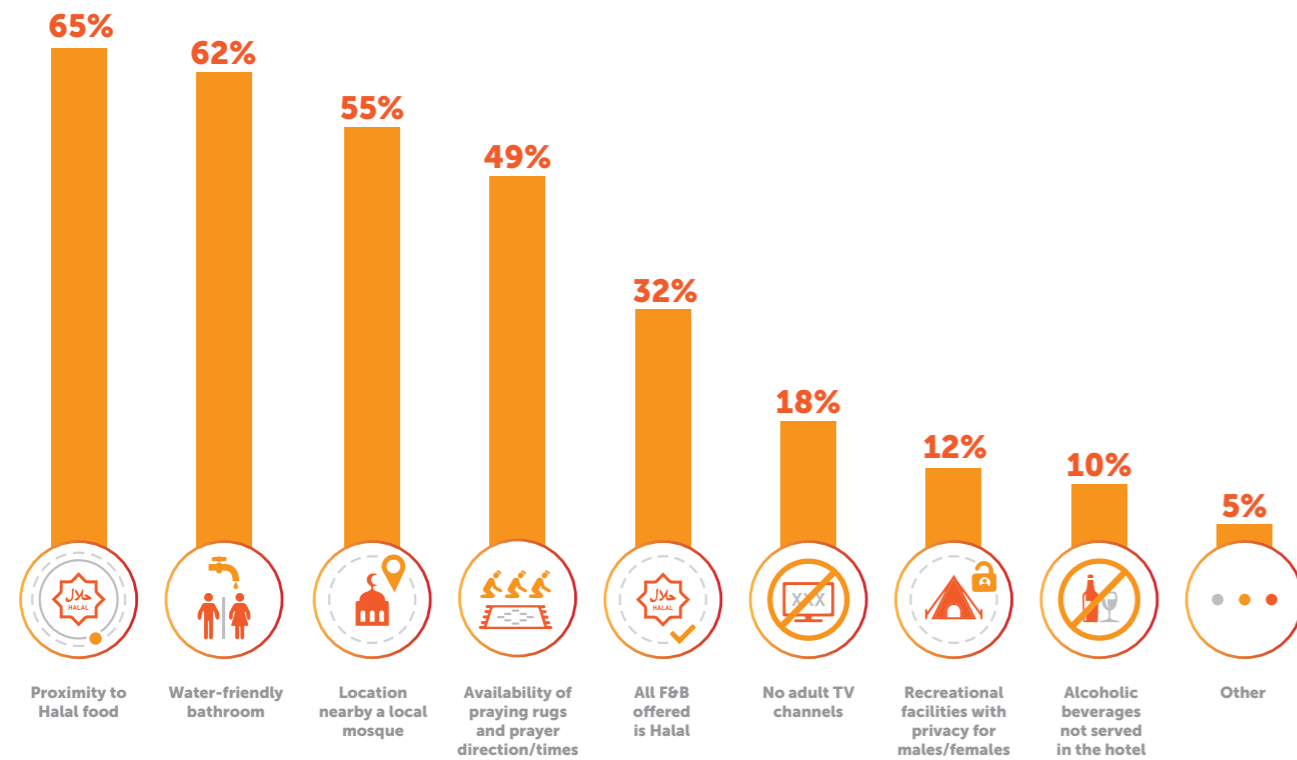
"Halal travel is about facilitating travel and making it easier for (Muslim travellers) to go on that journey," explains Omar Ahmed, founder of the Muslim traveller website Sociable Earth.

According to the 2016 Muslim Business Traveler Insights, proximity to Halal food is the most important consideration when choosing hotels, followed by water-friendly bathrooms,

proximity to mosques, and others. For dining, more than 80 per cent of Muslim business travellers prefer Halal-only establishments or those that label their food clearly.

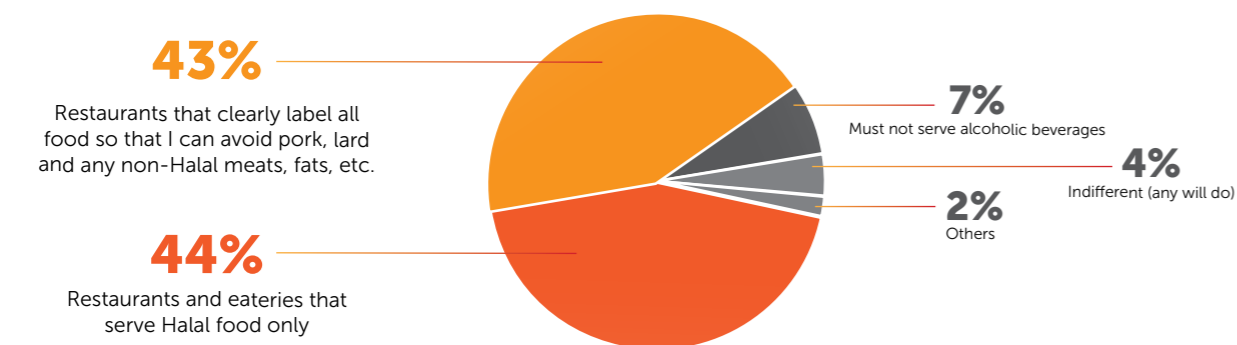
By tailoring their facilities and services to Muslim faith-based needs, hoteliers can open their doors to modern, discerning Muslim guests and capitalise on this segment's growth.

Most Important Muslim-Friendly Services at the Accommodation



Source: Mastercard-CrescentRating Muslim Business Traveler Insights 2016

Most Preferred Dining Options at the Destination

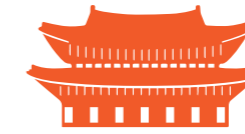


Source: Mastercard-CrescentRating Muslim Business Traveler Insights 2016

Catering to Muslim Travellers: Some Examples



Thailand opened its first Muslim-friendly hotel in 2016: the 4-star Al-Meroz Hotel in Bangkok hopes to boost Muslim visitor arrivals.



South Korea plans to partner with Malaysia to create more South Korean Halal food.



Japan is projected to attract 1 million Muslim travellers, building towards the 2020 Olympics. The new Syariah Fujisan Hotel near Mt Fuji was opened in 2016, offering a Halal menu and prayer facilities.



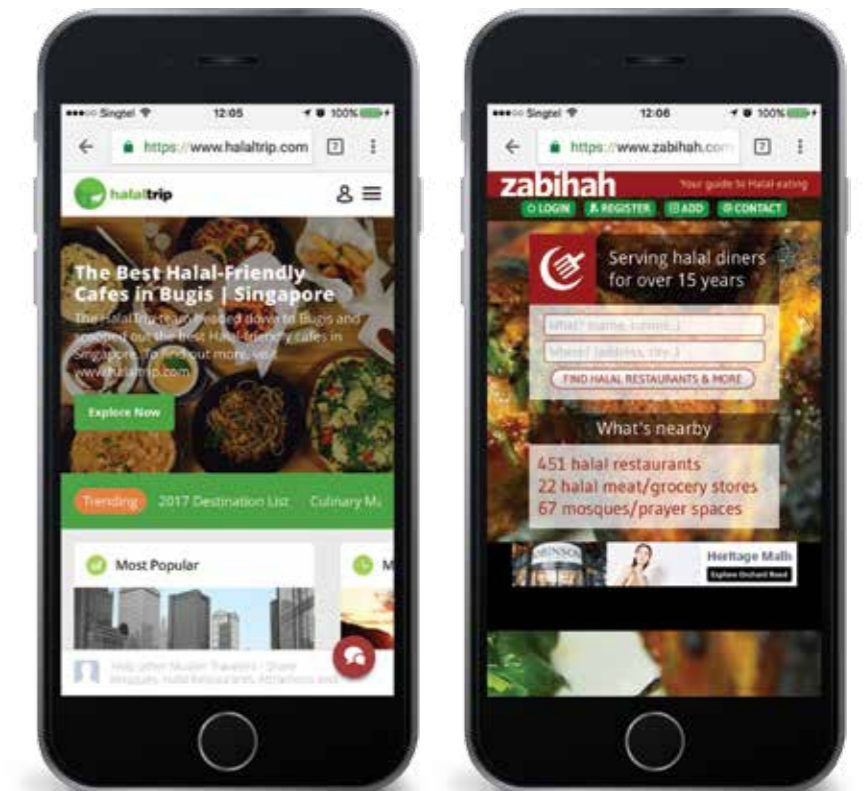
Taiwan is wooing Muslim travellers from Southeast Asia and the Middle East by waiving visa requirements and increasing the number of prayer rooms in hotels and more Halal restaurants.

Halal Digital

New tech innovations are making it easier for Muslim travellers to access Halal offerings anywhere.

Halaltrip, touted as the 'TripAdvisor for Muslim travellers', allows users to share about Halal dining spots and accommodation worldwide.

Zabihah.com grants wider access to *zabihah* food (conforming to Islamic dietary codes). Today it boasts 20 million annual users and 20,000 reviewed eateries globally.





RIDING THE
chinese
traveller wave

How can regional hoteliers welcome the swelling number of Chinese travellers? By serving up Chinese-specific offerings that make them feel at home, away from home.

Chinese travellers went abroad 120 million times in 2015, 12 per cent more than in 2014. This number is expected to reach 220 million by 2025. They remain the biggest spenders among international tourists – to the tune of US\$292.2 billion in 2015, according to the United Nations World Tourism Report.

Hotspot: Southeast Asia

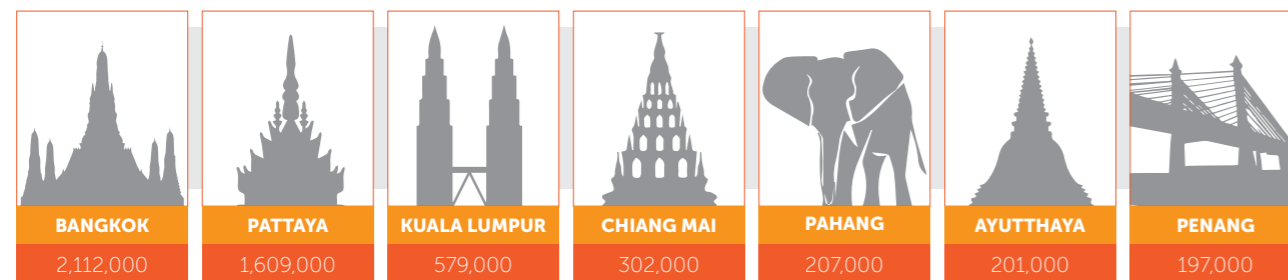
According to Oxford Economics, Southeast Asia is slated to become a top Chinese travel destination. Chinese long-haul travel to this region is forecast to rake in more than US\$40 billion by 2023. In the same timeframe,

Southeast Asian cities will lead the growth for nights spent at Asia-Pacific destinations.

The 2016 Chinese International Travel Monitor (CITM) reported that 40 per cent of outbound

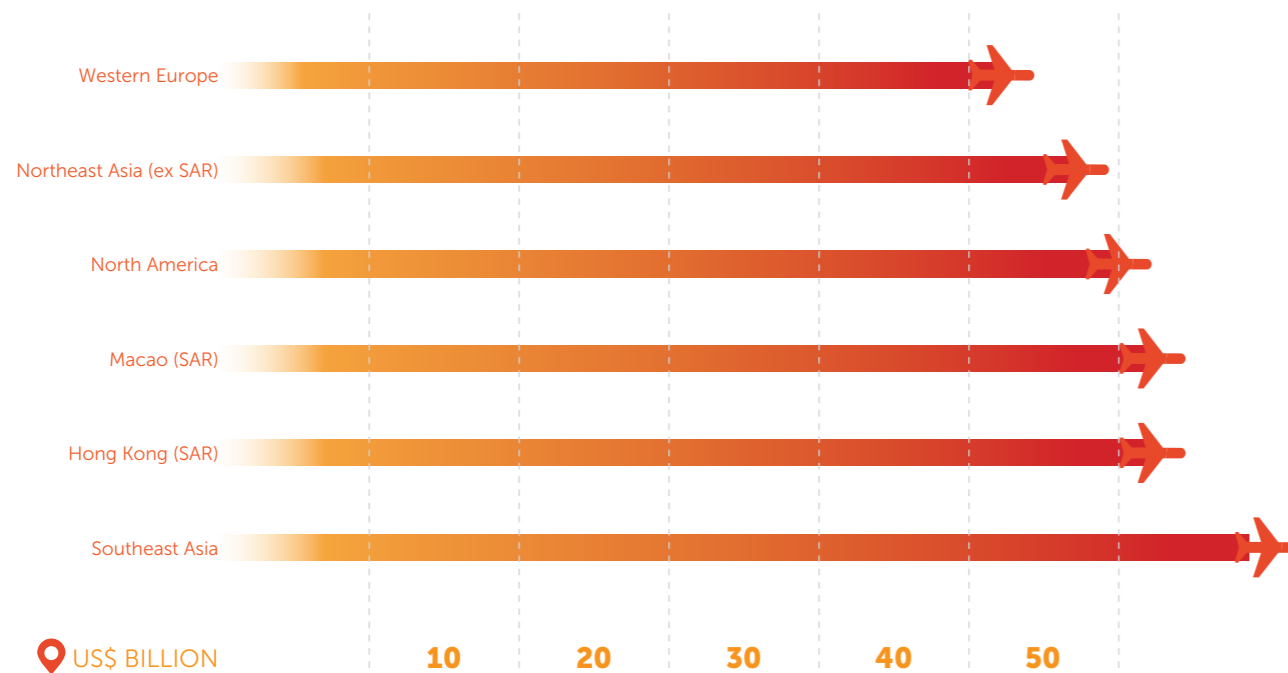
Chinese trips are for business. As Chinese international arrivals continue to rise in Southeast Asia, the number of MICE travellers will surge as well.

Projected Growth in Nights Spent at ASEAN Destinations (2013–2023)



Source: Oxford Economics

Projected Chinese Outbound Travel Spending by Destinations (2013–2023)



Southeast Asia will be the most popular destination by 2023

Source: Oxford Economics

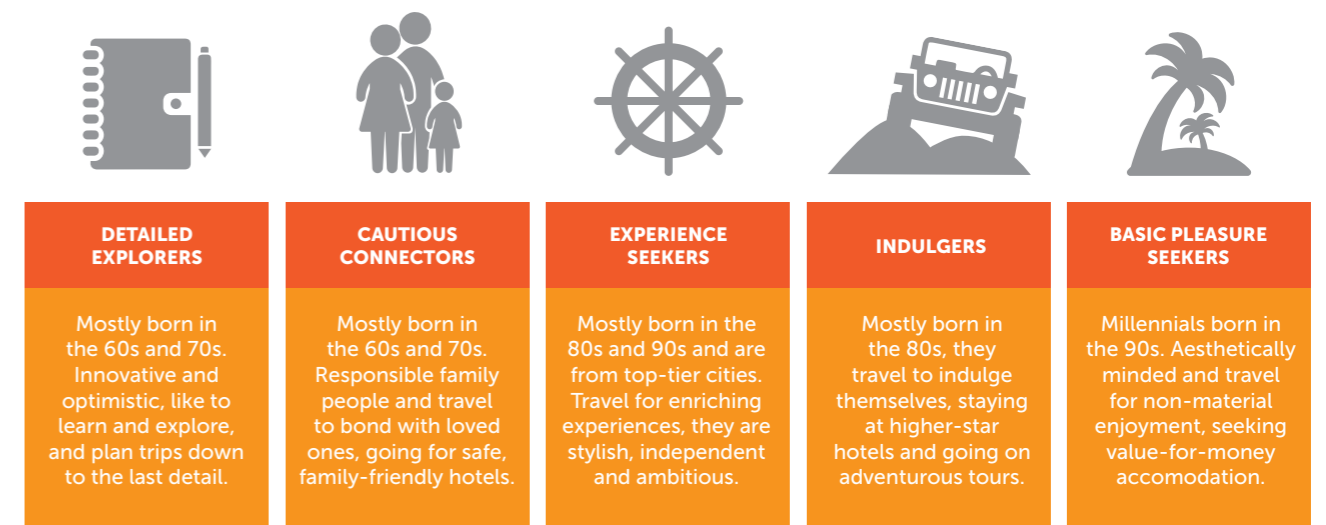
Millennials of the Middle Kingdom

The 2016 CITM segments Chinese travellers into five 'personas' based on their travel needs. Among them, millennials are the 'Experience Seekers', 'Indulgents' and 'Basic Pleasure Seekers'. According to the market research company GfK, millennials comprise about half of Chinese travellers today.

Chinese millennials are an appealing segment as two-thirds of them are high-earning professionals who are willing to indulge themselves. Broadly speaking, they prefer free and easy travel, private luxury tours, themed tours, and attending events like concerts and exhibitions. They favour higher-end accommodation and go for more authentic experiences – including cultural and gastronomic ones.

“Chinese millennials are an appealing segment as two-thirds of them are high-earning professionals who are willing to indulge themselves.”

The Five Chinese Traveller Personas



Source: Chinese International Travel Monitor 2016

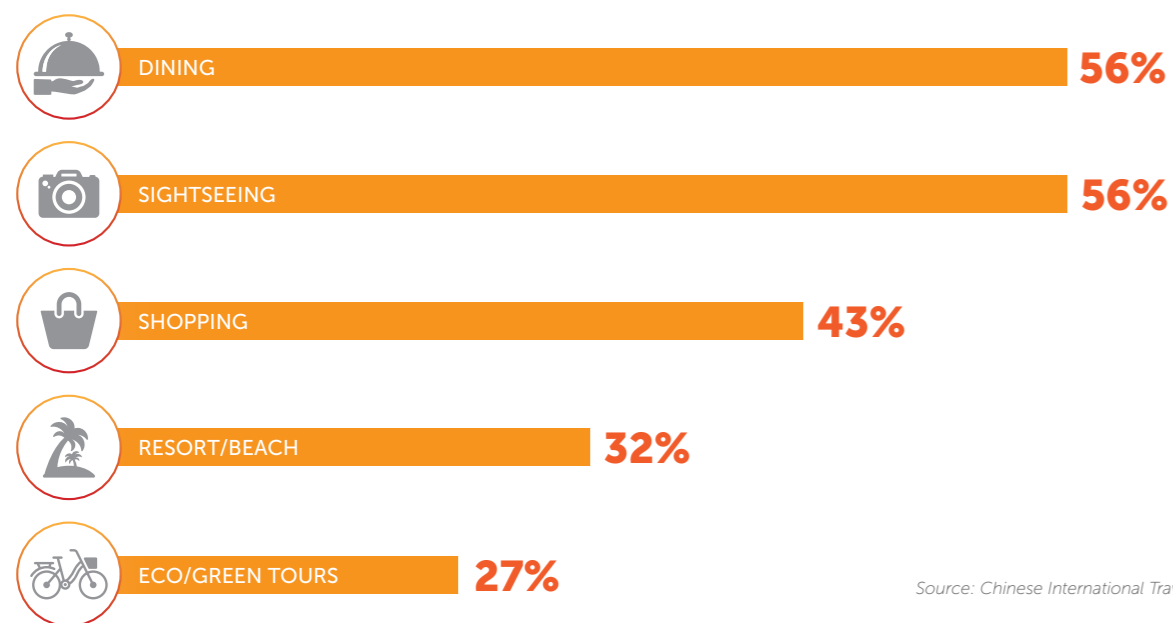
A Love of Food

In the 2016 Resonance report The Future of Chinese International Travel, one young Chinese traveller remarked: "Exploring local cuisine is a huge part of exploring a new place." It is something we can't experience in China and gives us a better understanding of the local culture."

According to the 2016 CITM, dining is Chinese travellers' preferred activity along with sightseeing. Their largest expense at hotels goes to on-site dining. While younger Chinese travellers are curious about different cuisines, the majority of Chinese visitors still prefer the tastes of home. Some hoteliers have taken

note: The Hilton, for example, offers Chinese selections at breakfasts, including porridge, dough fritters, hard boiled eggs, and more. (see 'Breakfast at Hilton Menu')

Top Activities Amongst Chinese Travellers When Abroad



Source: Chinese International Travel Monitor 2016

Hotels in Action

In response to the Chinese traveller surge, some hotels have responded with Chinese-specific promotions. For example, the Hilton and Anantara branches in Asia market themselves on Chinese digital media, have Mandarin-speaking staff, and serve Chinese cuisine in their F&B outlets (see 'Winning Over Chinese Travellers').

Such efforts go a long way in engaging Chinese travellers and building their loyalty for good hotel brands. Now is the best time to roll out the welcome mat.

"The Hilton and Anantara branches in Asia market themselves on Chinese digital media, have Mandarin-speaking staff, and serve Chinese cuisine in their F&B outlets."

Winning Over Chinese Travellers

Anantara

Offers amenities catered for Chinese tourists in Thailand; expanding across Asian tourism hotspots, including key resort destinations in China. Chinese-catered services include:



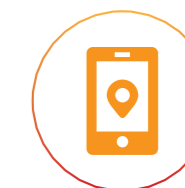
Partnering Chinese tourism boards



Working closely with travel sites including Ctrip, Qunar, and Zhanadu, and advertising extensively on Baidu



Recruiting Chinese-speaking staff through Chinese universities, institutions, and hospitality colleges



'The Handy', a handheld device in all guestrooms, offers free international calls, free internet, and tourist information

Hilton

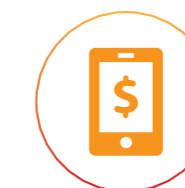
The *Huanying* (欢迎) programme, implemented in 110 properties across 30 countries, includes:



Tea, tea kettles, slippers, and Mandarin TV channels in guestrooms



Congee, soy milk, and dim sum for breakfast



AliPay payment solution



Marketing on WeChat, Weibo, and Hilton's dedicated Chinese website

Breakfast at Hilton Menu (*Huanying* Programme)

- Two varieties of congee with condiments
- Fried rice or fried noodles
- Dim sum selection
- Fried dough fritters (crullers)
- Service items: Chopsticks, Chinese spoons, soy sauce dishes
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Fresh fruit
- Jasmine tea
- Soy milk





DINING *trends*

Guests have become more thoughtful about their food. They want to know the stories behind their dishes. They recognise the goodness of healthy and sustainable choices like having vege-centric food or pulses.

Health and environmental benefits aside, taste and variety are still important. Rich and bold Thai cuisine remains well loved, while fresh and flavourful Vietnamese food has found a worldwide following. For Halal dining, Middle Eastern dishes from Turkey and Lebanon enliven the buffet spread.



FOOD *with a story*

More guests want their food to come from sustainable and local origins. Hoteliers can win them over by sourcing responsibly and telling the stories behind their food. In short, what is good for the planet is good for business too.

Where does my food come from? Is what I consume good for my health and the planet? These questions have become food for thought for more discerning guests.

In *TrendWatch Hotel 2016: Buffets Around the World*, we introduced a global appetite for 'feel-good food'. The 2015 Nielsen Global Health and Wellness Survey shows that about one-third of the respondents in Asia-Pacific are willing to pay more for organic, local, and sustainably sourced ingredients. Across the board, their percentage scores were higher than global averages.

Sustainable Sources, Local Produce

How can hoteliers respond to the growing demand for 'feel-good food'? Many do so by sourcing locally for sustainable produce that leaves a smaller eco-footprint and supports local farmers and communities.

Hyatt, for example, buys natural ingredients from local suppliers who practise sustainable farming. The hotel chain is guided by its food philosophy, 'Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served'. Hyatt hotels also actively participate in farmers' markets

and sponsor local community initiatives like culinary education.

Under the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau's 'Farm to Functions' project, MICE venues buy organic produce, such as rice, from local sources. This generates income for farmers and provides wholesome food to MICE participants.

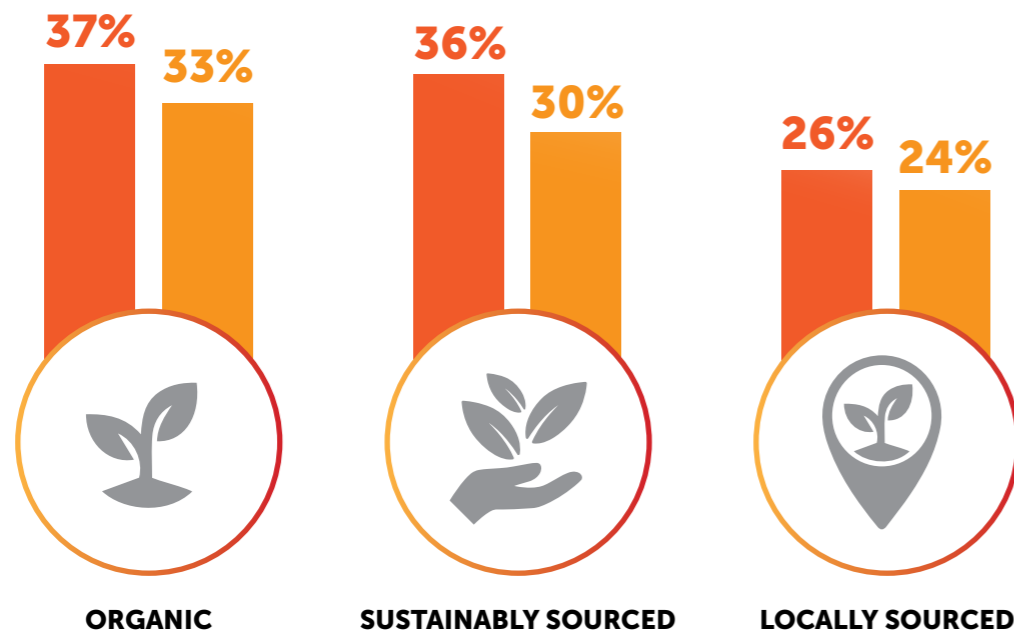
Fairmont Singapore and Anantara Riverside Bangkok have gone hyperlocal. By growing their own pesticide-free or organic herbs

and vegetables in their onsite gardens, they shrink their food miles even further.

Hilton Worldwide, on the other hand, has taken shark's fin off its menu. Its Singapore hotel is also the first in Asia to be certified by the Marine Stewardship Council and Aquaculture Stewardship Council for sourcing seafood ingredients responsibly.

Rising Demand for Sustainable Food

The percentage of people in the Asia-Pacific who are 'very willing to pay a premium' for sustainable food is higher than the global average.



■ Asia-Pacific ■ Global average

Source: 2015 Nelson Global Health and Wellness Report

Stories Behind the Food

Sustainable sourcing is the first step in winning over discerning guests; the next is to tell your food stories. Hoteliers can do so in various creative ways (see 'Telling your Food Stories'). Even sharing small details, such as which farms your ingredients have come from, on wall posters – like what the Five Guys Burger and Fries chain in the United States does – will speak volumes of hoteliers' care for the environment and their communities.

Takeaway:

Using local and sustainably sourced ingredients is good for hotels, because increasingly guests care about how their patronage impacts the environment. The green journey consists of two steps: make the change and tell the story.



Telling Your Food Stories



Give fun facts and details on menus and table standees



Highlight partnerships with local farmers and suppliers who are certified sustainable



Shout out any sustainability certifications earned



Adopt sustainability or eco elements as themes for buffet occasions or outlet décor

A Salmon Starter

Six thin slices of sustainably sourced salmon cured over 24 hours and paired with a rich Italian pesto sauce. A perfect start to a lovely evening with a loved one.

Healthy Tip:
You can cut down the fat by removing the salmon skin.



Cured Salmon

Salmon is a fantastic source of heart-friendly Omega-3 fatty acids. This sustainably sourced salmon is cured with salt, herbs, sugar, red wine, lemon, and orange zest for three days in a chiller at -5°C.

Healthy Tip:
Go easy on the salt for marinating. Not more than 5 grams of salt per adult per day is recommended.



VEGETABLES ARE THE *new comfort Food*

In 2016 Pinterest saw a 336 per cent rise in searches for veggies in comfort food, while searches for traditional comfort dishes like lasagne, macaroni, and stroganoff all dropped by more than 50 per cent.

Meet the 'vegivores' – guests who prefer dishes made with mostly vegetables. With a focus on their health and the planet's wellbeing, these diners have shifted to a vege-centric diet. As covered in 'Move Over, Meat' in *TrendWatch Hotel 2016: Buffets Around the World*, vege-centric dishes are not necessarily vegetarian or vegan.

Examples of creative vege-centric fare: Gjelina in Venice, California, serves wood-roasted asparagus with romesco and shaved Parmesan; at AL's Place in San Francisco, porcini mushrooms are served with a rich fava mayonnaise made with... not fava beans, but their husks and skins.

To appeal to the growing number of vegivores, chefs can consider three ways.



#1: Faux Meats

Guests have caught on to imitation meats like faux chorizos, ribs, and salami made out of plant proteins by plant butchers. Then there's the 'Impossible Burger', a sustainable plant-based patty made by food scientists. It is now served at restaurants like Momofuku Nishi in New York and Crossroads Kitchen in Los Angeles.

Faux meats taste like the real thing, yet are decidedly guilt-free. More guests are choosing them to satisfy their meat cravings, and chefs can expand their buffet menus with such options to meet this demand.



#2: Root-to-Leaf Approach

Like the nose-to-tail approach for meat, the root-to-leaf method uses every part of the plant. At New York's Little Park Restaurant, for example, broccoli bits are used as garnishes, stalks are pickled, and trimmings are pureed into green sauces.

Elsewhere, the zero-waste style sees chefs making pesto from carrot and radish tops, brewing broths using corn cobs and potato skins. They are pickling watermelon rinds as tangy relishes, roasting squash seeds for salad toppings, and using the odds and ends of rainbow chard and parsley as colourful touches.

For hoteliers and chefs, a root-to-leaf approach is the way to go: nothing is wasted, margins are enhanced and guests are surprised by exciting textures, colours and tastes.



#3: High-Heat Cooking

Chefs can coax the most flavour out of vegetables with high heat. Bold methods like charring, smoking, oven roasting and wood grilling, once reserved for cooking meats, are great ways to caramelize vegetables and draw out their natural sweetness. (see 'Turning Up the Heat').

Takeaway:

The trend of putting vegetables front and centre is here to stay. Hoteliers can take advantage of this trend by inventing creative dishes and using the right methods to make vege-centric dishes taste their best.

5 Tips for Going Vege-Centric



1. START SMALL

No need to overhaul the menu; start with vege-centric specials, side dishes or complimentary samples.



2. MAKE IT SOCIAL

Introduce shareable portions; excite all guests at the table with a taste of vege-centric bites.



3. EVERY BIT COUNTS FROM ROOT TO LEAF

Use roasted peelings, stalks, and roots to make vegetable stocks; make trimmings into sauces and pickles, shavings into garnishes.



4. STICK TO SEASONAL PRODUCE

In-season produce costs less and tastes fresher.



5. GO BEYOND STEAMING

Use high-heat cooking to maximise flavours (see 'Turning Up the Heat'). Add some protein or top with rich sauces for more character and depth.

Turning Up the Heat



1. Searing

Searing in a very hot pan seals in flavours, resulting in a caramelised crispy outside and a fork-tender inside. Toss vegetables only after they have become lightly charred.

Ideas:

- Pan-seared sprouting broccoli, tossed with honey-tahini sauce
- Charred Brussels sprouts with bacon and dates
- Pan-seared broccoli drizzled with chilli-spiked fish sauce dressing



2. Wood-grilling

Add some wood chips to the grill. Use apple and cherry wood for fruitiness, oak and hickory wood for smokiness, and mesquite for a stronger, spicy flavour.

Ideas:

- Wood-smoked grilled cauliflower, carrots, and onions, sprinkled with sugar-glazed chopped pistachio
- Grilled kale with shallot-yoghurt dressing and toasted hazelnuts
- Grilled apricots with country ham and arugula



3. Roasting

In an oven, roast veggies covered with foil, and then uncovered until browned. This retains flavours and moisture on the inside, and crisps the veggies up on the outside.

Ideas:

- Roasted carrots with carrot-top pesto, shaved carrot salad and burrata
- Roasted butternut squash with lime yoghurt, gingery oven-dried tomatoes, cashew nuts and shallots
- Salt-roasted golden beets with dill, avocado, capers and red onion

Beetroot Burger Cone

Made with beetroot juice and mashed potatoes, this burger patty has a texture similar to that of a beef patty. Add some melted swiss cheese and it's a perfect take-away snack for a stroll by the beach.



Healthy Tip:

Beetroot patties are great meat alternatives for vegetarians who love burgers. Beetroot is a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals.



Beetroot Slider Spread

This meat-free delight comes with a bright red beetroot patty sandwiched by classic ingredients like fresh mayonnaise and crunchy pickles, all tightly packed in a bite-size slider.



Healthy Tip:

Beetroot patties are great meat alternatives for vegetarians who love burgers. Beetroot is a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals.



PULSES: *the wonder seeds*

The tiny pulses play a supersize role in healthier diets and the planet's wellbeing. They can be a trendy addition in many cuisines and for special dietary needs.

Pulses come in varying sizes, shapes, and colours; there are many ways of categorising them. On the whole there are 11 types: dry beans, dry broad beans, dry peas, chickpeas, cow peas, pigeon peas, lentils, Bambara beans, vetches, lupins, and others.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations calls them 'nutritious seeds for a sustainable future' when they declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses.

Others give them a humbler name: 'poor man's meat'. No matter what names they go by, pulses are in growing demand and punch way above their weight.

According to the FAO 2016 report, the world's production of pulses has grown 31 per cent from 1990 to 2014. Furthermore, international trade in pulses has increased by 5.5 per cent every year since 1961.

The World's Staple Food

Pulses are modest staples in almost every cuisine: Lentils are used in Italian minestrone and Indian dal; chickpeas are mashed into Middle Eastern hummus and falafels; and mung and adzuki beans are cooked into Chinese *tong sui* (dessert soups).

Lately, this age-old ingredient has captured culinary imaginations anew. Chefs and guests alike are realising how versatile these wonder seeds are (see 'Endless Pulse-sibilities' for a snapshot of their range of uses).

Packing a Nutritious Punch

As excellent sources of protein and micronutrients, pulses are competent stand-ins for cheese and meat. They are also suitable for a wide range of special diets (see 'Pulses in Special Diets').

Use pureed cannellini beans in a lasagne, and guests won't even miss the ricotta. Substitute ground beef for pinto beans in vegetarian meatballs, burger patties, shepherd's pie, and chilli con carne.

For lighter main dishes that can still fill up, pair lentils with meat or sausages. Finally, pulse flours make for gluten-free, nutrient-dense alternatives to grain flours in baked goods.



Good for the Planet

Guests who favour sustainable meals will love the ecological benefits of eating pulses. They are good news for farms and the environment – they need less water to be grown; their cultivation enriches the soil and does not contribute to greenhouse emissions that come with industrial fertiliser production.

Takeaway:

Pulses are nutritious, versatile, and sustainable. They can be made into wholesome main dishes or provide additional flavour as side dishes. See how they can feature in your menu today.



Pulses in Special Diets



GLUTEN-FREE DIET

Use chickpeas, lentils, and peas as ingredients for gluten-free dietary needs.



DIABETIC DIET

Consuming lentils, peas, and beans may help with blood glucose management.



VEGETARIAN DIET

Pulses are good sources of protein, vitamins and minerals (especially iron and zinc); they contain eight essential amino acids.



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT DIET

Studies show that pulses may help with weight management. They are low in fat and moderate in calories.

Endless Pulse-sibilities

Pulses are very versatile ingredients, usable in a wide range of dishes. Here are some ideas.



SNACKS AND APPETISERS

Bruschetta topped with cannellini beans, sun-dried tomatoes, and basil

Socca (chickpea crepe) topped with zucchini, sundried tomatoes, black olives, mozzarella, and feta

Korean *bindaetteok* (mung bean pancakes)



SOUPS AND STEWS

Turkish eggplant and lentil stew with pomegranate molasses

French duck cassoulet with cannellini beans, ham hocks and pork sausages

Curried lamb shanks with quinoa and chickpeas



SALADS

Honey-roasted pumpkin, borlotti bean, broccolini and hazelnut salad

Sprouted mung bean salad with chopped onions, tomatoes, and green chillies

Roasted *baharat*-spiced cauliflower and broccoli with haloumi and lentils



MAIN DISHES



Pasta with chickpeas, garlicky wilted spinach, and red onions

Seared scallops with borlotti beans, clams, and chorizo

Mujaddara (Middle Eastern pilaf with rice, green lentils, caramelised onions) with cinnamon-and-cumin-spiked spiced yoghurt

Lima bean gratin topped with herbed bread crumbs



DIPS AND SPREADS

Black-eyed pea hummus spiced with smoked paprika and harissa

Thai red-curry chickpea hummus enriched with coconut milk

Cannellini bean dip spiked with chipotle, garlic, cumin and chili



WRAPS AND BURGERS

Lentil and mushroom meatballs

Mushroom, spinach and chickpea burger

Spicy black bean tacos with roasted sweet potatoes with avocado and coriander sauce



DESSERTS

Borlotti bean brownie

Matcha (green tea) swiss roll with adzuki cream

Chocolate mousse made with aquafaba (chickpea cooking liquid)

Tips for Cooking Pulses



Soak before cooking

Softened pulses take shorter times to cook and are more digestible. Soaking takes 6–12 hours. Not needed for lentils and split peas.



Cook with no salt or acid

Salt and acidic ingredients like vinegar and lemon juice make pulses tougher and lengthen cooking times. Add only at the end of cooking.



Use a pressure cooker

Cooking times depend on the pulse type, size, and age. On the stove, larger pulses like chickpeas and lima beans take one to three hours; red lentils, 10 minutes. Cook in the pressure cooker to shorten cooking times.



Boost the flavour

Add to the cooking water: herbs (bay leaves, rosemary, thyme, and parsley); garlic; Parmesan cheese rind; dried chillies; meat bones, bacon, or sausages.



Roast for crunch

Coat pulses with spices and roast in the oven for crunchy salad toppings and crispy snacks.



Bake with pulse flours

Pulses like chickpeas, lentils, and split peas can be ground into flours for baking. Pulse flours are gluten-free, and high in fibre and protein.

Jar of Beans

As stand-ins for cheese and meat, pulses are rich in protein and micronutrients. For this version, we deep-fry the small lentils for a crispy texture and steam the bigger beans for a juicy bite.



Healthy Tip:

Pulses are healthy meat alternatives and easy to prepare – you can bake, steam or stew them.



Pulses in Tomato Stew

Mix various types of pulses and tomato puree. Bring the mixture to a gentle bowl to make a thick, flavourful stew. The biscuit is a chef's special, made with green pulses, coated with flour and browned at high heat.



Healthy Tip:

Pulses are healthy meat alternatives and easy to prepare – you can bake, steam or stew them.



THAI CUISINE: unleashing its potential

All around the world, guests have an unflinching love for Thai food. To perk up their buffet lines, chefs and hoteliers can seek inspiration from Thailand's amazing array of street food and lesser-known regional favourites.

Thai cuisine is one of the most popular Asian cuisines around the world. It can be found in many corners of the globe, and within Southeast Asia from street stalls to 5-star hotel restaurants.

The cuisine's versatility allows for easy adoption by hotels. For example, Singapore's Hotel Jen Orchard Gateway has held a Thai

cuisine promotion showcasing more than 40 dishes, including less common ones like *poo ja* (deep-fried stuffed crab shells). At Crowne Plaza West Hanoi, Thai food has been showcased alongside the country's different regions and cultures.

A traditional Thai meal, simply put, is a feast for the senses. It

consists of rice, vegetables, a curry, a soup, and a fish dish with a dip. The dishes laid out before the guest are visually vibrant; they entice the senses with the aromas of gravies and spices.

In short, Thai food is an explosion of flavours that keeps guests coming back.

Regional Flavours

Talk Thai food and some popular dishes quickly come to mind: *tom yam* (hot and sour soup), *pad thai* (stir-fried rice noodles), *som tam* (green papaya salad), and *gaeng keaw waan* (green curry).

However, Thai cuisine offers far more than these well-known favourites. Thailand consists of different regions, each with its own distinctive cooking traditions and flavours, influenced by their ethnic groups, climate, and terrain.

FOUR REGIONS, four flavours

NORTH

Hot and salty, northern dishes are usually deep-fried, braised or grilled. Common spices used are chillies, galangal and peppers. The curries, soups, and relishes tend to taste bitter due to the use of plants and leaves from the native forests and mountains.

Signature dishes include:

- **khao soi** (red curry soup noodles)
- **gaeng kanun** (jackfruit curry)
- **sai ua** (spicy red sausage)
- **miang kham** (leaf-wrapped snacks made with a mix of sweet, sour, spicy, and salty ingredients)
- **nam prik** (chilli dip)



NORTHEAST

Dishes here tend to be pungent and spicy. Two of the most common cooking methods used are grilling and boiling.

Signature dishes include:

- **sticky glutinous rice**
- **gai yang** (grilled chicken)
- **som tam** (green papaya salad)
- **laab** (minced meat salad)
- **num tok** (grilled meat salad)

CENTRAL

Dishes here are made from a wider variety of ingredients and tend to be spicy, salty, layered, and more complex.

Signature dishes include:

- curries cooked in meat stock and coconut milk, such as **gaeng phet** (red curry) and **gaeng keaw waan** (green curry)
- **grilled beef and seafood salads** (spiked with dressings made with lime juice, fish sauce, sugar and chillies)
- **pad phet** (Chinese-influenced stir-fried dishes with Thai basil and chillies)
- **egg-based dishes**

SOUTH

Some of the most popular ingredients in this region are seafood, coconut oil and milk, and the dishes usually taste very spicy.

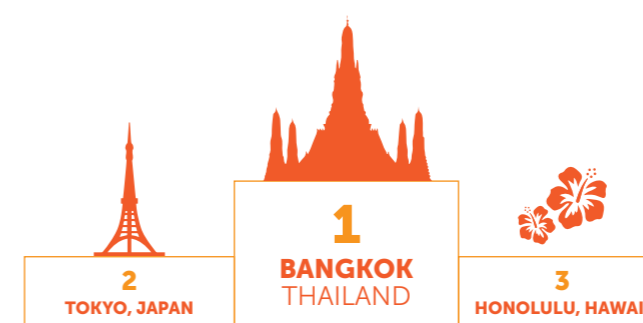
Signature dishes include:

- **gaeng tai pla** (fermented fish stomach curry)
- **gaeng massaman** (rich and sweet curry made with coconut milk)
- **sataw** ('stinky' petai beans cooked with shrimp paste and chillies)
- **khao yam** (rice salad with dried shrimp, toasted coconut, chopped greens and herbs)

Chic to Street

While Thai cuisine has been featured prominently in top hotels and restaurants, it owes its roots to street food. It is no surprise then that CNN Food ranks Bangkok as the number one city in the world for street food.

World's Best Cities for Street Food



Source: CNN Food

Yaowarat may be the go-to street food district in Bangkok, but the adventurous can find lesser known gems in the city. Banglamphu (Old Town) boasts old-style specialities and is famous for its *khao gang* (curry rice). The upscale Sukhumvit neighbourhood is well known for northern Thai food and soup noodles. Saphan Lueng, packed with skilful wok cooks, noodle vendors, dessert carts and the occasional porridge shop, is the other Yaowarat – without the tourists.

Takeaway:

According to the 2016 Chinese International Travel Monitor, Thailand is the second most popular destination in the world for Chinese travellers, and the most popular in Southeast Asia. Now, with more Chinese and other travellers arriving in the region, the time is ripe for hoteliers to expand their Thai offerings in buffet spreads.

Familiar Ingredients, New Uses

Thai ingredients are extremely versatile and can be adapted for other cuisines. Here are some ideas:



Fish sauce

- Punch up the umami of salads, stir-fries, noodles, and soups with a dash or two
- Use in place of Italian anchovies in salad dressings and pasta sauces, such as in caesar salad, panzanella, and spaghetti puttanesca
- Marinate meat and fish with fish sauce along with soy sauce, sugar, garlic, lemongrass, and chillies; or add fish sauce to barbecue sauces
- Use in ragu bolognese and slow-cooked tomato sauce to add a meaty depth



Fresh herbs

- Make pesto with fresh Thai herbs like lemongrass, Thai basil, mint, and coriander; toss with pasta, or top on grilled fish, chicken, mushrooms, and kebabs
- Mix lemongrass, cilantro, chillies, garlic, coconut milk, and fish sauce, and rub on chicken and meat before roasting



Thai curry paste

- Add a curry kick to almost everything – chicken, lamb, salmon, potatoes – rub before roasting
- Spread on pizza dough and flat-breads before layering with toppings
- Combine curry paste, miso, soy sauce, and olive oil to make miso-curry sauce; toss with vegetables or noodles
- Dips and spreads: Mix paste with mayonnaise and lemon juice to make curry aioli; swirl in some paste to brighten up hummus. Spread on sandwiches or use as dips for vegetables

Khao Soi, Noodles of Northern Thailand

What's green, orange, and pink? Gluten-free veggie noodles made from spinach, carrot, and beetroot, served in a rich Thai curry and with deep-fried egg noodles for a crackling bite.

Healthy Tip:
You can reduce the fat content by removing the chicken skin.



All-Day Breakfast Noodles

A staple dish in northern Thailand, *khao soi* is suitable for all meals of the day. This version adds a touch of the ocean with codfish and lobster; it is an irresistible dish at the buffet table.

Healthy Tip:
This dish uses vegetable (spinach, carrot, beetroot) egg noodles, which contain more fibre than regular egg noodles.



VIETNAMESE CUISINE: *the rising star*

Vietnamese food, lauded by celebrity chefs and foodies for its light and natural tastes, has become the next big thing in the Asian culinary arena. Add more Vietnamese offerings to buffet spreads, and hoteliers can impress even jaded palates with fresh, new flavours.

Vietnamese food has become the toast of the international media. Celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver have featured Vietnamese dishes on their channels. Former US President Barack Obama has slurped rice noodles in Hanoi in the CNN travelogue *Parts Unknown*.

Fresh and flavourful, the cuisine is no longer the 'lesser-known Thai

food'. It has won over a growing segment of health-conscious and sustainability-minded guests. According to the 2016 Google Food Trends Report, keyword searches for *pho* have jumped 11 per cent since 2013. The word is so popular that it has been added to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.



Tons of Flavour

Vietnamese dishes pack in tons of flavour from the fresh ingredients used, though they look deceptively simple. It is about balance – the best-tasting recipes always offer a harmony of salty, sweet, sour, and spicy.

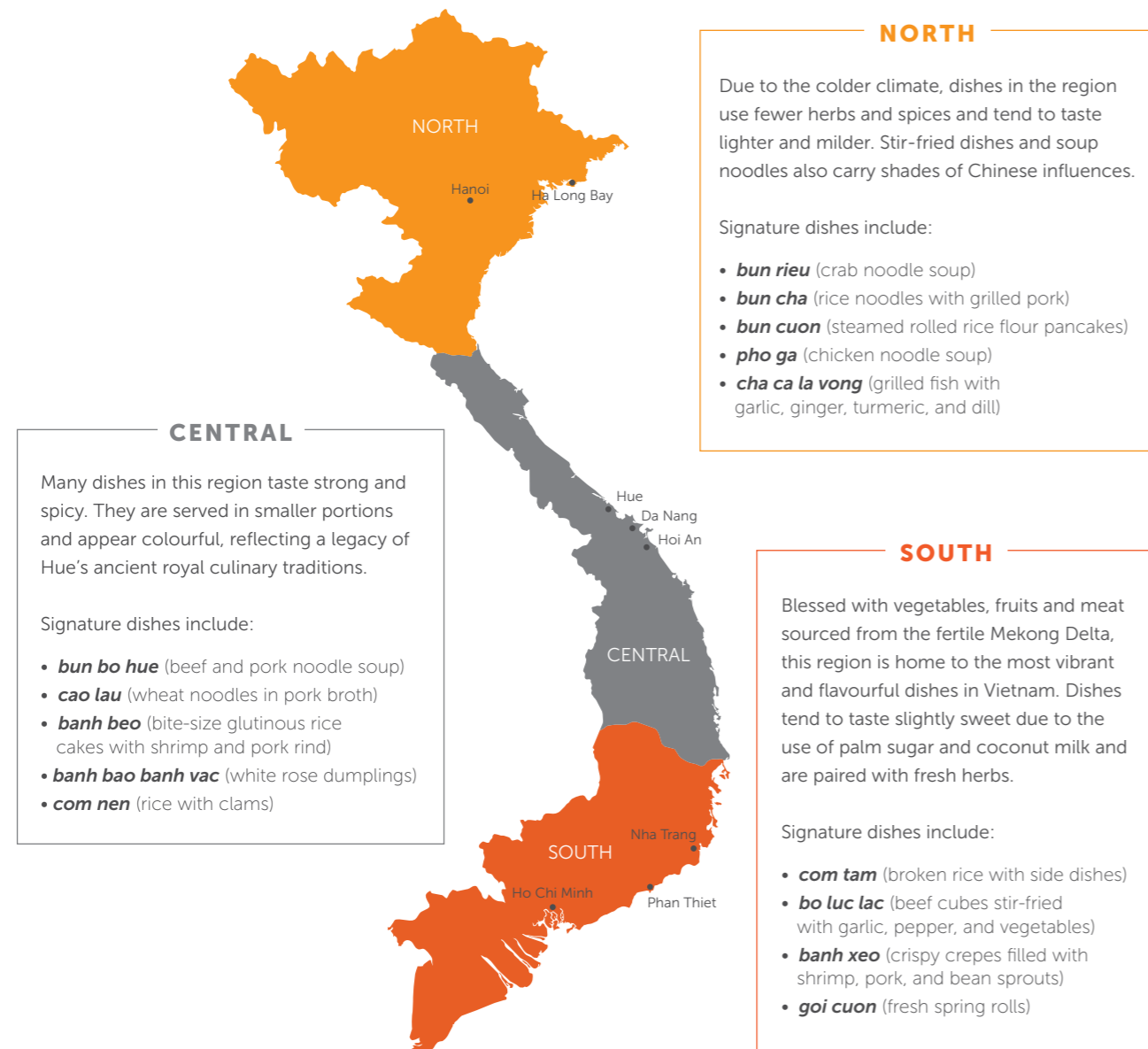
Each region of Vietnam has its signature fare. Stir-fries and soup

noodles from the north boast Chinese influences; the central region's food hints of Hue royal traditions; the south generously incorporates vegetables, fruits, and meat.

Two things are must-haves for an authentic Vietnamese dining experience: *nuoc mam*, the

fermented fish sauce that endows marinades, dips, and soups with rich umami; and *dia rau song*, a platter of fresh herbs like coriander, basil, mint, and dill that accompanies main dishes.

THREE REGIONS, three flavours



Street Eats

Like Thailand, Vietnam celebrates its street food. More popular street eats include *pho*, *banh mi* (Vietnamese sandwich), *bun cha* (white rice noodles), and *goi cuon* (Vietnamese spring rolls); beyond the renowned favourites, other gems can be found in Vietnamese streets.

Goat hotpot is popular in Vietnamese family meals, well known for its appetising flavour and nutritious value. From day to dusk, street vendors sell *bach tuoc nuong* (grilled squid) to passers-by. For a southern Vietnam classic, seek out *ca loc nuong trui* (grilled snakehead fish).

Hotels from the region and beyond are taking to Vietnamese food. Shangri-La Hotel Dubai has the city's only authentic Vietnamese restaurant, featuring a wide variety of dishes served in traditional style – on bamboo platters and lotus leaves. Closer to home, the Fullerton Hotel Singapore and New World Manila Bay Hotel have organised Vietnamese food festivals showcasing the full range of this cuisine.



Takeaway:

Increasingly health-conscious and media-savvy guests are welcoming Vietnamese cuisine in their diets. Take advantage of the cuisine's popularity, and offer healthier Vietnamese options on your menu.

Vietnamese Herb Primer

A large variety of herbs are used prominently in Vietnamese cuisine. Here is a sample:



Dill (*thi la*)

- Rarely eaten raw
- Cooked in northern fish dishes: *canh ca thi la* (fish and dill soup); *cha ca thang long* (grilled turmeric fish with dill); and *cha ca thi la* (fish patties)



Bitter herb (*rau dang*)

- Tastes bitter
- Eaten raw as part of herb platter
- Use in hot pot dishes



Vietnamese perilla (*tia to*)

- Purple and green leaves taste earthy and bold
- Eaten raw in soups, salads and grilled dishes



Vietnamese balm (*kinh gioi*)

- Smells lemony with a hint of mint
- Eaten raw in soups and meat dishes
- Use as part of herb platter



Vietnamese mint (*rau ram*)

- Tastes peppery with a hint of coriander
- Eaten raw as part of herb platter
- Toss in salads, or top on noodles and add to fresh spring rolls

Goi Bo, Vietnamese Beef Salad

This version of *goi bo*, a popular Hanoi dish, features thick-sliced wagyu beef with a generous serving of rice vermicelli and fresh bean sprouts. Basil and mint leaves, though optional, add a refreshing flavour.



Healthy Tip:

For less fat and more protein, swap the wagyu beef tenderloin for regular beef tenderloin.



Vietnamese Chicken Salad

A simple dish to make, *goi* is a great dish to be shared among friends. The charcoal-roasted chicken goes well with the dipping sauce, which is made with fish sauce, chillies, garlic, and spring onions.



Healthy Tip:

Instead of chicken thighs with skin, use chicken breast for less fat and more protein.





JEWELS OF THE *middle east*

Move over, beef *rendang* and *kuih lapis*. Hello, meze and *baklava*! More and more restaurants in Southeast Asia are serving Middle Eastern fare. Hoteliers can start to diversify their buffets with fresh flavours from the Middle East too.

As presented in *Guest Trends*, the number of Muslim travellers is forecast to reach 168 million by 2020. Those from Asia are travelling further while those from the Middle East are visiting Southeast Asia more. To capitalise on this trend, hoteliers can inject fresh touches, such as Turkish and Lebanese fare, into their buffets.

Turkish Delights

Turkish food is a richly varied cuisine. The diet centres around rice, vegetables, legumes, and bread. Mezzes – platters of small dishes like *dolma* (vine leaves stuffed with meat, rice and bulgur) and *ful medames* (stewed fava beans) – are shared at almost every meal.

Turkey is well known for its street eats, from *shawarma*, blocks of grilled lamb or chicken shaved into thin slices and stuffed in breads, to *lahmacun*, thin crispy flatbreads with all sorts of toppings. A Turkish meal often ends with *baklava*, a treat of honey and nuts in flaky pastry, or *lokum* jelly confections. These desserts are then washed down with thick, sweet Turkish coffee.



Lebanese Flavours

Lebanese cuisine has long incorporated foods from other cultures. The Ottoman Turks gave the Lebanese the pita – round pockets are sandwich bases; torn pieces scoop up hummus and *kibbeh nayeh*, a dish of raw minced lamb and bulgur.

Like in the Mediterranean, Lebanese cooks use plenty of olive oil, garlic, and lemon. There is also a dash of French influence: buttery croissants and custardy flans are signature baked goods.

The Lebanese make the most of seasonal produce, especially in salads like *tabbouleh* and *fattoush*, which sparkle with tomatoes and cucumbers, and herbs like parsley and mint.



Tastes of Middle East in Southeast Asia

Hotels around the region are offering Middle Eastern fare to attract Muslim diners. The Resort Café at Sunway Resort Hotel and Spa, in Petaling Jaya, serves a buffet with dishes like lamb *mansaf* (lamb cooked in dried yoghurt) and *musakhan* (Palestinian roasted chicken with *sumac* and onions).

At Le Meridien Jakarta, Al Nafoura restaurant has a menu of Lebanese favourites from braised lamb shanks to *sambousek* (small meat pies). Recently at Signatures at Hotel Indonesia Kempinski Jakarta, Istanbul chefs helmed its Turkish food promotion, introducing dishes like lamb *tandır* (roasted lamb) and *kalbuni* rice pilaf.

Takeaway:

Turkey and Lebanon can provide new inspirations for expanding halal buffet offerings. They give a taste of home to Middle Eastern guests, and offer others an initiation to more exotic Muslim cuisines.

middle eastern mosaic

The cuisines of the Middle East share many similarities, yet each country has its unique cooking traditions. Common dishes like *mezze*, *kibbeh*, *kebab*, *shawarma*, *hummus*, *dolma*, *tabbouleh*, and *fattoush* take on variations across the region.



The Turkish Pantry: 5 Essentials



1. Pomegranate molasses

This sweet-sour syrup adds a fruity zing. Use it in *muhammara* (red capsicum and walnut spread), on salads, and in meat marinades and glazes.



2. Vine leaves

Not only for rolling *dolma*, these tart leaves are also used for wrapping fish before grilling, and as the bases of savoury cheese pies.



3. Yufka

The Greeks have phyllo; the Turks, *yufka*. These paper-thin dough sheets are used for *baklava* and *borek* (savoury cheese pastries).



4. Bulgur

The most eaten grain in Turkey is used in pilafs, *dolma*, and salads like *tabbouleh* and *kisir* (a salad with parsley and tomato paste), and for bulking up soups and stews.



5. Baharat

This smoky-sweet blend contains dried herbs and spices like coriander, cumin, cloves, black pepper, and paprika. The Turkish version includes mint. Add a pinch to soups, sauces, salads, and couscous for depth. Use it as a rub for fish, meat, and vegetables.

Lebanese Ingredients: 5 Essentials



1. Lamb

Grill lamb *shawarma* on a vertical spit; roll minced lamb *kafta* meatballs; braise lamb shanks with olives and spices; make lamb biryani.



2. Sumac

This wine-coloured spice made from dried *sumac* berries gives a tangy taste. Sprinkle it on grilled meats, fish, and salads for a sourish kick.



3. Zaatar

Top this spice mix – dried herbs (thyme, oregano, and marjoram), spices (*sumac*), toasted sesame seeds, and salt – on *manakish*, Lebanon's pizza-like flatbread; sprinkle on *labneh* (Lebanese cream cheese); rub on roasted chicken and vegetables.



4. Tahini

Add this sesame paste to hummus, *baba ghanoush* (eggplant dip), salad dressings, and sauces for roasted vegetables, meats, and fish.



5. Orange blossom water and rose water

Use these strong aromatics sparingly to perfume syrups and desserts, and give them a distinctive Middle Eastern flavour.

Tomato Rice with Lamb Loin

Tomato rice is a staple of Turkish cuisine. Here it is shaped into a doughnut and topped with slices of medium-rare lamb loin and egg. For a healthier version, use brown rice.

Healthy Tip:
Add more veggies – they make the dish look more appetising and also offer more vitamins and minerals.



Lamb Pastry

Cubed lamb meat is cooked in a stew with celery, carrots, onions, and tomatoes. Top on pizza dough for an exceptional high-tea delight.

Healthy Tip:
For more protein, fibre and essential vitamins and minerals, substitute regular bread flour with whole wheat flour.





FESTIVE *inspirations*

Abiding by festive traditions is important, but there is always room for something new at the buffet table.

During Chinese New Year, how about serving an authentic *lo hon jai* (Buddha's Delight) with its full ingredient mix and symbolic meanings? Make it a Christmas to remember by serving Swedish buffet delicacies. Turn *Iftar* into fresh gastronomic experiences with the hottest ideas from Middle Eastern Ramadan buffets. Become a millennial wedding expert on everything from cake to catering.

Lo Hon Jai:

Blessings for Chinese New Year

Auspicious meanings lie at the heart of Chinese food. During Chinese New Year, symbolic foods are even more important.

Take *Lo Hon Jai* (罗汉斋), or Buddha's Delight, a vegetarian dish eaten on the first day of Chinese New Year. Each of its 8 to 18 ingredients embodies an auspicious meaning. To name

just a few: ginkgo nuts beckon good fortune; bean curd sticks stand for wealth; and water chestnuts represent unity. To enjoy *lo hon jai* is to usher in prosperity for the new year.

Steeped in blessings, *Lo Hon Jai* is a fantastic addition to the festive menu. Chefs can adopt traditional recipes, though the dish lends

itself easily to creative adaptations too. Add to it luxurious ingredients such as abalone and scallops, and the dish becomes a 'treasure pot' signifying abundance. How's that for more crowd-pleasing symbolism?

Core Ingredients of *Lo Hon Jai* and Their Auspicious Meanings

- Arrowheads: benevolence
- Bean curd sticks: wealth
- Black fungus: longevity
- Black moss: wealth
- Carrots: good fortune
- Fried bean curd: family prosperity
- Ginkgo nuts: good fortune
- Glass noodles: longevity
- Golden lily buds: wealth
- Lotus seeds: family prosperity
- Lotus roots: abundance
- Snow peas: unity
- Water chestnuts: unity



A modern interpretation of *Lo Hon Jai*, Buddha's Delight

Almost every food served during Chinese New Year carries a message of prosperity. This updated version of *Lo Hon Jai* is filled to the brim with blessings of wealth, peace, and abundance. Eight pieces each of eight types of ingredients are used, symbolising great fortune for everyone at the table. Abalones, dressed in a golden *Lo Hon Jai* sauce, complete this 'treasure pot'.



Have a Swedish Christmas

In Sweden, Christmas festivities begin as early as 13 December, when Swedes commemorate Lucia, the patron saint of light, with candle-lit processions. As Christmas Day draws nearer, they love to browse Christmas markets in search of trinkets and treats while sipping hot *glogg* (mulled wine) amid the winter ambience.

On Christmas Eve, Swedes traditionally enjoy a *julbord* (pronounced 'yuleboard') at home. It is a buffet of dishes so lavish that a Swedish family could take up to a whole month to prepare. Most Swedes will go for more than one *julbord* during the festive season, and many restaurants will serve it from late November onwards.

Here in Southeast Asia, more guests are arranging Christmas get-togethers at hotels. Why not tweak your menu with a selection of *julbord* dishes and surprise them with some Scandinavian Christmas magic?

At the Swedish Christmas Table

A traditional Swedish *julbord* consists of five 'plates', from appetisers to cold and hot dishes to desserts.

- **First plate:** assorted pickled herring, such as *senapsill* in a creamy mustard sauce, *matjtes* in a preserving liquid
- **Second plate:** fish, such as smoked eel, preserved cod, crayfish salad, all manner of salmon—cured, poached, raw, smoked and more
- **Third plate:** cold meat dishes, like *julskinka* (Christmas ham), chicken liver pâté, smoked lamb, *kroppkaka* (potato dumplings filled with pork or bacon)
- **Fourth plate:** hot dishes, such as *kottbullar* meatballs, Jansson's Temptation (potato casserole spiked with anchovies), *julgryta* (beef stew with cinnamon and figs)
- **Fifth plate:** desserts, such as cinnamon-dusted rice pudding, chocolate fondant, pear tart with star anise

Smörgåstårta, Swedish Sandwich Cake

Sweden, the country that spawned the world's favourite furniture store, IKEA, is also home to *Smörgåstårta*, a salad of scallops and prawns wrapped with thin cucumber slices into a square sandwich cake, a must-have for Christmas. This version is garnished with salmon roe, caviar, and beetroot juice.

Iftar With a Twist

Come Ramadan, Muslims worldwide break fast with *iftar* meals. Hoteliers have introduced novel flavours and creative takes to satisfy the appetites of Muslims seeking *iftar* experiences with fresh twists.

At the New Orleans-themed Cravin' Cajun at Novotel Dubai Al Barsha, for example, guests broke fast with American fare like mac and cheese, chicken and waffles, and key lime pie.

St Regis in Abu Dhabi served an Asian-Latin Ramadan feast at its Caribbean-inspired Asia de Cuba restaurant. Dishes

included empanadas filled with lamb picadillo in Korean *bulgogi* sauce and chicken dim sum with avocado wasabi cream.

Closer to home, Feast Restaurant at Sheraton Bandung offered an iftar buffet that harked back to the good ol' *kampung* (village) days. The concept dialed up the nostalgia using time-honoured Indonesian dishes and rustic décor, and guests were kept entertained with old-school board games and live music performances.

Over at Jakarta Restaurant at The Dharmawangsa Jakarta,

the chefs looked to Indonesia's coastal regions for inspiration. The result was a *pesisir*-style spread with favourites from Manado, Bali and Padang.

Iftar presents many opportunities for hoteliers to think out of the box and present inventive Ramadan concepts and fresh ideas for the buffet menu. Adding these new twists will help you to stand out from the competition.



Moroccan-Style Chicken Stew

Inspired by a Moroccan household dish, this stew is made with free-range chicken broth and organic tomato puree. Black, red and white quinoa is added as a wheat-free option. Garnish with olives and serve alongside gluten-free couscous for a warm, hearty *iftar* meal.

Millennial Weddings

Traditional weddings in the region often follow a pattern. The families usually decide the guest list. Attendee numbers run into the hundreds, or more. Chinese couples may opt for traditional tea ceremonies and eight-course dinner banquets.

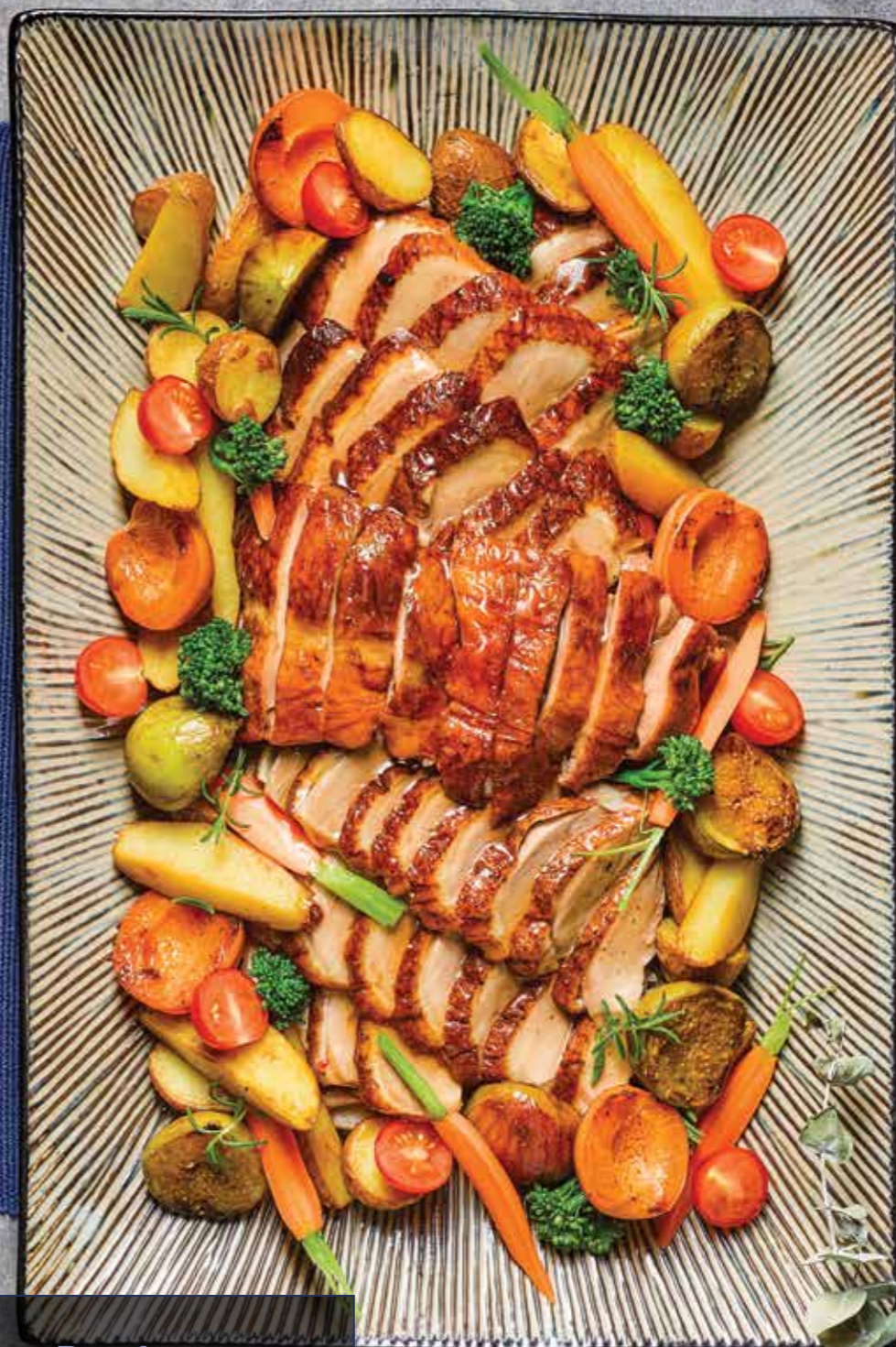
But gone are the days when couples are beholden to every nuptial custom. Millennials prefer to stamp their individuality on their big day and have the spending power to personalise their celebrations.

Just how different are millennial weddings? Social media plays a big part: savvy couples create their own wedding hashtags for guests to share happy moments with the rest of the party. Some couples forego dinner banquets for buffet lunches. Seating arrangements? Too stuffy. Casual dress code? Why not?

More importantly, millennial couples want to work with chefs on custom menus. Their aim? To wow guests by showcasing personal favourite foods. They

crave one-of-a-kind dining experiences: creative wedding cakes (macarons or cake pops, anyone?), dessert buffets with doughnuts and cupcakes, open drinks bars, and even entire banquets with organic, sustainable, or vegan dishes.

The possibilities will keep on evolving. To hoteliers and chefs, this means staying ahead of wedding trends, keeping an open mind and continuing to reinvent and personalise offerings.



Roast Duck Party Plate

Weddings are occasions where the young and old come together to celebrate the newlyweds. This crowd favourite – Chinese roast duck – is coated with luscious plum sauce, sweetening the special day. It is also decked out with Western staple ingredients like figs, apricots, as well as potatoes, which are baked, steamed, and deep-fried.



Thank you for joining us.

We scoured a wide range of food service, hospitality and travel intelligence to distil the most significant travel and dining trends for the year ahead. We then strengthened these observations with insights from our longstanding partnerships with culinary experts and hotel professionals. The result is *TrendWatch Hotel 2017: Inspiring Great Buffets*.

The recipes in this book come from Chef Yen Koh, Unilever Food Solutions, and a leading, award-winning chef in Singapore who took the national team to victory at the 2010 Culinary World Cup. We hope that these recipes, developed in response to the trends featured in this book, will inspire you to improvise recipes and create new buffet concepts that will keep things fresh and exciting for your guests.

Guests' tastes and dining trends will keep on evolving. But one thing is for sure: Unilever Food Solutions will walk this creative and fulfilling journey with you as you continue to elevate your creativity and expertise.



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Research and Resources

We gathered insights from many sources – including books, magazines, journals, websites, and market reports – to bring you the most relevant information from the industry.

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Upcoming MICE Events in Asia Jul–Dec 2017

July	August	September	October	November	December
International Beauty & Spa Expo 3-4 July New Delhi, India	Agri Cambodia 2-4 August Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Vitafoods Asia 5-6 September Singapore	BirdLife International World Congress 9-14 October Singapore	Asia Pacific Conference on International Accounting Issues – ACF 2017 1-4 November Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Chengdu International Tourism Expo 1-3 December Chengdu, China
Oil & Gas Asia 2017 11-13 July Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	11th International Congress of Tropical Paediatrics 4-7 August Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Seafood Expo Asia 5-7 September Hong Kong, China	CIE-Ecommerce Expo 12-14 October Shenzhen, China	Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) 1-4 November Pattaya, Thailand	Airport Solutions Indonesia 6-7 December Jakarta, Indonesia
International Footwear & Leather Product Exhibition Vietnam (IFLE) 12-14 July Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	18th Malaysian International Food & Beverage Trade Fair 9-11 August Malaysia	Food & Hotel Thailand (IFHS) 6-9 September Bangkok, Thailand	Cosmobeaute Indonesia 12-14 October Tanah Abang, Indonesia	GreenUrbanScape Asia 2017 9-11 November Singapore	Wire & Cable Vietnam 6-8 December Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
10th International Convention of Asia Scholars 19-22 July Chiang Mai, Thailand	East Food Indonesia 9-12 August Surabaya, Indonesia	Wedding Expo Philippines 9-10 September Pasay, Philippines	China International Meat Industry Exhibition (CIMIE) 18-20 October Qingdao, China	Vietnam Expo Ho Chi Minh City 6-9 December Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	
5th Annual Worldwide Nursing Conference (WNC 2017) 24-25 July Singapore	VietFood & Beverage 9-12 August Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	SIMA ASEAN Thailand 7-9 September Bangkok, Thailand	Indonesia Hospital Expo 18-21 October Tanah Abang, Indonesia	Functional Food Myanmar 8-10 December Yangon, Myanmar	
5th Annual MICE India & Luxury Travel Congress 27-28 July Mumbai, India	KITAS (Korea IT Accessory & Smart Device Show) 10-12 August Seoul, Korea	15th Guangzhou International Hospitality Supplies Fair 8-10 September Guangzhou, China	ITB Asia (Travel Trade Show) 25-27 October Singapore	Automechanika Shanghai 11-15 December Shanghai, China	
International Packaging & Labelling Food Processing & Bakery Equipment Exhibition 27-30 July Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	International Printing, Paper, Packaging Machinery Exhibition 10-13 August Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Fi Asia (Food Ingredients) 13-15 September Bangkok, Thailand	Singapore Jewellery & Gem Fair 27-30 October Singapore	Metalex Vietnam (International Machine Tools & Metalworking Technology Exhibition) 12-14 December Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	
International Sign & LED Malaysia 2017 27-30 July Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Guangzhou International Drinking Water Purification & Appliance Exhibition 16-18 August Guangzhou, China	Pharmed & Healthcare Vietnam (Pharmed Vietnam) 20-23 September Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam	Drinktec Indonesia 15-18 November Pademangan, Indonesia	Membrane Environment & Energy Technology Expo 14-16 December Bangkok, Thailand	
	TILOG – LOGISTIX (Exhibition on Logistics Service Providers & Intralogistics Technologies & Solutions for ASEAN) 16-18 August Bangkok, Thailand	Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings Asia (IT&CMA) 26-28 September Bangkok, Thailand	Waterchem + Tech China 20-22 November Shanghai, China	Elexcon (China Hi-Tech Fair, Global Electronics Manufacturing Industry Show) 21-23 December Shenzhen, China	
	China Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings (CIBTM) 23-24 August Beijing, China	Food & Hotel Malaysia 26-29 September Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings China (IT & CM China) 21-23 November Shanghai, China		
	Fishex (International Fishery & Seafood Expo) 25-27 August Guangzhou, China	Livestock Myanmar 27-29 September Yangon, Myanmar	Food & Hospitality Indonesia 22-25 November Jakarta, Indonesia		
	Vietnam Fisheries International Exhibition (VIETFISH) 29-31 August Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam		Sial Interfood (Interfood Indonesia) 22-25 November Jakarta, Indonesia		
			Medical Philippines Expo 27-28 November Manila, Philippines		

**“Try new recipes, learn from your mistakes,
be fearless and above all, have fun.”**

Julia Child

"Food is our common ground, a universal experience."

James Beard