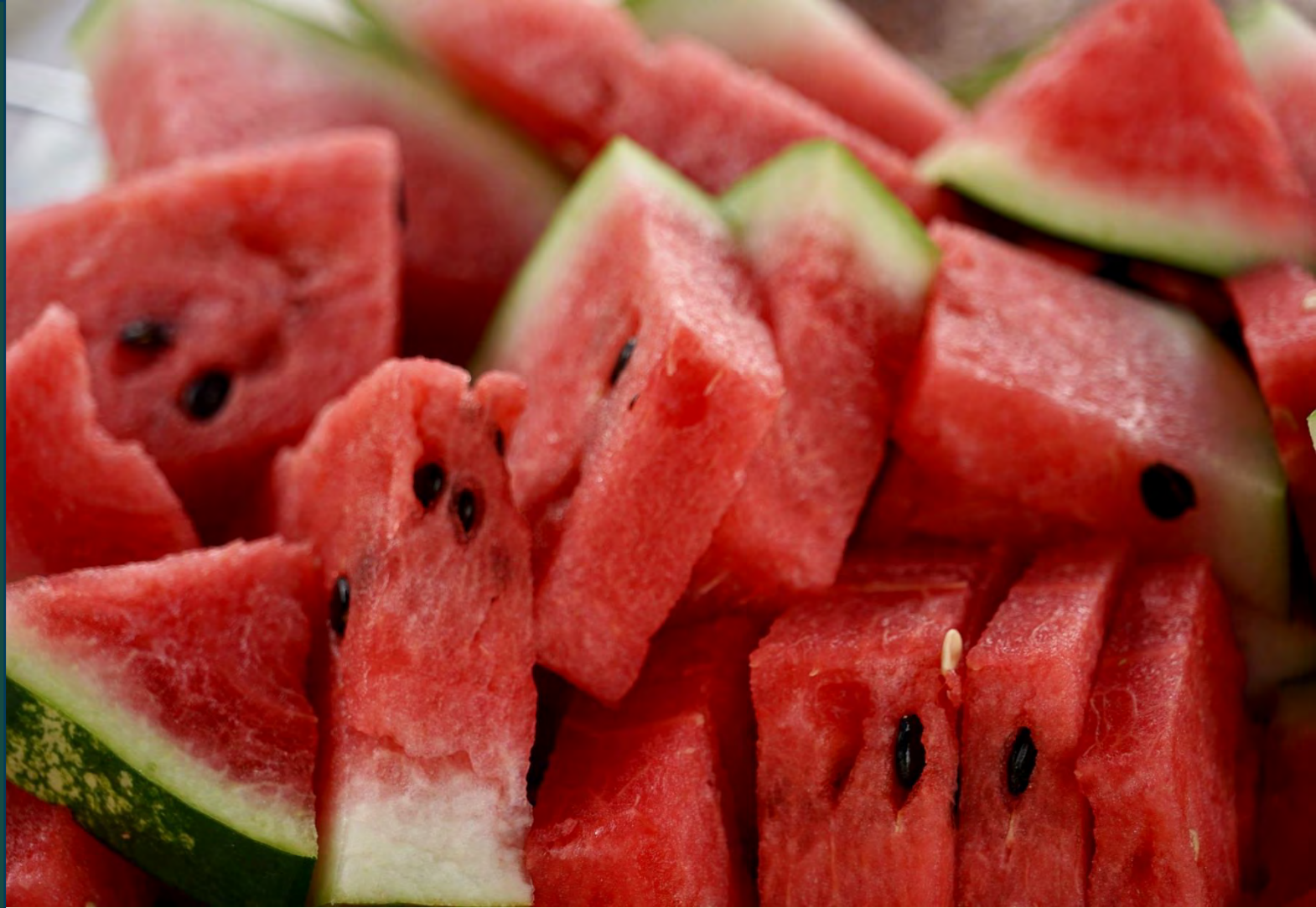


Watermelon Menuing and Innovation in the U.S.

- Penetration by segment
- Menuing by daypart, menu part
- Innovation across categories



Menu
Matters

✪ ✪ ✪

+



National
Watermelon
Promotion Board



Table of Contents

Methodology	3
Key Findings	4
Watermelon Menuing	5
Watermelon Innovation - Beverages	17
Watermelon Innovation - Salads	28
Watermelon Innovation - Appetizers	39
Watermelon Innovation - Soups	49
Watermelon Innovation – Seafood	53
Watermelon Innovation – Entrées	63
Watermelon Innovation – Desserts	70

METHODOLOGY

This report was created using the following data sources:

1. Menu Matters leveraged its own proprietary bank of information gleaned from reliable secondary sources inside and outside the food industry that focuses on trends impacting food and beverage preferences, needs and drivers.
2. Menu Matters worked with Menu Data, an emerging menus database company, to pull information on watermelon menuing. Menu Data captures menus from over 3,000 restaurants across the U.S., representing over 10 million menu items.
3. Menu Matters paired the Menu Data findings for 2025 (June 2024 to July 2025) with the 2021 (mid-year annual update) menuing report developed for the National Watermelon Promotion Board by Datassential to create a comprehensive analysis of current menuing behavior in the U.S., and the opportunities and hurdles that will impact future menuing behavior.
4. It is important to note that the data presented here is based solely on menuing behavior and menu call outs and is not tied back to shipments and/or sales of each protein through distribution channels.
5. Menu Matters combed through restaurant menus and social media posts – domestically and internationally – to identify unique watermelon innovation that can inform and inspire future innovation and increased menuing in the U.S.





KEY FINDINGS

1. Watermelon menuing has increased significantly in the past few years, driven by penetration increases across all segments suggesting broad adoption of watermelon as a source and base for menu innovation.
2. Regional penetration of watermelon continues to be higher on the coasts and in the South, where populations and restaurant density is highest and where watermelon is a key cultural element. There are significant opportunities to grow watermelon beyond these regions, leveraging not only the U.S. cultural affinity for watermelon but regionally specific innovation including focusing on immigrant communities in those areas with flavors that are specific to their cultural preferences.
3. While watermelon has grown at independents and small/ regional chains, where innovation – arguably – is greater, penetration declined with national accounts where volume gains will be more significant. Of course, national accounts tend to be more reactive and follow trends, which are being set by the independent and small/ regional chains currently working with watermelon.
4. Beverage menuing and innovation is driving much of watermelon menuing. This offers key opportunities given the strength and popularity of this category, but many of the products featured here will not be fresh watermelon. Engaging operators in fresh watermelon-forward beverage innovation as well as in savory applications will strengthen its position back of house.
5. Appetizers and snacks offer growth opportunity for watermelon both as underrepresented menu parts across watermelon menuing and as categories in which consumers and operators are far more likely and comfortable with innovation and experimentation. These categories are popular across both groups and dovetail well with ongoing shifts in younger consumer consumption habits.
6. Though “compressed” is limited as a preparation descriptor at this point in the U.S., it is used far more extensively abroad and offers significant opportunity in the U.S. as a solution for operators to not only menu more fresh watermelon but also to innovate more extensively against it.
7. Just over a quarter of all watermelon items specify “fresh watermelon” though penetration of fresh watermelon is estimated to be at just over 40% of all watermelon items. This is likely under-representing the penetration as many operators will not specify fresh watermelon, but it does identify significant additional room to grow fresh watermelon menuing not only among operators not currently featuring watermelon but among those operators who have proven the popularity of watermelon as a flavor by converting them to fresh watermelon usage.



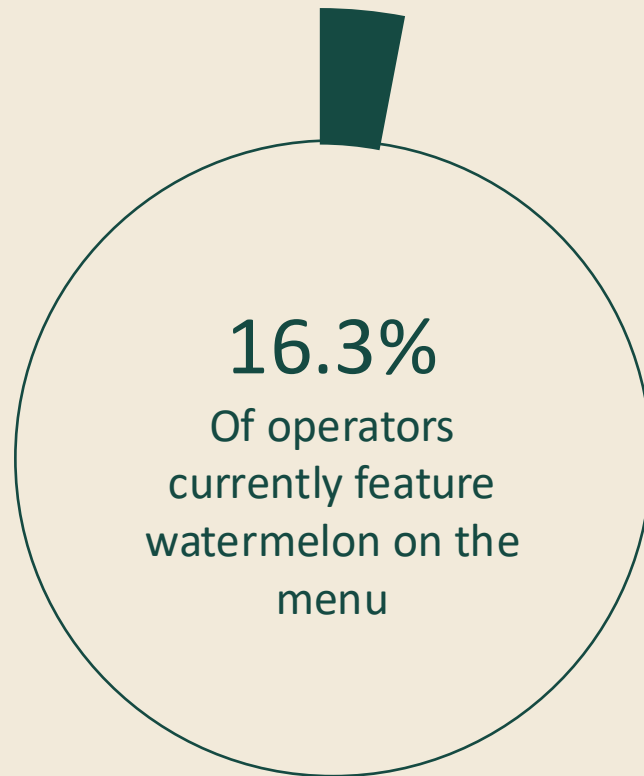
WATERMELON MENUING



Watermelon has enjoyed strong growth in past four years

Watermelon is now far more commonly menued than in 2021, with +30% more restaurants featuring it on the menu which equates to a CAGR of +7%. This growth is substantial in average years but considering the pressures on the industry and the growth of menu rationalization it is impressive watermelon has grown, supporting the idea that watermelon is more important now than it was four years ago.

Share of Restaurants Currently Menuing Watermelon
(2025)



+30%
Current estimated
penetration is up from
the 12.5% reported in
the 2021 report

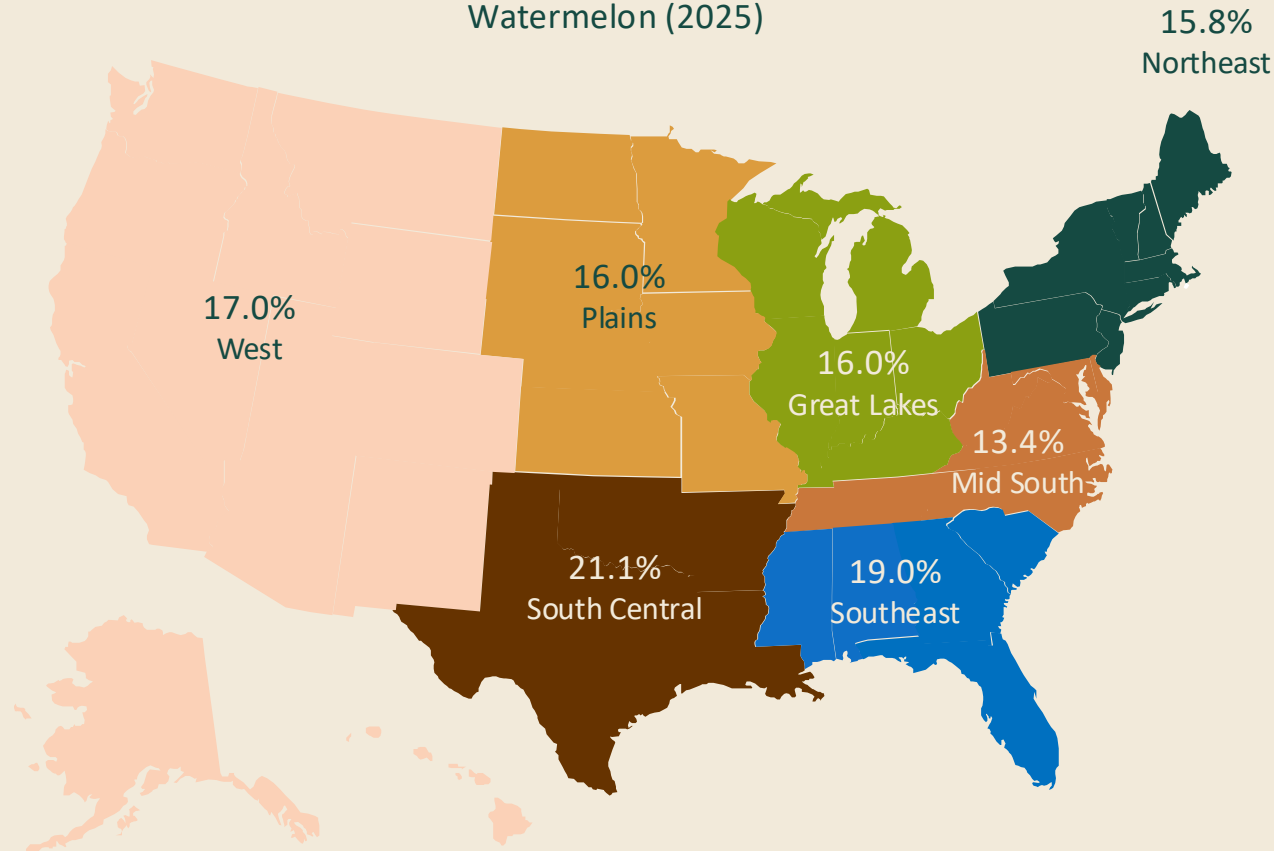
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: Penetration represents the percent of all restaurants currently menuing at least one item featuring “watermelon.” Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.

Watermelon is still more common in the South, but growing in the West

As with 2021, watermelon is most commonly menued by operators in the South. Operators in the West, however, are keeping pace with and catching up to the South, exhibiting stronger growth than any other region. Opportunities to increase menuing in the Plains and Mid-south are significant.

Share of Restaurants in each Region Currently Menuing Watermelon (2025)



Datassential 2021	
West (comparable)	12.7%
Midwest (comparable to Plains & Great Lakes, but excludes KY)	12.6%
South (comparable to Mid-south, Southeast & South Central, but includes KY)	13.9%
Northeast (comparable)	12.9%

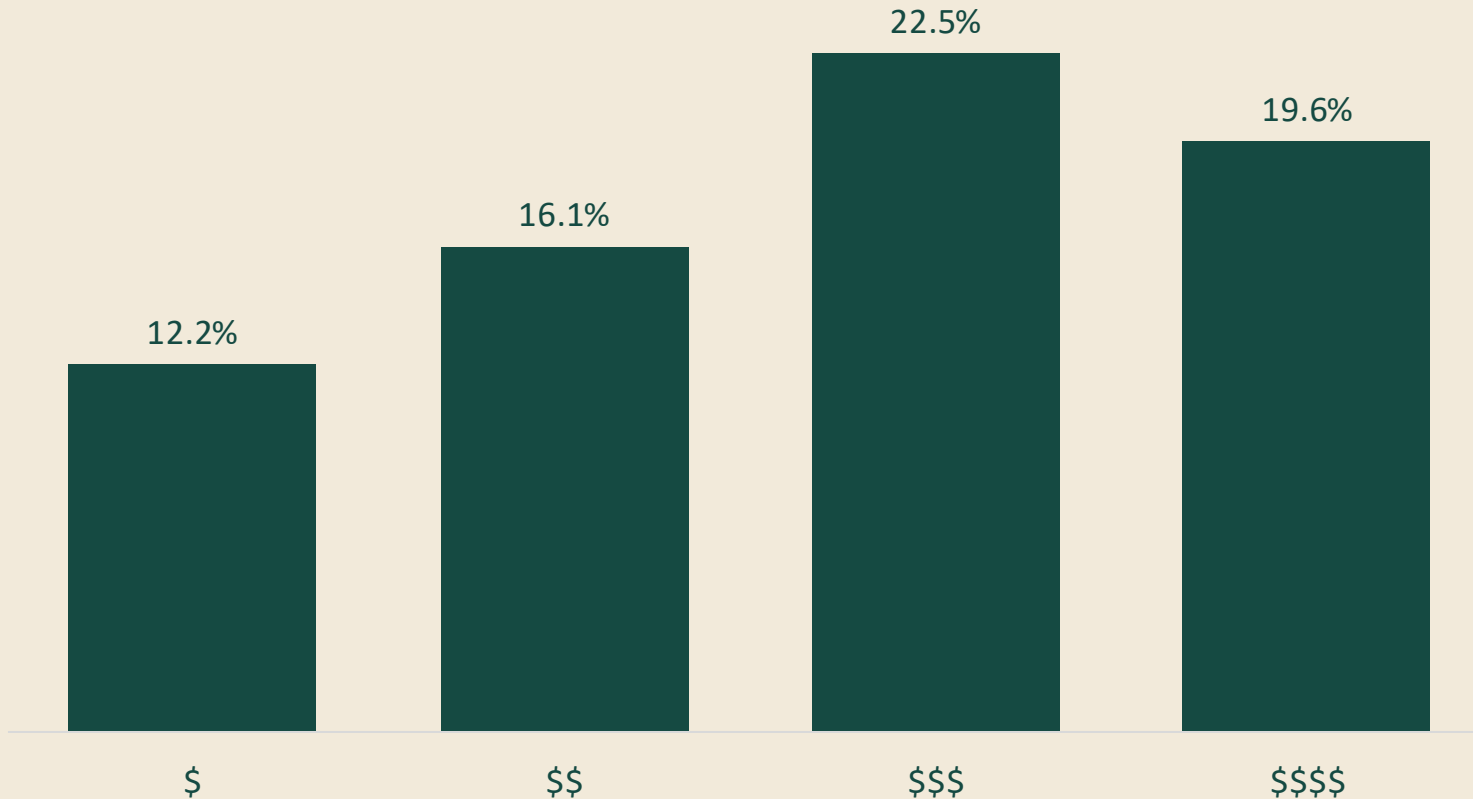
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: Penetration represents the percent of all restaurants currently menuing at least one item featuring “watermelon.” Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.

Watermelon in all segments trending up

In 2021, watermelon menuing in casual dining and fine dining restaurants was trending down. That trend appears to have reversed with menuing in both segments significantly higher. The upward trend in quick service and fast casual restaurants continued, with both experiencing significant gains. In all, there has been both strong growth across segments but still plenty of room to grow particularly in limited segments if fresh watermelon products become available to allow menuing despite labor challenges.

Share of Restaurants by Price Point Currently Menuing Watermelon (2025)



Datassential 2021	
Quick Service	8.3%
Fast Casual	9.8%
Midscale	11.0%
Casual Dining	16.9%
Fine Dining	11.5%

Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

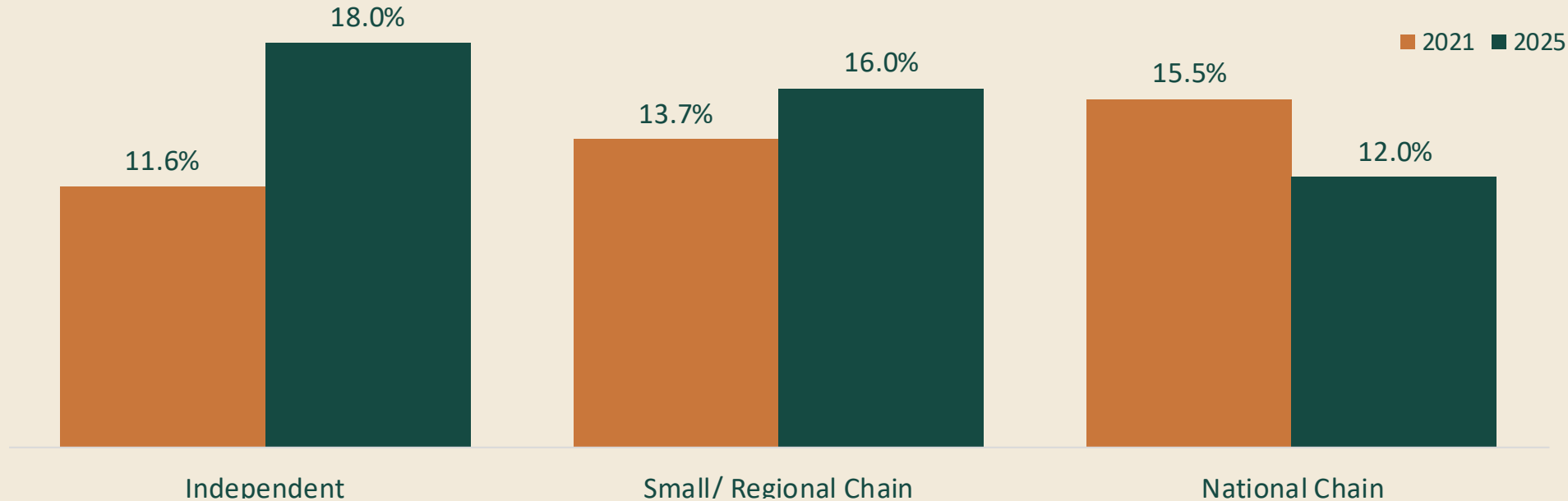
NOTE: Penetration represents the percent of all restaurants currently menuing at least one item featuring “watermelon.” Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.



Watermelons surged at independents and small chains, suggesting a renewed trend push

Though the slight decline in national account penetration is disappointing, the surge in independent and small chain menuing suggests a renewed excitement around watermelon as an on-trend ingredient. These segments, more so than national accounts, are likely to focus on trends – particularly emerging trends – and are likely to push interest into national accounts.

Share of Restaurants by System Size Currently Menuing Watermelon



Growth in small/ regional chain menuing matches NWPB spending for the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

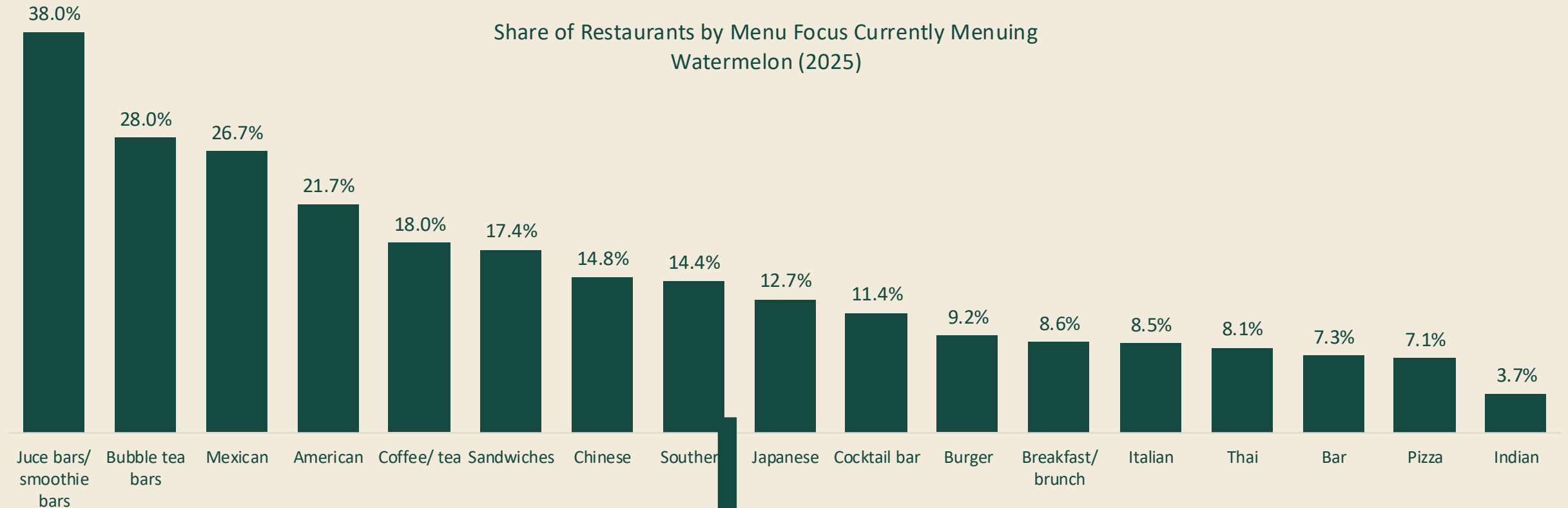
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: Penetration represents the percent of all restaurants currently menuing at least one item featuring “watermelon.” Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.



Watermelon is most commonly found at beverage-forward operations

This prevalence at beverage-forward operations mirrors the share of watermelon applications that are beverages, but highlights the opportunity to grow fresh watermelon menuing beyond beverages and at high-volume mainstream venues including burgers, American, Mexican, sandwich and Southern restaurants.



Penetration in Southern is likely underrepresented as many are BBQ “joints” that do not feature descriptive menus and are unlikely to identify garnishes or standard sides such as a slice of watermelon.

Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

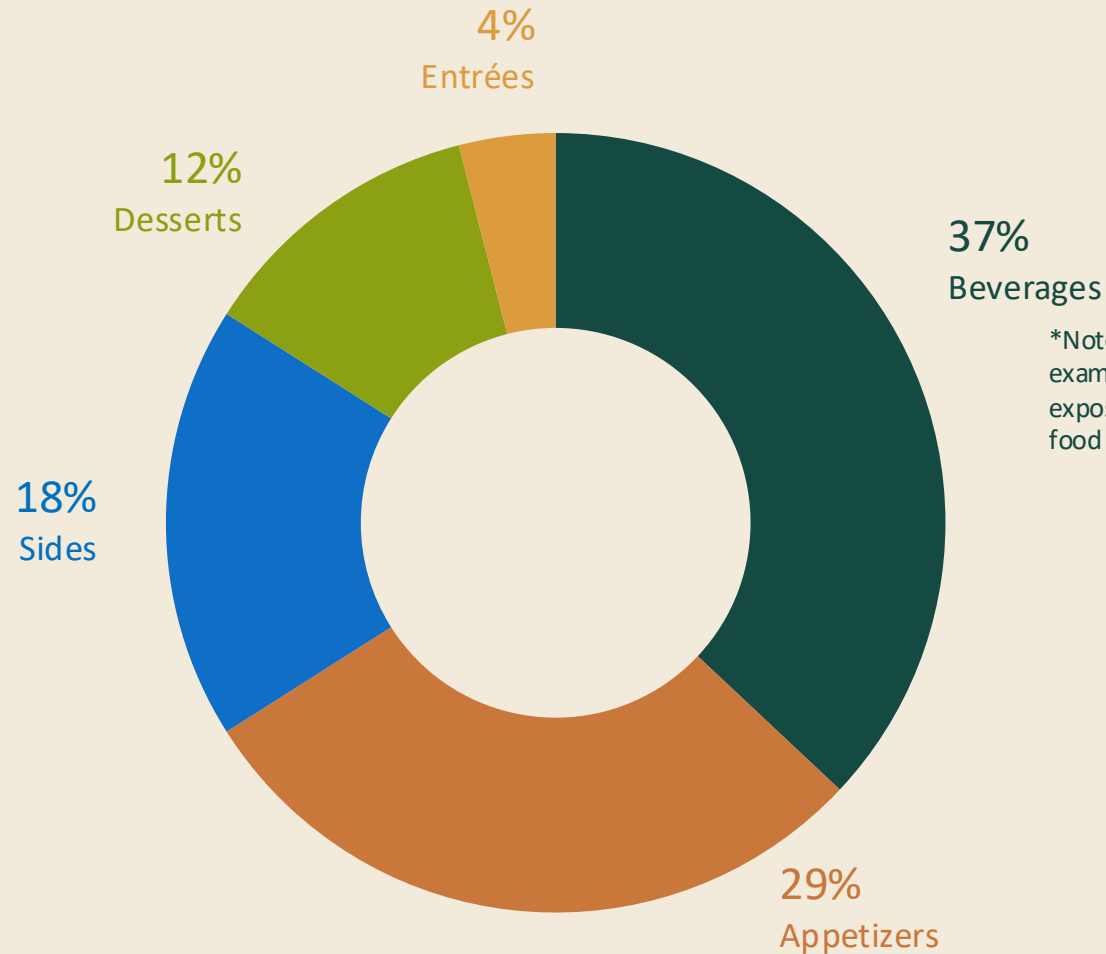
NOTE: Penetration represents the percent of all restaurants currently menuing at least one item featuring goat meat.



Opportunities to leverage beverages, grow savory applications

Nearly 40% of all watermelon items menued are beverages. This category, more than any other, is likely dominated by watermelon flavored options though fresh watermelon-based beverages are growing. Additionally, beverages have proven to be an incredibly important category for operators and are unlikely to experience the rationalization occurring in other categories. Appetizers, at nearly 30% are the second most common menu part and offer operators an excellent opportunity to innovate against watermelon in an approachable format for consumers. Entrées, however, are a key area of opportunity to grow menuing, particularly as watermelon becomes increasingly important as – at the very least – a key seasonal ingredient.

Distribution of Restaurants Currently Menuing Watermelon by Menu Part (2025)



*Note that beverages are likely to include non-fresh watermelon examples but have high consumer engagement and drive both exposure and innovation that can influence and shift into savory food categories.

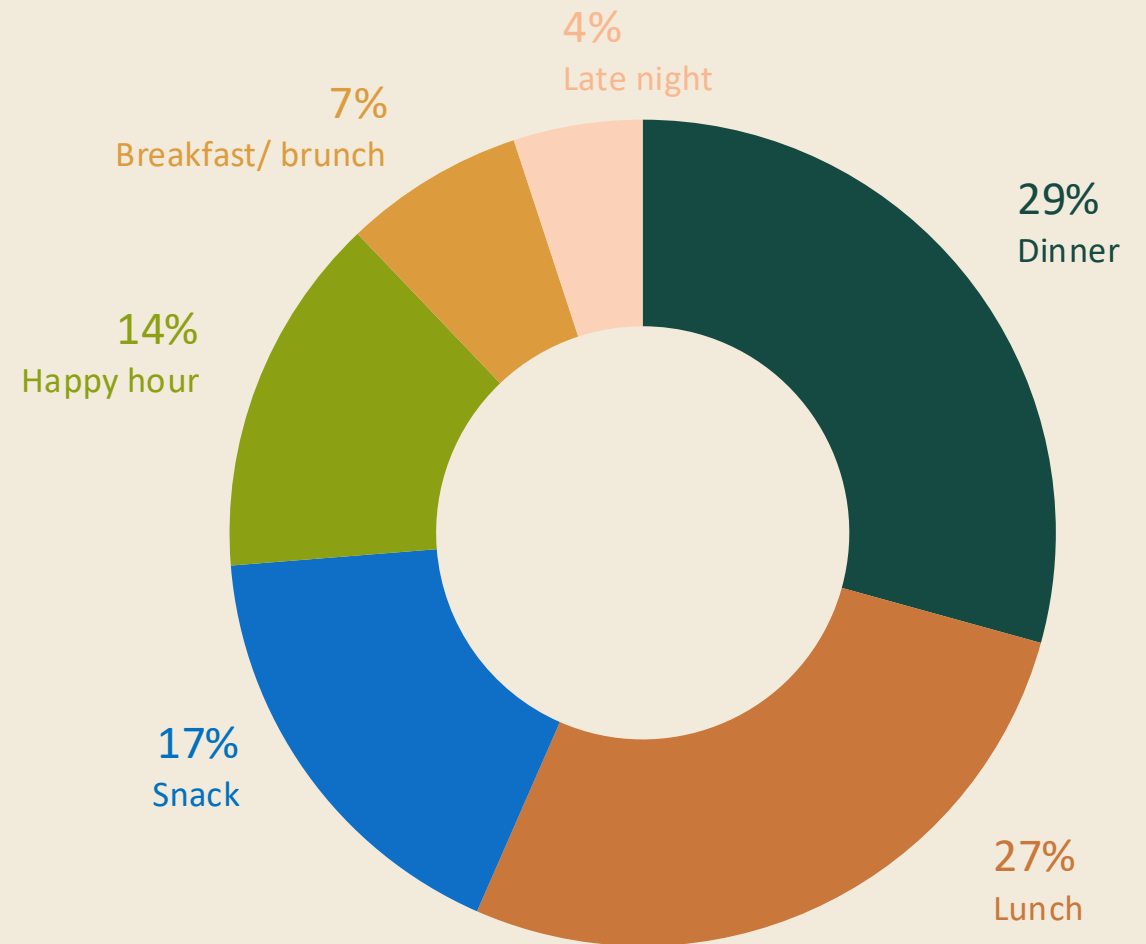
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 40% of all items featuring watermelon are menued as beverages. Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.

Watermelon is well distributed, but there are opportunities to grow at breakfast

Watermelon appears well distributed at dinner and lunch, and even as a snack (thanks to its strong distribution as an appetizer ingredient), but there is a good opportunity to grow menuing at breakfast where watermelon should be an intuitive fit in both beverages and food applications.

Distribution of Items Featuring Watermelon by Daypart (2025)

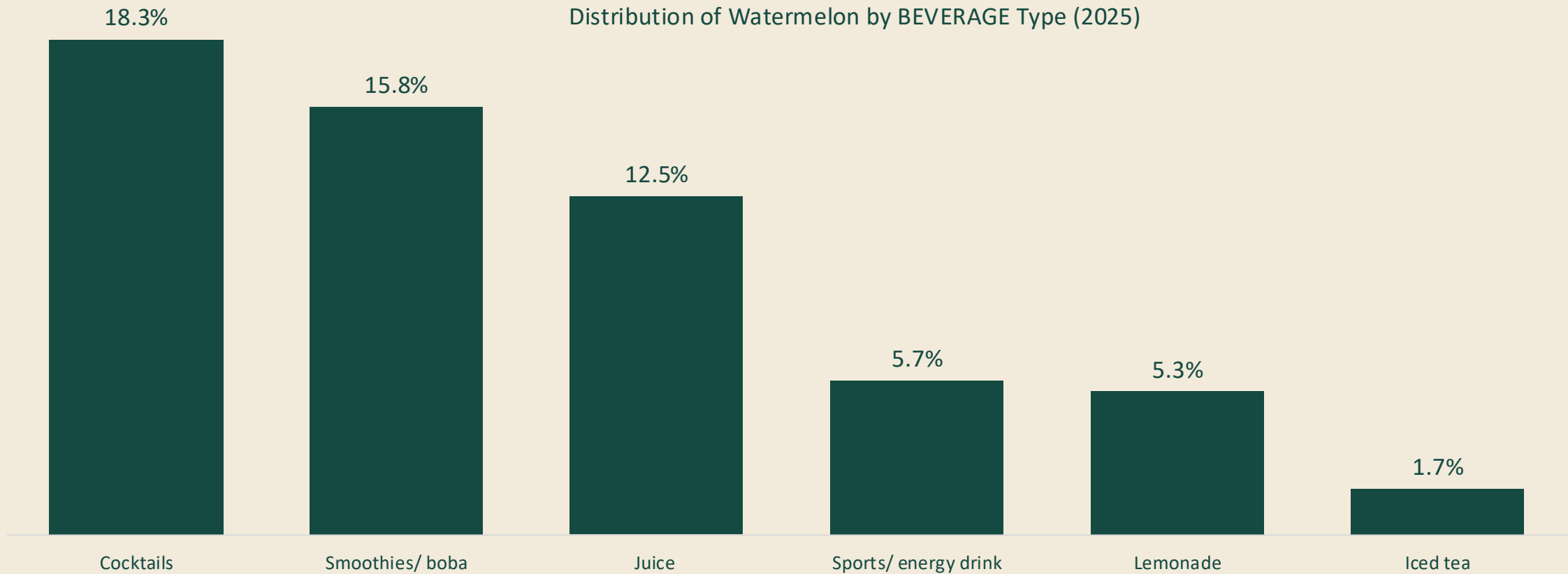


Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 29% of all items featuring watermelon are menued at dinner. Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.

Beverage applications make up the bulk of menuing, dominated by cocktails, smoothies and juice

Watermelon is most commonly featured in beverages, and cocktails – most often watermelon margaritas – are the most common beverage type though smoothies and juices follow close behind. Though this category can be dominated by watermelon-flavored beverages, cocktails are more frequently featuring fresh watermelon either as an ingredient or garnish. This category also offers growth potential given the increased importance to operators as a profit-driver and strong consumer engagement, particularly among younger consumers.



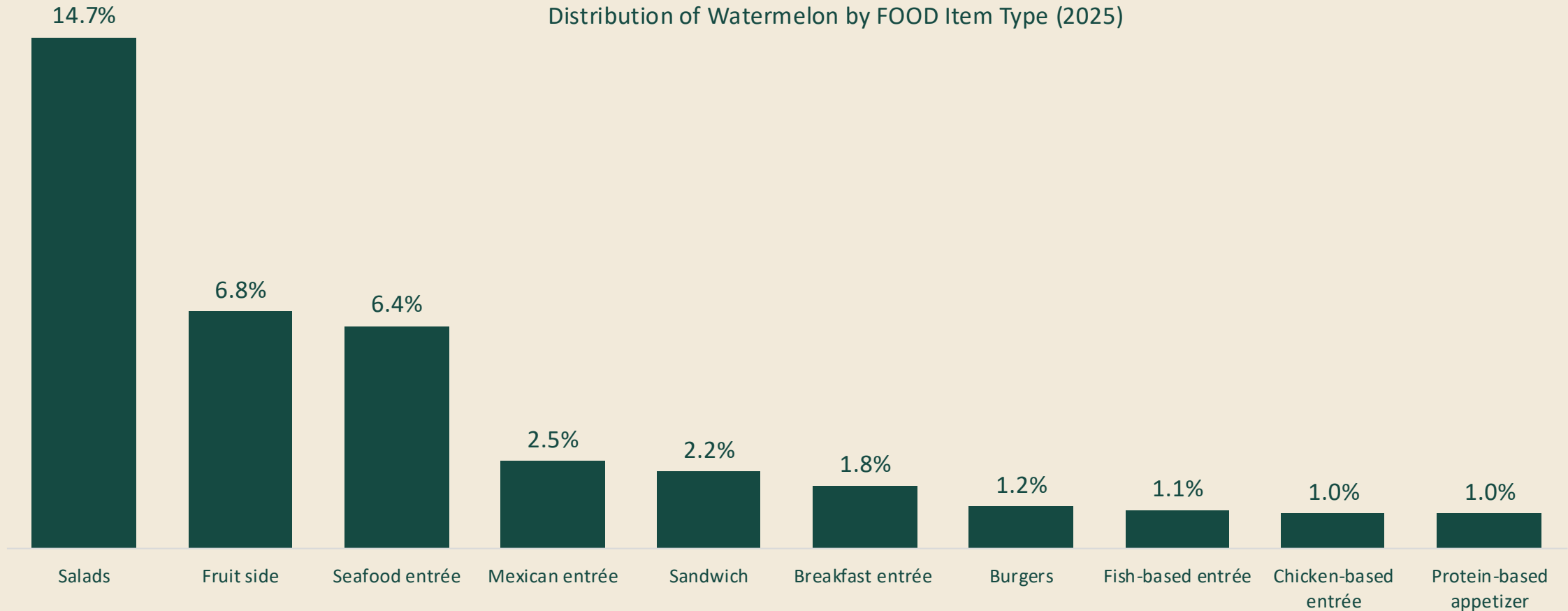
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 18.3% of all items featuring watermelon are cocktails. Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.



Salads dominate food menuing

Watermelon (most often watermelon feta) salads are the most common type of food item watermelon may be featured in and continue to be popular. Beyond that, watermelon is featured in fruit sides (alone or part of a fruit salad) or paired with seafood (often tuna). Beyond these applications, there is tremendous opportunity for increased innovation and menuing in savory items which the innovative examples at the end of this report highlight.



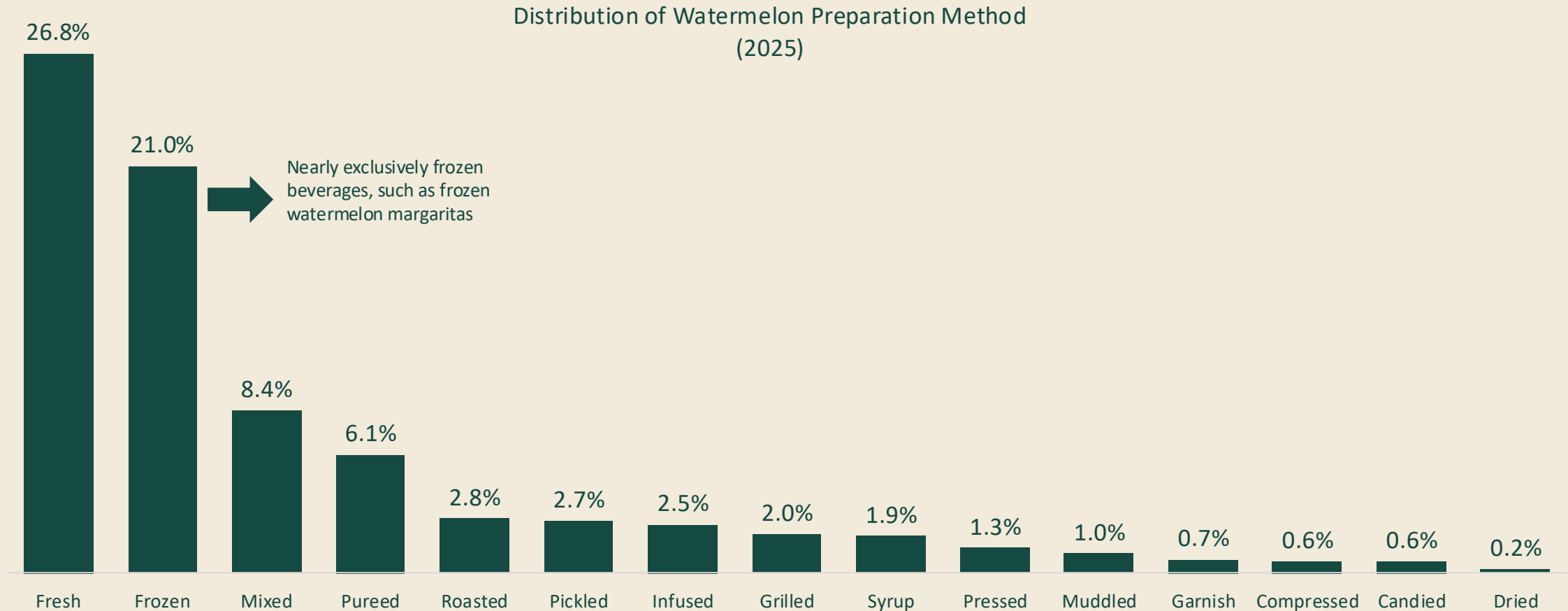
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 18.3% of all items featuring watermelon are cocktails. Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.



Preparations identified with watermelon highlight the prevalence of beverage applications

Many of the preparation methods indicated in association with watermelon are beverage-related. Other preparations that would be more common in food applications including pickled, roasted, pressed and grilled are all relatively uncommon and highlight the opportunity for more innovation around savory, high-impact watermelon innovation.



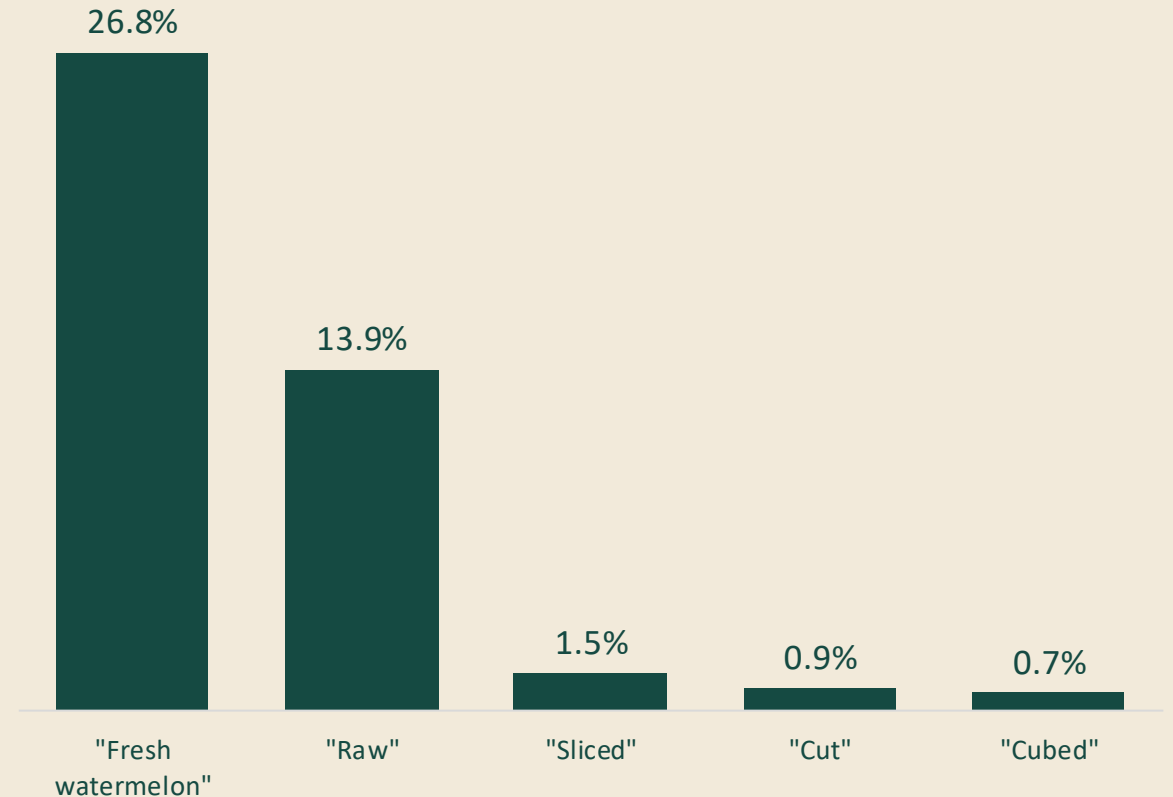
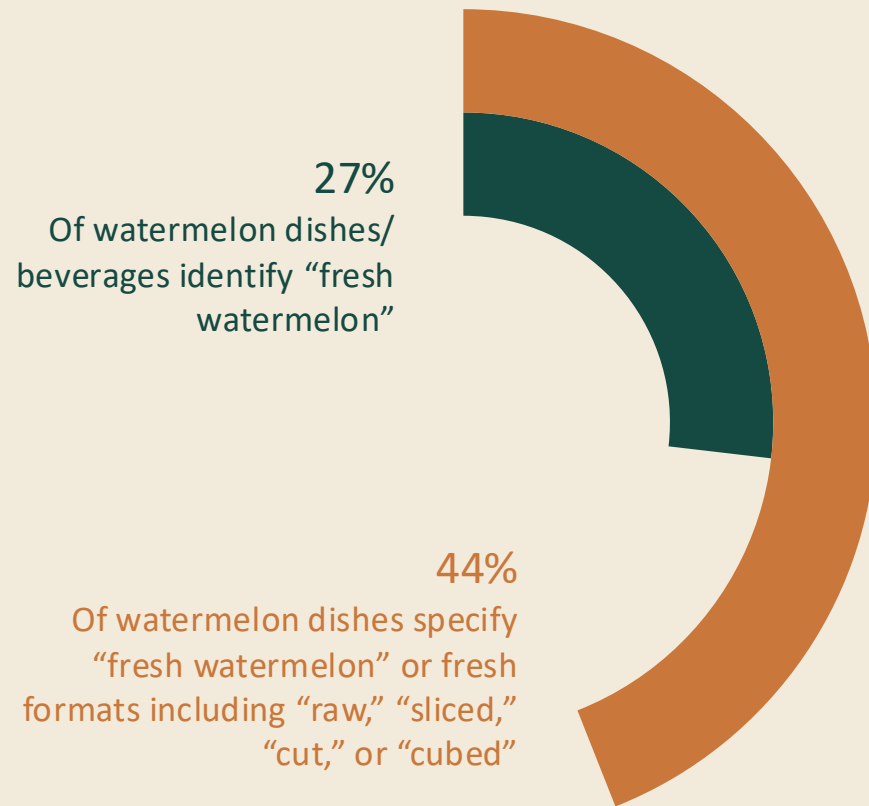
Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 26.8% of all items featuring watermelon indicate “fresh” watermelon.

Plenty of runway to grow fresh watermelon use among operators already featuring watermelon on menus

Across menus with watermelon identified on the menu in either a food or beverage application, 44% identify specifically “fresh watermelon” or some format that is fresh. This is likely under-representing the incidence of fresh watermelon use but certainly highlights the opportunity to increase mentions of fresh as well as use of fresh.

Penetration of Fresh Watermelon across Menus Featuring Watermelon (2025)



Source: 2025 data from Menu Data; 2021 data from Datassential

NOTE: This chart represents the share of all items featuring watermelon by daypart. For example, 29% of all items featuring watermelon are menued at dinner. Note this may include both watermelon flavored items as well as fresh watermelon.



WATERMELON INNOVATION - BEVERAGES

Non-alcoholic Beverage Innovation

There were far fewer innovative non-alcoholic beverages than expected, with most featuring watermelon juice without additional flavors. Here, there is tremendous opportunity for additional innovation.



Magali coffee – “a combination of watermelon and coffee – perfect for anyone looking for something different and tasty”
Roasters Cafe
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Pure watermelon juice
The Nomad Bali
Bali, Indonesia



Watermelon, pink lemon, ginger
Restaurante Maneva
Sao Paulo, Brazil



Medieval winter – “surprising blend” of watermelon, green apple, lemon juice and sparkling water”
Fascino Medieval
Joao Pessoa, Brazil

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation - Frozen

Very few frozen watermelon-based cocktails emerged during innovation exploration (beyond a standard frozen margarita). Equipment and execution challenges may limit the potential here, but if operators are featuring frozen beverages then watermelon should be on their rotation, particularly in season.



Watermelon Sparkling Bellini – Rebel
vodka, watermelon puree, lime,
monte creek split decision
Romeos Kitchen Spirits
British Columbia, Canada



Frozen watermelon paloma
Juniors on Harrison
New Orleans, LA



Watermelon Champagne &
Watermelon Frozen Margarita
Sorano Hotel
Tokyo, Japan

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Bitter Flavors

Pairing watermelon with bitter spirits such as Campari and Aperol is uncommon but creates a unique flavor contrast while amplifying the striking color of watermelon.



Watermelon garibaldi – Campari, peach, pink grape, fluffy watermelon juice
Tjoget
Stockholm, Sweden



Watermelon-infused Tyku Sake Aperol Sprits with Lillet Rouge and cold-pressed watermelon
KMRA Tasting Club
Kansas City, MO



Watermelon, strawberry, Aperol, cocoa honey and Tahitian lemon
Baruch Experience
Victoria da Conquista, Brazil

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation - Margaritas

Traditional or “standard” watermelon margaritas have become very common in season, but some operators are executing against margaritas that feature far less common flavor profiles and ingredients, as well as elevating these margaritas beyond those found extensively across the industry.



Sunburned – fresh watermelon, tequila, Cointreau, lime
Elephant Shoe
Valletta, Malta



Watermelon and coconut tropical margarita
El Patron
Tecumseh, OK



Watermelon sugar High – jespolon tequila, fresh lime, simple syrup, muddle watermelon, black lava salt
Jaime’s Restaurant
North Andover, MA



Watermelon margarita “up with a side of dirty rocks” – blanco tequila, triple sec, watermelon house-made sour mix
One 53
Rocky Hill, NJ

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation - Mojitos

Though far less common, and primarily found outside the U.S., watermelon mojitos celebrate fresh seasonal elements and play into the refreshing nature and appeal of watermelon.



Watermelon mojito – Bacardi, mint,
lime, simple syrup
Stix
Findlay, OH



Watermelon Mojito –
watermelon, ginger, lemon, mint
and choice of soda water or
sprite
Remaliya
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Muddled Cocktails

Though not identified as mojitos, these cocktail examples feature the same elements as traditional mojitos including muddled herbs and visually striking presentations.



Melon mosaic – muddled mint, fresh watermelon juice, lime, Bombay sapphire
Midlina Restaurant
Baltimore, MD



June bug – revolution austin reserve gin, fresh watermelon, basil, lemon & mikes hot honey
Greenhouse
Denton, TX



Watermelon basil gazatta
Rio de Todos
Bogota, Columbia

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Martinis

Martinis elevate watermelon above and beyond nostalgia and comfort, creating far more sophisticated experiences. The Lychee Martini from Leo's (below right) could be reinvented to push watermelon forward with lychee as more of a supporting flavor element.



Watermelon martini
The Fox House Restaurant & Bar
Antigua



Lychee martini – good boy vodka,
lychee syrup, watermelon, lime
Leo's
Grand Rapids, MI

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Tall & Refreshing

As “refreshing” is typically a key association with consumers, cocktails (and non-alcoholic cocktails) that lean into that concept regardless of cocktail type will be intuitive fits. The Watermelon Mule with Watermelon Popsicle (top right) creates a more engaging garnish; though the popsicle trend in the States came and went, the idea of an engaging garnish is very relevant.



White Watermelon Sangria
Bocca
Fairhaven, MA



Watermelon mint spritz
Ariella's Restaurant
Staten Island, NY



Watermelon Mule + Watermelon Popsicle
Lanterns Hawaii
Islas Baleares, Spain

Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Sweet

Watermelon is a sweet fruit, so cocktails that lean heavily into that sweetness by doubling up with other sweet ingredients (meringue, whipped cream, syrups, etc.) can easily overdo it. But, elevating and exploring the complexity of watermelon's sweetness can lead to unique flavor profiles.



Watermelon lime daiquiri – rumson's gold rum, fresh lime juice, sweetened watermelon, limoncello, whipped green
The Landing
Marblehead, MA

Vodka, butterscotch schnapps, le birlou, lime, watermelon/ strawberry syrup, Peychaud's bitters & whites with meringue & watermelon love heart garnish
8 at Trinity
Morisset Park, Australia



Alcoholic Beverage Innovation – Global Flavors

Watermelon is found worldwide so incorporating global flavors into watermelon-based cocktails should be an easy – though rarely explored – fit. These two examples, found domestically and internationally, do just that.



La rebanadita – watermelon, house-made chamoy, vodka
Amano
Caldwell, ID



Poke smash – Romeo's watermelon gin, watermelon liqueur, shoshu, cucumber water, shiso leaves, fresh watermelon, cucumber & strawberry shrub
Le Parfum
Montpellier, France



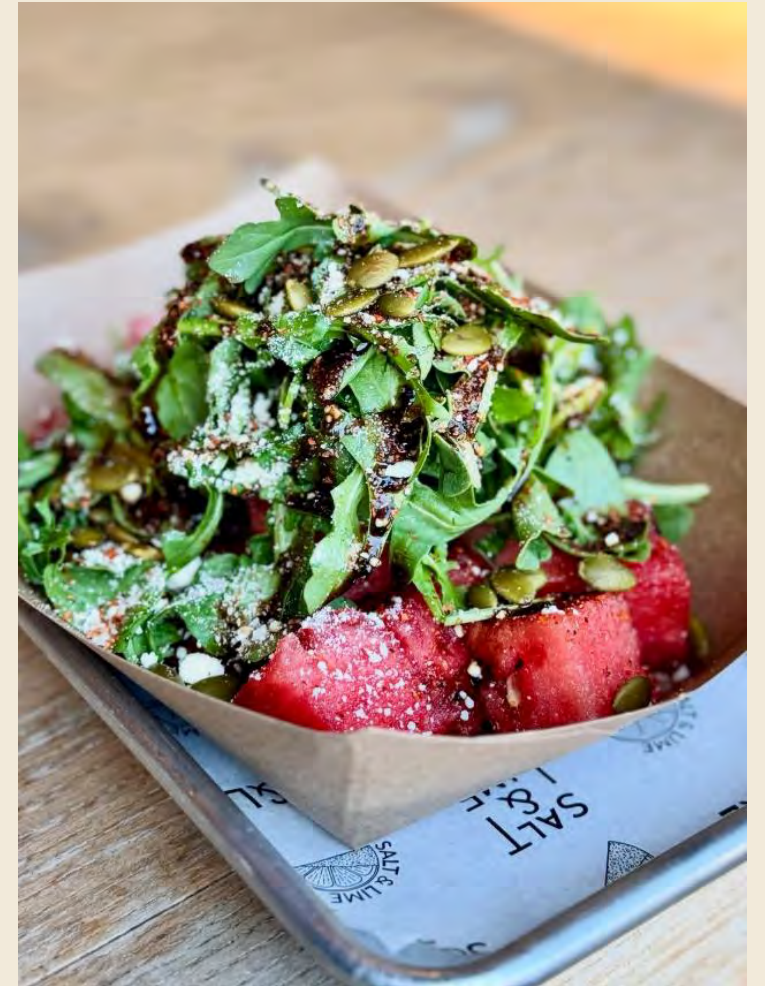
WATERMELON INNOVATION - SALADS

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Tajin

Domestically and internally, Tajin is becoming a more common pairing with watermelon.



Tajin Watermelon Salad – cucumber, red onion, jalapeno, mint, coriander, cotija cheese, roasted hazelnuts
Checho's
Penrith, Australia



Watermelon, arugula, tajin, mint
Salt & Lime Tacos
Costa Mesa, CA

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Halloumi

Two different presentations of the same concept, these watermelon & halloumi salads nicely balance sweet and tart, crunch and squeak while offering a salad that is, inherently, uncomplicated.



Watermelon Salad –
Halloumi, watermelon,
arugula, pistachios,
champagne vinaigrette,
balsamic
Good News Restaurant & Bar
Woodbury, CT



Watermelon, halloumi, pine nut salad
Roseleaf Bar Cafe
Edinburgh, Scotland

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Corn

Unlike some watermelon salads, those that feature corn often offer more dynamic visual appeal given the textures, shapes and flavor profiles developed. This is particularly true for the example from Shavano (right) which further enhances flavor with grilled corn and salsa verde.



Watermelon salad
Restaurante Campino
Islas Baleares, Spain



Watermelon salad – grilled corn,
basil, salsa verde, jalapeno, feta
Shavano
Salida, CO

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Burrata

Watermelon can make a basic burrata appetizer more intriguing, creating surprise and delight with two prolific and extremely familiar ingredients. Each of these examples, in turn, brings additional unique ingredients to the dish which allows an operator to keep the ever-popular burrata on the menu while ensuring it stands out.



Watermelon Burrata Salad – yuzu, watermelon, red wine, cucumbers, heirloom tomatoes, basil and balsamic glaze
The Garrison
Pineville, NC

stuffed tomato, cucumber, watermelon, burrata
Fed Restaurant & Bar
Luzern, Switzerland



Watermelon, burrata and dashi
Weisses Rosli
Zurich, Switzerland

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Tomato

In a watermelon and tomato salad, tomatoes often get much of the “romance” given the heirloom varieties available, but tomatoes can just as easily act as savory/ umami accents to watermelon’s sweetness without overpowering the dish.



Vesuvius Tomatoes, watermelon,
black olive, duck fat mayonnaise,
banyuls dressing & fried courgette
flowers
The Dysart Petersham
Richmond, UK



Watermelon salad with heirloom
tomatoes, stracciatella, grapefruit,
Calabrian chilies, parsley
Veratina
Savannah, GA



Watermelon, beefsteak tomato,
cherry tomato, buttercheese, mint,
white balsamic vinaigrette
Chartier
Paris, France



Cherry tomato, watermelon, labneh,
chettinad masala, peruvian mint
Spoon and Stable
Minneapolis, MN

Salad Innovation – Watermelon & Meat

These simple salads build off the more traditional prosciutto & melon appetizers, creating a more composed salad that balances the umami and saltiness of the meat with the varied flavors (macerated and fresh) of watermelon.



Watermelon macerated in lime & chilli with jamon and honey dressing
Arbequina
Oxford, UK

Watermelon & feta with olives, baby arugula, crispy speck
Mamma Lena's
Ventnor, NJ



Salad Innovation – Unique Flavors

Though watermelon feta salads are everywhere, there are so many other flavors and combinations in which watermelon can shine. Specifically, watermelon can pair with a wide range of ingredients from tropical to global and strong, impactful preps.

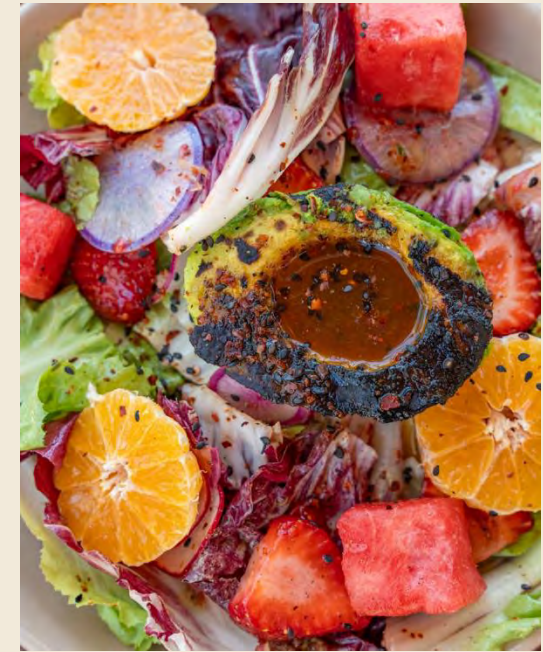


Watermelon & dragon fruit salad
Jackson Lily's
Bali, Indonesia



Watermelon & cucumber salad,
cashew harissa cream, black olive,
mint
Vernick
Philadelphia, PA

Charcoal avocado salad with
watermelon
Convivo Restaurant & Bar
Santa Barbara, CA



Paradigm Gardens watermelon with
lime, mint and cicada calling farm
dried roselle hibiscus
Here Today
New Orleans, LA

Salad Innovation – Preparations

Of the salad innovation identified here, only one applied a strong preparation method to the watermelon itself. And while watermelon is the headline ingredient in the item name, the promotion pushes the watermelon to the back which is, unfortunately, a miss.



Grilled watermelon salad
The Wine Bar at Vitner Valley
Morgantown, WV

Salad Innovation – Updating Watermelon Feta

Watermelon feta salads are, of course, popular but rethinking and exploring new presentations, flavors and preparations can create surprise and delight within the familiar formula.



Watermelon stack with arugula, sprouts, Aleppo chile, pickled red onion, cotija cheese
The Canyon River Grill
Ellensburg, WA

Did you know that watermelon is one of the best foods to eat in the heat? It's packed with water and electrolytes to keep you hydrated, and has a cooling effect on the body due to compounds such as lycopenes. In traditional Chinese medicine it is recommended to clear heat from the body. This lively pink fruit is bursting with vitamins and minerals including vitamin C so how wonderful to dine out for your pleasure and health!



Compressed watermelon, grilled feta, honey vinaigrette, mint oil, sesame
MandO Restaurant
Mykonos, Greece



Fresh watermelon, creamy feta, crunchy almonds
CouCou
Sardinia, Italy



Watermelon & feta – Almonds, hazelnuts, mint, basil, and a hint of lemon
Wagyu Paris
Paris, France

Salad Innovation – Updating Watermelon Feta (cont.)



Watermelon, feta, balsamic glaze, Maldon sea salt,
olive oil and mint
Stix
Findlay, OH

Watermelon salad with strawberry feta
cheese, fresh apricot & plum,
watermelon juice, pistachio
Juno Restaurant
Baku, Azerbaijan





**WATERMELON INNOVATION –
APPETIZERS**

Protein-forward Appetizer Innovations

Three very different applications of watermelon with animal proteins, with watermelon serving very different purposes but all three highlighting the versatility of watermelon when paired with animal proteins.



Beef, mountain serac, black garlic balsamic, crispy rye, watermelon, herbs and wildflowers
The Alpinist
Crans, Switzerland



Watermelon steak canapes
Herringbone
Edinburgh, Scotland



Watermelon tain boneless wings
tossed in a homemade watermelon
wing sauce
Undisputed Craft House
El Paso, TX

Protein-forward Appetizer Innovations (cont.)

A very different presentation of watermelon with animal proteins with an interactive and visually engaging presentation that places watermelon in a starring position with the prosciutto.



Watermelon fusion charcuterie board with
watermelon sangria
Bocca
Sardinia, Italy

Finger Food Appetizer Innovation

While watermelon as a carrier may not be as portable as other preparations, this take on the popular katsu sando dish creates an unexpected version that works well as an appetizer or small bite.

Watermelon & feta katsu sando
Le Jane
Lille, France



Tartare, Carpaccio Appetizer Innovation

Watermelon can often be featured as a vegan substitute for animal and fish/seafood proteins, and these tartare/ carpaccio starters are excellent examples of how that concept can be taken to the extreme with complex and trend-forward flavors.



Roasted watermelon tartare with seaweed crunch
Mareando La Huerta
Alacant, Spain



Roasted watermelon carpaccio and smoked and fresh cantaloupe “prosciutto”, apple, tonka, basil emulsion and citrus gel
Dubravkin Put
Zagreb, Croatia



Watermelon carpaccio – thinly sliced Italian watermelon served on a bed of arugula, eggplant cream, crumbled goat cheese and lemon basil pesto
Villa Rado
Andernos-les-Bains, France

Fried Watermelon Appetizer Innovation

Fried watermelon is a common street food in the Philippines but remains extremely uncommon in the U.S. That said, fried anything can be a winner here and the combinations of toppings and sauces could be endless, and not limited to more traditional Filipino offerings.



Filipino Deep fried watermelon
State Fair
Dallas, TX

Fried watermelon topped with savory pork floss
DaiLo
Toronto, Canada



Fermented Appetizer Innovation

Fermentation remains a significant area of innovation enjoying not only strong association with on-trend global cuisines but also a health halo. Watermelon's sweetness can offer balance and contrast to the sharpness of fermented flavors.



Taengmo pla ra – fresh watermelon and special sauce, most often made with fermented fish sauce
Street food vendor
Bangkok, Thailand

Compressed watermelon, fermented tomato
Dear Sainte Eloise
Sydney, Australia



Other Appetizer Innovation



Pickle plate featuring an assortment of pickled items including sweet summer watermelon rind
Forgotten Tonic
St. Augustine, FL



Watermelon & kimchi
Donmai
Mumbai, India



Other Appetizer Innovation



Dried watermelon filled with labneh and kalamata olives
Uri Buri
Acre, Israel

Charred watermelon with chicken crumb and ajo blanco
Maldonado Bistro
Gozo, Malta



Other Appetizer Innovation



Iodised watermelon, cream of feta cheese and wakame
Vins des Pyrenees
Paris, France

A top-down photograph of two blue ceramic bowls filled with a vibrant red, frothy watermelon soup. The bowls are placed on a matching red ceramic plate. The entire set is on a red and orange patterned tablecloth. A blue textured cloth napkin is tucked under the right bowl. A small blue ceramic dish containing black pepper is in the bottom left. A silver spoon with a blue handle is in the left bowl, and another is partially visible in the right bowl. The text 'WATERMELON INNOVATION – SOUPS' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the bottom center of the image.

WATERMELON INNOVATION –
SOUPS

Gazpacho Innovation

With or without tomato, watermelon gazpacho plays off the combination of those two seasonal produce options to create an unexpected but well-balanced soup, whether it's heavily garnished as with the example from KMRA (top left) or not.



Watermelon and oishi berry gazpacho, both frozen & chilled, with chili oil, compressed watermelon, red miso tuna belly, hibiscus, pickled shallot, clarified green tomato and celery bubbles with basil & tarragon eevo to finish
KMRA Tasting Club
Kansas City, MS



Watermelon gazpacho
Family House
Barcelona, Spain

Gazpacho Innovation (cont.)



Beetroot and watermelon gazpacho, pistachio focaccia, hummus “of the moment” and homemade feta ice cream
Ancienne Ecole
Palau-del-Vidre, France

Other Soup Innovation

These examples highlight the breadth of potential watermelon soup applications, skewing from savory to sweet but – in this case – all garnished to create textural and visual depth and engagement.



Watermelon aquachile with saffron oil, basil, habanero, pink peppercorn
Ensenada
New York, NY

Roasted and smoked
barthelasse watermelon with
fine garlands, Mas de Carles
goat mousse, Campari
watermelon grapefruit
mousse cocktail
Jacqueline Restaurant
Villeneuve-les-Avignon, France



Frozen tomato soup, strawberry & watermelon, burrata & raw ham
Imperial Palace Annecy
Annecy, France





WATERMELON INNOVATION - SEAFOOD

Watermelon & Tuna Innovations

It's interesting that nearly all tuna and watermelon dishes appear outside the U.S. These creations are frequently focused on raw or ceviche tuna paired with watermelon, with some applications adding additional preparation techniques to the watermelon which allows it to stand up more to the tuna.



Tuna with burnt watermelon, creamy burrata, nectarine with Caesar dressing and candied tomatoes
Pin Pon
Bordeaux, France

Mediterranean tuna belly matured with fermented soy, burnt watermelon, tarragon basil seasoning, raspberries, fresh almonds, smoked pickles and fragrant herbs
Restaurant Frederic Simonin
Paris, France



Tuna and watermelon with yuzu and crème fraiche
Latteria Bar
Adelaide, Australia



Tuna fillet, silky noodles, oven-baked watermelon
Diferent Mallorca
Mallorca, Spain

Watermelon & Tuna Innovations (cont.)



Tuna crudo – marinated watermelon, citrus
vinaigrette, pistachio, basil
Bikini Bikini
Leiden, Netherlands

Tuna tatare, watermelon, ginger,
sesame, lime
Socius
Norfolk, England



Seared tuna, avocado,
watermelon, sesame &
pickled ginger
Cabotte
London, England



Yellow-fin tuna and watermelon
ceviche
Chuuk Restaurant
Ontario, Canada

Watermelon & Tuna Innovations (cont.)



Red Tuna, red shiso,
watermelon
Hotel La Ponche
Saint Tropez, France

Red tuna ceviche, watermelon,
beetroot, raspberries
Restaurant L'endroit
Marrakech, Morocco



Tuna watermelon – ahi tuna, watermelon, guajillo, lime,
cilantro, radishes
El Catrin Destileria
Toronto, Canada

Watermelon & Tuna Innovations (cont.)

Ahi tuna loin, watermelon, green almonds and coconut green curry with cilantro, kafir lime/ lemongrass oil, lime juice, basil seeds and sesame shrimp rice crackers
Little Wolf
Edmonton, Canada



Tuna crudo with heirloom tomatoes, misozuke cucumber, watermelon, avocado, radish, shiso, sesame
Velvet Belly
Rochester, NY

Aguachile Innovations

Does aguachile give operators permission to be more inventive than more common applications such as tartare, ceviche or gazpacho? Two of these three examples employ impactful preparations, unique flavors and interesting plating.



Watermelon aguachile with shrimp, red pepper, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, red onions, micro cilantro and grilled watermelon
La Llorona
Philadelphia, PA

Mongo ika, pineapple and watermelon aguachile with pluot and cucumber
Sixty Three Clinton
New York, New York



Watermelon and tuna aguachile
Tago
Houston, TX



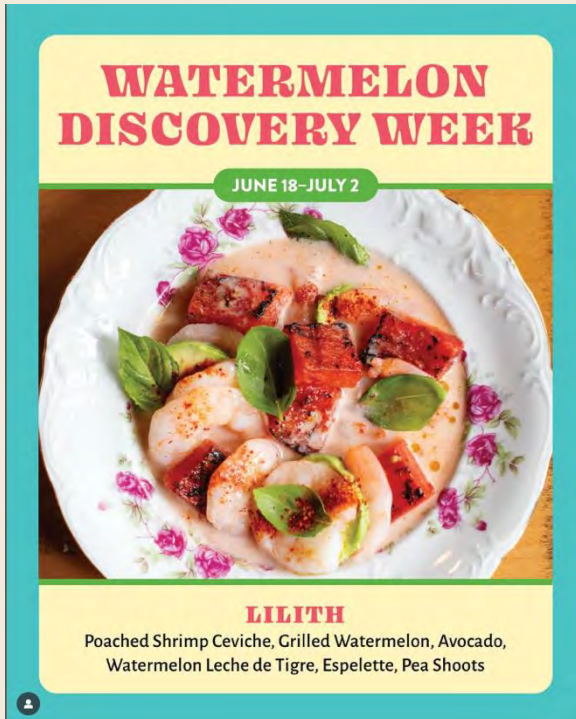
Watermelon & Shrimp Innovations

Watermelon and shrimp may not be as common as tuna but it is spurring some interesting innovation in flavors and application, including the example from C'sons (bottom right) which features watermelon in a BBQ sauce as well as garnish.



Grilled prawns over a summer salad of watermelon, avocado, feta, pickled cucumber, rucola, mint and coriander finished with chili oil and lime
Elephant Shoe
Valletta, Malta

Carabinero, burrata, fennel, watermelon, bisque
Restaurant Le Sable
Veldhoven, Netherlands



Poached Shrimp ceviche, grilled watermelon, avocado, watermelon leche de tigre, espelette, pea shoots
Lilith
Pittsburgh, PA



Watermelon bbq peel & eat shrimp – head-on shrimp, house-made watermelon bbq sauce, wedge of watermelon, grilled baguette
C'sons
LaGrange, GA

Watermelon & Oyster Innovations

Two very different applications of watermelons with oysters, but the refreshingly sweet flavor of watermelon can provide a unique counterbalance to the briny flavor of oysters.



Crostini oysters with lemon,
watermelon mignonette and hot
sauce
Benchmark Restaurant
Ontario, Canada

Bogue sound watermelons, fried
bogue sound oysters, comeback
sauce, sea beans, boiled peanuts,
Wrightsville beach se salt, pepper
RX Chicken & Oysters
Wilmington, NC



Watermelon & Scallop Innovations

Scallops, with their delicate flavor and texture, can pair well with watermelon as long as care is taken that the texture of watermelon (and flavor) don't overpower the scallops. In two of these examples, watermelon is featured in sauces which focuses the watermelon experience on its flavor versus its texture.



Hokkaido scallop crudo with watermelon gazpacho, radishes and blueberry kimchi
Frances
San Francisco, CA



Scallop & watermelon featuring scallops, watermelon, ponzu and shiso
WOODs.
Bangkok, Thailand



Hokkaido scallop, garlic scape, bing cherry, dill, preserved watermelon-fresno chili jus
St. Jack Restaurant & Bar
Portland, OR

Other Seafood Innovations

Two very different applications of watermelons with oysters, but the refreshing sweet flavor of watermelon can provide a unique counterbalance to the briny flavor of oysters.



Spiced watermelon ceviche, octopus carpaccio, fig leaf sorbet, white peaches and vervine syrup
TOMA Restaurant
Marseille, France

Seasonal crudo featuring pacific Hamachi, macerated watermelon, crushed sesame & watermelon ponzu
The Corner Store
New York, New York



Haddock croquette with fried okra, tomato watermelon coulis, pickled fennel & watermelon rind, chive oil
The General Muir
Atlanta, GA



WATERMELON INNOVATION ENTRÉES

Burger Innovation

While watermelon on top of a burger may be a more challenging sell in the U.S., watermelon-based BBQ could have far greater legs. However, grilled watermelon on a fried chicken sandwich may be a more intuitive fit.



Burger of the Week with grilled watermelon, wasabi mayo and arugula salad on a sesame bun

Die Fette Kuh
Cologne, Germany



Sandy Crunch – Artisan sweet potato bread, premium beef patty, watermelon bbq, onion confit, bacon crunch, creamy camembert brie spread, cheddar cheese

Dos Cucharas
Panama City, Panama

COP Protein Innovation

Watermelon is less commonly menued with animal proteins (versus seafood and fish) but these pairings show the breadth of possibilities, from extremely refined to comfort-forward.



Duck watermelon, Campari, coriander, capucine, grapefruit, black garlic, ginger
Da Mimmo
Woluwe-St-Lambert, Belgium



Brined pork chop, cornbread, puree, compressed watermelon, panzanella salad, tomato-watermelon vinaigrette and pickled watermelon rind – part of watermelon discovery week
Nobie's
Houston, TX

Fried Fish Innovation

Though watermelon isn't featured fresh here, it is another example of how the addition of watermelon to popular sauces – in this case, hot honey – can create new experiences from significantly over-exposed condiments.

“southern comfort with a coastal twist” – chicken-fried grouper collar with purple cabbage slaw, watermelon hot honey and tajin
1921 Mount Dora
Mount Dora, Florida



Fried Chicken Innovation

Though fried chicken and watermelon is a classic combination, this is updated with spiced watermelon. This combination has infinite innovation possibilities.



Fried chicken with spiced watermelon, bourbon maple syrup and waffles
Yardbird

Pizza Innovation

Watermelon on pizza is wholly unexpected but pairing it with prosciutto calls to mind the melon/prosciutto combination that is more common.

Watermelon prosciutto pizza
Paesanos
Sacramento, CA



Vegan Entrée Innovation

Communion's take on a tuna-forward entrée does not inherently alter the watermelon to mimic tuna but, rather, creates a flavor-forward dish with watermelon at its heart.



“new vegan entrée” crusted watermelon – watermelon soaked in tamari, seared over rice with a vibrant seaweed salad, cucumber, avocado and serrano finished with a ginger tamari dressing and a touch of mango gel

Communion
San Diego, CA



WATERMELON INNOVATION –
DESSERTS

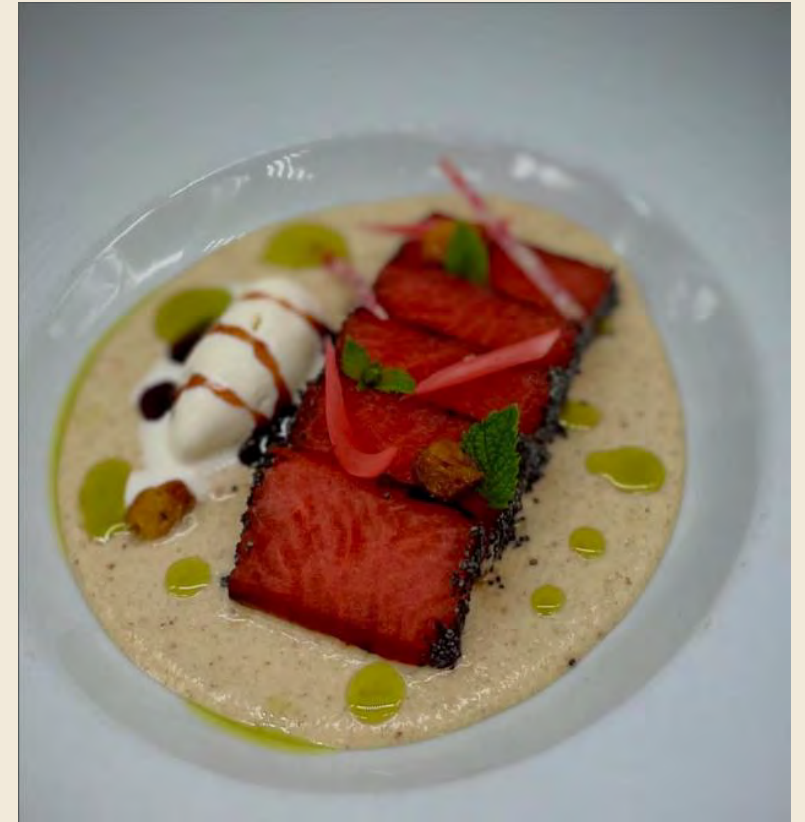
Dessert Innovation

While dessert applications may not be the focus of the National Watermelon Promotion Board's push to increase watermelon menuing, these innovative examples explore how watermelon desserts can move beyond basic, nostalgic or comforting.



Infused with rauram, tsukudani, melon candy and rauram ice cream
Freya
Biarritz, France

Bloody watermelon tataki, ajo blanco, goat cheese ice cream, bread nougatine and mint oil
Pierre-Louis Marin
Languedoc-Roussillon, France



Dessert Innovation (cont.)



Shortbread with crème, vanilla princess and watermelon
Les Impulsifs
Toulouse, France



Mint melon brunoise, fresh watermelon soup,
crunchy tulip tile, homemade ice cream and mint
oil
Boheme
Mougins, France



Grilled cottage cheese, agave-infused
watermelon and raki sorbet
Kavanoz Yalikavak
Mugla, Turkiye

Dessert Innovation (cont.)



Subak with watermelon sorbet and cucumber-mint granita
Restaurant I-Sang
Bangkok, Thailand



Watermelon cake
Ne Quittez Pas at Café 2001
Tokyo & L.A.

Dessert Innovation (cont.)



Watermelon soup with mango ice cream
Restaurante Baobab
Zaragoza, Spain

Watermelon granita, whipped cream & coconut
Lima Cantina
London, England



Compressed watermelon, lychee granita,
strawberry gelato, candied sunflower
seeds
Hustlers
Sydney, Australia

HUMAN-FOCUSED INSIGHTS

Menu Matters

FOR THE F+B INDUSTRY



MAEVE WEBSTER
PO Box 750
Arlington, VT 05250
O: (802) 430-7085
C: (312) 420-0724
maeve@menumatters.com

MIKE KOSTYO
6353 N. Wayne Ave, #3
Chicago, IL 60660
C: (219) 308-5872
mike@menumatters.com

menumatters.com