SECOND EDITION

THE CULINARY OWL

FOODTOK: THE MAKING OF A CRAVING

HOW FOOD VIDEOS HIJACK YOUR BRAIN, YOUR CRAVINGS & YOUR CART

HOOKED BY DESIGN

THE CRAVING TRIGGER

REWARD SYSTEM ACTIVATED! Close-up food imagery can activate brain systems involved in reward, attention and food motivation, sometimes increasing how much we want to eat.

ALGORITHM LOOP: Watched one dumpling video? The algorithm serves you ten more. Each view trains the platform to push more content, trapping you in a cycle of visual hunger that never gets satisfied.

IMPULSE OVERLOAD: Studies show that exposure to high-calorie food imagery increases the likelihood of impulsive food choices (Yeomans & Brace, 2015, PLOS ONE) — you weren't hungry, until you were.

TREND NORMALISATION: When millions watch the same viral recipe, it becomes "normal." Unusual combinations, extreme portions, and questionable habits get repeated, shared, and accepted as food culture.

MISINFORMATION SPREADS FAST: No chef's hat required to go viral. Unsafe food handling, misleading health claims, and outright myths rack up millions of views — and nobody fact-checks a cheese pull.

FOOD TREND LANGUAGE

How Buzzwords Sell You the Bite Before You Take It

Food menus are quietly shaped by psychology, not just chefs. Certain words aren't describing what's on the plate- they're selling a feeling, and that's often what convinces you to order.

"Artisan" toast costs more, and "guilt-free" brownies feel healthier, and that's not a coincidence. Food trend language is designed to make people want, trust, and spend. "Gluten-free" sounds cleaner and smarter even when the food never contained gluten in the first place. "Farm-to-table" sells freshness, authenticity, and a sense of connection to where the food came from. "Restaurant-style" turns an everyday recipe into a little taste of luxury. "Melts in your mouth" makes your brain imagine the taste before you've even taken a bite, while "artisan" suggests craftsmanship and exclusivity, making a higher price feel justified. These words don't just describe food, they sell an experience. So next time a menu makes you hungry, ask yourself: are you craving the food, or the words?

WORDS DON'T JUST DESCRIBE FOOD, THEY MAKE YOU CRAVE IT BEFORE YOU EVEN SEE IT."

CREATOR COOKING STYLES

How Food Creators Package Recipes for Maximum Impact on Social Media

THE VISUAL FORMULA

Trend Watch: Creator Cooking Decoded

Food creators don't just cook - they **PERFORM.** Food videos are engineered to stop your scroll and trigger instant cravings. It starts with a two-second hook - like a dramatic cheese pull or ASMR crunch.

Creators use tension for a major payoff, building hype before the big reveal. Viral formats like "restaurant dupes" or "3-ingredient recipes" keep people coming back because they are easy to copy.

It's also about vibes and identity, framing food as pure comfort, nostalgia, or luxury. Fast cuts and close-up textures make cooking feel high-energy, effortless, and impossible to resist.

THE CAMERA EFFECT

Why Crunchy & Gooey Foods DOMINATE Your Feed

Ever notice fried chicken just sounds better on camera? That's food physics, not editing. The crust shatters into a sharp, high-frequency crunch, and miking the bite close makes it feel almost aggressive, while a slow pull-apart shot lets steam escape as proof of freshness.

For example, tanghulu's (an old chinese street food) glassy sugar shell catches light like polished jewelry, cracking clean on mic to reveal bright fruit underneath, making mouths water.

Kunafa works differently - it melts you over instead. Crisp golden pastry gives way to warm, stretchy cheese that ribbons off the fork, syrup soaking every gap so the crunch never dries out, pistachios adding one final layer of texture.

Cameras matter because they translate crunch and pull into sound and light that our eyes trust instantly. Close miking exaggerates texture, backlighting exaggerates gloss, and slow reveals build anticipation, tricking your brain into tasting through pure sensory suggestion.

"YOUR EARS EAT FIRST ON FOODTOK

CRUNCH, SIZZLE, AND THE CHEESE PULL ARE THE NEW PLATING."

CULINARY RED FLAGS

FoodTok Food Safety Special — What Viral Trends Don't Tell You

DANGER ZONE: VIRAL HABITS THAT CAN HURT YOU

RED FLAGS vs. GREEN FLAGS - Know the Difference

🌿 FoodTok makes cooking look effortless, but a few viral habits are quietly putting people at risk. Here's what the trends get wrong, and what actually keeps a kitchen safe. Rinsing raw chicken under the tap feels clean, but it's genuinely wrong, since splashing water spreads Salmonella up to 3 feet across your sink, counter, and hands. Skip the rinse, pat the chicken dry with a paper towel, bin the towel immediately, then let the heat of cooking handle the bacteria. The five-second rule is just as flawed, since bacteria transfer is instant, and floors carry a ton of bacteria that get on your food no matter how fast you grab it, so discard anything dropped, no exceptions. Cross-contamination is another common mistake, can be prevented with colour-coded boards: red for meat, green for veggies, and handwashing between each. Lastly, a damp cloth just moves bacteria around instead of removing it, so sanitise surfaces after prep and swap cloths often.

JUST BECAUSE IT'S TRENDING DOESN'T MEAN IT'S SAFE. A LITTLE FOOD SAFETY NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE.

TREND TO TABLE

The FoodTok Pipeline — From Your Screen To Your Plate

1 STEP 1 – SEE IT

A golden, crispy, cheese-pull video stops your midnight scroll. Instant craving.

2 STEP 2 – LIKE IT

You like, save, tag a friend - and the craving gets stronger.

3 STEP 3 – SAVE IT

Into your “recipes to try” folder it goes. This one, you’ll actually make.

4 STEP 4 – GET INGREDIENTS

You pause, screenshot, and shop. Suddenly, miso paste and Korean chilli flakes are on your Tuesday grocery list.

5 STEP 5 – COOK IT

The kitchen becomes your set. You experiment, mess up once, nail it the second time - and make the screen real.

6 STEP 6 – MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Swap an ingredient. Add your favourite spice. Plate it your way. Now the trend is yours.

7 STEP 7 – SERVE IT

You plate it, step back, and feel proud. Someone asks, “Where did you find this recipe?”

8 STEP 8 – SHARE IT

You film it, post it, and pass the trend on. Somewhere, someone is scrolling at midnight - and stops on your video.

The loop is complete. The table becomes the screen. You become the creator.

“FOODTOK DOESN’T JUST INSPIRE MEALS – IT REWRITES THE ENTIRE COOKING JOURNEY, ONE SCROLL AT A TIME.”

JUST VIBES

Can You Find Them?

B	B	P	I	M	B	Q	R	O	Q	U	B	L	H	E	R	F	N	T	M	T	L	M	P
I	J	R	U	D	N	Z	N	F	Z	U	N	G	K	J	M	D	G	G	H	G	X	F	G
M	B	C	H	H	Q	Y	W	G	R	F	V	C	Z	Q	U	B	Z	E	S	M	O	U	B
A	J	C	G	Z	C	P	F	G	U	G	G	X	O	D	W	A	H	R	N	I	B	U	M
G	B	O	J	L	P	T	E	K	X	S	W	H	O	P	P	E	R	V	V	L	E	N	P
G	V	X	B	R	N	R	E	H	M	T	Q	F	D	P	U	O	B	U	X	Z	H	V	E
C	L	E	D	R	K	P	J	K	E	U	R	H	T	E	V	I	R	D	C	N	T	C	O
A	C	E	R	I	B	Y	L	W	G	P	A	Q	R	K	L	T	B	Q	L	O	N	P	Y
R	D	L	N	D	A	I	R	Y	Q	U	E	E	N	K	V	W	C	Z	C	G	I	S	K
E	O	G	X	M	L	L	L	E	B	O	C	A	T	L	V	Q	I	V	O	Y	K	N	U
G	G	O	Z	C	I	D	E	P	R	F	L	U	N	C	H	P	R	B	D	P	C	Y	H
R	P	W	X	Q	I	C	E	C	S	I	O	V	A	J	R	W	C	I	L	K	A	E	A
U	R	A	Z	L	M	N	N	I	G	Y	P	V	S	L	M	E	U	G	G	E	J	I	H
B	K	F	B	O	X	P	O	N	N	T	F	S	Z	P	O	F	O	M	W	T	X	B	F
E	W	V	C	C	Q	B	G	S	X	H	J	N	U	U	P	M	I	A	W	Q	K	U	F
S	J	K	E	N	T	U	C	K	Y	F	R	I	E	D	C	H	I	C	K	E	N	R	N
E	D	A	U	W	S	R	C	M	P	O	P	A	D	O	S	D	L	A	N	O	D	C	M
E	I	S	T	Y	D	A	D	L	X	Y	K	Y	X	R	V	P	Y	A	W	B	U	S	U
H	Q	G	C	F	R	L	A	C	S	V	X	A	Y	A	C	X	C	C	L	C	N	R	M
C	O	Q	I	L	E	L	T	S	A	C	E	T	I	H	W	F	L	G	O	W	K	W	J
D	H	W	S	G	R	F	R	E	N	C	H	F	R	I	E	S	Y	D	N	E	W	G	M
K	Y	J	A	U	S	K	G	O	O	D	T	I	M	E	S	S	K	G	I	D	D	X	Z
G	R	R	K	G	K	M	Q	C	G	R	F	X	Z	P	O	W	M	L	Q	N	G	N	V
K	I	W	O	Q	K	N	C	M	U	U	J	D	E	L	L	T	A	C	O	L	I	X	Q

FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

Kentucky Fried Chicken
Jack In The Box
White Castle
Burger King
Dairy Queen
Good Times
Del Taco
McDonalds
Taco Bell
Carls Jr
Subway
Wendys
Sonic

NO CAP, ACTUALLY

- **Dark chocolate:** Antioxidants, mood boost, and real health benefits.
- **Raspberries:** Botanically, they're part of the rose family.
- **Pistachios:** Naturally beige — the red colour was a marketing trend.
- **Caesar Salad:** Born in Tijuana, Mexico, not Italy.
- **Avocados:** Fruits — technically single-seeded berries.
- **SPAM:** Literally means "spiced ham."
- **Oreos:** Accidentally vegan — no dairy in the classic recipe.
- **Cucumbers:** About 96% water, even more than watermelon.
- **Bananas:** pumpkins & lemons: Botanically berries. Raspberries? Not actually berries.
- **Pound Cake:** Originally used one pound of each main ingredient.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

So, why does FoodTok carry so much weight? Because it's already shaped what your guests expect before they even walk in. Keeping up with this generation isn't optional anymore, and actually doing something about it is what makes them come back for more. Don't live under a rock! It's also free market research happening in real time, showing you exactly what flavours, textures, and formats people are craving before your competitors catch on. Ignore it, and you're not just missing a trend, you're missing the conversation your guests are already having.

ONE MORE SCROLL

TO CONCLUDE...

There's a ton of factors that affect what shows up in your algorithm, and its generally tuned in such a way that you stay for what comes. Making reels attractive has a lot of thought behind it, from the language used, the style of presentations to even the background, lighting and sounds. However, its easy to be swayed by all bright aspects of reels, even if they spread misinformation. So be smart about what you watch, and even smarter about what you actually do.

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