



A La Carte

Hospitality &

Food Service

Journal

Dates of Interest:

- 02/11-13/2027: NAFEM, Orlando, FL.
- 5/4-6/2027: HD Expo + Conference, Las Vegas, NV.
- 5/22-25/2027: NRA Show 2027, Chicago, IL.
- 06/28-30/2027: TASN, Corpus Christi, TX.

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"If I See Someone Without a Smile, I Give Them Mine."

- Dolly Parton

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TRENDS IN THE BAR: Bourbon Heritage Month

Why September is Actually the Best Month (If You Love Bourbon)

Look, to most people, September is just that weird bridge between summer and fall. It's when football comes back, the weather finally cools down, and everyone starts obsessing over pumpkin spice. But for me? September is the absolute best month of the year. Why? Because it's National Bourbon Heritage Month. Every year when September 1st hits, I look at my whiskey shelf a little differently. There's something so cool about the fact that every single bottle has a massive story behind it—just corn, water, wood, and a ton of time. For anyone who actually loves bourbon, this month isn't just an excuse to have a drink after a rough day. It's a full-on celebration of a legit American art form.

The Strict Rules That Make it Awesome

We can thank the U.S. Senate for making this an official month-long thing back in 2007. But way before that, in 1964, Congress declared bourbon "America's Native Spirit." "The coolest thing about bourbon is that you can't fake it. The government has super strict laws about what can actually be called bourbon: It must be made in the USA. (Nope, it doesn't have to be Kentucky, though they make about 95% of it). The recipe has to be at least 51% corn. That's what gives it that sweet flavor. It has to go into a brand-new, charred oak barrel. No used barrels allowed. Absolutely zero additives. No fake colors, no fake caramel flavors. Nothing. When you realize how strict those rules are, you understand why it deserves its own month. There are

no shortcuts. Everything you taste—the vanilla, the caramel, the oak—comes naturally from the wood and the grain. It's totally honest.

A Cool Connection to History

The history is another reason I get nerdy about it. When you pour a glass of Four Roses, Buffalo Trace, or Lux Row, you're drinking something that survived the Whiskey Rebellion, the Industrial Revolution, and the nightmare that was Prohibition. There are all these crazy legends, too. Like this story about a preacher named Elijah Craig who supposedly accidentally burned his barrels in 1789, realized it made the whiskey taste amazing, and invented bourbon. Whether that's 100% true or not, it's just a fun piece of the lore. Fast forward to today, and there are literally millions more aging barrels in Kentucky than there are actual people. We're living in the golden age of whiskey right now.

How to Celebrate This Month

If you want to do this month right, don't just drink the same exact bottle you always buy. Try to switch it up: Try something totally different: If you usually drink sweeter, wheated bourbons (like Maker's Mark), grab something with a high-rye content for a spicy kick. If you usually

drink 90-proof, challenge yourself with a higher barrel-proof pour. Learn a bit about your bottle: Look up the "mash bill" (the grain recipe) of your favorite pour. Read up on the Master Distiller who made it or start planning a trip to hit the Kentucky Bourbon Trail. Step up your cocktail game: Drinking it neat is great, but a properly made Old Fashioned is hard to beat. Get some good bitters, a fresh orange, and a big ice sphere and take your time making it. Crack open the good stuff: Bourbon isn't meant to sit on a shelf like a trophy or be sold online for crazy prices. It's meant to be shared. Take that expensive or rare bottle you've been hoarding, call some friends over, and pop the cork.

Cheers to September

Pour yourself a Dram in a Glencairn tonight. Sip it slow, enjoy the flavor, and celebrate a true American tradition. Cheers!

GIL R. URIAS,
SPECIFICATION SPECIALIST





Flexeserve Hub: Hot Air Technology To Hold Packaged Food Of Any Shape & Size

Flexeserve Hub is an enclosed hot-holding unit with maximum versatility in a small footprint. It uses industry-leading hot air convection technology rather than relying on outdated contact surfaces or heat lamps. Hot air is continually circulated throughout the entire three-dimensional volume of the unit and creates a consistent and stable environment for your products. This even distribution of air, which can be set to the required temperature, means food quality is maximized, unlike other heated displays that use conduction or infra-red which continue to cook food. In Flexeserve Hub, product integrity is maintained, resulting in food quality unlike any you have ever seen from a hot holding unit. It is the only unit designed for holding large quantities of packaged hot food for takeaway, deliveries and pickup.

Exclusive features

- ◆ The only hot-holding unit developed specifically for the cultural shift and growth of takeaway, delivery and pickup.
- ◆ Enclosed convected air system unlike any other hot-holding unit, for superior product quality, extended shelf life and industry leading energy efficiency.
- ◆ Flexible shelving system - move up, down and adjust angle. Double glazed, self-closing door with integrated smart LED lighting and a system to alert store staff if the door remains open for too long
- ◆ Innovative range of accessories available to increase capacity, improve product visibility and provide operational efficiencies.
- ◆ Available in 2 widths with a single or double doors.



Compelling benefits

- ◆ Extends food shelf-life - quality and temperature are retained throughout the holding process so food waste is minimized.
- ◆ True hot-holding - packaged food products held for longer and as they were intended within an accurate temperature regime. The unique Flexeserve hot air recirculation technology ensures a consistent temperature throughout the entire volume of the unit.
- ◆ Versatility - it works perfectly for both front and back of house, multipurpose accessories offer complete flexibility for storing any product type.
- ◆ Energy efficiency - constructed from highly insulative materials and a double-glazed door with integrated LED lighting, Flexeserve Hub is unrivalled for energy saving features.
- ◆ Safety - integrated over-temperature fail-safes, safe to touch surfaces and audible alarm if the door is held open for too long.



Cowboy Caviar: A Vibrant Crowd-Pleasing Texas Classic

Ingredients:

1. 2 cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
2. 1 can of whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed
3. 2 roma tomatoes, diced (about 1 heaping cup) or diced cheery tomatoes (1 cup)
4. 1 red bell pepper, stemmed seeded and diced
5. 1 green bell pepper, stemmed seeded and diced
6. 1/2 cup diced red onion
7. 1/2 cup diced green onion
8. 1 jalapeno pepper, finely diced
9. 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro for garnish (optional)
10. Tortilla chips for dipping and serving

Dressing:

1. 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2. 4 tbsp lime juice
3. 1 1/4 teaspoons sea salt
4. 1/4 cup parmesan cheese
5. 1 teaspoon sugar or honey
6. 2 garlic cloves, grated
7. 1 teaspoon ground cumin
8. 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, stir together the beans, corn, tomatoes, bell peppers, onion, jalapeño, and most of the cilantro. Note: you can substitute black beans or black eyed peas if preferred.
 2. Make the dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, salt, sugar, garlic, cumin, cayenne, and several grinds of pepper. Pour the dressing over the bean mixture and stir to combine. Note: If you don't have all the ingredients, you can use 1/3 c of Ken's Italian Light Dressing as base and then season it up.
 3. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour to allow the flavors to develop.
- Garnish with the reserved cilantro and serve with tortilla chips



MELISSA COUNIHAN, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



TRENDS IN THE KITCHEN: Protein Has Gone Viral

For years, protein lived in a relatively specialized world: bodybuilders, athletes, gym-goers and diet products. Now it's gone viral because it is the only major macronutrient that has completely escaped scrutiny, while at the same time benefiting from an aggressive alignment of social media culture, medical shifts, and corporate marketing. Unlike Fats, demonized in the '90s, and Carbohydrates, shunned during the Keto and Atkins phases, Protein has remained as a consistent "health halo". The explosion of the "Protein Craze" comes from several key drivers:

1. Social Media and "Proteinmaxxing"

- **Viral Trends:** Platforms like TikTok spawned the movement with viral recipes, turning everyday ingredients like cottage cheese into massive trends.
- **The "Longevity" Vibe:** Fitness and wellness influencers have pushed extreme daily protein goals often exceeding 100 grams. They have rebranded protein from a niche bodybuilding supplement into an essential tool for health, weight loss, and aesthetic goals.
- **Broad Adoption:** The trend expanded drastically as high-protein diets were heavily adopted, moving past the traditional gym culture.

2. The Rise of GLP-1 Medications

- **Muscle Preservation:** With millions of people taking GLP-1 weight-loss medications, medical professionals heavily emphasize high protein intake.
- **The Fix:** Because rapid weight loss can lead to muscle wasting, patients are told to dramatically increase protein alongside resistance training to preserve lean muscle mass.

3. Policy Shifts and New Dietary Guidelines

- **Higher Targets:** Federal dietary recommendations have shifted, with updated guidelines bumping daily protein targets up significantly to 1.2–1.6 grams per kilogram of body weight.
- **Institutional Backing:** Government focus has increasingly embraced nutrient-dense animal and plant proteins, giving consumers the ok to consume more.

4. Big Food's "Protein-Packed" Pivot

- **High Profitability:** Food companies realized they could easily add protein or whey derivatives to standard products and raise prices.
- **Everyday Fortification:** Grocery aisles are flooded with high-protein versions of foods that aren't traditionally protein sources - including protein cereals, protein chips, protein water, and protein cake mixes. Slapping "protein-packed" on a label instantly makes an ultra-processed snack look like a healthy option.

Incorporating adequate protein into your diet ensures your muscles recover and grow, while also helping you manage your appetite. It fuels energy, strengthens immunity, and supports essential bodily functions, making it a cornerstone of overall health. By choosing protein-rich foods, you not only nourish your body but also maintain vitality and balance every day.

TERISE URIAS, DESIGN CONSULTANT



DESIGN CORNER: The Future is Here..Have You seen the Food Delivery Robots?

Technology and robotics have been fully integrated into the multi billion dollar food service industry. Due to the global pandemic, labor shortages and the continued rise in e-commerce the needs for food delivery has become ever more necessary in our busy lives. Originally piloted in hospitals and college dormitories, fully electric food delivery robots have made an eco-friendly, safe and convenient experience.

These delivery robots at any time of day and in any type of weather can deliver to a customer. These delivery systems usually operate in more densely populated areas that may be more difficult or time consuming for employees. This added delivery option is providing cost savings, extra sales and reliable deliveries for the provider.

Leading delivery system companies like Starship and AV Ride have created fully autonomous bots able to travel up to a 4 mile radius. These coolers on wheels can navigate down busy sidewalks while stopping for pedestrians and cross traffic.

Companies have even gone to lengths of adding googly eyes, LED screens with Emojis or speakers playing music onto their units to create a more fun and enjoyable drop off to the consumer.

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*"Maybe it's not
too late to learn
how to love and
forget how to
hate."*

-Ozzy Osbourne

Interested in being featured
in our next Newsletters or
have some interesting news
to add!!! Contact us at
(512)388-4665 or by email
at info@counihanassoc.com
for more information. We
look forward to hearing
from you!!!

*"Adapt what is
useful, reject
what is useless,
and add what is
specifically your
own."*

- Bruce Lee



WHAT'S NEW: Creative Completed Projects

Congratulations to our Clients and the Design Teams on these successfully completed projects. Special thanks to all the Equipment Manufacturer's for helping us bring these projects to life.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE FAMILY KITCHEN



LINDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AISD



HOUSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AISD



TEXAS FRENCH BREAD, AUSTIN



MCCOY'S CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, SAN MARCOS



MINA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BISD

