

# THE FLAVOR IS KEE

UNLOCKING MENU POTENTIAL

## 2023 IS ALL ABOUT THE SAUCE

With 2022 in the rearview mirror, we're already looking ahead. After a year of spicy food, complex heat is still going strong. But how may that evolve on the other side of the calendar? **The answer is simple: sauce.**

And, as a company devoted to flavor, we're keen to identify what's captivating consumers' taste buds. Sophisticated and spicy hot sauces are becoming a tabletop mainstay, edging out old staples. In fact, we're seeing lots of new and exciting options for adding a little heat to anything on the plate. Fortunately for operators, we've got some of the best flavors to give consumers the exhilarating experience they're craving, from tingly to tantalizing.

Let's take a look at spicy. Fiery food has worked its way into everything from beverages to desserts, adding complexity to the heat of the Scoville scale.

**SPICY IS ON 70% OF US MENUS.<sup>1</sup>**

**62% OF CONSUMERS LOVE OR LIKE SPICY.<sup>2</sup>**

**(ALMOST) EVERYONE LIKES IT HOT. A RECENT POLL REPORTED THAT ONLY 7% OF ALL RESPONDENTS OPT FOR NO HEAT AT ALL.<sup>3</sup>**

- ▶ By now, consumers have come to expect a little heat in what they eat, and they're open to exploring. The hot sauce market experienced the highest level of consumer online searches in 2022, and is expected to **grow 78% by 2026**, from **\$2.75 billion to \$4.91 billion**.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Consumers crave foods that challenge their tastebuds, and seek out new levels of hot, spicy, and even sensational.

**63%** of consumers prefer spicy global condiments with Asian origin being among the most preferred.<sup>5</sup>

**31%** of consumers would prefer more globally inspired food and beverages.<sup>6</sup>

**+20.5%** Consumer interest in complex heat grew by 20.5% in the 12 months ending in July 2022.<sup>7</sup>

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# THE SPICY MAC (MENU ADOPTION CYCLE): WHY THE ADOPTION PHASE MATTERS FOR GLOBAL FLAVORS

When trends begin to enter the Adoption Phase, pay attention. During Adoption, flavors may appear at a local grocery store or on a food truck, reaching the mainstream market and continue to trend upward.



DATASSENTIAL "SPICY" MENU ADOPTION CYCLE OCTOBER 2022<sup>8</sup>



## BUFFALO

HAS A  
34.4% MENU  
PENETRATION<sup>9</sup>



## HOT HONEY (TRENDING UP!)

HAS SEEN 79%  
GROWTH ON MENUS  
OVER THE LAST  
4 YEARS<sup>10</sup>



## SZECHUAN

HAS A 78% AFFINITY  
CONVERSION RATE  
(CONSUMERS THAT LOVE/  
LIKE/HAVE TRIED IT)<sup>11</sup>



## GOCHUJANG

SEES 63% GROWTH  
ON MENUS OVER  
THE LAST 4 YEARS<sup>12</sup>

**CHEF ROBERT DANHI**

Culinary Ambassador, Lee Kum Kee

## CHEF TALK

**Q:** As a chef, what are your thoughts on hot sauces, tabletop or otherwise?

**Chef Robert:** Hot sauces used in recipes or served on the side are an indispensable way to add layers of flavor to nearly any food...or beverage. In recipes, they save so much time and space in a cook or chef's world by already having several ingredients combined and ready to use. For example, Chiu Chow Chili Oil has about 10 ingredients, and is such a great way to reduce inventory and add a flavorful, deep red-orange color and particulates of chilies in every spoonful.

**Q:** What are some of the most unique ways you've worked with a spicy ingredient in a dish?

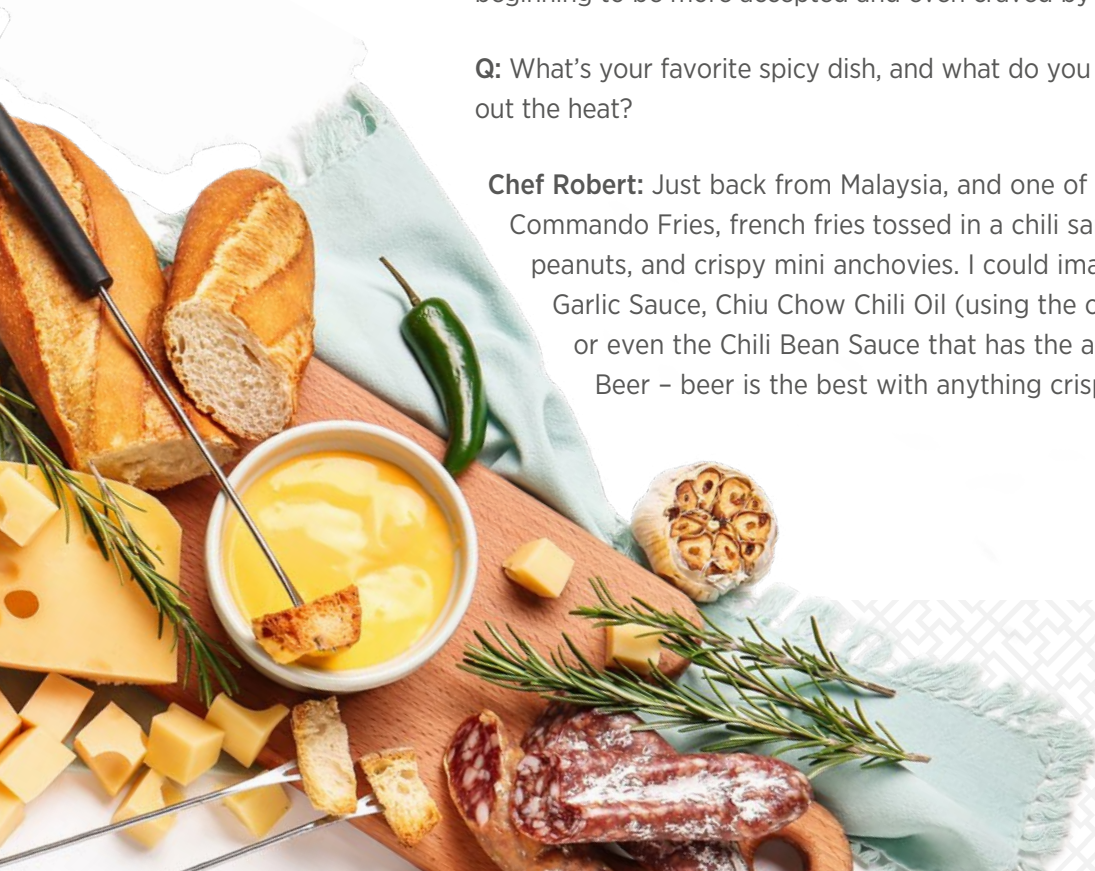
**Chef Robert:** Just this morning I made a rice-macaroni with parmesan and chili-butter sauce. Chinese chili sauces are not paired with dairy based ingredients often enough; try queso fundido, nachos, mac-and-cheese, or even a chili-cheese fondue with meat, veggies, and toasted bread for dipping. I also like to toss popcorn with Chiu Chow Chili Oil and butter.

**Q:** Where do you think the spicy food trend is headed? Where do you wish it would go?

**Chef Robert:** I believe and hope that the extreme heat trend is waning, the sauces that are so pumped up with capsaicin that they come with warnings on labels and caution notices. The multifaceted sensations from chilies and Sichuan peppercorns are beginning to be more accepted and even craved by those new to spicy.

**Q:** What's your favorite spicy dish, and what do you like to drink with it to balance out the heat?

**Chef Robert:** Just back from Malaysia, and one of my new favorite spicy dishes is Commando Fries, french fries tossed in a chili sambal with stir-fried onions, peanuts, and crispy mini anchovies. I could imagine using Lee Kum Kee's Chili Garlic Sauce, Chiu Chow Chili Oil (using the oil on top to stir-fry onions) on fries or even the Chili Bean Sauce that has the added depth of fermented beans. Beer - beer is the best with anything crispy, salty, and spicy!





## WE'VE GOT THE SAUCE

Sauce isn't just a condiment or marinade; the word "Sauce" is also used to describe someone who has style, confidence, and a certain kind of attractiveness. At Lee Kum Kee, we've got both kinds of sauce; our exciting products will amp up the heat, play into global cuisine trends, and "bring the sauce" to your menus and operations. Take a look at these spicy front-runners:



**+243%**

Chili Crisp has grown 243% on menus in the last 12 months.<sup>13</sup>

### CHIU CHOW STYLE CHILI OIL

**WHAT IS IT?** Our answer to chili crisp, and one of Hong Kong's favorite spicy condiments! Fried chilies and garlic seasoned with soy sauce and submerged in a savory oil.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Excellent for dips and adding a kick to ranch or mayo. Try as a topping for pizza or an Asian version of a HOT chicken sandwich! Works for tabletop, too.

### KENTUCKY HOT BROWN



**+25%**

Chili Oil saw 25% growth on menus over the last 4 years.<sup>14</sup>

### CHILI OIL

**WHAT IS IT?** Originating from the Shaanxi Province in Northeast China now making its climb on menus in the US. This product is a fragrant oil made by infusing ripe red chilies in soybean oil.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Adds rich, spicy heat to anything it touches, especially noodle soups, dumplings, sauces, or stir-fried vegetables. We love it on Buffalo wings and even popcorn.

### SPICY BEEF NOODLE SOUP



**+42%**

Chili Garlic saw 42% growth on menus.<sup>15</sup>

### CHILI GARLIC SAUCE

**WHAT IS IT?** A staple in southern China, this is a mildly hot chili sauce blended with garlic.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** This sauce can elevate a beloved and ubiquitous menu item like wings and refresh it with a new flavor, appealing to diners.

### SPICY ROASTED CAULIFLOWER STEAKS



**SZECHUAN:**  
39% consumers love or like it,  
66% know it.<sup>16</sup>

### MALA CHILI SAUCE

**WHAT IS IT?** A staple of the cuisine of Sichuan Province in Southwest China. Made with select Sichuan peppercorns and chili peppers, this robust, savory, and spicy sauce is perfect for creating complex heat known as Mala—a spicy and numbing sensation that is sure to thrill heat lovers.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** If you know Sichuan peppercorns, you know. Adds "mala" the tingly, spicy, numbing heat to anything it touches, from noodles and dumplings to roasted vegetables.

### MALA LOADED CHILI FRIES



#### SOURCES:

<sup>1,2,9,10,12,13,14,15,16</sup> Datassential Menu Trends, 2023

<sup>3</sup> <https://nypost.com/2022/11/22/spicy-food-eaters-more-likely-to-consider-themselves-attractive>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/consumer-searches-for-hot-sauce-projected-to-grow-15-yoy-in-2022-hitting-highest-ever-level-per-the-spicy-exchanges-new-market-report#ixzz7s6RL3ZFO>

<sup>5</sup> Datassential, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Technomic Multi-Cultural Report, 2022

<sup>7</sup> Spoonshot, Outlook 2023: Flavor Trends

<sup>8</sup> Datassential, October, 2022

<sup>11</sup> Datassential Flavor, 2023

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