Industry Insights

A roundup of noteworthy Canadian foodservice findings for the week of Oct. 19, 2026

Image Source: Shutterstock

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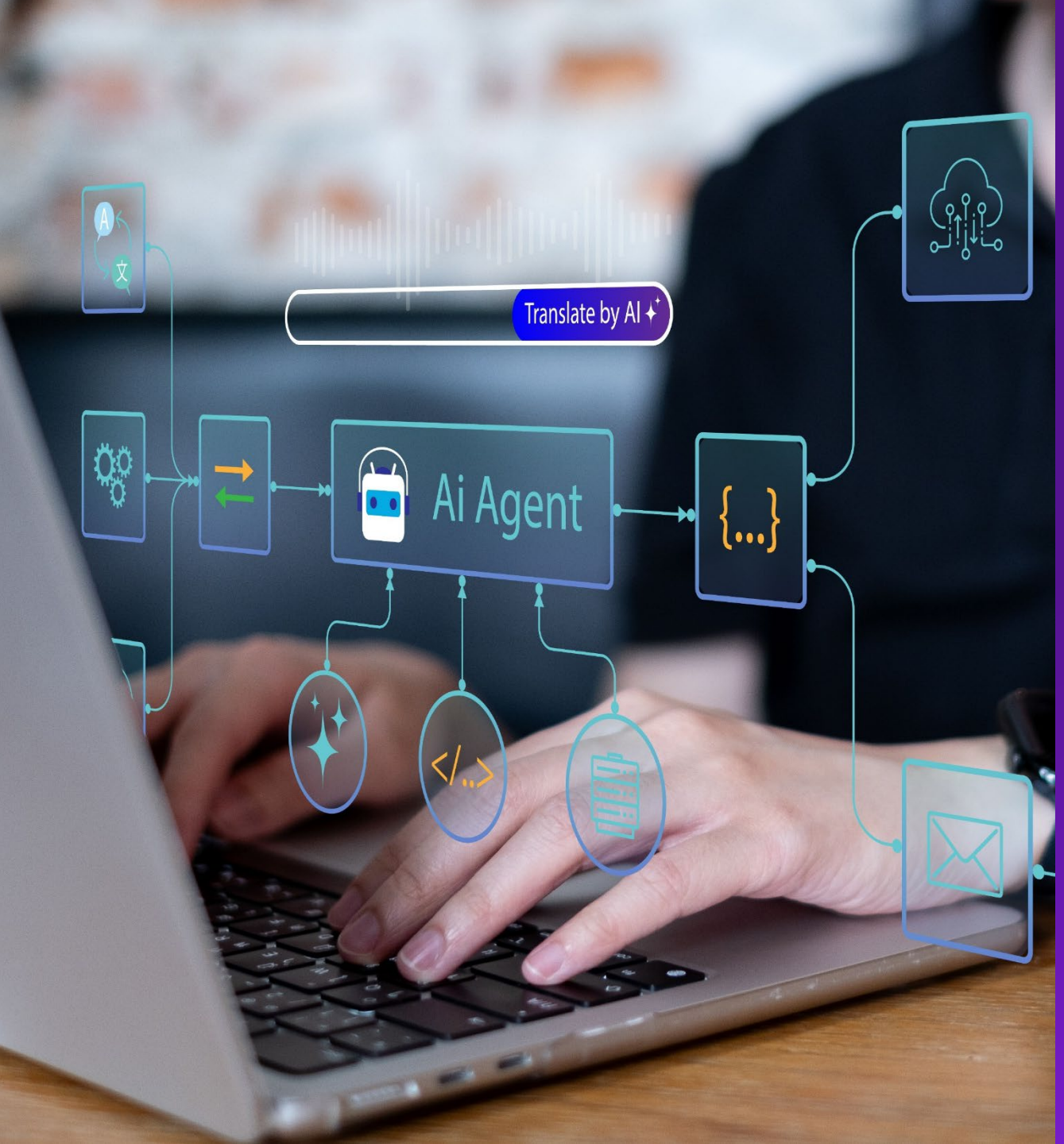

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Ignite AI Prompt of the Week

In each Industry Insights, we ask Ignite AI a top-of-mind industry question and share the answer with you. Copy our prompt or write your own to answer your industry questions in our Ignite.

Key Takeaways

Harvey's leads among Gen Z Canadian consumers, with 60% rating their visit as “excellent," outperforming the overall consumer average by 3.3 points. Casual-dining and grill-style brands (e.g., Montana's, Baton Rouge, Joey, Milestones, etc.) consistently show Gen Z satisfaction exceeding the general population, suggesting this cohort responds well to full-service, social dining experiences.

Interestingly, several QSR brands typically seen as "youth-oriented" show mixed results. McDonald's shows one of the largest positive gaps (+6.6 points), indicating younger consumers rate their McDonald's visits notably higher than the broader population. The Canadian Brewhouse shows the single largest advantage (+9.3 points), despite having a relatively modest absolute satisfaction level (44.3%), suggesting Gen Z sees comparatively more value there than older cohorts do.

Conversely, legacy sandwich and cafe brands (e.g., Subway, Second Cup, Cora, etc.) underperform meaningfully among Gen Z relative to the general consumer base, with Subway showing an 11.3-point gap—the largest disparity in either direction. This may reflect shifting generational preferences away from traditional quick-service sandwich/ breakfast formats toward more experiential or social dining occasions.

Technomic Ignite clients: Click here for more

Source: Technomic Ignite AI

TOP BRANDS BY GEN Z TOP BOX SATISFACTION

Brand	Gen Z Top Box %	Difference vs. All Guests
Harvey's	60.0%	+3.3
The Keg	58.3%	-1.1
A&W Canada	55.6%	+4.4
Baton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar	55.4%	+5.4
Montana's BBQ & Bar	54.3%	+8.8
Edo Japan	54.0%	-1.3

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Ignite Company

These chains have added 150+ units over the last decade

Spearheaded by BarBurrito, Pizza Hut and Tim Hortons, a dozen chain restaurant brands have each added more than 150 domestic units over the past 10 years, with this group responsible for nearly half of all new chain restaurant unit growth across Canada during that span.

BarBurrito has led the charge in establishing Mexican cuisine as a leading category among Canada's top chain restaurants, expanding from only 72 units in 2015 to close to 400 by the close of 2025.

Osmow's, Papa Johns, Pizza Salvatore, CoCo Bubble Tea, Edo Japan and Wendy's have all added over 100 stores each in the past decade.

Head to Ignite today for more long-term sales and location performance trends for Canada's top 250 chain restaurant brands.

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Source: Technomic Ignite Company

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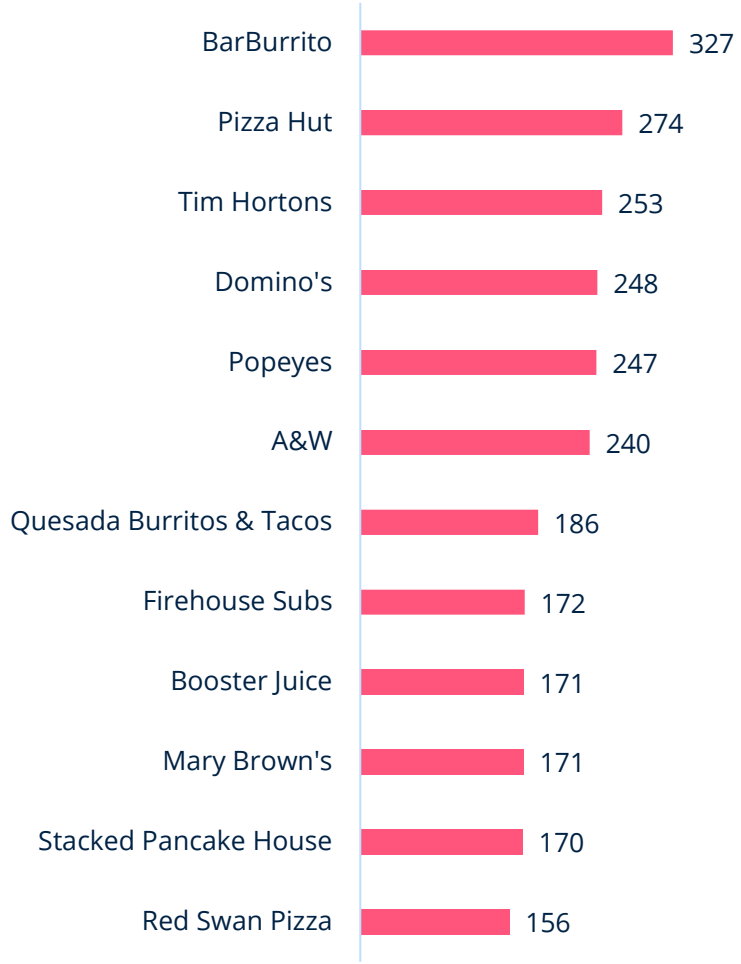
FASTEST-GROWING CHAIN RESTAURANTS
2015-2025 NET CANADIAN LOCATION GROWTH



Ignite Menu

Fastest-growing seafood at CDRs

The casual-dining restaurant (CDR) sector, encompassing both upscale and traditional models, is experiencing a notable surge in seafood innovation, with octopus leading the charge. This once-exotic ingredient has found mainstream appeal through approachable formulations, including charred or grilled appetizer preparations, skewers and Japanese-inspired takoyaki street food, fitting seamlessly into the broader trend of shareable, family-style eating that defines modern casual dining.

Octopus shares this communal space with ahi tuna and clams, both frequently featured on platters designed for the whole table. Ahi tuna demonstrates remarkable versatility, appearing in poke bowls, tacos and elegant tartare preparations, while its pairing with chicken creates an appealing surf-and-turf dynamic. Clams continue their steady climb through comfort-driven applications, such as noodle dishes topped with clams and clam chowder.

Whitefish and calamari round out this list through their own forms of adaptability. Whitefish is popping up in Baja fish tacos, as well as in tempura and sushi rolls, while calamari has evolved beyond its traditional appetizer role to enhance salads and chicken dishes.

Together, these five ingredients illustrate how CDRs are successfully expanding their seafood programs through global flavours, flexible formats and shared experiences that make seafood more accessible to a wider audience.

Ignite Menu clients: Click here for more

Source: Technomic Ignite Menu, Q2 2025-Q2 2026
Image Source: Shutterstock

Octopus
+9.2%

Ahi Tuna
+8.0%

Clams
+7.8%

Whitefish
+6.9%

Calamari
+3.8%

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Ignite Consumer

Afternoon treats drive snack occasions

In Canada, the afternoon snack represents 13% of limited-service occasions and perhaps reflects a broader treat culture, where consumers are looking for a small indulgence rather than just a functional stop. While these visits skew slightly to the weekend (58% vs. 54% overall), they also carry a more celebratory undertone: 23% of afternoon snack occasions are tied to special occasions and other nonroutine moments (e.g., a treat for myself or others), above the 19% overall benchmark.

This occasion is often personal and on the go. Nearly half of afternoon snack visits are solo occasions (48%), and 32% are eaten in the car, well above the overall average. Consumers are also more likely to describe the visit as a quick bite (14%), while 47% say the occasion was unplanned. Booster Juice, Second Cup Cafe, Starbucks, Country Style and Tim Hortons lead this daypart, underscoring the strength of beverage-led and snack-friendly formats.

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Base: 14,924 recent limited-service guests ages 18+
Source: Technomic Ignite Consumer, Q3 2025-Q2 2026
Image Source: Shutterstock

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Ignite Global

New markets coming to renamed global program

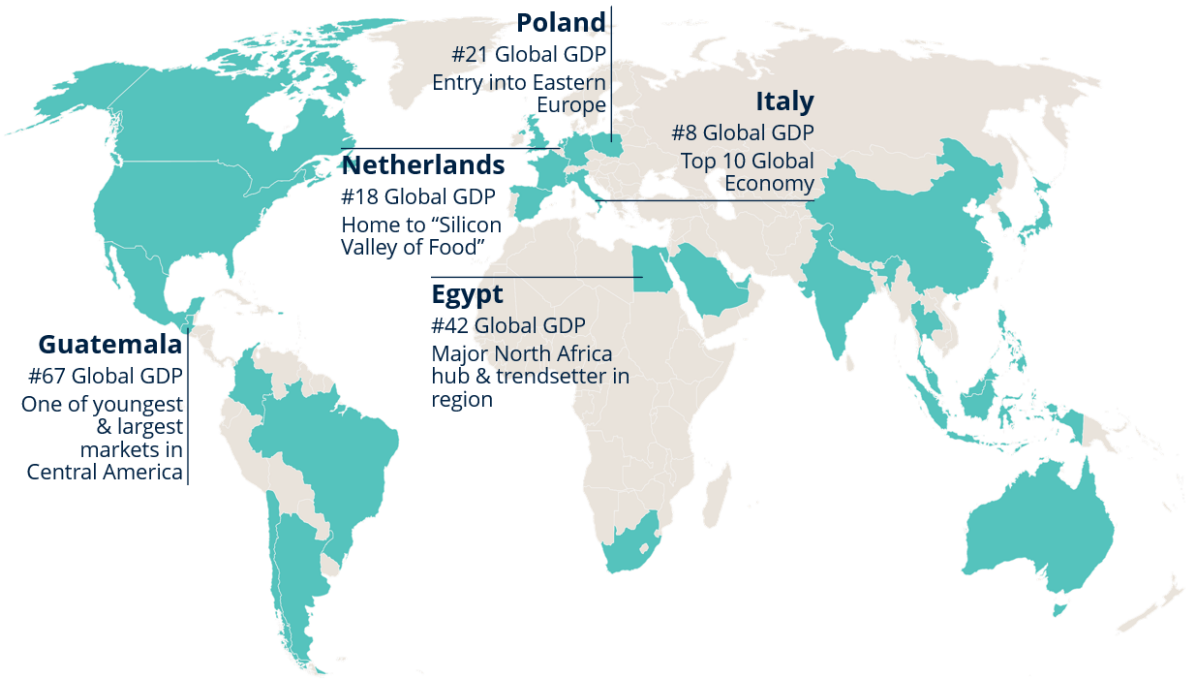
Starting in 2027, Ignite Global, previously known as Global Foodservice Navigator Program, will be adding five new markets to its ongoing global coverage.

Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Egypt and Guatemala will bring the total number of our industry-leading restaurant and foodservice research to 30 markets worldwide.

These markets span key international economies, including some of the largest GDPs in the world and critical players in global foodservice. This list includes major regional economies, such as Egypt and Guatemala, alongside the Netherlands, home to the "Silicon Valley of Food."

Our global chain news coverage has already begun to cover these new markets. Menu data and trend content will arrive at the start of the new year, with leading chain data shortly after.

Ignite Global clients: Click here for more



Initiating coverage of five new markets in 2027

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Since 1966, we have produced in-depth research focused on the foodservice industry.

We provide insights into consumer, industry and menu trends in the U.S., Canada and 23 markets around the world.

Our team of experts helps leaders in the industry make complex business decisions, set strategy and stay ahead of the curve.

Have questions?
Reach out to us today.

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