



5 Things Your Students Need From You

Menu
Matters

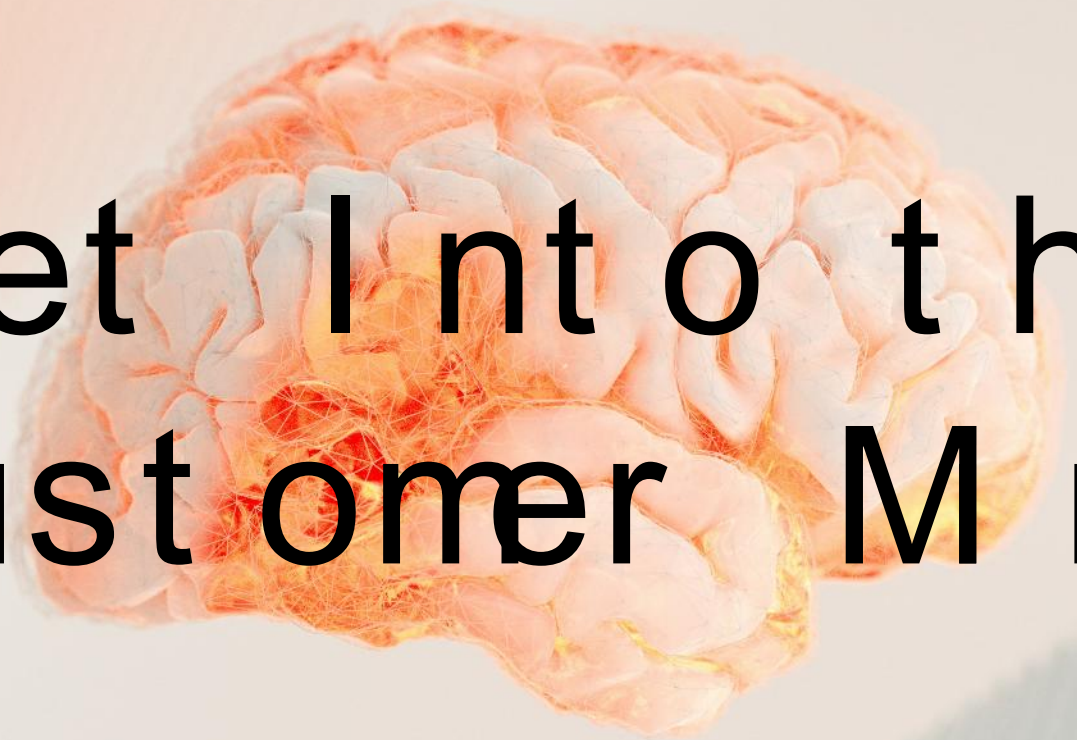


A photograph of a bustling restaurant interior. The space features exposed brick walls, large multi-paned windows on the left, and several large, dome-shaped pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. People are seen dining at tables and standing near the bar area. The overall atmosphere is warm and industrial.

WE SPECIALIZE IN HUMAN-
CENTERED INSIGHTS FOR THE
F&B INDUSTRY.

WE BELIEVE FOOD MATTERS.





Get Into the Customer Mind

A person's arm is extended from the left side of the frame towards the center, reaching out towards several tall, thin stalks of grass with feathery seed heads. The background is a soft-focus field of similar grass under a hazy, golden-brown sky. The overall mood is contemplative and natural.

2026 CONSUMER NEED

Give Me Something Real



What do your students
need?





They Need You to Cut Through the Noise

NAROPA UNIVERSITY

**97% of Gen Z says they
feel mentally
overwhelmed.**



U N I C E F

**60% of Gen Z globally
says they feel
overwhelmed by the
news.**



A P A

**58% of Gen Z says that
most days their stress is
“completely
overwhelming.”**



INNOVATION STARTING POINT

What are some easy ways to make your students' lives easier? What about their parents? Can you offer a “no decisions” meal or decision maker during finals? Can you simplify the meal plan?



“This is my favorite time of year. Watching college kids document their rush to use their meal swipes.”

“Can someone explain to me what a meal swipe vs. a flex dollar is? I’m so confused.”

“Last year I had to spend \$500 in 2 weeks. I had 30 drinks in my room.”

“Don’t forget the \$200 flex on that plan.”

“If I live on campus with a dining card can I go to any dining hall or are there certain restrictions?” “There are student athlete exclusive dining halls.”

“My school made freshman get the unlimited plan so I don’t get my money’s worth.”

“Wait ya’ll have to swipe per item?” “For this item specifically, yeah.”

“I have 107 meal swipes left. I’m f**d.”**

“Haha so many people ask you how the meal plan works.”

“That hall is only good because they don’t take meal swipes.”

“My school has a base 12 so I get 12 swipes a week and I think \$70 in cash that rolls over each week.”

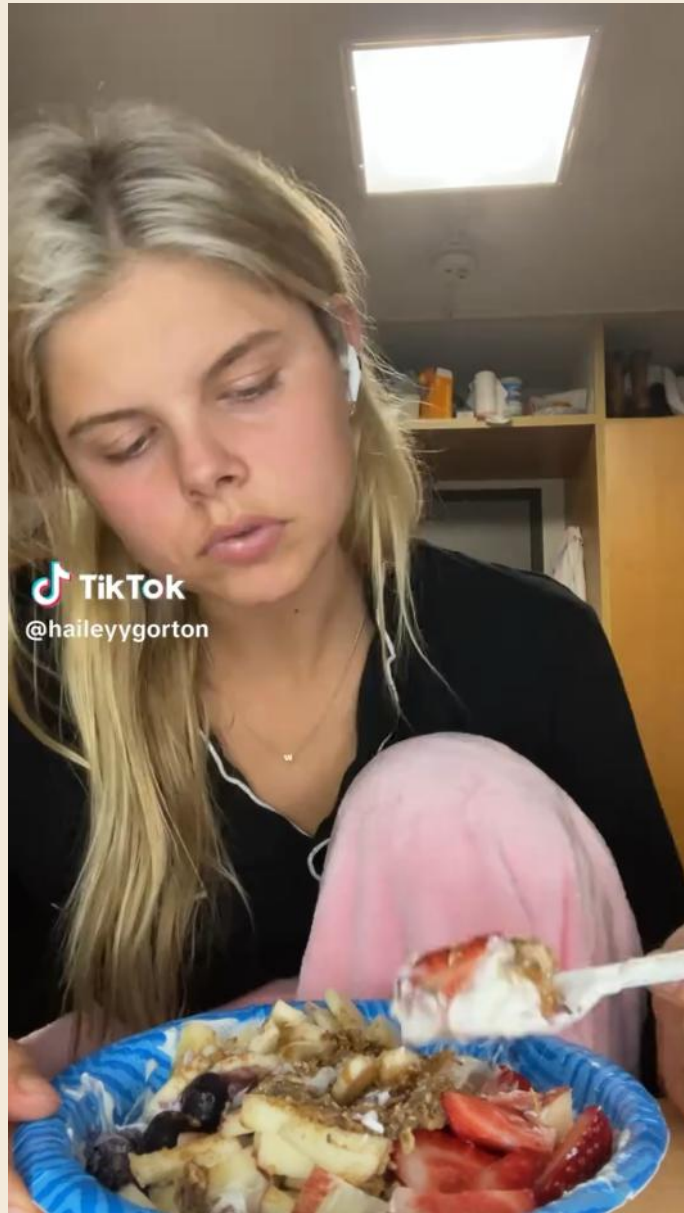
“How much is like one swipe worth?” “No one knows.”

YELLING
ACROSS
THE TABLE

47%

of Gen Z rank overall restaurant noise a “7” or higher on a scale of 1-10 today.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is “very quiet” and 10 is “extremely loud,” how noisy do you think restaurants are today in general?



**“Choosing a relaxing,
solo yogurt bowl PJ
dinner over the
overstimulating,
miserable experience
that the dining hall is.”**



“I came in there yesterday and almost had a panic attack.”

“It was like that when I went on a campus tour. I picked another school.”

“I literally felt the same way. IDK why I was so overwhelmed today. I hadn't eaten and just wanted some fries and all that was happening.”

“Yes I was overwhelmed.”



They Need You To Let
Them Be Themselves

NEWS

Study Reveals Over Half of Children Feel They Can't Be Themselves, Leading to Sleepless Nights

How fear of being 'cringe' is holding young people back

Cringe Culture Is Killing Creativity: Why trying becomes embarrassing in the internet age.

When effort becomes uncool and sincerity is mocked, what happens to young creators?



Y O U G O V

**55% of Gen Z says they
self-censor and don't
open up emotionally
because of cringe
culture**



INNOVATION STARTING POINT

Can you offer a guilt-free food day? What about a “no cell phone zone”? How do you celebrate your students and who they are? Make them proud to be themselves?





“This is the feeling of seeing your friends try Vietnamese dishes. I find studying abroad and enjoying a taste of home a joy.”



They Need to Connect With a Real Person

Friends and family create connection.

	TOTAL	GEN Z	YOUNG MILLENNIALS	OLDER MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BOOMERS+
Family meals at home	66%	58%	56%	65%	70%	70%
Dining out with friends	57%	49%	55%	52%	60%	64%
Cooking or sharing recipes with others	36%	38%	36%	39%	40%	28%
Food festivals or special events	26%	36%	31%	28%	24%	17%
Farmers markets or local food events	25%	25%	30%	25%	28%	22%

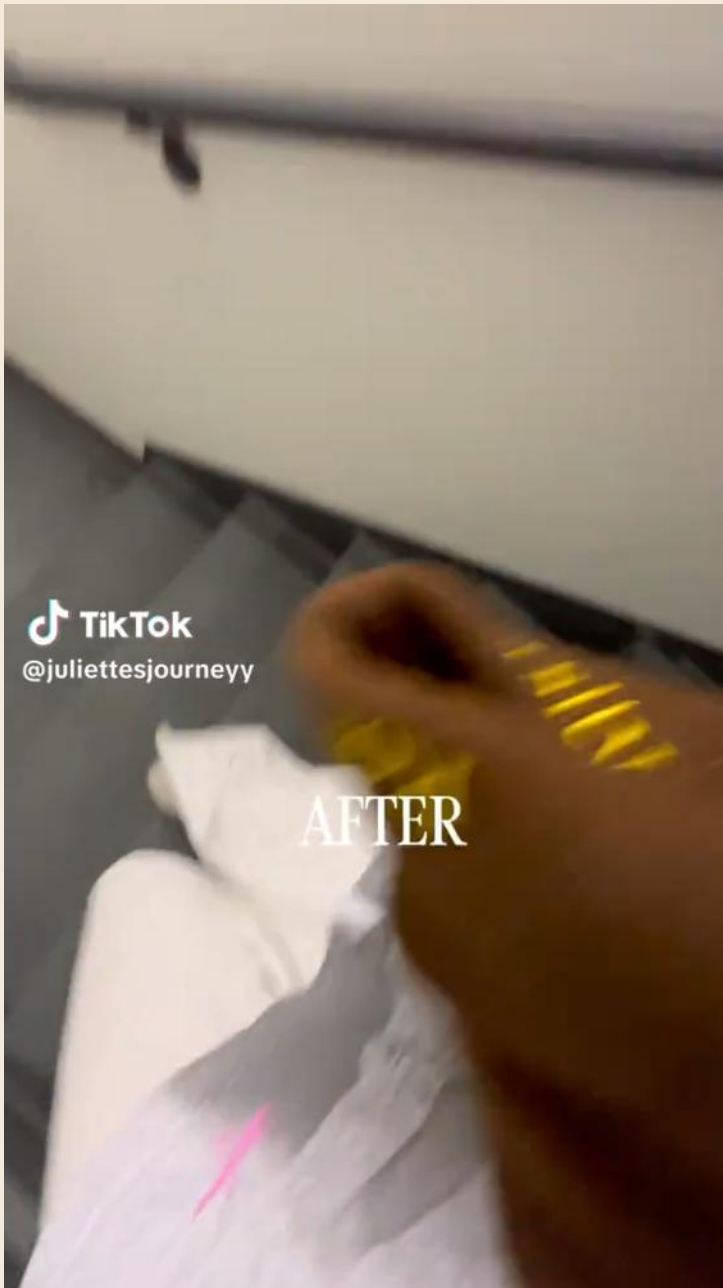
Where do you feel most connected to others through food? (Select all that apply.)



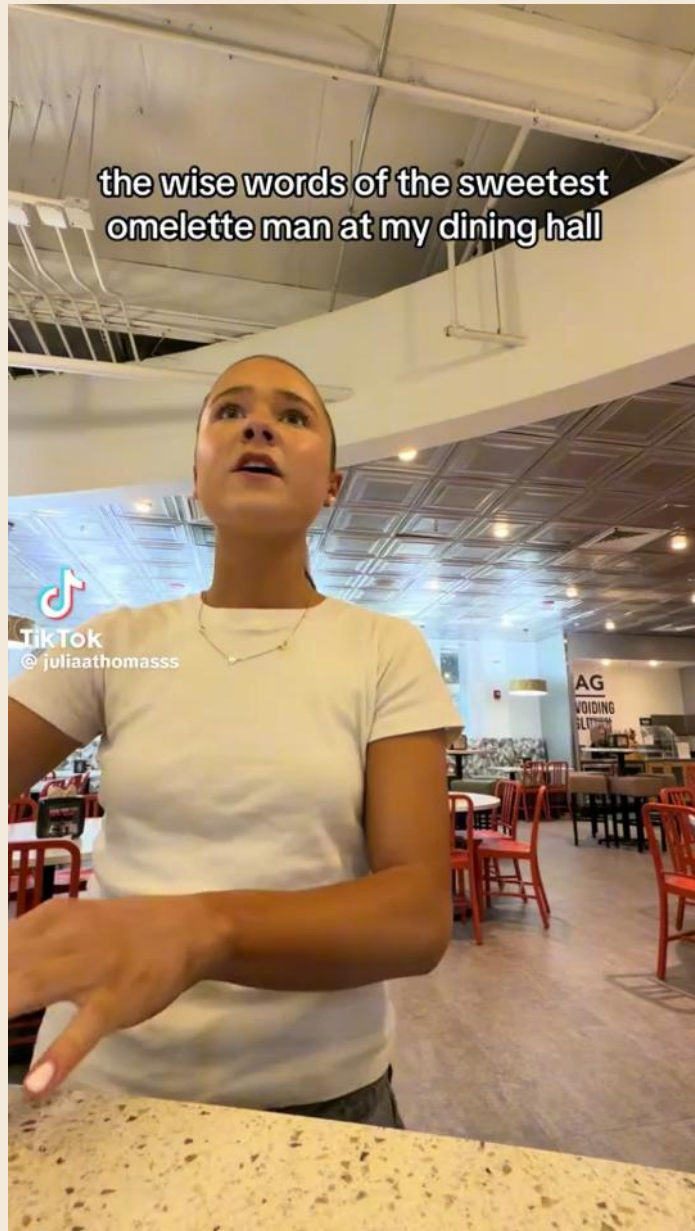
I N N O V A T I O N S T A R T I N G P O I N T

How do you make connection a trainable skill? How do you showcase the human touch in your hospitality and food (even a simple “made by” sign)? How can you create opportunities for connection?





“My freshman year of college I was alone, I was depressed, I had no friends, and the dining hall was the one spot for me that made me feel more alone because everyone was eating in groups and I was just by myself with my little AirPods.”



**“Literally the
sweetest man in
the world.”**



“I NEED the pancakes.”

“Can we get Yale food recipes?”

**“I would go there just for the
pancakes.”**

**“I would go to Yale just for the
food.”**

**“Those eggs are the perfect
consistency.”**



They Need Meaningful, Not
Transactional, Experiences



味外

L I G H T S P E E D C O M M E R C E

**66% of Gen Z says their
purchases should reflect
their personal values**



AI PALETTE

**58% of Gen Z says they
choose products that
offer emotional comfort
and stress relief**





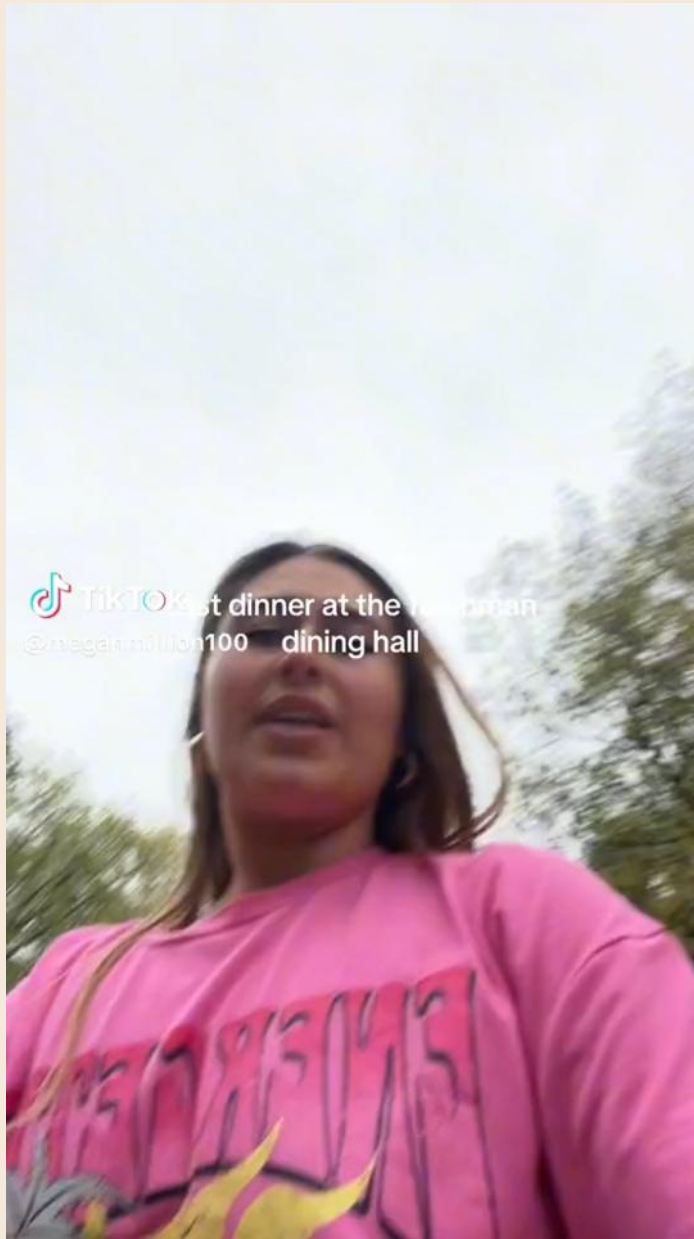
“Grandmacore”



I N N O V A T I O N S T A R T I N G P O I N T

**What is the meaning behind
your operation? Why are you
in this position? Do your
students know that? Where
are the meaningful
moments, like the last
meal?**





**“David it’s my last
time here!”**



They Need Someone to Trust

MORNING CONSULT

Gen Z is the least trusting generation. They have lower trust scores for 95% of brands compared to all adults.





12%
of Gen Z says that
apples are ultra-
processed

WHO CAN I
TRUST?

72%

of Gen Z don't know where to find trustworthy information.

Thinking about how you make decisions about what to eat or drink, how would you describe the amount of information and options you have available to you today? Please select all of the statements you agree with. "I know where to find trustworthy information."

Below are different types of claims or messages you might see from food or beverage brands. How much do these influence your decision to try or buy something? (Top 2 Box on a 5-Point Scale).

	TOTAL	GEN Z	YOUNG MILLENNIALS	OLDER MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BOOMERS+
Made with real ingredients	55%	59%	74%	65%	57%	39%
No artificial ingredients	50%	51%	67%	57%	53%	37%
Family owned	45%	53%	64%	53%	42%	29%
Locally sourced	44%	49%	67%	51%	44%	30%
Heritage recipe or traditional methods	36%	46%	58%	44%	35%	18%
Community focused or gives back	35%	53%	56%	41%	31%	18%
Sustainable practices	33%	44%	56%	44%	31%	14%
Science backed or clinically proven	32%	44%	49%	39%	30%	15%
Transparent supply chain	31%	43%	54%	39%	31%	12%
"Made by" with the name of the chef, farmer, bartender, etc.	28%	40%	52%	35%	26%	11%
Small batch	25%	32%	37%	35%	24%	11%
Celebrity or chef endorsement	18%	25%	39%	29%	14%	4%



**“Did you all see that one
[UNIVERSITY] stale bread video?”**

“YESS”

“YES I JUST SAW IT.”

**“THE VID IS ABOVE THIS
LMAOO.”**



I N N O V A T I O N S T A R T I N G P O I N T

Can you create an item that has a built-in trust factor? What makes it trustworthy? How can you make better use of your open kitchen? How do you showcase the farmer?



FIVE QUESTIONS TO TAKE BACK

To your campus next week:

- 1 What's one change we can make this week to ease a stressed-out student's day?
- 2 Where can students see their own identity on the menu?
- 3 Whose name and face is on the food we serve?
- 4 Which dish carries a story, not just ingredients?
- 5 What proof of where our food comes from can a student see?

HUMAN-FOCUSED INSIGHTS

Menu Matters

FOR THE F+B INDUSTRY



THANK YOU

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