



Classic, but reinvented with artisan cheese and hints of lemon, lightly fried zucchini blossoms make ideal appetizers.

Trends

- Focus on quality: more than any other sector, Italian food is quality driven; serve the freshest, best ingredients possible.
- Bitter flavors are moving into the limelight—balance rich recipes like fettucine alfredo and osso buco with fermented greens, fresh citrus, and tart vinegars.
- Arancini, the cheesy pop-in-your-mouth rice ball snacks, have made a comeback—flavor them with summer ingredients such as corn, tomatoes, and zucchini squash.
- Produce-focused entrées are very big in this segment, especially using eggplant, cauliflower, mushrooms, and spinach as the center of the plate.
- Go beyond the typical ingredients and menu visual stunners like Romanesco, heirloom tomatoes, or garlic chives: customers want a visual wow factor.
- Classic red sauces have made a comeback; the longer you simmer, the better!



Suggested Pairings

- Markon First Crop (MFC) Basil: Basil works well with pesto, cantaloupe, olives, oranges, and strawberries.
- MFC Lemons: Bright lemons prevent robust ingredients such as meat and cheese from overwhelming the palate. Add zest and/or juice to lighten up ricotta cheese, gravies, fried eggplant, veal shanks, and roasted potatoes.
- MFC Portabella Mushrooms: Lend firm texture and umami flavors to Italian recipes. Best partners include cheese, eggplant, onions, rice, sage, and tomatoes.
- MFC Tuscan Lettuce: Tango, Oak, Lolla Rosa, Green and Red Leaf, and Sweet Gem lettuces (depending on season). Pairs well with caramelized onions, grilled meats, sausage, and soft-boiled eggs.
- Ready-Set-Serve (RSS) Washed & Trimmed Kale: Use in fresh salads, roasted and served as chips, or used in pasta and pizzas. Kale is a good fit with classic Italian flavors like blood orange, cannellini beans, garlic, and pine nuts.
- RSS Wild Arugula: The peppery notes of wild arugula lend complexity to ingredients such as blue cheese, olive oil, pasta, pork, potatoes, and walnuts.

Italian Essentials

- Artisan Burrata Cheese
- Old-Fashioned Red Gravy
- Gluten-Free Pizza
- Soppresata
- Olive Oil Cakes
- Agnolotti
- Sardines
- Braised Fennel
- Limoncello
- Squid Ink Pasta
- Amaretti



- Butternut Squash
- Salty Cheeses
- Pesto
- Garbanzo Beans
- Risotto
- Mushrooms
- Tomatoes
- Artichokes
- Whole-Wheat Pasta

Usage Ideas

MFC Basil

- Use basil in expected, but delicious places like smoothies, lemonade, custards, and sandwiches
- Layer the flavors of long-simmered broths and sauces (especially tomato-based), with basil, garlic, and onions
- Use whole leaves to stuff veal, chicken breasts, and the classic braciolo
- Basil is at home in nearly any Italian recipe: pastas, pizzas, salads, soups, meats, even desserts

MFC Lemons

- Toss RSS Washed & Trimmed Kale, roasted garbanzo beans, toasted croutons, and lemony vinaigrette—great with grilled chicken, steak, or chops
- Make in-house lemon curd to serve with breakfast scones, English muffins, and quick breads
- Stir in the juice and zest of MFC Lemons to brighten the flavors of olive oil cakes
- Ferment long strips of MFC Lemons and use to flavor specialty cocktails, marinades, vinaigrettes, and meat sauces



MFC Portabella Mushrooms

- Add heartiness to breakfast by stirring sautéed mushrooms into scrambled eggs, frittatas, and Florentine omelets
- Portabellas are so much more than stuffing mushrooms—use them in risotto, soups, with cream sauces, on pizzas, and as a lightly fried appetizer
- Grill MFC Portabella Mushrooms and toss with linguine, olive oil, and fresh herbs such as MFC Basil and Oregano

MFC Tuscan Lettuce

- This blend's hearty texture can withstand grilled meats and vegetables like artichokes, chicken breasts, potatoes, pork loin, and steak
- Vinaigrettes work well—but so do creamy dressings like blue cheese, lemon poppy seed, and creamy tomato
- Fruity applications are great for summer—try tossing with a balsamic syrup and sliced MFC Strawberries; nectarines, peaches, and plums work well too
- Accent the different lettuce varieties' colors by arranging salads in rows or sections

RSS Washed & Trimmed Kale

- Roast chopped green and purple leaves in olive oil and sea salt; serve as a pre-dinner bar snack or bread substitute
- Simmer torn green kale in a variety of soups: Italian wedding, Sicilian meatball, and sausage-white bean
- Roast with fingerling potatoes and meats like chicken thighs, pork chops, and wild boar
- Make a bold pesto sauce with kale, lemon, garlic, walnuts, and olive oil

RSS Wild Arugula

- Toss wild arugula with salty cheeses like Pecorino and Parmesan, nutty oils such as pistachio or walnut, and a hearty squeeze of lemon juice
- Give a bit of grassy texture to soups like papa al pomodoro, minestrone, pasta e fagioli, and Tuscan tomato with steamed mussels
- Use sautéed RSS Wild Arugula and sweet Butternut squash to fill pasta like ravioli and tortellini



Light and silky, this panna cotta gets its soft pink color from dried hibiscus and lemon flavor from lemon zest.



5-Star Food Safety

- Every case of RSS, MFC, or ESS you purchase from a member distributor has met or surpassed Markon's unparalleled standards for food safety.
- Our 5-Star Food Safety® Program is based on specifications, inspections, and information at five key points: fields, facilities, transportation, distributor warehouses, and operator kitchens.

Sustainability

- Markon was the first to test sustainable practices that result in specific, verifiable, and measurable data; we continue to set new benchmarks, meet them, make adjustments, and pass these standards along to the rest of the produce community.

