

OUTLET: TOTAL FOOD SERVICE MAGAZINE
DATE: FEBRUARY 2026 ISSUE
CIRCULATION: 76,135
IMPRESSIONS: 243,632



PRO-TEK is here to support our Food Service Partners by offering
Discounted Specials on all of our Kitchen Maintenance Services

CALL US FOR MORE INFO AT
(866) 773-7717 OR VISIT PROTEK.NY.COM

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU NOW OR WHEN YOU ARE
READY TO RE-OPEN! **(BOGO ON MOST SERVICES)**



Total Food Service

FOODSERVICE NEWS • INDUSTRY TRENDS • EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

Chair, Club Management
Association of America

February 2026
Vol. 35 • No. 10
totalfood.com

Richard LaRocca

Exclusive Q&A Interview on Page 36

NYC Wins \$5M+ Delivery
Court Settlement on pg 4

Denver Takes On Food Waste on pg 6

Houston Eatery Wins Over NYC Diners on pg 8

Philly Takes Aim at Reservation Scalpers on pg 20

**BUILT FOR HOSPITALITY.
DESIGNED FOR CHEFS.**

DISCOVER KLAY.

Visit Arc Cardinal at Booth #1816 at the
New York Restaurant Show | Javits Center | March 8-10, 2026



DINING TRENDS FORECAST FOR 2026



beef, seasonal vegetables, and clean preparations let the ingredients shine, delivering real food made with care.



Daniel's, A Florida Steakhouse & Daniel's Miami – Thomas & Cassidy Angelo (Owners)

- **Hospitality as the Experience, Not the Add-On:** Guests are moving away from flashy indulgence and toward dining that feels personal and meaningful. At Daniel's, the culture is built around recognition and real connection. Teams know guests' favorites, and regulars can reach Thomas directly by phone or text. Relationship-driven service is the new luxury.

- **Ingredient Integrity > Excess:** Diners increasingly want transparency and clean sourcing. Daniel has partnerships with Florida River Farms, Hierarchy Farm, Tiny Farms, Swank Farms, and essential imports like olive oil from Puglia. Every choice reinforces freshness, honesty, and a shift toward more mindful eating.

- **Local First, With Purpose:** The demand for responsibly raised, regionally supported products continues to grow. Today's diners aren't chasing showy luxury; they want flavor that speaks for itself. Thoughtfully sourced

no Ozempic menus. Instead, olive-oil-forward techniques, less butter, and dishes that feel cleaner, fresher, and still decadent so a Tuesday supper doesn't eat like Thanksgiving.

- **Balanced Price/Value, Without Compromise:** More skillfully handled, cost-smart proteins (think skirt steak done spectacularly) and right-sized portions driven by COGS reality, not fad chasing.

- **Real NA Hospitality:** Elevated zero-proof cocktails and legitimate NA wine pairings so non-drinkers feel just as special as drinkers—no juice stand-ins.

- **Takeout That Travels:** A curated to-go portfolio (sushi rolls, select steaks and sides) engineered for quality at home, not a wholesale copy of the dining-room menu.

- **Human > Bots (Guest-Facing):** Smart AI on the back end, yes—but Danny doubles down on human-to-human interactions. For him, it starts with live "experience curators" (his

February is the time to talk about what's essential to enhance the dining experience for customers for 2026. Professionals from across the industry are sharing their insights on trends you need to know that may impact your business. You buy, sell, and serve. Here's what we're seeing is leaning toward meaningful, and high-quality ingredients first.

Vitolo & Emilio's Ballerina – Anthony Vitolo, New Ft. Lauderdale, FL

- **Lighter, Cleaner:** Anthony is seeing diners gravitating toward dishes that feel lighter and use real ingredients. His kitchen has always delivered this, with proteins dried at low temperatures and high-quality ingredients like tomatoes from his family farm, creating flavorful, seasonal



Joyce Appelman is the SCOOP News Editor and Senior Contributing Writer for Total Food Service and previously the National Communications Director for C-CAP, Careers through Culinary Arts Program. An industry leader supporting education and scholarships, she has been instrumental in opening career opportunities for many young people in the foodservice industry. Email her at joyceappelman@gmail.com

in-house U.S.-based reservation call center) to craft celebrations before guests walk in.

- **Weeknight Wins:** The celebration crowd remains; the biggest opportunity is casual weekday dining—lighter, quicker, great value, zero guilt.

Markette and The Argyle – Executive Chef India Doris, NYC

- **Nostalgia and Comfort:** I want

continued on page 88



Chef Danny Grant



Chef India Doris