

Wellness, culture and comfort lead trends at IFSA Global EXPO



The SkyChefs booth at IFSA Global EXPO

At the recent [IFSA Global EXPO](#) in Dallas, Texas, a miso caramel cheesecake, an adjustable lumbar cushion and destination-inspired amenity kits reflected a shared priority: developing products around how passengers want to feel during and after a flight.

Conversations with *PAX International* revealed how that priority is influencing product development across airline catering, F&B and amenities. Wellness informed discussions about dining, sleep and skincare, while cultural identity continued to shape menus and brand partnerships. Suppliers also explored how familiar foods and adaptable comfort products can deliver a more personal experience. Together, these considerations are broadening the definition of premium across cabin classes.

At the [SkyChefs](#) booth, Chef Anthony Wright, Senior Director of Culinary Excellence, discussed how the caterer's chefs and development teams balance emerging flavors with passenger preferences.

The sampling menu included chipotle-maple glazed peach with creamy stracciatella, fresh mint and chipotle-pepita crunch. An ube panna cotta combined pandan coconut cream, ube jam, toasted coconut crunch and ube gel.

While ube and chipotle-maple are enjoying the moment, Wright's team is already considering the next direction in menu development. He anticipates a wider role for umami, demonstrated at the booth through a high-protein, no-bake Miso Caramel Cheesecake with miso-yuzu dulce de leche,

candied pecans and sesame.

The dessert also reflects his approach to wellness: deliver the flavor and enjoyment passengers expect while considering how the meal makes them feel. For caterers, this means integrating nutritional considerations into a dish that retains its appeal as an indulgence.



DFMi debuted JOYRIDE at IFSA Global EXPO

[DFMi](#) reported a similar appetite for its [JOYRIDE](#) offering, which attracted strong interest from airlines and buyers at the show. The Austin-based brand added a Texas connection to the lineup, with plant-based, low-sugar candy in familiar formats including gummies, ropes and sour strips.

“Passengers still want that moment of enjoyment,” Kim Brown, Vice President of Marketing at DFMi, told *PAX International*.

The emphasis on enjoyment also underlies the renewed interest in nostalgia across F&B development. Familiar flavors offer reassurance and an emotional connection, giving suppliers a foundation for introducing new ingredients or updating established formats.

[En Route International](#) explored this relationship in its [trends report introduced at WTCE](#). The findings provide context for the conversations in Dallas: consumers increasingly seek comfort, pleasure and authenticity from food, alongside options that fit their everyday eating habits.

For airlines, this creates opportunities to elevate familiar sandwiches, baked goods and desserts through ingredient quality and careful preparation. En Route also identifies growing demand for smaller meals and flexible snacking formats, including options that allow passengers to personalize

ingredients. The implications extend beyond menu selection to how airlines structure and deliver dining service.



Pecan Lodge's barbecue platter for American Airlines

[American Airlines' partnership with Pecan Lodge](#) invites familiarity and regional identity to redefine premium dining. The menu offering won Best Food & Beverage – Meal Service at the [2027 IFSA Awards](#), presented on the Dallas show floor.

American expanded the First Class offering to all eligible domestic departures from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport beginning September 9. Passengers can preorder the smoked brisket sandwich for lunch or barbecue platter for dinner where available.

Preparation starts at Pecan Lodge's Dallas restaurant, where the team seasons and slow-smokes the meat before packaging it for American's catering partners to prepare for onboard service. The collaboration gives a recognizable regional meal a place in the premium cabin through provenance, consistent execution and a direct connection to the airline's hometown.

[AMI Group](#) explored an expression of cultural identity through its [Itameshi tasting event](#). Japanese-style Italian cuisine provided the theme, with focaccia, seaweed butter and umami olives introducing the combination of culinary traditions. Nduja tonkotsu broth with ditalini in another course, while wine pairings completed the experience.

The tasting gave airline partners an opportunity to assess how recognizable dishes and ingredients can support more adventurous flavor combinations, with food, wine and service contributing to a cohesive offer.



Japanese flavors, Italian inspiration and wines from around the world gave guests plenty to savor at AMI Group's tasting menu pop-up at IFSA Global EXPO

Cultural relevance on display at the [FORMIA](#) booth, where the company connected sense of place with well-being, contemporary lifestyles and the enduring appeal of heritage brands.

[Aeroméxico](#)'s special-edition Premier One kits combine Mexico's national colors with [Nopalera](#) skincare centered on the nopal cactus. [The collection](#) linked both the design and contents to Mexican identity.



Aeroméxico's special-edition Premier One collection with Nopalera celebrates Mexican identity through distinctive designs and skincare featuring the nopal cactus

American Airlines' U.S. Soccer kits draw on [passengers' shared enthusiasm for sport](#), with stadium-ready bags designed for use after landing. The program extended the airline's sporting partnership into a product passengers could carry through the next stage of their trip.

Lifestyle relevance similarly informs FORMIA's work with [EVA Air](#) and [Hunter](#). The latest long-haul Premium Economy collection features crossbody bags with adjustable, detachable straps, combining the British brand's heritage with practical design. [The collection](#) places continued use at the center of the amenity proposition.

In a [recent discussion with PAX](#), FORMIA describes an expanding role for partnerships across wellness, art, sport and lifestyle, giving airlines a broader range of brands through which to engage passengers.

[Etihad Airways](#) combines sense of place and personal care in its [Destination Collection](#) featuring [LANEIGE](#), which earned Best Onboard Amenity Business Class at the IFSA Awards. The collection features 14 designs inspired by cities across the airline's network, with embossed city names, geographic coordinates and individual serial numbers. The Abu Dhabi Edition draws inspiration from the Zayed National Museum.



LANEIGE skincare products featured inside Etihad's Business Class amenity kit

Etihad extended its focus on wellness across the journey with the announcement of [Etihad Wellbeing](#) during Global EXPO. The program brings together lounge quiet spaces and spa treatments, nutritious dining, hydrating beverages, bedding and skincare.

That emphasis on the complete journey also informed PAX's conversation with [WESSCO](#). The company approaches well-being as a consideration across the passenger experience, with hydration, sleep and recovery guiding product decisions.

"The focus now is simple: design around how passengers want to feel," says Petros Sakkis, CMO at WESSCO.

WESSCO points to JetBlue's Mint Wanderfuel kits as an example of tailoring amenities to the circumstances of travel. The program introduced four variations aligned with different travel moments, recognizing that passengers on a morning departure may have different needs from those preparing for an overnight flight.

Buzz addressed individual needs through adaptable product design at its booth, where Meagan English demonstrated four [Premium Economy comfort concepts developed with Tangerine](#).



Buzz's Meagan English at the company's IFSA Global EXPO booth

The Foldout Lumbar Cushion provides lower-back and lateral support as passengers change posture. An adjustable neck pillow allows passengers to shape their support, while a cocooning blanket and an eye mask with removable, sound-reducing earbuds address other barriers to rest.

The collection illustrates how suppliers are developing the Premium Economy proposition through products that give passengers greater control over their comfort. It also makes personalization a practical design consideration, allowing one product to accommodate different preferences and resting positions.

Across the Dallas show floor, these developments pointed to a broader basis for differentiation in onboard service. Regional partnerships give menus and amenities a distinct identity; familiar formats support both comfort and culinary innovation; and adaptable products respond to individual needs. For airlines and suppliers, the opportunity lies in translating those priorities into a consistent experience across dining, amenities and rest.