



# STIFEL *Bits*

November 26, 2025

## The Appetizer

*“The guest doesn’t dislike us, they just have forgotten about us.”*

– Paul Carbone, CEO of Panera Brands, the parent company of Panera Bread.

***Now, on to the numbers. Drum roll, please ...***

- **81.8 million:** The number of **Americans expected to travel** at least 50 miles from home over the Thanksgiving holiday, up from 80.2 million last year.
- **3,000-4,500:** The **average number of calories** consumed per person at Thanksgiving dinner. Basically, one dinner equals two days’ worth of eating – no regrets, only leftovers.
- **80 million:** The **pounds of cranberries** typically consumed during the Thanksgiving period.
- **57%:** The percentage of U.S. shoppers who say they expect to **spend the same or more** this holiday season compared with last year.
- **400:** The number of days a **family cat went missing** after Hurricane Helene before returning to its home.

# Dig In

## When the Internet Sneezes

If it feels like the internet has been having more “off days” than usual, you’re not wrong. Between not being able to mobile-order Starbucks (**CrowdStrike’s** fault), kids getting locked out of Roblox (**Amazon’s** fault), and ChatGPT and X going dark for hours (**Cloudflare’s** fault), outages have become a weirdly common part of modern life.

But why does **one glitch** ripple across so much of the internet? When you type something as simple as google.com, your request kicks off a lightning-fast journey through routers, cables, and even undersea wires until it finds the right server. That server then sends tiny packets of data back to your phone so the page loads. It all happens in milliseconds – well, until something breaks anywhere along that chain.

Here’s the twist: Outages feel bigger now because we’ve moved everything to the cloud. Twenty years ago, losing connection meant your office server froze; now, a hiccup in a single **data center** can knock out banks, transit apps, Zoom calls, and yes, your artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot.

The internet’s more powerful than ever, but also more fragile. Proof that no matter how smart tech gets, the Wi-Fi still runs the show.

## Weekly Specials

Justin Bieber and I have basically been best friends since ’08 – at least in my head. That’s the beauty (and curse) of **parasocial** relationships – Cambridge Dictionary’s 2025 Word of the Year. It’s the term for feeling close to people you’ve never met – celebrities, influencers, even AI chatbots. Friendship without the effort of actually hanging out? Sign us up ... maybe.

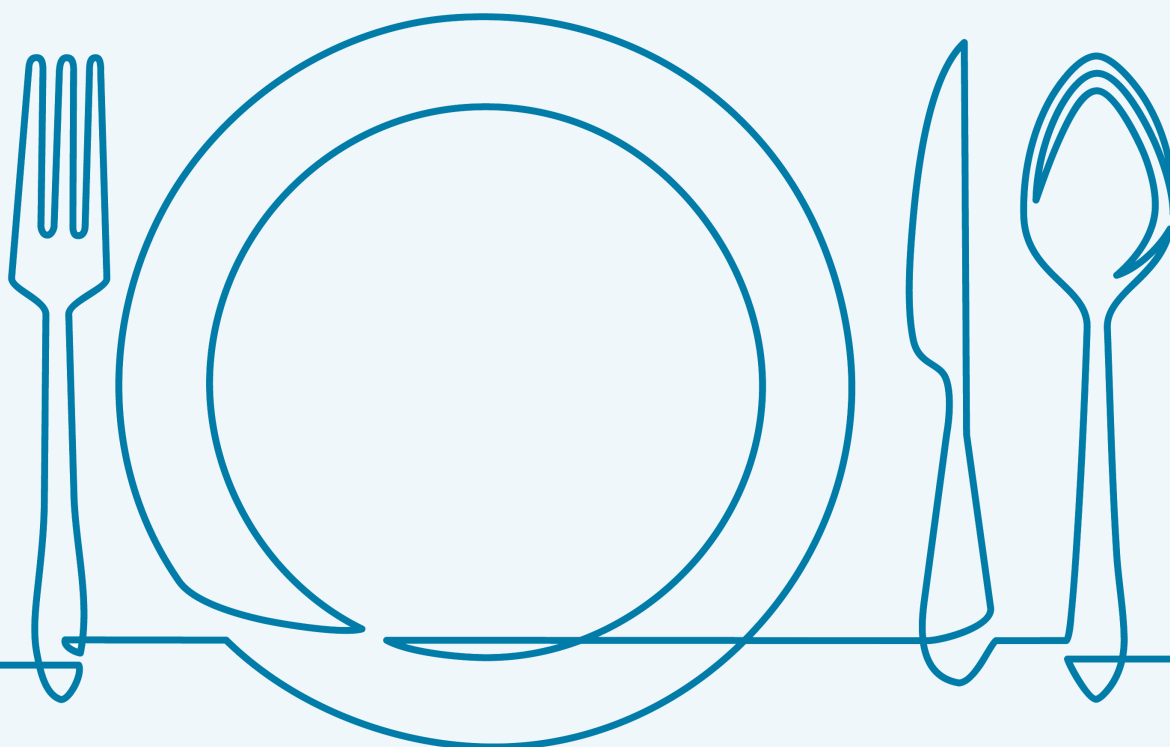
I thought the **Oscars** were in March, so I was a little confused to hear that Tom Cruise has now checked “win an Oscar” off his mission list. It was thanks to an honorary award at the 16th annual Academy Governors Awards ... I guess we’ll count it.

Apple pie fans, brace yourselves: **America’s favorite pie** is *pumpkin*. A new poll shows pumpkin narrowly edging apple, 24% to 23%. Sweet potato takes bronze with 16% and chocolate cream isn’t far behind at 14%. Four percent of respondents boldly declared they don’t like pie at all – chaos.

And up in **Utqiagvik, Alaska**, residents just watched their last sunrise of the year. The town won’t see the sun again until January 22 – that’s 64 days of darkness. They’ll still get a bit of twilight, but that’s small comfort. Over 4,400 people live there – proof that humans can, in fact, adapt to anything (with enough coffee and vitamin D).

# Corporate Lunch

- **Ford** just slid into **Amazon's** DMs. Now you can shop for **certified preowned** cars on Amazon just like you shop for sneakers. Next-day delivery not included (yet).
- **Starbucks** and **Target** teamed up for a **Frozen Peppermint Hot Chocolate drink**. Because nothing says “holiday spirit” like sipping dessert while impulse-buying throw pillows.
- Defense is trending: **Boeing** is scaling **Patriot missile seeker tech** like it's the next viral drop, with demand skyrocketing worldwide.
- Big-ticket renovations? Not trending. **Home Depot** warns profits will fall as high mortgage rates, tariffs, and **high costs** curb consumer splurges.
- **Intuit** just signed a **multiyear deal** with OpenAI. If AI can make taxes less painful, that might actually qualify as a miracle.
- **Walmart's** CEO is **clocking out** after a decade at the top. His replacement? John Furner, who started as an hourly associate. The retail version of “started from the bottom.”
- **Netflix** is officially a **game night host**. You can now play Tetris and trivia on your TV with your phone as controller.



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