

TOP 10



TRENDS

2018

INFLUENCING FLAVOR & MENU DEVELOPMENT



TOP 10 TRENDS

2018

If our collection of Top 10 Trends is any indication, 2018 is going to be an entertaining year. There's a lighthearted, convivial, experiential vibe threading this set of trends together. From the shareable seacuterie offerings and new-wave texture treatments to the advent of taco taverns and Instagramable cocktails, it could be said that today's trends are a pendulum swing. They're shifting us back to the lighter side of things, reminding us that although flavor development is serious business, the fruits of that labor should be sweet. They should connect us—without formality—over a memorable, shared, relaxed, break-from-the-everyday experience. Our 10 trends indicate the growing consumer yearning to be wowed without worry. Fanciness and precision make way for casual yet inspired. ☺



"This enduring trend can be executed deliciously in every segment of the foodservice industry, from fine dining to casual to school foodservice. The taco has earned its permanent position as part of the American culinary landscape. - Sharon Olson

family picnics—bringing those happy food memories to life. That build includes fried chicken, warm honey-Dijon potato salad, avocado crema and crispy chicken skin—tapping into the flavor system while making it uniquely Velvet Taco's.

VEG-CENTRICITY LIVES HERE

It's no surprise, really, to see veg-centric making moves into modern taco builds. This long-lasting trend, which sees chefs paying loving attention to the cooking and flavoring of produce, is really finding its way across menus. Tacos offer a snug carrier for delicious, flavor-forward builds. Vicia Restaurant in St. Louis, known for its vegetable cookery, serves a seasonal vegetable taco. A recent offering combined purple-top turnips, shiitake, charred

vegetable mole, tomato hot sauce, black beans, pickled onion and fajita peppers. Petty Cash Taqueria in Los Angeles plays with the classic pastor profile in its Carrot Pastor—ancho chile-rubbed farmers' market carrot, pineapple and avocado. Puesto, a Mexico City-style taqueria with three locations in Southern California, serves a Mushroom Taco: garlic-braised seasonal mushrooms wrapped in crispy melted cheese, topped with stone fruit-jalapeño salsa, pickled onions and microgreens. At Espita Mezcaleria in Washington, D.C., Robert Aikens, executive chef, menus a Roasted Brussels Sprouts Taco with smoked almond, hazelnut and sesame crema. "Why not put sprouts in a taco? Just make them delicious with carefully considered ingredients," says Aikens.

A WORD ON MEXICAN TACOS

Although today's taco opportunity is rooted in a free-spirited exploration of flavors and textures, all tucked into the mighty taco, there is still significant flavor discovery from the rich traditions of our neighbor to the south. Puesto celebrates Mexico City's urban, authentic take on tacos, with offerings like Zucchini & Cactus Taco and Lamb Barbacoa. With that celebration of authenticity comes a discovery of flavor and texture, combinations that are unfamiliar and exciting to American diners. Katy Smith, Puesto's executive creative chef, features an authentic technique that brings insane craveability to the taco: She puts queso Oaxaca on a plancha, cooking it until thin and crisp, adds the taco toppings to that



SOCIABLE & SHAREABLE

By Sharon Olson

This trend is driven in part by the strong desire for sociability—and for Instagram moments. A recent Culinary Visions study of more than 1,000 consumers under 35 years old further supports this:

58% like to take pictures to share on social media when dining with a group

42% love going out to eat because it's a good opportunity for photos

39% think about whether it's a good spot for photos when choosing a restaurant

38% have dined at a restaurant before with the express purpose of sharing a photo on social media



66 Another way to introduce a fun, social cocktail is with a dining-room drink cart featuring a liquid nitrogen frozen slushie created tableside. Much like the guacamole cart, or bananas Foster flambéeing tableside, the cocktail cart adds a unique interactive flair and creates buzz in the dining room.

—ANDREA TODD

fun moments shared with wider social networks. “Snap-worthy sips are all the rage, whether they’re served in a kitschy vessel shaped like a cat or a giant punch bowl designed for the communal slurp,” says Liz Moskow, culinary director at Sterling-Rice Group. “What’s Instagram-worthy is in.”

Pop culture played out in cocktails is a smart form of social currency. At Bar Stellar, a modern American restaurant in Dallas, the Cereal Killer is served in a glass that looks like a milk carton. Guests can order a Black Russian topped with Lucky Charms, or the White Russian with Froot Loops. A photo of actor Ryan Gosling clipped to the rim finishes the look. Barton G., with locations in Los Angeles and Miami, is known for theatrical presentations of both its food and beverage. The Sabrinatini is a martini made with orange vodka, watermelon liqueur and a nitrogenized Champagne popsicle, topped with a chocolate monkey dangling from its rim.

Morgan Zuch, corporate beverage director of Datz Restaurant Group, Tampa, Fla., taps into pop culture for her ever-changing cocktail list at Datz, an American gastropub. She looks to movies like *Mean Girls* and TV shows like “Stranger Things” for inspiration. Her drinks are whimsical and Instagrammable. The Waffle Thief is a tribute to a waffle-obsessed character in the popular “Stranger Things” show: bourbon, spiced rum, cinnamon- and vanilla-infused maple syrup, lemon juice, pomegranate and blueberries, garnished with Eggo Minis dusted in powdered sugar.

The Dark Side is a beer cocktail sporting dark rum, crème de cacao, coffee liqueur, chocolate stout, “black glitter” simple syrup, with mini

lightsabers subbing in for swizzle sticks. “I like paying attention to pop culture and media, and what everyone is raving about,” she says. “Our customers are both older and younger Millennials, and our goal is to give them a fun, approachable experience. I want the drinks to deliver that ‘Wow!’ factor.”

ICE THEM OUT

Serious cocktail culture helped bring attention to ice, thanks to the adulation given to the artisanal ice cubes in modern cocktails. The counterculture looks to the cube as an opportunity for differentiated fun.

At Whiskey Cake Kitchen & Bar, Front Burner’s modern American concept, branded ice cubes have become part of its persona. The letters “WC” are embedded into the ice, featured in some drinks. “We’ll get people who don’t normally drink whiskey or bourbon order it, just so they can take a picture of the ice,” says Bolet. “It’s another fun way for us to extend our brand and stand out.”

Some mixologists are looking to ice cubes as an opportunity to impact both flavor and experience, changing it from a single tone to a nuanced one, with flavor intensifying as the ice melts. At IIO Godfrey, a rooftop lounge at The Godfrey Hotel in Chicago, the Rainbow Sangria is a showstopper. The rainbow of ice cubes is made from fresh-squeezed fruit juices. Grey Goose vodka and Caposaldo Moscato top the ice, with large-format pitchers making the shareable experience a memorable one.

Meanwhile, at Tanta, a Peruvian restaurant in Chicago, El Chingon is made with jalapeño-infused tequila, mezcal, lime and cilantro. The rocoto pepper ice puts it over the top—as it melts, the drink becomes spicier.

providing global companies with strategic food & beverage, brand, and operations solutions. Louis develops creative and strategic initiatives for clients while keeping tabs on new and evolving restaurants.

louis@theculinaryedge.com

ELIZABETH MOSKOW is the Culinary Director at Sterling-Rice Group, a Boulder, Colo.-based branding and innovation firm. A culinary and strategic thought leader in CPG and foodservice trends, Liz



tracks and predicts the future of food and beverage. The author of SRG's bi-annual publications, "Trendjectories," "Top Cutting-Edge Trends," and "The Natural Nine," Liz provides insight into culinary trends in both CPG and foodservice. She lends a culinary perspective and strategic insights for all food-related innovation and brand projects.

emoskow@srg.com

KARA NIELSEN is a food & beverage trend expert with over a decade of experience translating trends for strategic brand growth and innovative product development. She is VP, Trends & Marketing at



CCD Innovation, a strategic food and beverage innovation agency based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Kara also has experience creating and sharing consumer and culinary trend content at Innova Market Insights,

Sterling-Rice Group and CEB Iconoculture Consumer Insights. She is a frequent speaker on trends at industry trade shows and conferences, and is quoted regularly in national and industry media. Her success at placing trends in a larger societal and cultural context comes from her background in culinary arts and restaurant hospitality as well as her master's degree studies in gastronomy at Boston University. kara@ccdinnovation.com

SHARON OLSON is Founder & Executive Director of Chicago-based Culinary Visions® Panel, which works with food companies to inspire big-idea innovation and to deconstruct trends into



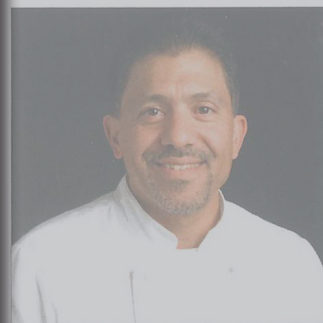
a relevant context that helps build brands. Services include focused original research with custom-crafted professional and consumer panels, innovation labs and a wide range of culinary marketing services. Culinary Visions publishes Conference Beat reports throughout the year that identify trends spotted at leading domestic and international food and beverage trade conferences. sharon@culinaryvisions.org

RICK PEREZ is Chef/Founder of R&D Culinary Consultants, a product & menu development firm serving food processors and foodservice operators. With 30-plus years of experience, Rick is an ACF member and was honored as a 2013 inductee into the American Academy of Chefs.



Based in Jamestown, N.C., he has assembled an extensive team of professionals who are instrumental in developing next-generation food products with clean labels, including reductions of sodium, phosphates and sugars. rperez_rdculinary@aol.com

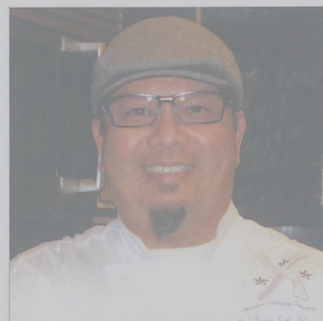
NICK SABA has over 35 years of experience in the foodservice and hospitality industry, not only as a chef, but as a corporate executive and business owner. Throughout his career, he earned



various certifications, including ACF, FMP certification and NRA ServSafe trainer certification, as well as advanced education through The Culinary Institute of America. His corporate career began at the Wilshire Restaurant Group, leading to VP and Corporate Executive Chef, then moving to the Catalina Restaurant Group. In 2015 he founded Terra Culinary, Inc., providing food and beverage consulting to restaurant chains, independent operators and manufacturers.

terraculinary@gmail.com

DENNIS SAMALA is Founder & Chief Innovation Officer of Creative Culinary Concepts, a consulting practice of passionate, strategic-minded, culinary, baking and food science experts with over



25 years experience in domestic and international foodservice, consumer product goods, and food manufacturing. Specializing in new

product and menu ideation and innovation, culinary development, product optimization, that drive business through sales and profitability, Dennis is a consumer-centric, solution-oriented, collaborative, visionary strategist with a track record of innovative food & beverage development and implementation. He has worked with both large corporations and independent start-ups. He holds a degree in biology and microbiology from Cal Poly Pomona and is a certified ProChef II from The Culinary Institute of America. Based in Southern California, he leverages his culinary and technical background along with his network of business partners in marketing, packaging, and consumer insights, enabling his clients speed to market. chefsamala@chefsamala.com

BARTON SEAVER is on a mission to restore our relationship with the ocean, the land, and with each other—through dinner. His most recent book, *American Seafood: Heritage, Culture & Cookery From Sea to Shining Sea* (Sterling Epicure,



2017), is an essential guide to more than 500 species, as well as a riveting history of one of our country's most iconic industries. His global initiatives educate consumers about how choices for diet and menus can promote healthier people, more secure food supplies, and thriving communities. His work uses human health metrics to better define sustainability by cooking with underutilized species and serving conscious portion sizes. An internationally recognized speaker and author, Barton resides in coastal Maine with his wife and son. barton@forcodandcountry.com

CRISTINE SHIPLEY is Director of Culinary at Marlin Network Culinary Arts in Springfield, Mo. Chef Cristine is serious about food. Her exceptional palate, creativity and attention to detail are a result