

Food and Beverage Trends for 2013

Yes, it's that time of year again - prediction season. Here are some 2013 forecasts and predictions that we find interesting and relevant. Let's look at some of the trends that might have the most potential to bring profit and to position your restaurant as an "in the know" establishment.

With health and global realities top-of-mind concerns for consumers, look for these food trends to go big next year as they move from cutting-edge to mainstream:

- **Sour gets its day:** Fermented cherry juice and sour beer? In 2013, yes, as food palates move beyond sweet, salty and fatty to tart, acidic and bitter.
- **Chefs watch weight:** Chefs are changing their habits and exchanging their butter and bacon for broth and beets. The result, better-for-you food that actually tastes good.
- **Asian infiltrates American comfort food:** The spicy and fresh flavors of Thailand, Vietnam and Korea will give consumers a new take on comfort food.
- **Veggies take over the plate:** No longer prepared as just a side or salad, vegetables will get their chance to star as the main dish.
- **Kids' menus grow up:** Mac and cheese and chicken nuggets take a backseat to kid-friendly versions of adult dining options.
- **American Artisans save a trip to Europe:** With the emergence of local artisans budding in cities across America, why fly to Paris when foodies can think globally, but travel locally.
- **Small plates:** Small plates for sharing will be replaced with smaller, singular servings of meat, veggies or starches for a truly customized dining experience.
- **Savory fruit:** Look for fruit used with savory flavors, incorporated as a touch in appetizers, soups and meat dishes.
- **No diner left behind:** From gluten-free to vegan, more restaurants will offer all-inclusive menus and services to accommodate all eaters.
- **Popcorn is THE snack of 2013:** Sweet or savory, the all-time favorite (and healthy) snack will pop up everywhere -- in ice cream, as croutons.
- **Everyone wants to be Chipotle:** Consumers are trading down like crazy ... leaping from full service restaurants directly to fast-casual formats. Fast-casual service systems are being applied to all concepts.
- **Fast food strikes back:** fast-feeders are taking the competition from robust fast-casual seriously. Menu boards are sprouting higher-priced options ... while at the same time maintaining their 99-cent or \$1 leaders.
- **Minis are bigger:** if you can eat it with one hand or better yet, two fingers ... if you can dip it ... then it's big!

- **Changing Perceptions:** Image-building is critical to getting consumer acceptance for upscale items. So language is changing: “Hand-battered” ... “artisan” ... “premium.”
- **Bundling gets bigger:** Fast food meal bundles are nothing new ... they dominate chain menu boards. But since the recession, bundles are getting increasing play at casual dining chains too.
- **Nose to tail:** Whole animal or whole bird dinners are expanding.
- **Bread trend:** Some restaurants won’t give bread without you asking for it. And increasingly, they’re charging for a breadbasket.
- **Bars are where the flavor action is:** Ambitious bartenders are infusing vodka and gin...and especially rum...with mango, kiwi and other house-made exotica (even dried fruit) as they stretch the notion of hand-crafted cocktails.

BUZZWORDS FOR 2013

Menu shuffling aimed at flexitarians

Asian flavorings: togarashi, yuzukoshi, gochujang

More chicken (often upscaled), less beef

Fermented everything

Donuts getting bizarre upscaling (foie gras jelly donuts, hamburgers between two griddled donuts, kimchee donuts)

Craft bourbon, small-batch rye, local gins

Zip-code honeys

Spice trends: Torridly hot, smoked, warm and aromatic, fruity

Too much smoking going on

Too many tasting menus

Food halls

Weirder and weirder desserts

White strawberries

Green tomatoes

Geranium leaves

Hibiscus

Shiso

Charred octopus tentacles

A good year for hard cider

Lobster rolls

Charcuterie boards