

▶ ▶ TREND WATCH 2011: What's Realistic, Profitable, and HOT This Year!

We Give the Top 2011 Trends a Reality Check

Everything that's tried and true was once a trend, so how do you know what's just a far-fetched fad and what's worth integrating into your operation? ▶ Some trends are obviously "out there," like heirloom beans, the number four produce trend on the just-released 2011 NRA "What's Hot" Chef Survey. But others – like using highly flavored crumbled, dried, or ground elements to top dishes instead of sauce, cited as a top trend on the annual Andrew & Freeman Consultants 2011 Trend List – are innovative and practical. Freshen up your menu this year with just a few smart and trend-savvy substitutions...

BEVERAGES

INSTEAD OF: EXPANDING YOUR WINE LIST

TREND TO TRY ▶ KICKING UP YOUR COCKTAIL MENU

Blame it on the popular, trend-setting show "Mad Men" which has certainly influenced fashion trends with 1950s flair, but right now the cocktail is hot! Inventive cocktails are the number one trend for 2011 according to Technomic. Be sure your cocktail menu is as diverse as your wine list. Include retro cocktails – like the Manhattan, Tom Collins, and the Sidecar. *Put a creative twist on tradition by incorporating savory elements, which is the third most important beverage trend according to the NRA Chef Survey:* Try adding fresh tarragon to the classic mint julep. For inspiration, visit www.theviolethour.com, a Chicago bar world renowned for their inspired cocktail creations!



APPETIZERS

INSTEAD OF: AMERICAN CLASSICS

TREND TO TRY ▶ ETHNIC AND
STREET-FOOD
INSPIRED BITES

Make room on the appetizer platter for more than just potato skins and mozzarella sticks. Customers are hungry for interesting, ethnic appetizers. Technomic suggests integrating Korean barbeque flavors wherever possible on your menu in 2011 – mini Korean tacos are one possible interpretation. If you think that's a far-fetched fusion, one of chain giant Chili's most popular appetizers is the Southwestern eggroll! Don't be afraid to mix culinary influences and get creative on your appetizer menu. Also take a cue from street food. For example, the highly portable German soft pretzel gets reinvented when it's served with a trio of Middle Eastern-inspired hummus.

Andrew & Freeman Consultants predict that hummus will be one of the hottest options for dipping in 2011.

The Trend Towards Menu Transparency Inquiring Customers Want to Know...

...What exactly are they eating? ▶ They want hard, cold nutritional data. The desire for disclosure has hit the restaurant industry and now, restaurants with 20+ units are required to list calorie counts on their menus! Transparency is the number three trend on research firm Mintel's 2011 Top Five Trends list and the firm suggest that over 61 percent of consumers want nutritional information – from calorie counts to fat grams – on their menus, or at least available to them on a separate document.

CENTER OF PLATE

INSTEAD OF: UPSCALE STEAKS

TREND TO TRY ► UNEXPECTED STEAKS

We're not suggesting you abandon all upscale steaks: filet mignon will never go out of style. But customers are in an adventurous mindset and are looking to try new cuts of steak. When it comes to center of plate options, the NRA Chef Survey identified newly fabricated cuts of meat in the top five trends for 2011. From the Denver steak to the petite tender, from the hangar steak to the flat iron pork cut – these are great “new to you” options for your customers. There are more underutilized cuts of meat available than ever before (ask your Maines Account Manager for a list of newly fabricated cuts). As an added benefit, these cuts offer tremendous opportunity for mark-up. *But if there's one trend to try this year, make sure it's at least one or two dishes featuring locally sourced meat: The year's number one overall trend according to chefs surveyed by the NRA.* Team with a local farm and show your sustainable side while offering a new flavor experience to your guests.

KID'S MENU

INSTEAD OF: ANYTHING MEANT FOR KIDS...

TREND TO TRY ► “MINI ME” VERSIONS OF HEALTHY, GROWN-UP ITEMS

Move over chicken nuggets, and make room for grilled chicken! It sounds counterintuitive, but right now both kids and their parents are more into adult-like kid's menus than classically child-oriented items like grilled cheese and hot dogs. *The reason for this trend is that conventional kid's menu items fall short on basic nutrition:* Items like pizza and hamburgers are loaded with fat and sodium, and childhood obesity is a national crisis. In fact, two of the overall top ten trends on the 2011 “What's Hot” Chef Survey involve a healthier kid's menu! The Survey suggests restaurants makeover the kid's menu by including smaller versions of adult items, plenty of fruit and vegetable side options, and entrée salads.

DESSERTS

INSTEAD OF: BROWNIE A LA MODE

TREND TO TRY ► MINI PIE SAMPLER WITH HOUSE-MADE ICE CREAM

Our suggested dessert item incorporates three major trends in one: First, bite-size desserts are still taking customers – and the culinary world – by storm! Mini

desserts give customers a chance to indulge while still keeping portions small. And pie is highlighted on Andrew & Freeman's 2011 top trend list, most likely a reflection of the trend towards American comfort food. Research firm Technomic predicts that food “straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting” will be hot this year, and what's more traditional than pie? *Finally, house-made ice cream is the top dessert trend on the NRA's “What's Hot” Chef Survey* and it's a great opportunity to give your chefs a chance to get creative!



Marketing Trend Watch:

Top Operational Trends
According to the NRA
“What's Hot” Chef Survey

#1 Food Trucks

A new trend just “popped” into town: Food trucks and “pop-up” restaurants are a hot item, according to 30 percent of surveyed chefs.

#2 Cooking Classes and Demos

Take customers “behind the scenes” with a chef-guided cooking class or demonstration. Another hot trend is customers hosting at-home chef parties, led by YOUR chef of course!



#3 Social Media

Social media is here to stay, with 17 percent of surveyed chefs citing it as a top operational tactic. Over 55 percent of chefs said they use social media to help promote their restaurant.