

Q & A

Culinary Trends



Paul King
Editorial Director,
FoodService Director
Magazine

What do you view as the top three culinary trends at this time?

In the non-commercial marketplace, the three trends

that are garnering the most interest among operators are plant-based proteins, clean label foods, and allergen/gluten-free menus.

What do you see as the driving force behind these trends?

What's driving all three of these trends is a single, overarching movement: customers wanting, in one way or another, to eat more healthfully. It used to be that eating healthfully meant reducing fat in your diet, cutting out sugar, or reducing sodium. Now, it means customers are looking at a whole host of issues that can affect health—not just their own health, but the well-being of animals and the health of the plant.

So customers begin to ask questions as they decide what to eat: How can I get much-needed protein without giving up my vegetarian ways? Is this meat coming from an animal that was treated with antibiotics? Is this milk free of growth or other hormones? Will that food trigger one of my allergies? How can I know for sure that this item is gluten-free?

How can foodservice professionals prepare for these trends?

I think, now more than ever, it is important for operators to talk with each other. Solutions to these menu challenges aren't going to come from a software program or even

necessarily a menu consultant. These trends are more individualized than, I think, any health trends that have come before. For instance, there is no one-size-fits-all menu program to deal with allergens or gluten intolerance. These must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and what works in one institution is not necessarily going to fly in another.

So I'd recommend peer groups or discussion lists on these topics. Sharing what has worked and what hasn't could be the easiest way to help operators deal with these trends.



**Michael Roddey, MS Ed,
CDM, CFPP, CEC, CCE,
CCA, FMP**

President & Principal
Consultant, Gastronomic
Services & Consulting, Inc.

What do you view as the top three culinary trends at this time?

When reading the National Restaurant Association's "Top 10 Food Trends for 2015," with the exception of one, they are all summed up with these three general topics: local food, sustainability, and healthy eating. For the last few years these have been evident and gaining traction in the Top 10 lists. It is comforting to note that there is harmony among these three areas of interest.

The local food movement, "Eat Local, Buy Local," is a concept that has been on the rise in many areas. When discussing local food it is next to impossible not to bring sustainability into the conversation, along with it being a healthier manner of eating.

We asked two food and nutrition leaders for their **insights on culinary trends**. Here's what they had to say.

What do you see as the driving force behind these trends?

Consumers are becoming more concerned about the food they choose to put into their bodies. Knowing the supply chain of one's food allows us to be educated about how crops are being cultivated, maintained, and treated for pests.

Sustainability is also high on the radar of consumers and producers today for the following reasons:

- we live in a world that can be depleted more quickly than it can rejuvenate
- natural resources are exhaustible
- how we treat the world impacts future generations

The desire for people to maintain a healthier lifestyle also appears to be gaining in popularity. I like to tell people our body is a machine of which we only get one. Unfortunately, sometimes we tend to take care better care of other machines, of which we will have numerous (cars, bikes, computers, etc.).

We need to provide our machine (body) with the proper fuel and maintenance so that it lasts our lifetime, which is now approaching 90 years. With the cost of health care today and the ailments that can affect us, people realize that we must invest in our health. This begins with providing our body with nutrient-rich food. We can essentially medicate our body through the nutritious food that we consume instead of seeing the doctor for medication.

How can foodservice professionals prepare for these trends?

One must first want to do something in order to be successful at it. I say this because local food, sustainability, and nutritious eating are not topics that everyone buys into. Aside from that key component, professional development and staying current in the field is highly important. Knowledge is power. To gain knowledge, we must engage with others who possess the desired knowledge.

Becoming more involved with the local food movement can be accomplished by:

- visiting local farmers markets and talking with the farmers
- participating in local food activities
- getting to know your local chef network through area restaurant associations, culinary school programs, or the local chapter of the American Culinary Federation

As one participates in these activities the knowledge will begin to flow and, hopefully, the understanding and value of the concept will catch hold. This network can help you procure local products, and can also impart ideas—including recipe applications and preservation methods—for how to utilize products as they become abundant. **E**



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