



NEWS RELEASE

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Healthy Kids' Meals, Local Produce, Mini Desserts Among Hottest Menu Trends for 2009, According to National Restaurant Association Research

Survey of more than 1,600 American Culinary Federation member chefs shows locally grown produce, bite-size desserts, organics as top trends

Washington, D.C., December 9, 2008—A new National Restaurant Association survey of more than 1,600 professional chefs – members of the American Culinary Federation (ACF) – reveals that nutrition and philosophy-driven food choices will be the hottest trends on restaurant menus in 2009. Local produce, bite-size desserts, organics, healthful kids' meals, and new cuts of meat top the list of nearly 210 culinary items in the third annual "What's Hot" chef survey. Rounding out the top 10 trends are kids' vegetable/fruit side dishes, superfruits (including acai and mangosteen), small plates/tapas/mezze/dim sum, artisan liquor and sustainable seafood.

"Creativity has always been a hallmark of professional chefs. Today's marketplace offers more options than ever before," said Dawn Sweeney, President and CEO of the Association. "As the wider trend of health continues to grow, the trend of choosing certain foods to follow one's personal philosophy has also gained momentum in the culinary world. As interest in food and the culinary arts grows in the United States, consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about the food they eat, and chefs are putting their enormous talents to work to fulfill the demand for dishes that follow these trends."

"Restaurant operators will have the best opportunity of the year to explore these trends at the 2009 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show and International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event, both to be held next May in Chicago," Sweeney added.

"Our members are restaurant owners, culinary educators and executive chefs at restaurants, hotels and country clubs, and they experience first-hand the latest trends," said ACF National President John Kinsella, CMC, CCE, WGMC, AAC. "In 2009, we will see healthier menu options with an emphasis on produce and fruit, smaller dishes and fish, and an increase in the use of local and sustainable ingredients. Going green will no longer be an alternative, as it will affect everything we do in our industry, from the use of induction cooking to finding new and exciting local food sources. And the word 'chef' will represent and mean a chef who cooks healthy, flavorful foods."

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In October 2008, the Association surveyed 1,609 American Culinary Federation member chefs, asking them to rate 208 individual food/beverage items, preparation methods and culinary themes as a “hot trend,” “yesterday’s news,” or “perennial favorite” on restaurant menus in 2009.

Nutrition/health as a culinary theme is ranked number 11 in the survey, underscoring the growing trends of consumer interest in healthful living. Among the top 20 items, nutritionally balanced children’s dishes and side items, produce and fruit items, smaller dishes, fish and gluten-free/allergy-conscious meals illustrate that restaurant menus will continue to expand options for health-conscious diners.

Several among the top 20 trendy items are related to the emerging trend of philosophy-driven food choices, including local sourcing, organics, artisanal items, sustainable seafood and free-range pork/poultry. Locally grown produce – rated the number-one trend on restaurant menus in 2009 – has grown tremendously in popularity for a variety of reasons. The idea of farm-fresh fruit and vegetables and minimal transportation are appealing to many, and sourcing locally is also tied to supporting local communities and businesses. Food and beverage items produced by small, artisan businesses also hold appeal, as do animal welfare and environmental concerns.

New/fabricated cuts of meat (such as Denver steak and pork flat iron steak) come in at number five on the list of trendy items. Several factors drive this trend, including culinary creativity, cost-consciousness, and interest in lean protein. These new cuts are developed to gain maximum flavor from the meat, incorporating under-used parts of the animal into innovative dishes, and customizing cuts to trim fat content.

Various types of alcohol will also heat up restaurant menus next year, both as a cooking ingredient and on the drink menu. Micro-distilled liquor, culinary cocktails (created to complement specific foods and dishes, savory drinks, etc.) and organic wine top the list of trendy alcohol. Among non-alcohol beverages, specialty iced tea, organic coffee and flavored/enhanced water will be the top trends.

The hottest trends in culinary themes include nutrition/health, gluten-free/allergy-conscious, food-alcohol pairings, umami (known as “the fifth taste”), and the slow food movement. In the preparation techniques category, braising tops the list, followed by smoking and sous vide.

Also included in the survey were questions about alcohol, kitchen and cost-cutting trends. The chefs rated mixologists and signature cocktails as the hottest beverage alcohol trend. The top trend in restaurant kitchens next year will be environmentally friendly equipment and practices, and the best way to save money in the kitchen is through sustainable practices, according to the surveyed chefs.

The 2009 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show® will offer first-hand opportunities to experience and explore the hottest food and beverage trends in the culinary world. The event provides a window to the future of the restaurant industry, including food and beverage items, innovative equipment and technology. In addition, the Show will feature unparalleled culinary-focused events and educational opportunities. NRA Show 2009 will be held May 16-19 at McCormick Place in Chicago. The 2009 International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event will again be held in conjunction with the Show, May 17-18. For more information, visit www.restaurant.org/show.

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To view the social media version of this release (including full results, downloadable photos, a video and more), visit www.restaurant.org/pressroom/social_media_chef_survey.cfm.

The American Culinary Federation, Inc., established in 1929, is the premier professional organization for culinarians in North America. With more than 22,000 members spanning 230 chapters nationwide, ACF is the culinary leader in offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and accreditation. In addition, ACF operates the most comprehensive certification program for chefs in the United States. ACF is home to ACF Culinary Team USA, the official representative for the United States in major international culinary competitions. For more information, visit www.acfchefs.org.

The National Restaurant Association, founded in 1919, is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which is comprised of 945,000 restaurant and foodservice outlets and a work force of 13.1 million employees - making it the cornerstone of the economy, career opportunities and community involvement. Along with the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, the Association works to represent, educate and promote the rapidly growing industry. For more information, visit our Web site at www.restaurant.org

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