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Local Wine and Beer, Culinary Cocktails and Artisan Liquor Among Hottest Menu Trends in 2010, National Restaurant Association Research Finds

Survey of more than 1,800 American Culinary Federation member chefs reveals range of alcoholic beverages among top 20 menu trends

(Washington, D.C.) A [National Restaurant Association](http://www.restaurant.org) survey of more than 1,800 professional chefs – members of the [American Culinary Federation](http://www.acfc.org) (ACF) - reveals that alcohol has gained a firm foothold among top restaurant menu trends. According to the survey, locally produced wine and beer is the fifth hottest trend on restaurant menus in 2010, and culinary cocktails and artisan liquor both rank in the top 20. Additional alcohol trends to be seen in restaurants in 2010 include organic beer/wine/spirits, food-beer pairings, craft beer, bar chefs/mixologists, gluten-free beer, specialty beer and organic cocktails.

“Alcohol can be an important part of the restaurant experience, and the What’s Hot in 2010 survey clearly shows that wine, beer and spirits are essential menu items,” said Dawn Sweeney, President and CEO of the Association. “In addition to the local sourcing trend that is also big in food items, we are seeing a fresh approach to integrating beer into meals, with chefs and ‘beer sommeliers’ working closely to select complementary solid and liquid flavors. The culinary cocktail is another concept emerging as a top trend, taking guests beyond the traditional drink into more complex and adventurous culinary landscapes, often with savory ingredients such as bacon, hot peppers and fresh herbs.”

According to ACF National President Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, “The culture of food preparation has changed dramatically. Consumers are more affluent, and they are bold and more demanding when it comes to their dining expectations. They want chefs to tempt their palates by pairing food and drink to ensure a superb dining experience.”

The Association surveyed 1,854 American Culinary Federation member chefs in October 2009, asking them to rate 214 individual food/beverage items, preparation methods and culinary themes divided into categories as a “hot trend,” “yesterday’s news,” or “perennial favorite” on restaurant menus in 2010.

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Local sourcing is a central theme of the top trends in the survey, with locally sourced produce and meat/seafood as numbers one and two. More restaurants are exploring options for wine and beer that is made locally to build their drink menus and support local business. Minimal transport also holds appeal from an environmental standpoint.

Other alcohol trends ranking high in the survey also mirror general food and societal trends. Culinary and savory cocktails, and the concept of a bar chef (also known as a mixologist) illustrate how American palates have grown more sophisticated and adventurous than ever before. Organic and artisan-made alcohol both reflect popular philosophy-driven choices. Gluten-free beer is an example of increasing awareness of food allergies and intolerances, by adding new options for diners on restrictive diets. While pairing wine with food is a long-established practice, recommending specific beers with menu items also shows a level of sophistication, deeper interest in “foodie” culture and recognition that all types of alcohol can enhance the dining experience.

When it comes to sources for trendy food and beverage ideas, the chefs surveyed ranked television, trade shows and independent restaurants as the best places to get inspired.

The National Restaurant Association’s International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event (IWSB) is the industry's first and only professional forum focused exclusively on restaurant and hospitality bar programs. To be held May 23-24 at McCormick Place in Chicago, the event gathers brewers, vintners and distillers, leading beverage experts, beverage alcohol buyers and more in one exclusive area where attendees have the opportunity to explore the latest trends and new brands and labels. For more information, visit www.winespiritsbeer.org.

IWSB 2010 will be held in conjunction with the National Restaurant Association’s annual trade show, the National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show®, the largest and most comprehensive industry event. NRA Show 2010 will be held May 22-25 at Chicago’s McCormick Place.

To view the social media version of this release (including full results, downloadable photos, video and more), visit http://www.restaurant.org/pressroom/social_media_whats_hot_2010.cfm.

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Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association 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 million employees. Together with the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, the Association works to lead America’s restaurant industry into a new era of prosperity, prominence, and participation, enhancing the quality of life for all we serve. For more information, visit our Web site at www.restaurant.org.

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, and to the Chef & Child Foundation, founded in 1989 to promote proper nutrition in children and to combat childhood obesity. For more information, visit www.acfchefs.org.