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Sustainability, Local Sourcing and Nutrition Top List of Hottest Menu Trends for 2010, According to National Restaurant Association Research

Survey of more than 1,800 American Culinary Federation member chefs shows locally produced food and beverages in top five menu trends

(Washington, D.C.) The [National Restaurant Association's](#) annual survey of more than 1,800 professional chefs – members of the [American Culinary Federation](#) (ACF) – reveals that local sourcing of ingredients, sustainability and nutrition will be the hottest trends on restaurant menus in 2010. Locally grown produce, locally sourced meats and seafood, sustainability, mini-desserts and locally produced wine and beer top the list of nearly 215 culinary items in the “What’s Hot in 2010” survey. Rounding out the top 10 trends are nutritious kids’ meals, half-portions, farm-branded ingredients, gluten-free/food-allergy conscious meals and sustainable seafood.

“No one has a better view of restaurant menu trends than the chefs of the nation’s nearly one million restaurants, and that is why we survey these culinary professionals on what hot, new trends we’ll see in the coming year,” said Dawn Sweeney, President and CEO of the Association. “The top trends this year – local sourcing, sustainability and nutrition – reflect wider societal trends and consumers’ growing interest in these issues. Many restaurants are sourcing some of their ingredients locally, and you often see chefs shopping at farmer’s markets to create a host of better-for-you options that today’s diners want.”

Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, ACF national president, agreed. “This is retro – it’s what we did in the past when chefs relied on local markets because we did not have the luxury of today’s transportation system. We are going back to our roots and the foundation of our craft that made it more pleasurable.”

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.

The leading culinary theme revealed by the survey is sustainability, which is ranked as the third hottest trend. Whether applied to produce, meat, seafood or alcoholic beverages, the concepts of environmentally friendly practices and local sourcing – farm-to-fork – are appealing to both restaurant operators and consumers for several reasons, including freshness, minimal transportation, and supporting local communities and businesses.

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Nutrition is another culinary theme that ranks high on the list of trends at number 15. Healthful options for children, produce, superfruits, bite-size and half portions, and food allergy conscious and gluten-free meals all rank in the top 20, illustrating that consumer interest in health and nutrition continues to grow and that restaurants are responding.

Other menu trends in the top 20 include farm-/estate-branded ingredients, regional ethnic cuisine, non-traditional fish (including barramundi and Arctic char), and newly fabricated cuts of meat (including Denver steak and pork flat iron). Simplicity as a culinary theme and smaller portions for a smaller price are also menu trends for 2010, reflecting the shift in consumer preferences toward value and comfort during the economic downturn.

When it comes to the drink menu, locally produced wine and beer is the fifth hottest trend on the What's Hot in 2010 survey. Other alcohol items in the top 20 chef-rated menu trends include culinary/savory cocktails and artisan liquor.

Topping categories within the survey are: amuse bouche and mini-burgers/sliders in appetizers; quinoa and braised vegetables in side items/starches; ethnic-inspired and traditional ethnic items in breakfast/brunch; bite-size desserts and artisan/house-made ice cream in desserts; regional and fusion in ethnic cuisines; artisan cheeses and black garlic in ingredients; and specialty iced tea and organic coffee in nonalcoholic beverages.

In the preparation methods category, liquid nitrogen freezing/chilling was ranked as the number-one trend, followed by braising, sous vide, smoking and oil-poaching/confit.

Also included in the survey were questions about kitchen and concept trends. The chefs rated environmentally friendly equipment as the top kitchen equipment trend, and the hottest restaurant concept in 2010 as restaurants with gardens.

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

The National Restaurant Association's annual trade show – the National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show® – is the largest and most comprehensive industry event and will be held May 22-25, 2010, in Chicago. Together with the [International Wine, Spirits & Beer Event](#) (May 23-24, 2010), it will offer first-hand opportunities to experience and explore the hottest food, beverage and equipment trends in the culinary world. For more information, visit www.restaurant.org/show.

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.