



17 HOTTEST FOOD AND DINING TRENDS FOR RESTAURANTS & HOTELS, 2013

Consultants Baum+Whiteman say that a flavor a day keeps recession at bay. Restaurant chains, hotels and smart independents are ramping up their flavor profiles ...chucking artificial stuff, exploring whole new worlds of real ingredients ... especially at bars.

Big snackification of America in hotel lobbies and fast feeders. Old fogey chains doing fast-casual disco dancing. Dumbelling at fast feeders. Plus: A big bunch of buzzwords for the year ahead.

Baum+Whiteman International Food+ Restaurant Consultants creates high-profile restaurants around the world for hotels, restaurant companies, museums and other consumer destinations. Based in New York, their projects include the late Windows on the World and the magical Rainbow Room, Equinox in Singapore, and the world's first food court. Their annual hospitality predictions follow ...

1. BARS ARE WHERE THE FLAVOR ACTION IS.

Looking for future flavors? Keep keen eyes on artisan boozeries. Ambitious bartenders (whose numbers grow exponentially) are infusing vodka and gin ... and especially rum ... with mango, kiwi and other house-made exotica (even dried fruit) as they stretch the notion of hand-crafted cocktails. Talde, in Brooklyn, lines its bar with beakers of honey syrup, grenadine, vanilla syrup, mint syrup, Chinese five spice syrup, citrus bitters and maple bitters, all house-made. At "Farm-to-Bar" Capo d'Oro in LA, fruits, herbs and vegetables come fresh from the Santa Monica Farmer's

Market ... you tell the bartender alcoholically what's on your mind and he fashions a drink from these ingredients. It's happening across the country.

Flavor researchers (and chefs, too) should refocus upon the bar: cocktails of pureed and muddled melons, syrups of lemongrass, rosemary, pomegranate, cinnamon, cardamom and ginger, among other esoterica; flavored vinegars going into old fashions shrubs, smoked ice cubes, yuzu bitters, chocolate-chile bitters, sangria variations no one's heard of in Spain.

Restaurant and hotel chains, straining to step away from bottled and powdered shortcuts, are playing catch-up ... but training hundreds of bartenders can be a killer. To raise their competitive profiles, they're emphasizing Latin accents – example: Friday's Tiki Torch, a mixup of tequila, muddled pineapple, triple sec, lime and chipotle-pineapple syrup.

Boozy soda fountain favorites for grownups are on-trend: floats, shakes, parfaits and smoothies laced with bourbon, peppermint rum, aquavit, Benedictine, or Chartreuse along with flavored syrups. And “better burger” chains, obsessed with differentiation, are now pushing alcohol-laced shakes.

You need to know about “fatwashing.”

Because hand-crafting artisan cocktails is slow and labor-intensive, we're seeing pre-made barrel-aged cocktails ... small batches stored for weeks and even months in old bourbon, rum or sherry barrels where they mellow and absorb butterscotch topnotes inherent in the wood.



(photo from Aviary cocktails)

State laws prohibiting pre-mixing of different boozes are being relaxed or

ignored ... so this trend is spreading fast. A five- or six-liter batch of Negroni might barrel-age for a few weeks and then sell out in a day or two ... taking only seconds to fill a glass. Avant garde bars are batch-carbonating pre-made cocktails ... serving them in capped bottles.

All this artisan stuff is expensive, and cocktails are regularly crossing the \$15 line ... so there's lots of inflation at the bar. Wines-by-the-glass, too, are galloping in price. An \$8 glass once came from an \$8 bottle; now we're seeing \$12 glasses from \$10 bottles ... what recession? And local craft beers, traditionally poured in 16-oz. pints, now come in 14- or 12-oz. glasses.

All these oddments give rise to itinerant cocktail consultants working for hotels and hot restaurants around the country, staying on top of local small-batch distilleries and cranking up their inventiveness. A London bar hawks Meatequita ... chorizo-infused tequila, vegetable juice, balsamic vinegar, smoked salt, pepper and port.

Coming to you: Bars specializing in brown booze, especially bourbon and new-old ryes. Mysterious vermouths. High-proof spirits (think 50% alcohol and up) and artisan beers with 8% to 12% alcohol. Not just because people want to get tanked faster ... bartenders say they're getting stronger flavor identities. Beer-based cocktails. "Enhanced" juices ... with a bit of booze, so you get your anti-oxidants and simultaneously a bit sloshy.

2. SOFT DRINKS BUBBLING.

For fast feeders, beverage sales are a big bright spot with growing numbers of snack-time beverage-only sales. The three big gorillas ... McD, Dunkin and Starbuck's ... slug it out with every beverage concoction they can devise to slake thirsts. There's Starbuck's line of coffee-spiked energy

drinks, and its acquisition and planned chain of Evolution Fresh Juice bars (with premium prices and a real menu) to compete with Jamba Juice ... Starbucks' new Tazo Tea salons will compete with 200+-unit Teavana varietal tea shops ... while Jamba Juice pushes recently acquired Talbott Teas into its smoothies. Jamba's adding fresh-squeezed options to its high-sugar lineup. Dairy Queen hawking Orange Julius-branded soft drinks, Red Mango adding frozen coffee smoothies ... and frozen yogurt shakes taking off everywhere.

Upscale restaurants, pushing for differentiation, are making their own artisan sodas using fresh and local ingredients (especially at their bars – see above). And several bottlers of flavored waters are adding real juice to their products.

Behind all this stirring: Consumers abandoning colas in droves ... seeking “fresh” beverages or fruit-flavored carbonates and smoothies with the illusion of health. New York's coming ban on monster-size sweetened drinks raises awareness, too. Pepsi sees flavored carbonated drinks outselling colas by 2015. Every fast feeder needs a blended fruit beverage, preferably with healthy herbs and berries ... so hibiscus, pomegranate, lemongrass and basil will pop up in mass-market beverages ... while fruit-flavored iced teas rise among fast food and fast-cas chains. And: The chains are learning about flavors from manic bartenders (err, mixologists) noted above.

Coming: More genuine juice bars in hotel spas and in hotel breakfast rooms. Popup juice bars during midday at otherwise slow drinking places.

3. EVERYONE WANTS TO BE CHIPOTLE ... EVEN CHIPOTLE

Consumers are trading down like crazy ... bypassing casual dinnerhouses ... leaping from full service restaurants directly to fast-casual formats ... sacrificing service but believing the food is still “fresh.”

So everyone wants to be the next Chipotle. We're seeing fast-cas service systems applied to pizza, fish and chicken, Greek food, noodles, Asian food (Chipotle's own Shop House also aspires to be the next Chipotle!), hot dogs ... and taquerias (want to know where it all began? Get yourself to a San Francisco taqueria).



Because fast-cas concepts seem fresh and new, they're entry points to sample new ethnic cuisines ... especially for millennials. Customizable sushi, Indian-inflected wraps, and a banh mi version of Subway would be examples.

Hotels are pondering fast-cas takeaway spaces as tablecloth restaurants slump. Look for more “old-timers” jumping into the market. Red Robin playing with a fast-cas Burger Works; Pizza Inn's fast-cas offshoot Pie 5; Jr's Burger Grill from Johnny Rocket's; a second Deckers and a second Blaze Modern BBQ co-branded with White Castle buildings ... and old fogies like Denny's, Sbarro, Shoney's and IHOP fast-casualizing

Everyone understands the *system*: interactive service with food made in front of you; customizable upscale options; bolder flavors; distinctive, contemporary décor; more youthful appeal than dinnerhouses but more mature than fast-food plasticity ... prices about half-again as much as fast food ... and consumers tolerating slower service in exchange for better quality.

But: The system by itself isn't enough. Fast-Cas needs to wear its heart on its sleeve ... incorporating not just value, but *values*. It needs a back-story. Making personal connections with customers is key: What should they know about your food?; how can you express it?; what do you mean by "transparency?"; where does your bacon come from? ... what's your position on sustainability, on recycling, carbon footprint, food miles, genetic modification, gay marriage? What your story line, your narrative ... and how do you get customers (and employees) to buy into it? These used to be collateral issues, but they'd better be the core of these budding chains ... because either *they're selling holistic experiences* ... or they'll disappear from social media boards.

4. FAST FOOD STRIKES BACK; MORE DUMBELLING

At the bottom of the price chain, fast-feeders aren't taking robust fast-cas competition with (ahem) a grain of salt. Menu boards are sprouting higher-priced options ... and burger chains, smitten by the "gourmet" boom, are adding higher-priced items (\$4.50-\$6) while at the same time maintaining their 99-cent or \$1 leaders. Watch for gilded burgers (guacamole, pineapple, mushrooms, crispy onions, but don't look for goat cheese), pepped-up sauces, ethnic touches, lots of fancier buns (see McD black-and white buns in China, right)...and a bit more customization. The dangers: fast feeders edging into fast-casual average checks without delivering a fast-cas experience ... and too much trading up leaves a hole at the bottom of the market for someone to fill.



Minis are bigger: If fits your car's cup-holder ... if you can eat it with one hand, or better yet, two fingers ... if you can dip it ... then it's being tested in chains' r&d kitchens. Applies to breakfast, snacks and desserts. Sausage bites. Cake bites. Chicken dippers. Rolled sandwiches. Teeny cinnamon buns. Mini shakes. Dashboard dining becomes all-day snacking, a boon to fast feeders. (But wait!: Fast-cas chains will add drive-thru windows to capture some of this biz.)

Image-building is critical to getting consumer acceptance for upscale items. So language is changing: "Hand-battered" ... "artisan" ... "premium". Domino's pan pizza is "hand made" (take that, Pizza Hut!). Arby's wants you to think that in-store meat slicing means their food is "fresh". "Real" (as in *real fruit*) will be an overused word.

Taco Bell's Chipotle-like menu graft-on rang a bell ... so look for similar thievery and upscaling among other fast feeders. Interesting factoid: at Jack in Box more than one in six checks is over \$7, while \$3 or less accounts for slightly less than one in four checks ... so you can see the urge to upscale while keep bargain prices, too. It's called "dumbelling" the menu.

More impulse desserts ... sweet potato fries ... more Italian and Southwest and Latino flavor accents

5. SNACKIFICATION OF AMERICA

We're eating less at every meal... but more than making up for it with endless snacking ... and our national waistlines prove it. Snacks account for one in five "eating occasions" ... multiple snacks now qualify as America's "fourth meal" ... and even the traditional three are degenerating into nibbles and bits.

Reasons vary: Life's too hectic; I need a pleasure fix; an energy jolt; I missed lunch ... or want to chew more than just fat with a co-worker.

Greasy fries no longer do the trick. Snacks are becoming increasingly sophisticated ... glorified mini-burgers, wraps with exotic fillings, upscale dips are building off-hours bar traffic. Lots more minis showing up at fast food chains, adding impulse revenue to between-meal shoulder hours ... cake bits, mini-dippers, teeny shakes (see Fast Food Strikes Back, above).

You find all-hours grazing across the economic spectrum: Food trucks define a new market for creative, portable food ... and hotel lobbies, morphing into living-dining rooms, give rise to social snacking and all-day drinking ... and breakfast getting fancified and served at all hours.

Every food purveyor is chasing after serial munchers ... particularly convenience stores and drug stores ... ramping up new selections with “fresh” connotations. Walgreen, 7/11 et al grabbing market share from fast feeders and restaurant takeaway departments.



7/11 snack tray, Japan, coming to you

6. LAW SUITS

Natural. Organic. Artisanal. Local. Claims like these are under intense scrutiny as bloggers, journalists, nutritionists ... and of course lawyers ... are hollering “Your pants on fire!” Keep your eyes on General Mills and Pepsico suits (among others) over genetically modified ingredients

conflicting with “natural” claims ... and suits against Cabot, Yoplait and other yogurteers over whether their “Greek” yogurt is the real thing. Nutella agreed to label overhaul earlier this year. A Jamba Juice suit over its ingredients ... suits against Applebee’s and Brinker over calorie and fat content on their menu labels ... will be the thin end of a wedge as menu labeling laws kick in across the country.

7. BUNDLING GETS BIGGER ... GOING THE WHOLE HOG:

Fast food meal bundles are nothing new ... they dominate chain menu boards. But since the recession, bundles are getting increasing play at casual dining chains: Chili’s and Golden Corral’s 2-for-\$20, periodic bargain dinners-for-two at Red Lobster and TGIFriday’s, Olive Garden’s 2-for-\$25 this summer, and lately its buy dinner and get a free entrée to take home. The Palm in September had a three-course dinner for \$39.95, including an 8-oz. filet ... and Morton’s introduced a \$29.95 lunch package. Outback at this writing offers four courses for \$15. Their objective is to fill seats at any cost ... and to stem the tide of people trading down.

At the other end of the spectrum, there’s an opposite strategy at hot upscale independents ... *instead of discounting, they’re charging oodles of money!* Whole animal or whole bird dinners are expanding, triggered by successful nose-to-tail dinners across the country and, in equal part, by large format meals like Momofuko’s \$200 Korean “bo saam” family-style meals of a dozen oysters, a whole roasted pork shoulder, bbq sauce, kimchee and lettuce in which to wrap the meat. It’s available at lunch or only before or after peak dinner hours. A seat-filler if there ever was one!



At Daniel Boulud's dbgb this past summer \$495 got you an entire pig for up to eight people plus headcheese as a starter, a mountain of side dishes and baked Alaska.

Grace Restaurant in Portland, Maine, has a "whole beast" lamb dinner for six to eight people at \$65 a head, including harissa-spiked lamb tartare, cured lamb "bresaola," rigatoni with smoked lamb shoulder, and leg of lamb stuffed with pine nuts and corn. Like many such feasts, it requires 72 hours' notice.



Mozza, in Los Angeles, fills its "scuola" with specialty dinners including a whole hog multi-course extravaganza of various body parts served family style for up to 30.

Wong, in New York, does it with duck -- duck in lettuce wraps, duck buns, duck meatballs, whole duck two ways, duck broth, and duck fat ice cream (see *right*) with plums. The shebang is \$65 per person for four to eight on 48 hours' notice.



Although fairly timid (rarely do you get tongues, kidneys, livers and tails) these "dining adventures" are immensely profitable ... chefs know exactly how much to purchase for a pre-ordered table, the kitchen cooks a banquet-style meal, tables get filled at off-hours,

waiters don't juggle complicated orders, and the festive event prompts diners to vastly over-order cocktails and wines. Diners, meanwhile, revel in theatricality and in a carnivore's delight at digging into an animal, often getting finger-sucking greasy.

8. to 12. SHORT TAKES

Pop-up restaurants and bars with edgy designs and food will focus new attention on hotel dining, energizing formerly dead spaces. Not just on rooftops.

Drip-irrigated green walls, costly to maintain, decorating hotel lobbies and some restaurants, too. Next: Edible garden walls.

Grilled cheese will not be the new hamburger. Pies will not be the new cupcakes

Most "Neapolitan" pizza isn't.

13. AYE, ROBOT

Sprinkles, the LA cupcake chain, made headlines with its pink 24-hour Cupcake ATM that (it said) sells 1,000 pieces daily to people who beat in-store lines or demand an after-hours sugar fix.

Meanwhile, McD is bringing its touch screen order-and-pay kiosks from Europe to the US. (*photo, right*) to speed service and cut lines ... along with back-of-house upgrades to handle increased orders.



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It's "the need for speed" ... industry-wide moves to accelerate getting food into customers' hands. Sprinkle's creative cupcake vending is no threat to, say, Panera Bread ... but the concept suggests using machines to accelerate service and to generate supplemental sales. Examples:

A Lay's machine in Argentina churns out warm, salted chips from real potatoes and sells them by the bag ... Seattle's Best Coffee brands machines in grocery and convenience stores, so you're not forced to buy anonymous swill on-the-go since this one starts the process with whole beans and vends coffee, mocha and lattes ... A butcher in Spain has a 24-hour vending machine for prepared meals, sausages, steaks, meatballs; in-store customers can use it during business hours, bypassing salesclerks ... Jamba Juice launched JambaGO, vending its products in non-traditional locations like schools, entertainment complexes and convenience stores ... In France, a 24-hour machine sells freshly baked baguettes . Coke in Korea has an interactive dance machine ... you imitate dance steps shown on a large screen and the machine rewards you with bottles of soda; in Singapore, you hug a vending machine lovingly and out comes some Coke.

The Japanese buy everything from underwear to lobster from vending machines, but we're just scratching the surface ... machines at your airport now vend paperbacks, sunglasses and electronic doohickeys. Why not more food?

You easily can see a McD self-ordering kiosk marrying a vending machine that, say, dispensed just fries and beverages to impatient teenagers. You could see Sprinkles (*photo, right*) or Seattle's Best vending machines next to your drive-thru ATM.



credit stickyandsweet.com

You're looking at the introduction of upscale vending for hungry folk with restless tastes. Not yet? Ok, not yet. But watch convenience stores.

14. and 15. TWO BREAD TRENDS

Restaurants won't give bread without you asking for it. And increasingly, they're charging for a breadbasket.

Look for more elaborate breads and rolls ,, , restaurants are baking in-house to save costs ... and to ramp up distinctiveness, especially with sandwiches, emphasizing an "artisan" at work.

16. FIELDS OF GREENS

Seaweed beyond sushi ... in bread, in flavored salt, in crackers, in breakfast cereals, in butter, toasted and sprinkled on fries, fish and pasta ... also in packaged snacks flavored with wasabi, olive oil, sesame seeds. Greens beyond seaweed: Kale trickles down to mass-market feeders ... beet greens, chard, turnip greens, mustard greens ... rejected only five years ago, finding favor. (Someone's testing a "better burger" topped with bbq flavored kale chips.)

17. SUPPLIERS OPENING OWN-BRAND STORES

Blame it, perhaps, on the wildly successful Apple Store. Food suppliers and manufacturers are launching their own restaurant startups. Their aim: To raise their brands' visibility and build powerful appeals to consumers.

Take the latest "culture wars" ... Dannon and Chobani have opened flagship yogurt bars in Manhattan, planting their flags where thousands of customers pass by. Dannon is hawking a choice of traditional and Greek-style yogurt, a retail segment that's doubled in five years with no sign of slowing. Chobani, the largest US purveyor of its kind, sells only Greek yogurt curated by "yogurt masters." Both stress "fresh" yogurt ...the tangy mainstay of all those Korean upstarts ... the stuff we ate before all manner of sweetenings were added to satisfy American tastes.

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Barilla's launching branded pasta restaurants next year to enhance the company's pasta products in supermarkets and, presumably, among restaurant food buyers and customers. A competitive manufacturer, Pastificio Rana, is opening a long-delayed fresh pasta restaurant in New York's Chelsea market, the first of a chain.

Ghirardelli Chocolate, on the prowl for high traffic venues, opened a soda fountain/chocolate shop at Disney California Adventure... to be followed by the Palace Hotel in San Francisco and Harrah's Carnival Court in Las Vegas. In Virginia, Smithfield Foods opened a pork-centric restaurant, Taste of Smithfield, combined with a specialty retail store ... again to enhance the brand's visibility by attracting large number of tourists.

Vogue magazine will open a Vogue Café in a mammoth shoe store in Dubai, and a GQ bar in a hotel there. Publisher Conde Nast already has branded F&B venues in Kiev, Moscow and Istanbul ... And an English branded gin bar is opening in a London hotel, a forerunner, perhaps, of a trend.



And don't forget beer. Anheuser Busch-InBev is joining other global breweries at airports ... with a chain of Belgian Beer Cafes serving their own brands – Stella, Hoegaarden, Leffe ... and modest amounts of food.

Some of these are for promotional purposes, but some are actual P&L operations slated for expansion (Pastificio Rana runs a chain of pasta places in Europe) ... so one wonders whether more of this stuff could alienate the folks who write restaurants' purchase orders for food and beverages. On the other hand, since we're finding increasing numbers of chain restaurant brands in supermarkets, perhaps this is well-deserved tit-for-tat.



BUZZWORDS FOR 2013

Menu shuffling aimed at flexitarians. Asian flavorings: togarashi, yuzukoshi, gochujang (you can look them up). More chicken (often upscaled), less beef. Fermented everything. Donuts getting bizarre upscaling (foie gras jelly donuts, hamburgers between two griddled donuts, kimchee donuts). Overused kimchee gets doneeskee in 2013. Bar-made and small-batch tonics and quinine syrups. Lillet, Dubonnet, Chartreuse, Benedictine and other golden oldies. Craft bourbon, small-batch rye, local gins. Zip-code honeys. Spice trends: Torridly hot, smoked, warm and aromatic, fruity. Too much smoking going on. Too many tasting menus. Food halls. Weirder and weirder desserts. White strawberries. Green tomatoes. Geranium leaves. Hibiscus. Shiso. Charred octopus tentacles. A good year for hard cider. Lobster rolls (while wholesale prices are cheap). Charcuterie boards.

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