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FOOD AND BEVERAGE UNPLUGGED: 2012 FOOD TRENDS

Posted on [February 15, 2012](#) by [Stephen Stromberg](#)



While last year brought the emergence of the cupcake, this year's new food trends will have you saying, "That is so last year." From infused drinks to a social dining experience, 2012 brings promising expectations for foodies nationwide.

Guests will not only get a chance to tempt their palate with new tastes, but also engage with chefs, staff and other restaurant-goers, making for a truly memorable dining experience.

2012 Food Trends:

Move Over Meat

It is the year of the vegetable, and fish, and fruit ... well, any good-for-you fare. With resolutions of healthier eating on the minds of many restaurant-goers, a trend that will continue to grow but shrink the waistline, will be the emergence of healthier menu options (hint hint: sushi, which has omega 3 fats — aka good fats — that protect the nervous system and provide vitamin D and proteins). Be it by using fresh, locally grown produce or keeping calories at a minimum, chefs are keeping guests' guts in mind when taking the red marker to their menus.

Get Your Tepp-an

Blurring the lines between dining and entertainment, restaurants will be offering guests a chance to socialize and engage in the cooking experience this year. From table-side cooking to communal tables, guests will be rubbing elbows and getting to know each other well into 2012.

While many might not be used to the idea of dining with strangers, teppanyaki service, such as that available at Sapporo, engages guests with entertainment as the main entree.

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- Lose weight
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- Quit drinking and/or smoking

Imbibing Infusions

This year, expect to see cocktails take a new approach. Just when we thought things couldn't get any trendier, the infused cocktail came along. Bars will begin to be fully stocked with house-made syrups and infused liquors (think lavender vodka, cucumber rum, smoke-flavored tequila or liquors tasting of elderflower and tea). While more prevalent with lighter spirits, such as vodka, gin and sake, expect to see bartenders experiment with darker spirits as well.

Food Truck Takeover

Once despised "roach coaches" have now turned into modern day food trucks that are taking America by storm. Considered, in some cases, a gourmet kitchen on wheels, local food trucks can offer everything from exotic fare to high-end desserts on the go. When ordering a Bento Box to go isn't in the cards, a walk to the nearest food truck is always a good option.

Goodbye Gluten

While sushi restaurants, like Sapporo, are a gluten-free guest's go-to, look for more restaurants to join the gluten-free bandwagon this year. With more and more people having food allergies, restaurants across the nation will be offering tastier options for those needing to avoid wheat protein.

Unlike ever before, restaurants are raising the bar. No longer are they settling for mediocre drinks and already-been-done fare. Experimentation and creativity have unleashed a new style of dining and new way of preparing and serving food to hungry guests. Whether you're dining as a group at a teppanyaki table or sipping on the newest concoction from your favorite bartender, it's highly likely that you will be doing a lot of both this year.

For more information on Sapporo, visit sapporoscottsdale.com or call (480) 607-1114.

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ABOUT STEPHEN STROMBERG

With nearly 20 years in the food and beverage industry (the past 14 being in Arizona), chef Stromberg has worked his way up the restaurant ranks — from dishwasher, to waiter, to executive chef and everything in between. As executive chef of Sapporo, his day-to-day activities include overseeing all aspects of food preparation and execution, along with morning prep, lunch and dinner service, ordering, inventory and table-side chats with guests.

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