

## Local Sourcing, Healthy Kids' Meals, Sustainable Seafood and Gluten-Free Cuisine among Hottest Restaurant Menu Trends in 2011

*National Restaurant Association survey of more than 1,500 professional chefs reveals that sustainability, nutrition and food trucks will be hot trends for restaurants next year*

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(Washington, D.C.) The National Restaurant Association's "What's Hot" survey of more than 1,500 professional chefs – members of the [American Culinary Federation](#) (ACF) – reveals that local and hyper-local sourcing, healthy children's meals, sustainable seafood, and gluten-free cuisine will be among the hottest trends on restaurant menus in 2011. In addition, the chefs said that mobile food trucks and pop-up restaurants will be the top operational trend in restaurants next year.

The top 10 menu trends for next year will be locally sourced meats and seafood, locally grown produce, sustainability as a culinary theme, nutritious kids' dishes, hyper-local items, children's nutrition as a culinary theme, sustainable seafood, gluten-free/food allergy-conscious items, back-to-basics cuisine and farm-branded ingredients.



To watch a video of What's Hot in 2011 and download images, see the [social media version of this release](#).

"Our annual 'What's Hot' chef survey is one of the industry's most anticipated and quoted culinary forecasts, largely due to the credibility of its respondents – professional chefs that work in some of the nation's finest dining establishments and educate the next generation of chefs in culinary institutions," said Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of Research and Knowledge Group for the National Restaurant Association. "The top trends identified by these culinary professionals for 2011 are reflecting larger societal trends, underscoring that American diners are becoming more and more interested in what's on their plate. Sustainability and nutrition are becoming key themes in our nation's nearly one million restaurants."

"Locally sourced food and a focus on sustainability is not just popular among certain segments of consumers anymore; it has become more mainstream. Diners are requesting to know where their food comes from, and are concerned with how their choices affect the world around us," said Michael Ty, CEC, AAC, ACF national president. "Nutrition will continue to play a key role in 2011. With the results from this survey of American Culinary Federation chefs, restaurants

across America will be able to tailor their menus and better serve their guests.”

Rounding out the top 20 hot menu trends are artisan liquor, locally-produced wine and beer, smaller portions for a smaller price, organic produce, nutrition as a culinary theme, culinary cocktails, newly fabricated cuts of meat, fruit/vegetable children’s side items, ethnic-inspired breakfast items and artisan cheese.

The Association surveyed 1,527 American Culinary Federation member chefs in October 2010, asking them to rate 226 individual food items, beverages, cuisines and culinary themes as a “hot trend,” “yesterday’s news,” or “perennial favorite” on restaurant menus in 2011.

In tune with increased consumer awareness and interest in food sourcing and farm-to-fork practices, the leading culinary theme revealed by the survey is sustainability, which occupies four of the top five trends. The top two items – both with 86 percent of chefs identifying them as a hot trend – are locally sourced meats and seafood and locally grown produce. Ranked as the third hottest trend is sustainability as a culinary theme. Hyper-local ingredients (e.g. restaurants with their own produce gardens, and chefs managing the raising and butchering of their own meat) lands at number five, with nearly eight in 10 chefs calling it a hot trend.

Nutrition – children’s nutrition in particular – is another umbrella trend identified by the survey. Nutritionally balanced children’s dishes is ranked the fourth hottest trend on menus next year, while kid’s nutrition as a culinary theme comes in at number six. Gluten-free and food allergy-conscious items are number eight in the trends survey, with nearly eight in 10 chefs agreeing it’s a hot trend. Nutrition and health as a general culinary theme is number 15.

On the drink menu, [micro-distilled spirits is the top item](#), with nearly three-quarters of the chefs ranking it as a hot trend. Other alcohol items high on the list include locally produced beer and wine, culinary cocktails, food-beer pairings and beer dinners.

Topping categories within the survey are: street food-inspired items and amuse bouche/bite-size hors d’oeuvre in appetizers; black-forbidden rice and quinoa in sides/starches; ethnic-inspired and traditional ethnic items in breakfast/brunch; house-made ice cream and bite-size items in desserts; regional and fusion in ethnic cuisines; artisan cheeses and ethnic cheeses in ingredients; sous-vide and braising in preparation methods; and specialty iced tea and organic coffee in nonalcoholic beverages.

Also included in the survey were questions about recession strategies, operational trends, promoting nutrition and using social media. The chefs said that offering value specials, simplifying menus to save on prep labor and ingredients, and increased marketing efforts were the most successful strategies for building business during the period of economic weakness.

Thirty percent of the chefs said that mobile food trucks and pop-up restaurants will be the hottest operational trend in 2011; 18 percent said restaurants with gardens will be the top trend, and 17 percent said social media marketing. In addition, 55 percent of the chefs said they are currently using social media for professional purposes, and another 16 percent said they plan to start using such channels.

The chefs were also asked how chefs and restaurateurs can best promote health and nutrition. Twenty-one percent said create diet-conscious menu selections (including lower-sodium, -calorie and -fat items); 19 percent said increase fresh produce options on menus; and 17 percent said get involved in school nutrition/children's education efforts.

These and many other restaurant industry trends will be showcased at the 2011 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show, to be held May 21-24 at Chicago's McCormick Place. Exhibiting companies from across the United States and around the world will cater to tens of thousands of industry professionals, and top chefs and trend-watchers will share their expertise in culinary demonstrations and education sessions. For more information, visit [www.restaurant.org/show](http://www.restaurant.org/show).

For complete "What's Hot in 2011" survey results and a video, visit [www.restaurant.org/foodtrends](http://www.restaurant.org/foodtrends).

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Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which comprises 945,000 restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of nearly 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](http://www.restaurant.org).