

Year after year, trend spotters, top chefs, food connoisseurs and avid bloggers release the top predicted food trends. From delectable cupcakes to Spanish cuisine, the trends have continued to evolve over the past five years. As we turn back time and expose some of the most unique food trends, you will see that some food themes continue to remain the same. Regardless of the latest diet fad or unique ingredient, offering healthy meal options doesn't seem to be a trend that is fading any time soon.

## 2006

- Chocolate
- Sustainable Eating
- Spanish Cuisine
- Yerba Mate



As sustainable and organic eating and following a healthier lifestyle became popular this year, customers still couldn't do without the chocolate. Customers demanded higher-end chocolate varieties to satisfy their sweet tooth. In addition, Yerba Mate, a beverage that offers caffeine and the health benefits found in tea, made its way into many coffee shops.

## 2007

- Unique Beverages
- Mini Meals
- Fat-Free and Sugar-Free Food
- Dining at home

Even though more people preferred to eat in most nights of the week, take-out and to-go meals rose in popularity. As people believed eating at home could be healthier, restaurants answered by offering more fat-free meals. Consumers also demanded mini-meal or snack-like entrées and one quick service restaurant even offered the "fourth meal." Revamping the beverage menu, inventive teas, flavored water, and energy sodas were in demand.

## 2008

- Adding the Spice
- Restaurants within Grocery Stores
- Healthy Food
- Artisan Liquors

Health trends remained popular in 2008 and restaurants provided more organic and locally-grown ingredients to customers. Also, spices containing antioxidants, like cumin and ginger, added a flavorful and healthy touch to meals. Grocery stores hired special chefs to offer hot food to customers to eat onsite. Taking the overall restaurant experience to the next level, mixologists amped up beverage menus with unique cocktails.



## 2009

- Bite-Size Desserts
- Salt
- Bread Variety
- Organic Food

In 2009, organic food continued to fill menus and answer consumers' healthy eating demand. Chefs also played with different exotic salts to add flavor to entrées. Different sea salts and an Indian mineral salt intrigued customers. As the Atkins diet trend faded, consumers began to explore with bread more and chose more wheat varieties. To top the meal off, miniature desserts, such as tarts, pastries, and mini cakes, swept the nation with popularity.

## 2010

- Local ingredients
- Social Media Food Tips
- Brunch
- Kids' Menus

Buying local, not only to boost customers' health, but support local farmers, really starts to take off in restaurants, cafeterias, and grocery stores. Restaurants also worked to expand the healthy trend to children by offering healthier alternatives on the kids' menu. To offer deals, restaurants turned to Facebook and Twitter to connect with customers – exploring the world of digital marketing. In addition, brunch became a popular mealtime not only for restaurants, but at home functions as well.

## 2011

- Bacon
- Gourmet Hot Dogs
- Gluten-Free
- Food Trucks
- Pies

As we dive into September, the food trends this year continue to shine. Even more restaurants worked to provide gluten-free and allergy-conscious entrées to reach an important demographic.



However, as the health food trends continue, bacon dishes and gourmet hot dogs increase in popularity. This year bacon has been found on pizzas and even in ice cream and many baked goods. The bacon craze reached numerous restaurant menus and even trended on Twitter.

Consumers continue to express that convenience is key, but that quality is important too. Not your ordinary food trucks hit the streets this year to offer just this. From Korean cuisine to sensational tacos, food trucks offer a flavorful variety to those dining on the streets. Another popular food commonly sold on the street, hot dogs, started to make their way into restaurant doors. Acting as the “new burger,” chefs spiced up this all-American specialty with gourmet toppings and unique sauces – all at an affordable price. Tampa Bay is even the home of a hot dog featuring pepperoncini, tzatziki, feta, cuke, and olives.



For dessert, the trends also shifted this year as pies were predicted to make a comeback over cupcakes. With savory ingredients and even bite-size options, restaurants will want to put their [dessert carts](#) to use with this dessert trend.

*What unique eats are you seeing in your restaurant this year? How do you leverage food trends to stay ahead of the competition?*