

headlines, trends & ideas

BENCHMARK Announces Top Ten Dining Trends for 2019

BENCHMARK, a global hospitality company, recently released its Top Ten Dining Trends for 2019. The trends were observed by Benchmark's executive chefs and culinary experts at the company's 80 luxury hotels, resorts and restaurants coast to coast, off shore and in Europe. "Food and beverage is an ever-evolving realm of experiences," said Patrick Berwald, Benchmark's vice president of food and beverage. "The opportunity for us is not only to be ahead of the trend but to understand who tomorrow's customer will be, what fulfills their needs and how our properties can be ready to meet that demand."

1 The Tea Party – While three cups of tea are consumed worldwide for every cup of coffee, here in the U.S. coffee drinkers are increasingly becoming cuppa fans. What is new is how people are beginning to think of tea with the same reverence as coffee due to its many varieties, applications and benefits. Craft tea blending, nitro tea on tap and even tea cocktails will start to proliferate on Main Street.

2 Meat Lovers – Not yet available to buy commercially, heme (from the Greek word for "blood") is a possible stepping stone to a more environmentally sustainable meat and protein alternative. Tech-food companies are using it to bring a meaty quality to wheat and potato protein burgers with the "bloodiness" of meat cooked rare. But not to worry: if you still enjoy good old-fashioned beef, select steak restaurants will be expanding their repertoire to include new cuts, such as Vegas Strip steak and merlot cut.

3 Fermented – Big-brand kombucha (fermented tea) has cemented itself in the new age of alternative beverages but consumers will soon see various styles of home-grown kombucha coming out of boutique/lifestyle hotels and chef-driven trendy eateries. These same businesses will expand their lines to include more kimchi, pickles, sauerkraut, tempeh, kefir, carrots and cream, and many other foods fermented, cooked and offered to customers.

4 Tastes Like Crickets! – As food costs continue to rise, chefs are looking for new sources of protein. Insects appear more and more as a sensible choice on many levels. In fact, 80 percent of the world consumes insects. Low in fat with three to four

times as much protein as beef, insect powders can enhance cocktails and cricket flour can be used to make breads and pastries.

5 Farm to Table 2.0. – The farm-to-table movement has recently taken a new path: chef/farmer custom farming in which chefs specify what seeds farmers should plant for new menu development. BENCHMARK's Willows Lodge has partnered with a farm in the valley, which is helping to cultivate a new type of a relationship that will change the way each supports the other to sustain farming inside their communities, ultimately saving small, sustainable farms for generations to come.

6 Are You In or Out? – In an age of online and mobile food-ordering services, diners have moved away from eateries and toward placing more value on being homebound thanks to the convenience of delivery. However, BENCHMARK projects that diners will again recognize that restaurant dining offers more compelling and satisfying experiences. Whether it is celebrity spotting, educating your taste buds on adventurous cuisine or building relationships in social atmospheres, outside eateries offer all things you just can't get at home.

7 The Vegetarian Factor – With today's diners increasingly aware of their "macro diets," combined with culinarians applying unique and creative takes on Mom's succotash, menus will soon see a large portion dedicated to vegetarians and what is plant-based and coming from the ground. Dishes are becoming vegetable focused, with proteins as the complement. Vegetarian tasting menus are quickly becoming a staple in many accredited establishments.

8 Food & The Greater Good – With a global focus on the natural disasters humanity faces, the collective culinary community is starting to put their food where their mouth is and put greater efforts behind charities that provide sustainable support. Chefs are beginning to make more meaningful connections around food, less about social media and more about the deeper issues and how food is involved.

9 No Substitutions Please – Chefs are ready for a remix of the typical ingredients with which diners have become all too familiar. Citrus is a widely used component in many dishes and libations but soon we will see regular cameos by unique and eclectic relatives to the lime and lemon: citron, cumquat and shaddock. Kale has outlived its welcome and will soon be replaced by wild weeds such as sorrel, dandelion greens and amaranth. Finally, put away the honey and agave: life will become a bit sweeter with derivatives from sources such as carrot, sweet potato, golden beet, butternut squash and corn.

10 Dietitian, the New Celebrity Chef – Professional dietitians will rank alongside celebrity chefs as the benefits of understanding nutrition combined with leveraging technology will allow consumers to personalize their food experiences. Consumers will begin to craft personal portion sizing relative to their dietary and nutritional needs. The convergence of mobile and internet technologies will allow providers and core consumers to have access to personal dietary requirements at restaurants, retail locations and quick-service eateries. ■