



## 16 HOTTEST FOOD AND DINING TRENDS FOR RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS IN 2012

**Baum+Whiteman says it's "into the wild" as chefs go foraging for new ingredients and customers abandon comfort food for intense mix-and-match global flavors**

Baum+Whiteman International Food and Restaurant Consultants creates high-profile restaurants around the world for hotels, restaurant companies, major 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 courts. Their 12<sup>th</sup> annual hospitality predictions follow ...

**1 ... WHAT'S THAT CRUNCHING SOUND?** As the economy crawls sideways, like blue crabs at the shore, mom-and-pop eateries will be hit the hardest. Each time a big national chain cuts its prices, or flings a million half-off coupons into the market via social networks, independent restaurant numbers will take a dive. Corporate players borrow money cheaply and keep growing, but mom and pop can't borrow at all, and after maxing out their credit cards at rapacious interest rates they'll increasingly throw in their kitchen towels. If the economy slides more, the last week of every month will be a killer for these places. With no turnaround in sight, the US could lose 8,000-10,000 restaurants in 2012, few of them belonging to chains.

**2 ... THE WHOLE WORLD ON A PLATE.** Look for excitement at the lower end of the market where devil-may-care entrepreneurs are piling flavors from all over the globe onto a single dish. Gastronomically, *everything goes*. Bite into a sandwich of chipotle pork chop with burnt sugar glaze, carrot kimchee and tarragon mayonnaise, and your taste buds will announce that these flavors came from a global Mixmaster. *This is what's emerging: A multi-ethnic, multi-sensory dining experience where flavors clash on purpose.* A multi-culti zucchini pizza dabbled with hummus and topped with crunchy wasabi peas is from nowhere geographically because it is from *everywhere*. We can seal our southern border but it won't stop folks from stuffing tacos and tortillas with

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outlandish things like octopus and feta cheese, or with barbecued chicken gizzards and sriracha slaw. And any day now, someone will stuff a porchetta with bulgogi seasonings. Cooking is at a crossroads ... where everything collides!

It's mostly happening at eateries where food is cheap because the risk is low ... for both buyers and sellers. Your wallet can't get hurt by bibimbap burger from a food truck if it only costs four bucks, right? Or fried sushi filled with a cheeseburger? The banh mi, our Sandwich-of-the-Year in 2011, is now an object of much tinkering around the country; it is a feature on Steve El's new Asian ShopHouse prototype, too. Sandwiches are the big focus of this mix-match trend. There's an over-the-top thrill about a sandwich filled with a carnitas, sausage, jalapeno, an egg over easy, and a hot dog with cilantro aioli from roadside shack. The wilder, the better. After all, if your new car's parts come from around the world, why shouldn't your sandwich ingredients? Next up: Mexican tortas and cemitas.

**3 ... A WIDENING "FLAVOR GAP":** The menu items discussed above contain ingredients and multi-ethnic combinations that are alien to your local Panera Bread or Pizza Hut or even Five Guys -- because chains' financial stakes are so high, they're compelled to serve the fewest number of items to the greatest number of people. Savvy independent operators (most of them young) use this growing "flavor gap" to differentiate themselves from more staid corporate competitors.

**4 ... INSTEAD OF BREAD:** Stretching for even more differentiation, look for sandwiches piled on things other than bread. Arepas, for example. Flattened tostones. Bao. Waffles. Rice cakes. Think of KFC's notorious Double Down calorie bomb... but with more inventive ingredients.

**5 ... INNARDS AND ODD PARTS:** We said it last year ... and we're saying it again: Tongue – lamb and beef -- and gizzards are hot. They're moving up from ethnic neighborhoods (think Mexican and Korean



tacos) and onto menus of upscale restaurants. Pigs' ears, too, on breakfast dishes right through the day to night-time bar snacks. In the year ahead, look for more "wobbly cuts" – such as tripe, and chicken livers that are crunch-fried (a great topping for Caesar salad), and even beef heart (but not brains, yet) -- because customers are increasingly adventurous (*photo, prior page, of grilled beef heart carved rare from Mado in Chicago, by Cooking with the Single Guy*). Even fancy places will discover that they can sell tongue tacos at the bar and izakaya-style gizzards on skewers, and pigs' ears and ox tails will show up on white tablecloths.

**6 ... IN A PICKLE:** House-made vegetable and fruit pickles will appear on more and more menus as chefs concoct ever more complex ways of making these preserves. They're important because they (A) enliven all those ingredient-laden multi-culti sandwiches (see "The World on a Plate," above) and (B) they provide a foil for intensely flavored organ meats (see "Innards and Odd Parts," above). They're not your grandmother's pickles -- chefs are going global with additions of Asian fish sauce, Mexican peppers, ginger, yuzu, smoked paprika, star anise. Some are selling bowls of their own pickled products as individual menu items ... and there's a kimchee free-for-all, since there's no "authentic" recipe. Kimchee might be the ingredient of the year.

**7... AT LAST, KOREAN HITS THE CHARTS:** Thanks largely to food trucks, Korean food has entered the American lexicon. Bulgogi, kimchee, kalbi, bibimbap are all the rage in Wednesday food sections, which means that shelter magazines will start running dumbed-down recipes in 2012 and we wouldn't be shocked to see Korean-inflected fried chicken appearing on some chain menus. Look for upscale places to serve items poached or braised in kimchee broth augmented with Asian and non-Asian flavors. You won't find red pepper paste (kochujang) in your supermarket's ethnic food sections next year, but wait'll 2013. Reminder: Korean



barbecue comes with a barrage of pickled things, making them right on target (see “In a Pickle,” above).

Since Koreans run most of the country’s sushi bars, expect lots of fusion recipes as they open restaurants beyond the bounds of Korea-towns. The government in Seoul reportedly is footing a very big bill for an upscale restaurant outside of New York’s Korean district in order to promote the cuisine; they’re several years too late. A doozy recently opened in New York’s Tribeca, launching “modernist” Korean cuisine. Bring lots of money and a camera to Jung Sik, a transplant from Seoul (*see Five Senses Pork photo, previous page, from Jung Sik*).

**8... NO, EVERYONE’S NOT BROKE:** About a quarter of America’s population is still happily working and another large chunk has a bit less – but not nothing – to spend, and after deep psychological retrenchment they’ll be returning to restaurant life. They’re not burning money, but they’re still having fun spending. And when they do, they’re seeking fun, interesting food and a sense of adventure. From this, we see the following:

**8 a ... COMFORT FOOD HITS THE WALL:** When the recession hit three years ago, Americans gravitated to “crisis food”: homey roast chicken, soothing meat loaf, voluptuous mac-and-cheese, unchallenging sushi, and the Holy Cheeseburger. Now we’re bored by gastro-nostalgia. Instead, we’re demanding new taste thrills and culinary invention. Mac-and-cheese is being reworked with pork rillettes, or with chicharrones for crunch and braised pork necks for depth; or it is being stuffed into sandwiches along with fried chicken or chicken-fried steak. Classic fettuccine recipes are twisted with Asian Bolognese; pasta carbonara, already much abused, now comes with meatballs, with snails and with chorizos ... and now shrimp-and- grits is getting worked over. There’s no limit to what people will slap onto hamburgers (head cheese, bone marrow, pastrami-and-eggs, Cajun crawfish) as new entrants to the “gourmet burger” biz fall over themselves being creative. Sushi’s getting stuffed with mutli-culti ingredients. Plain old roast chicken’s giving way to goosed-up fried renditions -- highly spicy, highly crisp Korean fried chicken being the most evident, but Latino flavors are being grafted on as well. Guacamole is being spiked with wasabi paste. Hummus comes in a dozen or more flavors. And meatloaf has taken a dive as customers opt for all manner of meatballs at twice the price.

**8 b ... EARLY DRINKING, LATE NIGHT DINING:** People making sales and service calls, and supervisory staff, are spending more time in their cars, so they're shifting social times to cocktails at four and dinner at ten. That's because they've only chatted and texted with colleagues also scattered on the highways, and 4 p.m is a logical time to rendezvous somewhere, unwind with a cocktail and maybe have lunch that was missed earlier. Hotels are big beneficiaries and they'll be upscaling drink lists, bar food (see below) and furnishings. Road warriors, and late-working desk jockeys get a second wind long after dark, congregating in better restaurants' bars and hotels that are now revving up flavors and presentations ... but still pricing things so that they are "affordable luxuries" (see "Round Things" below).

**8 c ... ROUND THINGS THAT GO POP IN THE MOUTH:** Kimchee- and-parmesan-filled arancini (*photo by Pablo76*), fried goat cheese balls, spherical falafel, meat balls of all kinds, bacalao croquettes, crispy oxtail risotto balls – all of them dropped briefly in the fryer and served with multi-ethnic sauces and dips – are becoming hot-hot sharable bar food. They're contemporary, drink-friendly finger food and no one seems to mind the calories. Also: mini sandwiches with banh mi flavors, Korean meatball sliders, all sorts of global chicken lollypops, ceviches, flatbreads from everywhere, dishes with fried green tomatoes (see "The World on a Plate," above). Next: Smart chefs explore the world of Japanese snacky things.



**9 ... BEER GARDENS:** Outdoor or indoor/outdoor, beer gardens will boom around the country, – especially from restaurants and breweries with unused backyards, oversized parking lots or available rooftops. The bigger the better. Good, cheap beer, often at five bucks a pop, and unchallenging food like pretzels, hot dogs and burgers, draw crowds seeking a fresh air alternative to indoor bars or lounges. Movable roofs and

warmers make them year-round businesses. Topping them all, there's Birreria, a Batali/Bastianich 10,000 sq.ft. rooftop extravaganza in New York with its own microbrewery, wine from barrels, operable roof and terrific "alpine" food.

**10 ... WHEELS COME OFF FOOD TRUCKS:** Dozens of food truck operators will open brick-and-mortar shops in 2012. Many will put their vehicles on the block; others will attempt to run both businesses. The reason is clear: There's more money to be made in storefronts now that food trucks – pioneering in social media marketing -- prove that eccentric menus have great market potential, and after the trucks create strongly branded identities that attract customers and satisfy wary landlords. If they open two or three storefronts, the trucks act as moving billboards. Only danger: They may lose menu focus in trying to keep their new places filled; then they become like the big chains.

**11. CHOCOLATE DIRT: THE FORAGERS ARE COMING!** A few years back, an unknown chef at restaurant Noma, in Copenhagen, created a strange series of tableaux on his dining room tables, using tree bark, pine needles, lichens and other things normally grazed by reindeer. So it was that in 2010 the Nordic forager Rene Redzepi (sounding much like an acid rock band) displaced the Spanish chemistry wizzrd Fernan Adria (for whom he once worked) as the world's *numero uno* chef.



Molecular gastronomy hasn't exactly evaporated, but now you might get trampled by dozens of upscale chefs rushing to harvest dinner from the underbrush and under rocks – or assembling dishes that *looked* like they might be untamed gardens.

In the US, “wildcrafting” is largely, but not entirely, a West Coast trend. Forerunner Jeremy Fox composed beautiful plates at Ubuntu in Napa several years ago (*salad on carta de musica by Chuck Eats, prior page*); John Sedlar at Playa in Los Angeles, and Daniel Patterson at Coi in San Francisco, and David Kinch at Manresa in Los Gatos are masters of the style. You’ll find similar efforts at McCrady’s in Charleston, and Toque in Montreal. Perhaps the most “florid” exemplar is Dominique Crenn at Atelier Crenn (subtitled “poetic culinaria”) in San Francisco, with bonsai-like garden presentations (*photo right from Atelier Crenn*).



These chefs’ horticultural foodscapes appear to have been assembled by gnomes with tweezers and dental instruments. They’re sent to your table on slabs of slate, miniature rock slides, primordial wood shapes and thrown glass instead of plates. Their dishes come with lyrical names such as Ocean Creatures and Weeds, A Walk in the Garden, Into the Vegetable Garden, or Le Jardin d’Hiver.

Watch for these kinds of items slipping onto upscale menus: White acorns; tips of fir needles; “dirt” made of dried and crumbled mushrooms, black olives, bulgur wheat, or sprouting grains; eucalyptus leaves, chickweed, wild ginger, wood sorrel, yarrow, and sumac. Dirt is so hot that Crenn cooks her potatoes in the stuff before washing them clean. Next up: Dessert assemblages growing out of chocolate “humus” (as in dirt, not as in chick peas).

Read more about this trend in our Culinary Director Rozanne Gold’s blog on the subject: <http://rozanegold.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/chocolatedirt-is-it-art-or-is-it-dinner/>

**12 ... JAPANESE CRAFT BEERS** will gain a following.. They’re already is making inroads on beer-centric menus and Asian-inflected restaurants and they give lots of local artisan brews a good run for their money.

**13 ... FORGET SKYSCRAPER ARCHITECTURE.** Chefs are shifting from stacking food as high as possible to stringing out ingredients in caterpillar-like lines along oblong or rectangular plates. This may look like “dribble art” but at least it keeps the flavors separated. Ceviches, tartars, sushi and sashimi primarily, with salads as the next frontier. At right, Korean steak tartare with Asian pear, quail egg and pine nuts from Dandi in New York (*photo, Paul Goguen/Bloomberg*)



**14 ... PERU GAINS MOMENTUM:** Peru’s food is cross-pollinated by Japanese, Spanish, Chinese, Italian and Andean flavors and cooking techniques. It is the source of the world’s most exciting ceviches and tiraditos (another raw fish dish), and it is where pisco sours come from (photo: halibut ceviche with mango and tomato). This past September saw many of the stellar chefs noted above – Redzepi, Patterson, Adria, along with Dan Barber (US), Michel Bras (France), Massimo Bottura (Italy), and star chef Gaston Acurio, a major promoter of self and of Peru – in Lima for a conference that put Peruvian cuisine and ingredients into the spotlight. Acurio in September opened La Mar Cebicheria in New York, following a success in San Francisco, where the food goes from high note to high note. Mo Chica



in LA and Limon in San Fran are creating their own Peruvian stirs. We predict that this is the next cuisine, so you need to know about *causas*, *lomo saltado*, *aji amarillo*, *anticuchos*, *cuy* (you know ... whole roast guinea pig, legs, head and all) and *tiraditos*, along with vibrant, acidic fruits and juices that go into their unique raw fish preparations. Better get to Lima and Cuzco before they're overrun by foodies! You can read more about Peru and its trendy food in our Culinary Director Rozanne Gold's article in the Huffington Post ... [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rozanne-gold/food-trend-pop-goes-peru\\_b\\_982949.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rozanne-gold/food-trend-pop-goes-peru_b_982949.html)

**15 ... WRONG ON HAMBURGERS:** We predicted last year that "gourmet burgers" would peak in 2011. But they haven't and we may be premature. Seems that a new burger chain launches every few weeks without regard for the growing density of competition. We think they'll outrun the available demand; they're selling a product that's available everywhere; creativity is running amok as newcomers strain for differentiation; and there's a low barrier to entry. We see a bubble. So wait'll next year.

**16 ... THREE CAUTIONARY TRENDS:** (1) Misuse of words like "artisan" and "heirloom" and "local" will pollute their meaning, especially as chains co-opt them for marketing slogans. Adding a whole grain to factory bread doesn't make it "artisan" and not all misshapen tomatoes are "heirlooms" from "local" growers. "Green" and "sustainable" are in this category, too. (2) There's a looming oversupply of farmers markets. (3) Too many chefs are smoking too many foods.

### **BUZZWORDS FOR 2012**

Fresh sardines. Ultra-long dry aging of meat. Uni. Yuzu. Tamarind. Ox tail, (see "Innards and Odd Parts," above). Duck will make a comeback but not slathered with orange marmalade. Hand-made ricotta and burrata. Kalbi, bibimbap, bulgogi (*bulgogi photo right from ifood tv*). Huacatay (better look it up). Bone marrow. Flowers re-appearing on dinner





plates. Hibiscus. Arepas. Coconut oil. Goat meat crosses the border from ethnicnabes. Shiso. Nordic cooking and ingredients. Upscale restaurants re-tenanting shopping center food courts. Lamb ribs and belly. Bao. More entries into the tossed salad restaurant business, using ever better ingredients. Nduja. Micro-distilleries. Bacalao. Large displays of exotic bitters on the bar. Crazier taco fillings migrating from food trucks to restaurants. Green papaya. Seaweed in non-Asian dishes.

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**They are this year's lead speaker at the CIA's "World of Flavor" conference in Napa and have run trends seminars for Taj Hotels, Starwood Hotels, Restaurant-Hospitality Magazine, Club Corporation of America, Hotels Magazine, Certified Angus Beef and Les Dames d'Escoffier.**

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