

TOP TEN FOOD TRENDS 2012

2012 Food Trends to Watch

By Phil Lempert

2011 brought us higher food prices at unprecedented levels, crops and livestock destroyed by global weather catastrophes, nations at war over the lack of food supplies and more food recalls from unique points of origin. Americans love their foods which has built a foundation for what may be one of the most exciting – and game-changing years in the food world.

Trend #1: Food Prices

We will continue to see food prices rise based on environmental conditions as well as higher costs of fuel, feed, packaging, food safety - coupled with a higher demand for export. Shoppers will shave costs by revising recipes by using less meats and seafood and adding more non-meat proteins that are filling and less expensive, including whole-wheat pasta, tofu, lentils, brown rice and vegetables.

Trend #2: Never Shop or Eat Alone Again

The rise of food blogs has built a foundation for group food experiences. Food trucks tweet their locations and flash food raves assemble underground at midnight. And it is not about the food. It is about connection, conversation and a sense of community. One key to success will be embracing LoSoPhoMo - mobile marketing enhanced by the location, social and camera features of mobile devices.

Trend #3: The Baby Boomers keep right on truckin'

The generation of 76 million who started turning 65 years old last year will control 52 percent of the total \$706 billion spend on groceries by 2015 – making them the largest food influencers and purchasers — and as they age they are becoming more interested in those foods and beverages with health benefits.

Trend #4: Increased Emphasis on the “Farm to Fork” Journey

Shoppers have become increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from, which is why 2012 will bring an added emphasis to a different kind of food celebrity – the farmer. We've seen “buy local” become one of the most important supermarket offerings; now we get to meet the people who are the producers, farmers and ranchers.

Trend #5: The end of the checkout lane

Many shoppers are learning to appreciate the tech-savvy nature of using their mobile device (what used to be our cellphones!) comparing prices at nearby retailers, scanners, QR codes, and mobile coupons - increasingly delivering information rich store visits. This year we go beyond finding out nutritional, allergy and country of origin information on individual products – or even receiving special offers, coupons, and flash sales - to checking out as they shop.

Trend #6: The ethnic food revolution

Food trucks are replacing gourmet and specialty stores as the channel to experiment and discover new food experiences – especially when it comes to ethnic foods. These food trucks are actually manned by descendants of the ethnic cuisines and cultures; they possess the ability and knowledge to share the heritage and romance of the food – a benefit many shoppers enjoy.

Trend #7: The new role of the male shopper

It is all about “dad” and family; husbands who help out at home enjoy happier relationships. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports 41 percent of men are now cooking at home – double that in 2003.

Trend #8: Eating at home – Xtreme Home Cooking

With continued pressure on the economy more of us will eat at home to save money. Think of it as Xtreme Home Cooking where, following the lead of Extreme Couponers, these everyday cooks pride themselves on making the most for the least.

Trend #9: How sweet it isn't

The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends reducing the amount of added sugars of all kinds (especially in soft drinks). Reduced sugars will be the biggest health claim in the coming year along with a revised Nutrition Facts Panel that indicates whether the sugars are added, occur naturally, or are a combination of the two.

Trend #10: The sound of food

People judge the readiness of foods by the sounds. We judge the freshness of soda based on the sound of the gas as it opens. Multisensory perception will be one of the new “food sciences” in 2012 as psychologists and food scientists join forces to create and influence the sounds of foods to convey freshness, taste and even health attributes.