

Trends - Winter 2012

Popular Potatoes

What's the hot ingredient for 2012? Something artisanal like handmade burrata? A super food like chia? Or buckthorn foraged from the wilderness? No, no, and no. Forget low-carb diets, this year the humble potato reigns supreme—taking different forms and pairing with many flavors.

- Customized French fries: offer a variety of cuts with dipping sauces and dusting powders
- Mix-n-match mashed potato ingredients like caramelized onions/bacon; curry paste/coconut milk; pesto/sun-dried tomato; or roasted garlic/thyme
- Hasselbacks are the new stuffed baked potatoes: make vertical slices down the length of the tuber; bake and top with compound butters, cheeses, herbs, or spinach
- Stack thinly sliced Russets brushed with garlic oil; stack and season with sea salt and fresh thyme; bake and serve as an amuse bouche or appetizer



Crunchy on the outside, tender on the inside—these mini potato stacks work as an amuse bouche or appetizer.

Plant-Based Diets

Whether it's due to the economic downturn or the collective desire to finally get healthy (or both), grain-, legume-, and vegetable-centric recipes are gaining steady momentum.

- Using meat as a condiment or flavoring agent rather than center of the plate improves nutritional benefits and reduces menu costs without making customers feel deprived
- What better way to help people fulfill the United States Department of Agriculture's MyPlate requirements for produce than to focus on brightly colored, intensely flavorful fruits and vegetables prepared in innovative ways
- Drop the salad-only mentality and experiment with heartier ingredients like beans, mushrooms, quinoa, multiple types of rice, and winter squashes
- Kids' meals are an especially critical area in which to implement this trend; more and more operators are moving beyond chicken fingers and hamburgers

Interesting Ice Cream

Frozen desserts like ice cream, gelato, sherbet, and sorbet are classic menu favorites. Flavors such as hibiscus, mango, and sesame might seem exotic, but this year adventurous chefs are using ingredients that are wilder than ever.

- Flavors like corn, garlic, and horseradish pair well with vanilla and cream
- The light, grassy flavors of herbal sorbets are ideal between courses
- Tomato gelato has both sweet and savory notes—great with cheese!

Winter 2012 Trends At A Glance

- Good, old-fashioned spuds top the list of must-have ingredients
- Use meat as a condiment... vegetables, grains, and legumes take center stage
- Ice cream: think outside the bowl
- The life of the party...food!
- Go green—as in beet tops, chard, collards, escarole, and kale
- Indian & Thai flavors

Catering To Crowds

Move over food trucks—catering is the newest recession-friendly trend. Restaurants at every price point are adding this option to their service rosters.

- Party menus can bolster budgets when table counts fall
- Utilizing online menus and current employees keeps overhead low
- Business and personal parties extend brand recognition
- Some are starting to call this the newest day part

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Hearty Greens

It all started with the revival of kale...kale chips, kale salads, kale soups. Now chefs everywhere are fully exploring the earthy flavors and robust fiber of other delicious greens like beet tops, collard greens, escarole, and Rainbow chard.

- Drop chopped beet tops into stir-fries and vegetable sautés for bitter notes and toothsome texture
- Collard greens are best known as an overcooked Southern side; try reducing cooking time in broth soups, curries, and meat braises
- Escarole has a peppery bite and pairs well with bacon, citrus, fennel, and tomatoes
- While Rainbow chard leaves are always dark green, their fibrous stalks range in color from pale white, to golden yellow, to deep crimson; mix into salads, sauté with garlic, add to lasagna, or bake in gratins
- Kale still tops the popularity list: use it in bean chilis, grain salads, meat roulades, and vegetable tarts

The Hot List:

- Portion Control
- Amaranth
- Donuts
- Green Beans
- Foraged Ingredients
- Ramen
- Group Dining
- Black Garlic
- Vegetable Desserts
- Social Coupon Sites
- Nose-To-Tail Eating
- Soufflés
- Asian Dumplings
- Farm-To-Glass Cocktails
- Gluten-Free Menu Items
- Tart Flavors
- Glazed Vegetables
- Blurred Dayparts
- RAW!
- Currywurst
- Scandinavian Foods
- Boiled Peanuts
- Reduced Sugar
- Healthy Vending Snacks
- Grilled Cheese
- Cauliflower Steaks
- Tablet Ordering
- Beans
- Jewish Delis
- Customer Service

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- **Specialty Produce**—a twice-monthly information piece about the fast-paced specialty market; what's in, what's out...what *is* it?
- **In Season**—a quarterly look at what's fresh now and how to use it
- **Trends**—forecasts what is on the culinary horizon four times per year

Indian and Thai Go Mainstream

Indian and Thai restaurants have been mainstays of culinary culture far from their origins, but never (until now) have they made such inroads to global fusion trends. In 2012, ingredients such as curry pastes, lemongrass, and tamarind as well as dishes like pad thai, satay, and tikka masala will influence cuisines in every foodservice sector.

- **Small bites** such as pakoras, samosas, and summer (a.k.a. fresh) rolls incorporate the versatile flavors of carrot, cucumber, onion, and potato...making them easily adapted into many menu types
- **Indian flatbreads** (chapatis, naan, parathas, poris, and rotis) make ideal appetizers and side dishes; prepare with cauliflower, garlic, or spinach
- **Everyone** seems to love food on a stick—easy to make, portable (if necessary), and fun to eat; try grilling chicken, seafood, even tomatoes on skewers
- **Refined flavors** like Kaffir lime, lemongrass, and Thai basil are traditionally Thai, but can be substituted in American, French, Italian, and Scandinavian recipes
- **The vada pav sandwich** might be the successor to the Vietnamese banh mi; these curry-, garlic-, and ginger-spiced potato croquettes are served in small, square buns and topped with condiments such as green chile sauce, mango chutney, or stewed onions
- **Substitute** coconut milk for cream in a variety of desserts—works for lactose-intolerant diners and vegans while adding a subtle floral flavor

Resources:

Bon Appétit Magazine
Boston Globe
Chowhound.com
Denver Post
Eatbeat.com
Eater.com
Epicurious.com
Esquire Magazine
Flavor & The Menu
Food & Wine Magazine
Food Navigator
Food Network Magazine
Grubstreet.com
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