

FROM A TO Z: PREDICTING 2007 TRENDS IN FOOD

Ethiopian bread will be popular this year. Check out what else will be on our plates.

BY CHRIS ROSENBLOOM, SUSAN PUCKETT

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

"It's hard to make predictions, especially about the future," goes an often-quoted saying. But that doesn't stop us from trying. With last year's focus on the dangers of trans fats, will we see more interest in good and bad fats in 2007? With sodium levels skyrocketing in convenience products and restaurant items, could salt be the next villain? Will the E. coli outbreaks linked to spinach and other bagged lettuces affect our food choices in the near future? How will food marketers take advantage of baby boomers' abundant disposable income as they go kicking and screaming into old age?

To answer these questions and others about what we can expect to see on our tables and in the marketplace in the coming year, we consulted experts across the country and perused the piles of magazines, press releases and new books that have already weighed in.

Here's what they were seeing in their crystal balls:

A

Anti-Aging Products for Boomers

"Food products will be moving beyond liquid drinks like Ensure or Boost in marketing to older adults," says Dea Baxter, associate professor of nutrition at Georgia State University. Superfruits or their extracts like acai, goji berry, coffee berry, guava and mangosteen will appear on a host of ingredient lists from drinks to desserts. They're loaded with disease-fighting anti-oxidants and especially appealing to older consumers. "Packaging innovations will also be implemented for older adults with arthritis or decreased grip strength," Baxter adds.

B

'Bellies Are Big'

So notes restaurant consulting firm Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co. in its forecast for 2007. "Relentlessly searching for new things to serve, chefs are focusing on the nether regions of fish and animals," according to the report. Pork belly, better known as bacon, was big on menus everywhere last year, and costly tuna belly, also known as toro, was popular in upscale sushi restaurants. This year, they say, menus will feature veal, salmon, swordfish

and lamb bellies—"all rich with fatty flavor, all (not coincidentally) cheap cuts that used to be trimmed away."

C

Chocolate—the Darker, the Better

Chocolate is no longer a guilty pleasure as researchers identified that dark chocolate contains compounds called flavonols that provide heart-healthy benefits. In December, the Chocolate Manufacturers Association announced guidelines for cocoa content to help consumers wade through the label claims. Keith Ayoob, an associate professor of pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, says we will see more emphasis on the percent of chocolate that comes from the cacao bean—the higher the percentage, the greater the benefits. "We will also see more emphasis on where the cocoa bean is grown. We will see more chocolate products from Ecuador, Venezuela and the Ivory Coast as competition for the 'best' chocolate grows."

D

Downsized Desserts

Simple carbs are still on the no-no list for many a calorie-conscious eater. But most

of us still want a little something sweet. In response, some restaurateurs are taking a bite out of the guilt by offering scaled-down versions of fattening favorites. Seasons 52, the health-oriented chain that opened two locations here last year, serves teeny portions of red velvet cake and Key lime pie; Rathbun's pastry chef Kirk Park offers mini samples of his entire dessert menu all on one plate—a trend in and of itself.

E

Exotica Goes Everyday

"Foods unfamiliar to everyday shoppers, like Greek yogurt, jicama from Mexico, Japanese sushi rice and Portuguese peri-peri sauces, will be front and center in the gourmet groceries that spring up in newly developed areas," according to Marian Salzman, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of JWT Worldwide advertising agency, and Ira Matathia, co-founder of brand consultancy NoFormula, co-authors of "Next Now" (Palgrave Macmillan, \$26.95). "Here, trendy shoppers will visit tasting bars and attend cooking classes." Asian flavors and African specialties such as injera, the soft Ethiopian bread that serves as an eating utensil, are likely to be big in such shops.

F

'Feel-Good Fish'

That's how Bon Appetit describes the fish that's in favor now in its January 2007 issue: environmentally sound, and low in toxins and PCBs. Among the eco-friendly varieties it recommends: United States- and Central American-farmed tilapia, wild mahi-mahi from Hawaii, the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico; California-farmed sturgeon; American-farmed striped bass.

G

'Gastroporn' Invades the Lexicon

Now that EVOO—Food Network icon Rachael Ray's catchword for extra-virgin olive oil—has made it into the Oxford American College Dictionary, could this term that's begun popping up everywhere be far behind? "It's one of the ironies of modern life that cooking shows and books are so hugely popular when much of the time we eat on the move or settle down in front of the TV with a microwaved frozen dinner," says trend-spotter Salzman. "The preparing, cooking, tasting and eating of food have become voyeuristic pleasures separated from physical reality."

H

Hamburgers and Hot Dogs Go Haute

Speaking of Ray, she is expanding her empire to include a hamburger restaurant, as is Mario Batali's partner Joe Bastianich, who's planning one serving sustainable beef, according to consulting firm Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co. (Here in Atlanta, Shaun Doty uses super-high-end Japanese wagyu beef at Shaun's, Star Provisions continues to sell its foie gras burger to go, Joel makes its lunch burger with Kobe beef and Midtown's Repast last year rolled out a foie gras hot dog.) "Perhaps they're inspired by Hubert Keller's Burger Bar in Las Vegas, where, in addition to a standard hamburger, you can blow your winnings on a \$60 Rossini Burger of Kobe beef, foie gras and truffles," they say.

I

Izakayas as the next small-plate cuisine

The Japanese version of tapas bars is opening all over the world, notes Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co. "These are

homey places emphasizing modestly priced Japanese hors d'oeuvres washed down with oversize bottles of beer and overfilled glasses of sake," the consultants say. "Some of the food may be unfamiliar, but people are willing to risk \$5 or \$6 to experiment." They note that the P.F. Chang's folks have opened a more Americanized version in Scottsdale, Ariz., that, if successful, could launch another chain. Look for the Kinjo brothers, creators of Midtown's MFSushibar and Nam, to open their version soon.

J

Junk food made over

Consumers worried about their own health as well as that of their chubby children continue to drive this trend, the trend-spotters agree. Fiber-packed fruits and vegetables are being made into chips, ice cream is being enhanced with extra vitamins, whole grains and heart-healthy oils are replacing white flour and trans fats in cookies, and even Disney is putting a more nutritious spin on its theme-park snack foods.

K

Kid-aimed food advertising

Trend-spotter Salzman calls children the "masters of pester power" who are easily won over with sweet, colorful foods presented in fun formats, making them a much-sought-after target for advertisers across the globe. "In the short term, this means easy feeding for parents and irresistible profits for food marketers; in the longer term, it means heavy costs for treating the effects of obesity, such as diabetes," she points out. "And so the clamor is growing to regulate junk-food marketing aimed at children."

L

Locally grown food

As concerns about food safety and the environment grow, so does the popularity of farmers markets and foods produced close to home. "Consumers want to know where and how food is being grown," says Patti Garrett, a nutrition instructor at Georgia State University and member of the Hunger and Environment Nutrition organization of the American Dietetic Association. She points to the Atlanta Local Foods Initiative as an example. "This group helped in the distribution of a local foods guide published from Georgia Organics to promote local foods, decrease transportation costs,

maintain and improve crop diversity in Georgia and support community gardens." A copy of the guide can be found online at www.buylocalgeorgia.org.

M

Mad science meets fine dining

Though the trend has yet to take off here, in a growing number of big-city kitchens, chefs are dismantling the molecular structure of fresh ingredients—"whirling them in laboratory equipment with frightening-sounding chemicals, dipping them in liquid nitrogen, inflating them with vacuum cleaners, fabricating cantaloupe caviar, deep-frying mayonnaise, turning sauces into powders, and spraying the air with flavors to suggest that what you're looking at isn't what you're about to eat," according to Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co. Richard Blais began dabbling at it at his eponymous Blais here in Atlanta; now Hector Santiago of Pura Vida is planning to unleash his own experiments at his upcoming Bodega Gastronomica.

N

Newfangled steakhouses with name chefs

Wolfgang Puck, Bradley Ogden, Michael Mina and David Burke are among the celebrity chefs who have launched "newfangled beeferies that marry elements of serious cooking with simple but upscale grilling," according to Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co. Locally, look for Kevin Rathbun's Steak to open soon.

O

Organic beyond the vegetable field

Expect to see the term "industrial organics" more often as giants like Wal-Mart continue to jump into the fray. Organic snack-food sales continue to flourish, while the foodie world is all abuzz about organic wines and chocolates.

P

Personalized diets

Forget Atkins. "There's a growing belief that there's no such thing as a diet that's right for everyone. Personalization—whether based on lifestyle, ethnicity, blood type or something else—will become an important component of diet programs," says trend-spotter Salzman.

Q

Quick-service restaurants diversify their options

Many of these eateries, according to the National Restaurant Association's 2007 Restaurant Industry Forecast, are jumping on the wellness bandwagon, offering and promoting healthful choices. Among the fastest-growing menu items in quick service: espresso/specialty coffee, chicken sandwiches, energy drinks, deli-style sandwiches, wraps/pitas/tortillas, bottled water and entree salads.

R

Reverse dieting

Among the latest crop of diet books is "The Reverse Diet" by Tricia Cunningham (Wiley, \$24.95). Cunningham is a young mother of two who got considerable attention on talk shows for losing more than 170 pounds by simply eating dinner for breakfast, and breakfast for dinner. The idea is to eat your heaviest meal early so you burn those calories throughout the day. Of course, she also ate healthier, too. Whether others will share her success remains to be seen, but those searching for yet another weight-loss method may well be inclined to give it a try.

S

Salt backlash

New York City chef and registered dietitian Kyle Shadix predicts an attack on salt in 2007, like the attack on trans fats in 2006. "The United Kingdom has taken a stand on salt with the Food Standards Agency Salt Awareness Campaign. Manufacturers have heard the call and are voluntarily reducing the amount of salt in a wide range of processed foods. "I expect to see the same thing in the U.S.," he says. "Some people are going so far as to argue that salt should be removed from the Generally Recognized as Safe list, since evidence seems to support that it is harmful."

T

Technology on the menu

Restaurants are finding new ways to use technology to improve efficiency and give customers more control over their dining experience, which is especially appealing to younger diners. According to the National Restaurant Association, 46 percent of

Americans—and 71 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds—say they are likely to use customer-activated ordering and payment terminals if available in their favorite table-service restaurant. About half of all adults—and roughly two-thirds of those ages 18 to 34—say they would use a self-serve order and payment terminal at a quick-service restaurant if it were available.

U

Upscale salt

Manufacturers may be pressed to lower the sodium in canned soups and other processed foods but—health concerns aside—the demand for gourmet salts is hotter than ever. "Not the powdery stuff in round cardboard boxes; we're talking instead about crunchy, flaky, tinted crystals from out-of-the-way places that have migrated from restaurant kitchens to dinner tables at home," says Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Co., citing as examples pink salt mined in the Peruvian Andes, black lava salt from Cyprus, smoked salts (a big seller at Dean & DeLuca), Tahitian vanilla sea salt and even truffle-flavored salt. "Salted caramel has become the rage among upscale pastry chefs."

V

Vegetable salads sans the bag

Sales of bagged salad greens continue to wane as consumers remain skeptical about their safety following last year's outbreaks of E. coli linked to bagged spinach. It's prompted creative cooks to experiment with other cool ways to toss veggies—a topic that's been turning up in the latest food mags, including January's Bon Appetit, which includes a feature on no-lettuce salads that call for fennel, cabbage, cauliflower and artichokes.

W

Waters with pedigrees

Bottled water has become a \$9 billion-a-year industry, according to Michael Mascha, founder of www.finewaters.com, described as "the definitive voice for water connoisseurs and their lifestyle." And consumers are becoming increasingly picky about them. Consider his just-released "Fine Waters: A Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Most Distinctive Bottled Waters" (Quirk, \$24.95), which not only rates the "virginity" (the degree a water is protected from its surroundings) and

"minerality" of 100 brands but offers food pairing suggestions and advice on what stemware to serve it in.

X

X-rated cocktails take a back seat to restrained classics

Those fruity, fanciful libations that often go by names unprintable for a family newspaper aren't going away anytime soon. But, as *Saveur* magazine notes in its January issue, look for the return of classic cocktails—perhaps made with artisanal distilled spirits, and possibly served in a retro bar. "Instead of vodka, think gin; instead of 'Sex and the City's' Carrie Bradshaw, think William Powell in 'The Thin Man.'" (The bar at Trois, one of 2006's biggest Atlanta restaurant openings, is one spot to experience the trend locally.)

Y

Yogurt and beyond

Probiotics, which help populate the gut with good bacteria that help strengthen our ability to fight infection and disease, will be a major buzzword in the nutrition world. San Francisco-based nutrition consultant Jo Ann Hattner says she's "added probiotic therapies to my practice using dairy foods with natural cultures," and predicts we will see more probiotic foods competing for space in the dairy case. Yogurt is the best-known source, but look for others—like Dannon's Activia and Kashi Vive Cereal.

Z

Zero trans fats

Already, many food companies have removed these heart-damaging, chemically altered fats—once prized for improving texture and extending shelf life—from their products. And as New York City implements its war on these "bad" fats by phasing them out of restaurants and other food establishments, we may see other cities follow that lead. As a result, "I predict we will see more emphasis on including healthy fats such as omega-3 fats into balanced diets vs. focusing just on what not to eat," says Lisa Carlson, registered dietitian and director of professional education for Quaker/Tropicana Foods. Neva Cochran, a nutrition consultant in Dallas, adds that this will give rise to more "designer fats," or the reformulation of traditional vegetable oils to improve their fatty acid profile to make them more healthful.

HOME / decor

The Trend for 2007: Getting Real

BY ALMA E. HILL

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Take note, design divas: 2007 is the year to switch to new trends in home decor. Again.

That means ditching the stainless steel appliances for sleeker, drawer-style refrigerators, freezers and dishwashers.

And replacing the wall-to-wall carpet with exotic or Earth-friendly reclaimed woods salvaged from demolished buildings.

Anything weathered or recycled, be it metal, glass or wood, is in.

But too much glass on kitchen cabinet doors is out.

Says who?

Say trend-spotters Mark Nash, a former Realtor and publisher of an online magazine about the real estate industry, and Marian Salzman, executive vice president of the J. Walter Thompson ad agency and author of "Next Now: Trends for the Future."

The book explores what the future holds, for everything from entertainment to business to sex.

WHAT'S IN

The builder-beige exterior paint common in cookie-cutter subdivisions will be partnered with bold-color trim on shutters, doors and window frames, Nash says.

Luggage rooms, often a closet or alcove under a stairway where the family can store all their luggage.

Exotic or Earth-friendly reclaimed woods.

Anything weathered or recycled, be it metal, glass or wood.

Do consider a wrought iron fence this year instead of a wood or chain-link one. Wrought iron is considered more luxurious, Nash says.

Home entertainment systems and theaters to entertain friends and family are still hot. So are dining tables that can seat four to 12 people.

Going out nowadays is about staying in, Salzman says.

"It's going to be, 'Join me around my table for 12,'" she explains. "You're going to see a lot of family dinners and intergenerational socializing in the kitchen."

Houses will be more pet-friendly, with amenities such as indoor bathtubs and luxury accessories like doggie dining tables, framed beds and fancy dishes. But keeping a storage cabinet for Fido's papers is out, because he or she won't be a pedigree.

"The mutt is going to be on the rise, the spare-parts dog," Salzman predicts. "We're really anti-status right now."

Perhaps one of the biggest shifts we'll see in the home in the near future is the passing of the apron strings.

Salzman predicts Martha Stewart is out and Rachael Ray is in.

"Rachael Ray is to 2007 what Martha Stewart was in 1997," Salzman explains. "We always thought of Martha as perfect and brittle. We see Rachael as casual and friendly."

"Martha Stewart was about showcasing stuff when people came over," Salzman continues. "Rachael Ray is about entertaining friends around the table."

WHAT'S OUT

Spiral staircases

Pedigreed dogs

Interior designers might want to consider getting a second job; they're on the way out, too.

"I think [the HGTV show] 'Trading Spaces' stuck. We all have an inner designer," says Salzman, who sees no slowdown in home decorating shows on TV. "The preference will be to do it themselves, because their home is a real expression of who they are."

Budget-priced, ready-to-assemble furniture is on the way out, too, trend-spotters say. Not because we don't like to save a buck, but because we want furniture that's built to last instead of disposable goods that have to be replaced every few years.

Martha Stewart

Stainless steel appliances

Wall-to-wall carpet

Too much glass on kitchen cabinet doors

WHAT'S CHANGING

The concept of the bedroom as boudoir is not out, but making it comfortable for sleeping is in.

"It's going to be all about sleep, so your bed is going to be the focal point," says Salzman. That means luxurious linens, soundproof walls to block out noise, climate-controlled bedding and mattresses that conform to your sleep preferences.

LIFE AND ARTS

Master Suite Trend Sends Sex and Slumber in Opposite Directions

BY ALMA E. HILL

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The conjugal bedroom is sooo last year.

In 2007, cohabitating couples will have their cake and a good night's sleep, too, by creating adjoining bedrooms within the master suite, trend-spotters predict.

This prognostication was among a bevy of such forecasts by folks who make a living figuring out how we will live in the future, then selling us products to help us along.

Slumber, say the pundits, is the next wave.

"Sleep is the new sex. If you're going to have sex, you're still anxious to get a good night's sleep," says Marian Salzman, executive vice president of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in New York and co-author of "Next Now: Trends for the Future" (\$26.95, Palgrave, Macmillan).

"The trend I'm seeing is master suites broken into two sleeping rooms," she explains. "This is going to allow couples to be separate by choice and come together as they wish out of the family eye."

And away from the noise. Some will turn a sitting area in the master suite into a "snoring room" and furnish it with a daybed instead of a couch or love seat.

"A lot of people said, 'I didn't want to leave the bedroom, but I needed to get away from the chain saw.' Mainly women—who are not the snorers—have moved into the space," Mark Nash says.

A former real estate broker and author of five books about buying and selling homes, Nash published a list of "What's In, What's Out With Homebuyers in 2007," after surveying more than 900 industry execs who subscribe to his monthly "Agent to Agent" online magazine.

Weary from long commutes, the isolation of suburbia and oversize homes, American consumers are dictating changes in housing design and space planning, trend-spotters say. The result will be homes with dedicated rooms where families can work, play, relax and entertain without having a lot of excess square footage to clean and maintain.

So what happens to McMansions?

"Over," Salzman says. "They're very unenvironmental. It's a little like driving the SUV right now. They take up space and burn unnecessary electricity and oil. Existing McMansions will stay. But you're going to see people gravitating back to smaller, bungalow style houses in the inner city."

With less space to design and decorate, consumers will make sure the rooms they have are as functional as they are attractive.

For example, kitchens will gain even more prominence as the nucleus of the home. The trend that began a few years ago of removing the walls and opening it to the family or great room will continue, and we'll start seeing kitchen islands on wheels that can be moved wherever we need them at the time.

"The reason I'm envisioning this is we're going to have several things going on in the kitchen at any one point," Salzman says. According to her book, it's become the entertainment hub of the home.

Outdoor kitchens also will be more popular, whether outfitted with an expensive grill and luxury furniture or a plastic table and a \$49 sheet-metal cookery on wheels, she adds.

To sum up, says Salzman in her book, "Watch as homes in the next decade become fully equipped compounds that offer both comfort and entertainment—and very little reason to leave."