



LET'S EAT Trending Upward

Where to test out the experts' opinions of what's new and exciting for 2007

By Joe Bonwich
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Every year around this time, various food "experts" let loose with their predictions for the Next Big Thing (or Things) in food and drink. We plowed through several of these lists and picked out some of our favorites, along with some ideas for experiencing the trends locally.

PREMIUM-DRINK BARS

Marian Salzman, of the advertising and marketing firm JWT Worldwide, and Ira Matathia, of brand consultants NoFormula, predict the rise of bars designed to promote a single expensive liquor and "the experience of that drink and its mixers." We haven't yet heard of plans for a Louis IX Meets Louis XIII cognac club or anything similar, but you can get a \$50 "signature cocktail" at the new Mandarin Lounge (44 Maryland Plaza in the Central West End). It's called the Gold Standard Cosmopolitan, and it consists of Gran Patron Platinum tequila, Grand Marnier Cuvée du Centenaire and juices garnished with 23-karat gold flake.

DESERT BARS

Giada De Laurentiis of the Food Network thinks these will really take off. A couple that already exist in St. Louis are Bailey's Chocolate Bar (1915 Park Avenue in Lafayette Square) and Veruca at Niche (starting at 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays only, 1831 Sidney Street in Benton Park).

'OLD SCHOOL' BEERS

"Enough with the trendy beers that you drink with a fork," says the Food Network's Guy Fieri, citing PBR (Pabst Blue Ribbon), Mickey's and Oly (Olympia) as prime choices for a counterrevolution. Those are three of the 50 beers you'll find - in cans, of course - at the Tin Can Tavern and Grille, 3157 Morganford Road in Tower Grove South.

THE 'NEXT' CUISINE: PERUVIAN

The late Joseph Baum and partner Michael Whiteman created some of the best-known restaurants in New York City. Now Whiteman puts out an annual trends list, and Peruvian food is on it. Sample it locally at Mango, 7307 Watson Road in Shrewsbury.

SLOWCOOKERS

The backstage folks at the Food Network compiled their top five trends for 2007, and slow cookers were No. 1. Watch for a cover story on slow-cooker recipes later this winter in Let's Eat.