

Fresh perspectives

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By Frank Sabatini Jr.

Chefs cite overplayed dining trends and reveal what's ahead

Last year's local dining scene delivered a swarm of new restaurants, re-brandings and top kitchen talent that isn't expected to let up anytime soon. Continued progress, however, requires moving past hackneyed food trends lurking conspicuously within kale salads and beneath the fat layers of pork belly.



Kevin Templeton (Courtesy Alternative Strategies)

We quizzed several chefs from Downtown-area restaurants on what culinary fads of 2016 they feel should be tossed to the wind, and what new ingredients, dishes or

cooking styles they plan on introducing to their menus in the coming months.

Kevin Templeton, executive chef at Barleymash, barleymash.com

Leave behind: “Casual cuisine served in uppity, fine-dining atmospheres. I don’t like places where you’re switching forks at every course for meals that don’t live up to the formality. I also wouldn’t mind seeing foams left behind.”

Coming up: “I’m trying to broaden my horizon with more obscure produce, such as different varieties of Romanesco, shelling beans and new lettuces, like leopard Romaine, which is a cross between Romaine and leaf lettuce with little red spots.”

Lori Sauer, executive pastry chef for Blue Bridge Hospitality, bluebridgehospitality.com

Leave behind: “The quenelle needs to go away. It’s a technique for making football-shaped scoops of ice cream, sorbet, mousse or mashed potatoes using two spoons. It’s been done a lot and still some people don’t do it right.”

Coming up: “Filipino food is a huge thing right now and it’s going to get bigger this year. I plan on doing my homework with the help of [Filipino chef] DJ Tangalin at Tidal to start integrating that influence into some of my desserts.”



Lori Sauer (Courtesy H2 Public Relations)

Brad Kraten, executive chef for Curadero (replacing Saltbox in early March), curadero.com



Brad Kraten (Courtesy Saltbox)

Leave behind: “The over-proliferation of pumpkin spice is crazy. It doesn’t belong in potato chips or peanut butter. I think the same goes for other seasonal spices you find everywhere — in lattes, desserts and savory dishes.”

Coming up: “At Curadero we’ll be making fresh tortillas daily and using Mexican ingredients like huitlacoche (corn fungus) and seafood from Baja.”

Stephane Voitzwinkler, executive chef at Mister A's, bertrandatmisteras.com

Leave behind: “We could move forward from escargot. It’s fine and good, but it’s basically garlic butter for your bread. By the time your main course arrives, you’re full.” *Coming up:* “Old-school dishes from Europe, but with a little flair and high-end ingredients such as black and white truffles, good caviar, Dover sole and American red snapper.”



Stephane Voitzwinkler (Courtesy Bay Bird Inc.)



Aliano Decka (Courtesy The Nth Element)

Aliano Decka, executive chef at Carne Prima, carneprima.com

Leave behind: “I’d like to see the dining trend go from rushed to what dining out is supposed to be — like how they do in Italy, where you sit down to eat at 8 p.m. with family and friends and finish at about 1 a.m. I want to bring that type of experience to Carne Prima.”

Coming up: “I plan to bring in USDA prime-aged steaks, which have a taste many people have never experienced. I also plan on using cicoria (European chicory). People want healthy options and cicoria is high in protein, full of vitamins and hard to find here.”

Giselle Wellman, executive chef for Pacific Standard Coastal Kitchen, pacificstandardkitchen.com



Giselle Wellman (Photo by Audrey Ma)

Leave behind: “Deconstructed dishes, where everything is separated. For example, when you take an apple cobbler, separate the ingredients, throw it on a plate, and call it apple cobbler — it’s not. You don’t want to leave the diner figuring out how to eat something.” Coming up: “I’m moving forward with grains, beans and produce that we don’t normally use. I went to Mexico recently and saw produce that wasn’t perfect looking, like that in our supermarkets, but their flavors were amazing. We need to start falling in love with the imperfections of products grown locally in an effort to reduce consumer waste.”

Ben Miller, executive chef of Quad AleHouse, quadalehouse.com



Ben Miller (Courtesy Quad Alehouse)

Leave behind: “Overpriced restaurants. It’s too darn expensive to charge \$100 a head for meals that could realistically be served for less. What I like about our restaurant is that it’s more affordable for the average Joe to come in and enjoy an upscale burger, barbecue brisket or pork, or a quality piece of ahi.”

Coming up: “I’ll be using nitrogen and other methods of molecular gastronomy to infuse flavors into different foods. I’m going to the sweet side first and already dabbled in making fruit caviar, which is basically turning regular fruit juice into little beads that can be used as flavorful garnishes on desserts.”

Mario Cassineri, chef/partner of Bice San Diego, bicesandiego.com

Stay behind: “Let’s get rid of complicated dishes that people don’t understand and have to pay big prices for when they’re supposed to be enjoying something traditional. To make a good dish, you don’t have to be fancy and expensive. Just stick to tradition and add your twists.”

Coming up: “I’m going to introduce more vegan and vegetarian Italian dishes to the menu. I love cooking all sorts of food and this is an area I look forward to building in 2017.”



Mario Cassineri (Courtesy of The Nth Element)