

2008 Restaurant Food Trends

by [Kristie Leong M.D.](#), Jan 18, 2008

What can you expect to see on the restaurant horizon in 2008? Here are some of the most important restaurant food trends.

If you eat out frequently, you may be interested in the upcoming 2008 [restaurant](#) trends and how they'll affect future [restaurant menu](#) offerings. Consumer food preferences are always changing with change bringing a variety of new menu options and food choices. Here's what you can expect to see more of in 2008:

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Smaller Portions and Snack Sizes

The average consumer seems to be eating more frequent, smaller meals. This has attracted the attention of a [restaurant industry](#) eager to capitalize on this growing trend. It seems we're becoming a nation of snackers. To respond to this demand, restaurants are offering smaller portioned meals with lower prices. Have you noticed the rise of the mini-burger? It seems to have struck a responsive cord with [diners](#). On a more sophisticated level, tapas-style dishes are growing in popularity as consumers look for smaller dishes with enough taste to satisfy a discerning palate.

Latin Cuisine

Latin cuisine particularly cuisine from the Caribbean is growing in popularity. As the population ages, their ability to taste diminishes slightly which increases the desire for more flavorful, [spicy foods](#). Latin cuisine can fulfill this demand with its tempting melding of spices and fresh ingredients to create unique food preparations that are both healthy and satisfying.

Healthy Fare

As the population continues to age, healthy food choices become more important. Although Americans have been accused of "talking the talk" and then returning to their less healthy alternatives, the tide seems to be shifting as consumers embrace healthier restaurant choices. More restaurants are using organic and locally grown produce as well as free range meats to satisfy consumer demand. They're also cooking with healthier oils and eliminating trans fats from their kitchens.

Emphasis on Spices

Spices are getting their share of positive publicity these days and restaurant chefs are taking notice. Such spices as cumin, tumeric, ginger and a host of others are being lauded for their antioxidant capabilities and their ability to potentially prevent certain chronic diseases. Plus, they give food flavor and personality. Expect to see more [chefs](#) incorporating these healthy spices into dishes to add flavor and variety to their offerings.

Redefining Casual

Restaurant consumers want good food but they want it in a more relaxing setting. Forget the coat and tie. Diners crave five star food in a setting where they can relax and unwind. Along with this trend comes the expansion and upgrades of bar and lounge menus to allow diners to enjoy a wide range of chef inspired dishes in a laid back [environment](#).

Grocery Stores with Restaurants

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More grocery stores are [catering](#) to customer's demands for chef inspired food that's fast and convenient. Grocery stores are hiring chefs and serving higher quality, hot food that can be eaten on site with some sites even offering full service restaurants. Consumers are embracing the idea of having a quick and delicious meal at the same time they do their grocery [shopping](#). These grocery store inspired chef stations and restaurants are expected to grow in demand and popularity due to their accessibility and convenience.

How will these [restaurant food](#) trends affect your [dining](#) habits? 2008 should be an interesting year for culinary enthusiasts.

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