

Top 10 Food Trends for 2008

'Locavores,' bold flavors, and healthier choices will be hot, experts predict.

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What new food trends are in store (the grocery store, that is) for 2008? According to the experts, 2008 might be called the year of ethical eating. Consumers are looking for more locally grown foods that support a healthier environment and a healthier lifestyle.

"Locavore" -- a person who seeks out locally grown and produced foods -- was designated the 2007 word of the year by the New Oxford American Dictionary, and eating locally is also anticipated to be the biggest food trend of 2008. Experts say we can also expect consumers to think more holistically about their food -- questioning where it came from, its packaging, and its ecological footprint.

Americans are also expected to experiment this year with exotic foods with bold flavors -- like goji berries, yumberries, pomegranates, blood oranges, colored and flavored salts, and grains such as red rice, amaranth, and black quinoa.

And, experts predict we can look forward to more healthy choices on grocery store shelves. People want foods that are convenient, fill them up, taste good, and will help them [lose weight](#), says American Dietetic Association President Connie Diekman, MEd, RD.

Soups, salads, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein are examples of these healthy foods that multitask. Manufacturers are also expected to continue to create more portion-controlled packages of foods (like the popular 100-calorie snack packs).

Here's more of what diet and nutrition experts have named as the top food trends for 2008:

Food Trend No. 1: Eco-Friendly Foods

Increasingly, consumers want to know more about their food -- where it was grown, what ingredients it contains, how it was packaged, and the footprint its production left on the earth.

"It is the evolution of organics that consumers want to know and understand more about the foods they eat," says "Supermarket Guru" Phil Lempert, food trends editor and correspondent for NBC's *Today Show*. "You may choose a locally grown product over one that is organic because the food is fresher and its footprint is smaller."

Food Trend No. 2: Local, Natural, and Fresh Foods

On a similar note, we're likely to see more farmers markets and community co-ops, as well as more locally grown foods in mainstream grocery stores. Consumers are also said to be scrutinizing imported foods more carefully these days, and looking for those from countries that have very high safety standards.

Food Trend No. 3: Concern About Food Safety

No one wants to repeat the scares we had in 2007, when tainted pet food, peanut butter, ground beef, and other products made headlines. "Consumers are demanding safe food for us and our pets, and want the government to update the food safety system so we can have confidence that our food supply is safe," says American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Jeannie Moloo, PhD, RD.

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Food Trend No. 4: Higher Prices

Food prices are expected to continue rising, which experts say will cause consumers to rethink their purchasing patterns. "Higher food prices will push consumers out of the fresh produce section into the freezer or canned food aisles to re-evaluate other options that can be just as nutritious," says Lempert.

Food Trend No. 5: Prebiotics and Probiotics

Consumers are learning that adding "friendly" bacteria to foods can help with digestion. And they're not just for yogurt any more. We'll be seeing the beneficial bacteria added to a wide variety of foods -- including chocolate, predicts Moloo.

Food Trend No. 6: Whole Grains

Shoppers will continue to opt for more healthy whole grains, including exotic types aimed at tempting the jaded palates of baby boomers, experts say. "There are numerous health benefits of whole grains, and food manufacturers are making it easier to enjoy them with new products," says Diekman. "Exotic grains such as amaranth, quinoa, teff, millet, and Kamut are going mainstream."

Food Trend No. 7: Simple Ingredients and Clearer Labels

Increasingly, consumers don't want ingredients they can't pronounce, nor do they want artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives, experts say. Look for more informative and clearer labels, and foods with just a handful of simple ingredients.

Food Trend No. 8: Emphasis on Lowering Salt

The American Medical Association has urged food manufacturers to lower the sodium in processed foods. "With an aging population and recommendations to lower sodium in our [diets](#), companies are working to keep the same flavor profile and lower the sodium," says Moloo.

Food Trend No. 9: Alternative Sweeteners

Alternative natural sweeteners like ultrasweet stevia (which is 300 times sweeter than table sugar) and zero-calorie erythritol will replace high-fructose corn syrup and artificial sweeteners in more beverages and foods, experts predict.

Food Trend No. 10: Bottled Water Backlash

Bottled water remains popular among consumers looking to cut down on calories and artificial sweeteners. But growing awareness of the impact all those empty plastic bottles have on the environment (and the fact that many brands of bottled water are nothing more than purified tap water) is expected to make this option less appealing, experts say.

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