

2021 Food Trends

As we work towards a healthier lifestyle there are some trends that reflect the results of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some small steps toward current and future trends. These come from Rutgers Cooperative Extension and I would like to share them with you.

Special Occasion Dining will include special tasting menus and private dining experiences that include special ingredients. Consumers will go out for a truly memorable safe dining experience and can expect a new experience unlike any they have experienced in the past.

Simple Menus will bring two polarizing approaches to dining. These include the need for comforting and soul-nourishing food and the other that functions as an escape and embraces frivolousness, allowing customers to be both fancy and indulgent.

Deeper Focus on Black Foodways is an important part of African American cuisine. There will be a focus on sweet potatoes and various greens and biscuits as part of our agricultural roots along with indigenous American cuisines. Trends will focus on our roots as they look back on a 2020 as a year that really grounded us and brought our truths to the surface.

More Diverse Cooking and Spices will be more evident and embraced by those who do not care about “perfect plating” but rather center the dishes on their cultural roots, histories and traditions with prepared food and ingredients that will be available in restaurants, grocery stores or online.

Individualized tasting menus will be created for adventuresome consumer looking for a unique dining experience. This will be the reason consumers will leave the safety of their home to dine out and celebrate.

Small-group private dining will be hot. Restaurants that can provide safe, intimate spaces for small groups will be sought out at a premium.

Heritage cooking is being recognized as part of the immigrant cooking and family food favorites. It is a celebration of vibrant cultures through food as it exposes diners to new traditions and recipes.

At-home restaurant experiences using take-out and delivery brings the restaurant experience to homes with popular items now on the “to-go menu”. Plant-based, healthy vegetarian dishes with seasonal ingredients and global flavors are here to stay. Restaurant-style meals packaged for the family will keep trending in the years to come.

More virtual cooking classes and food boxes with ingredients for the box recipes—will continue to expand in 2021. This fun way to get together with family, be entertained at home while preparing a healthy meal will continue if consumers have the resources to afford the boxes. There is a thirst for knowledge in how to cook healthy and develop home gardens along with cooking classes.

Quick Meal Preparation and Condiments are both trending as consumers make their own sauces, chimichurri, or sauerkraut. By adding flavor to simple ingredients means dinner comes together easier and is more exciting to eat. Condiments often have a long shelf life and can be stretched over several meals.

Comfort food and simplicity will be dominant due to the pandemic. Consumers are looking for a sense of normalcy. As we take small steps, we need to support those in the food production and restaurant

industry as they work to survive with limited resources and staffing. The food trends throughout 2021 will continue to offer new challenges for our health and wellbeing.