

Future set to dish up the past

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Rohan Anderson at home.

2012 will be about connecting with food communities.

TRENDS come and go - some even stay - but they all move us forward in small and incremental ways. So here's the forecast for 2012, arrived at not by scientific study and columns of statistics but by hunch, educated guess and much talking to those who are busy doing their own thing regardless of trends. For that, dear reader, is how trends are created.

So while you may already be up to speed with the embracing of Peruvian food, slow-drip coffee, food trucks, fire and smoke, there are many more interesting things on the horizon; such as shooting your own dinner, Gen-Y playing granny in the kitchen and - yippee - bacon in everything.

Shoot your own dinner

And grow it, catch it, breed it and harvest it, before cooking it and composting the remains. The new huntin', shootin', fishin' are all done with an ethical slant, for reasons philosophical and ecological as much as gastronomic.

Blogger, photographer and hunter-gatherer Rohan Anderson feeds his family by fishing in local creeks, shooting rabbits and hares on local farms and growing vegetables after a tree change from Melbourne to Ballarat.

"I truly respect people that hunt for their meat," he says. "You can no longer go to the supermarket to buy meat and ignore the consequences of that purchase."

Anderson, who blogs at wholelarderlove.com and on ABC Online's *Grow, Gather, Hunt, Cook*, says if you take an animal's life in order to fuel your own, then you should waste nothing. "Roast it whole, then use the carcass to make a stock, then feed the bones to the dog and the scraps to the compost."

Retro kitchens

All those glossy built-in European designer kitchens we've been spending our money on might just start looking so last year. The next trend is for homely, comfortable, book-strewn kitchens; places to gather in, mug of tea in hand, as an aromatic stew braises on the stove. They're un-sleek and un-smooth; part industrial, part farmhouse. Think Elizabeth David's circa-1950s kitchen in London, gently mixed with a Margaret Olley still life. The same trend is seen in bars and cafes as young, economy-minded owners forsake expensive design - and expensive designers - for a nostalgic do-it-yourself mix of granny's larders, raw walls, knitted tea cosies, matching kitchen canisters and egg beaters as decor. Owner Natalie Paull laughs when complimented on the charming retro decor of her tiny cafe, Beatrix, which opened last year in



Burch & Purchase Sweet Studio's pumpkin, bacon, chocolate and pecan cake.



Melbourne City Rooftop Honey above Fatto a Mano in Gertrude Street.
Photo: Lachlan Mathison

North Melbourne.

"I have no interior design skills at all," she says. "I had a counter built, grabbed things from home, Ikea and eBay, then strung up my old egg-beater collection and that was it."

Customers now donate their own egg-beaters for a free slice of one of Paull's renowned cakes.

Sweet cheeses

Cheese is now a dessert in its own right, inspiring as much care, thought and imaginative technique as chocolate. At Momofuku Seiobo in Sydney, Ben Greeno grates pecorino over apple cider jelly and bee pollen. At Noma in Copenhagen, pastry chef Rosio Sanchez teams caramelised Huldreost brown cheese custard with beetroot granita, blackcurrants and liquorice. Aaron Turner at Loam on the Bellarine Peninsula combines a rich, creamy French roquefort with a fresh, acidic ewe's milk granita made from Meredith Dairy yoghurt for a dessert entitled "Old ewe, new ewe".

"It's a reflection of how greatly different the same base product can be, depending on how it is treated and the location and diet of the animals that produce it," Turner says. "At Loam we are always playing with cheese in one way or another."

Baconalia

Combining as it does the contemporary trendlets of rare-breed pork, salumi platters and the harnessing of smoke, bacon could well be the trend d'annee. In Los Angeles, diners queue in order to pig out on Animal restaurant's indecently sweet and salty bacon chocolate crunch bar, while Prahran's Burch & Purchase Sweet Studio's winter 2011 pumpkin, bacon, chocolate and toasted pecan dessert is still being talked about with awe. "We like to pair sweet and savoury," Darren Purchase says.

"People love salted caramel, so this is just one step further on."

Local bacon-lovers can but pray for a promotion such as Denny's recent Baconalia, when the American fast-food giant proved you could add crisped hickory-smoked bacon bits to just about anything, including vanilla soft-serve ice-cream sundae with maple syrup. Chicago's Baconfest 2012 festival could also prove inspiring, with its bacon martinis, its six-course bacon degustation dinners and its BBBLT, a triple-decker BLT layered with eight strips of bacon.

Honey, I shrank dinner

Already, burgers are small sliders gone in three bites, tacos are tiny and the once-large Vietnamese banh mi roll is the new miniature amuse-bouche. Ice-cream, confectionery and cocktails are in turn shrinking to being "fun-size" in response to rising costs and increasing carbophobia.

What used to be the pre-dessert is now the dessert, wines come in tasting glasses and the piccolo cafe latte is threatening the hegemony of the full-glass version.

Nutritionist Judy Davie of thefoodcoach.com.au says the trend is all about what we value.

"In lower socio-economic areas, people want more for their hard-earned dollar, so supersize meals and two-for-the-price-of-one deals are popular," she says. "More affluent people eat out often, get bored easily and are generally more concerned with health, appearance and setting trends, so the mini version of everything that was once off their eating agenda is now back on."

Beer geekery

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show beer consumption as a percentage of total alcohol sales is down to a 61-year low of 44 per cent, yet craft beer from microbreweries is, in its own way, booming. More artisanal, small-brew, unpasteurised beers are appearing, using fresh hop flowers and 100 per cent malted grains, hand-washed and labelled bottles. More attention is being paid to beer temperature, glassware tempering and the fine art of "tap-dancing", with brew-masters beginning to see themselves as the equivalent of baristas, able to pull different tastes and textures from single kegs of beer.

Beer regions are slowly emerging within wine regions across Australia, with Margaret River alone home to Bootleg, Cheeky Monkey and Eagle Bay. More restaurants such as Collingwood's Josie Bones are treating beer as if it were wine, with eight rotating taps. Denmark's "gypsy brewer" Mikkel Borg Bjergso will no doubt bring things to a fine head at the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival's new Liquid Lounge sessions (including the inaugural beer breakfast) in March. The new beers also mean new flavour profiles of chestnuts, peppercorns, rosemary and, of course, bacon. Try, for instance, Moon Dog Craft Brewery's Perverse Sexual Amalgam, aged in American oak-bourbon barrels with stewed cherry plums.

And the ultimate in beer geekery? Serving glass tankards of nothing but pure, creamy beer foam, known by its Czech name of mlíko, as at New York's Hospoda bar.

Haute vegetarian

The "more plants, less meat" movement is gaining momentum, with menus from Copenhagen to California adjusting the balance on the menu and on the plate. Look out for menus with only one or two meat entries; heirloom tomato degustations; and meat jus replaced by lighter, brighter vegetable juices. It's a trend that gets the Food Coach's Judy Davie excited.



Rebecca Sullivan.



The egg-beater collection at Beatrix cafe. Photo: Nico Alary

"Vegetables to become the next Bangalow pork belly? Bring it on," she says. "I also think we'll see a lot more interesting vegies like samphire and purple carrots in restaurants, incorporated into the main dish and not served as a side." Davie also expects to see - if only in trendy suburbs - upmarket juice bars and raw-food cafes, "places for people to detox and socialise".

Fine dining loses its cool

It's not dead yet; it's just no longer cool. Almost one billion people in the world suffer from chronic hunger - and still the 14-course degustation dinners go on, plying well-fed people with more food than they need in marathon sessions of up to five hours. But the core market is ageing and fortunes are diminishing. It's no coincidence Spanish chef Ferran Adria has closed elBulli, which reportedly lost half a million euros a year. Instead, he uses the brand as a foundation for merchandising and consultancy work. Parisian chefs are moving to the more casual, fun bistrone model instead of chasing three Michelin stars. In Scandinavia, San Francisco and Singapore, restaurants are raising local food to new levels without the fine-dining faff. What was fine dining is now "destination dining"; at its best at Heston Blumenthal's Dinner in London, with its lively, luxe brasserie atmosphere; David Thompson's Nahm in Bangkok; and David Chang's Momofuku Ko in New York, with its counter dining and interactive kitchen. Not a tablecloth nor stuffy waiter in sight; just good food in a fun atmosphere.

Granny skills

Increasingly, it's the twentysomethings and not the OBEs (Over Bloody Eighty, according to my mother) who are obsessed with the ultimate "granny skill": the perfect setting point for jam. "Learning new kitchen skills is just another way of being creative, no matter what age you are," says Rebecca Sullivan, who at age 30 couldn't look less like your typical granny. Sullivan has set up Dirty Girl Kitchen, a "social movement, eco-food, catering, events and community initiative" to help safeguard what she calls "granny skills". "You know, all the things that involve getting dirty," she says. "From growing food to making soap, jam, curing meat and pickling cucumbers."

Sullivan, from Adelaide, will base herself in Melbourne soon and the floral aprons will be out in force here when Dirty Girl Kitchen stages its first "jam session" in October. Held in conjunction with Melbourne grannies and the Country Women's Association's finest jam-makers, the event will be part of the new Sustainable Living program at the Taste of Melbourne restaurant festival.

"My generation needs to put a real value on these traditional skills," Sullivan says, "or we'll lose them entirely."

Working bees

It's not enough for cafes to offer single-origin coffees any more; now it's single-origin honey as well. Mat Lumalasi and Vanessa Kwiatkowski of Melbourne City Rooftop Honey are as busy as bees installing urban hives above cafes, bars and restaurants such as Ladro in Fitzroy, La Luna in Carlton, Golden Fields in St Kilda, Dead Man Espresso in South Melbourne and Burch & Purchase Sweet Studio in South Yarra. It's not just for the honey, though. Australian honey bees, whose daily nectar commutes account for two-thirds of Australia's food production (think hazelnuts, almonds, celery, apples, pumpkins, watermelon), are under threat from disease, exotic pests, pollution and foreign imports.

"So far, we've helped rehome 40 swarms of honey-bee colonies that would not otherwise have survived the winter," says Kwiatkowski, who is setting up a local honey distribution network to save on food miles.

The trend of trends

The year ahead, it seems, will be one of connections. The more the world changes, the more we need to feel that we have roots, history and context; that the small things we do count for something. City dwellers, in particular, want the food and wine choices they make to help them feel part of a wider community; connecting to how food is grown, meat is raised, beer is brewed and fruit is turned into jam. We want to feel like parts of a whole, rather than mere users and consumers. And if that requires eating more bacon and drinking more craft beer, then damn it, we'll have to do it.

Blood, brews and Blumenthal

THE 2012 food trends lists have been filed and posted. Dismissing the immediately obvious (Thai food? Yawn), here is a handful of America's finest predictions for the year to come.

■**Antique food:** Chefs will bring back the recipes of the past, says [StarChefs.com](#), citing Grant Achatz of Chicago returning to Escoffier at his restaurant Next, and Dinner By Heston Blumenthal in London, inspired by "historic British gastronomy".

■**Breathable food:** Small aerosol "delivery systems" will revolutionise the delivery of nutrients to the mouth, says the JWT Trend Report 2012. The Aeroshot delivers 100mg of caffeine and B vitamins for instant energy.

■**The YouTube Chef:** "Everyone's a TV star," according to the James Beard Foundation's trends for 2012. With a digital camera and a YouTube account, you can be a celebrity chef.

■**Beer cocktails:** There are so many enjoyable ways to drink beer, according to the *LA Weekly*. Add beetroot juice, lime and chilli sauce to Pacifico beer, or top a Bloody Mary of vodka, cherry tomatoes and lemon with smoked lager.

■**Blood:** In the post-*Twilight* zone, blood is a newly fashionable ingredient, the James Beard Foundation says, and will be found in blood pancakes, blood cups, sauces thickened with blood, and the odd chocolate-and-blood ice-cream.

Source: Epicure

