

8 Food Fads Coming in 2013



From fancy fast food to treats with a twist, here's what coming to your breakfast, lunch and dinner next year.

The Return of Eating Out

For years the number of meals the average American purchases annually at restaurants has dropped -- 194 meals during the year-ended August 2012, down from 215 in 2000, according to Harry Balzer of consumer market research firm NPD Group. But Balzer thinks the decline bottomed in 2012, so expect an uptick in restaurant dining in 2013.

Superior Sweeteners

Traditionally, the beverage industry has been slow to innovate. But Beverage-Digest editor and publisher John Sicher says R&D from major soft drink and ingredient companies around new and improved diet sweeteners should start to payoff in 2013 or 2014. "The holy grail for the beverage industry is to have a natural diet sweetener that tastes the same as regular soft drinks," Sicher says. "It could be a game changer for the industry in terms of future growth."

International Flavors Go Mainstream

Diners should expect to see more ethnic flavors on menus beyond ethnic food restaurants, says Mary Chapman, director of product innovation at research and consultancy firm Technomic. Growing in popularity? South American-inspired dishes, clearly not classified as South American, with elements like chimichurri sauce. Tacos.

Treats with a Healthy Twist

We want our salty snacks and sweets but we want them to be better for us. It might sound impossible, but the food industry will respond in 2013 by continuing to fortify goodies with healthy ingredients, says Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel. "It feeds the consumer's unwillingness to compromise," she says. Rather than a chocolate bar, have a handful of dark chocolate acai berries. Or trade in your potato chips for root veggie chips.

Supplier-Owned Stores

Food suppliers, tired of fighting to get their own brick-and-mortar shops. The trend, which was pioneered by Haagen Dazs, is gaining steam: Dannon and Chobani recently launched their own yogurt stores in New York City, and Barilla is opening branded pasta restaurants next year. "It's a way to put something tangible in front of customers, where you can control the image," says Michael Whiteman, president of food consulting firm Baum + Whiteman.

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