



A look ahead at culinary trends for 2010

By Chris Madsen | Business Review

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The holiday season is a time to reflect on the past year, as well as look forward to what the next one will bring.

In the culinary world, we saw some exciting trends in 2009 — many of which I believe are here to stay. Here is my exclusive forecast for 2010. While these predictions may not all be correct, some of them I'm certain you will see in the months to come.

Local and sustainable produce: Bar none, this was the hottest trend in 2009, and I don't see any signs of it slowing down. In fact, I think it will continue to gain traction next year with more farmers growing and consumers seeking local, sustainably grown produce.

There likely will be more demand for locally raised beef, poultry, lamb and other proteins in addition to produce as more consumers look closer to home for the food they purchase.

Artisan and craft distilled spirits: The craft brewed beer market peaked in the last couple of years, and many local breweries have emerged with quality products. In 2010, I think this trend will continue to the spirits side of the business. There are already producers of Michigan vodkas, and local brewers and distillers are making a wider variety of non-alcoholic beverages like flavored sodas and root beers using Michigan cherry juice.

Continued interest in ecological conservation: In 2009, there was prominent awareness of conserving our state's natural resources — our rich lakes, forests and plentiful agriculture. I think next year people will look not only at reducing their individual energy consumption, but the total amount of greenhouse gases that are produced by the foods we buy. Restaurants and food suppliers will be challenged to examine the goods they buy and find ways to maintain quality and selection while supplying savvy consumers with the low-carbon-footprint items they demand.

Return to traditional canning and preserving: People are trending back to the basics, and next year the interest level in canning, pickling and preserving will continue to increase. This traditional technique enables people to take advantage of seasonal availability of farm-fresh fruits and vegetables by purchasing them in bulk when the price is economical. Many of us grew up with fond memories of the family garden, and I see a new generation finding joy in its simplicity and bounty.

Interest in "nontraditional" fish species: With increasing stress levels put on our oceans, some of the fish we consider "normal" on a restaurant menu or in the supermarket will soon be replaced by other species being sustainably raised. Fish like Arctic Char, Branzino and Cobia will find their way onto more plates and palates because of their low environmental impact and high availability.

We will find new favorites along the way, while some of the ocean species we've come to consider a staple will be given a chance to rebound so future generations can enjoy their wonderful flavors.

*Chris Madsen is chef d' cuisine at **The 1913 Room at Amway Grand Plaza Hotel** in Grand Rapids.*

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Madsen