

TOP 10 FOOD TRENDS

Coming soon to a table near you...

2015 was a year of food highs and lows. It began with duffin hysteria, followed by kale crisp mania, and finished with many asking if we'd reached peak pulled pork. Rachel Walker goes out on a limb to predict what we'll be eating (and drinking) in 2016



1 Lots more butter

Sorry, marge, butter is back! A recent British Medical Journal (BMJ) paper suggested that butter wasn't so bad for us after all, giving us the green light to hit the proper yellow stuff again.

In the constant race for foodie one-upmanship, there are now artisanal butters ranging from St Helen's goat's butter from Yorkshire, to Fen Farm's cultured butter made from raw milk in Suffolk, and the celebrated 'golden rolls' of handmade Abernethy from Northern Ireland, the butter favoured by chefs such as Marcus Wareing and Heston Blumenthal.

A resurgence in DIY butters is nigh too, it seems. Trish Deseine's new book *Home: Recipes from Ireland* (Hachette Cuisine) has a recipe for pickled butter, and the latest mega-tome by famed Swedish chef Magnus Nilsson, *The Nordic Cookbook* (Phaidon) includes reduced curds and whey made with cultured milk.

2 Truly Turkish cooking

Thought kebabs were just for Friday night? Well, think again. Turkish cuisine will be big in 2016.

Early last year Wagamama's Alan Yau opened Babaji in central London, which elevates *pide* (a Turkish version of pizza) to an edible art form. Late 2015 saw the launch of chef Selin Kiazim's Oklava restaurant in east London, where the emphasis is on sophisticated Turkish-Cypriot cooking – not your stereotypical greasy doner.

And it's not just big name chefs getting in on the act. Smoke signals are also billowing out from the mangal grills of a whole new wave of trendy kebab shops.

And for home cooks? The new *Essential Turkish Cuisine* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang) by Turkish author Engin Akin will have newbies to the cuisine cooking for Manti Mondays or pide parties.



3 PEEL-TO-STEM AND ROOT-TO-FRUIT VEG

After nose-to-tail, now there's peel-to-stem eating, which celebrates every part of the fruit and vegetable. Eco chef Tom Hunt serves dishes such as scallops with toffee apple peel at his Poco restaurants in Bristol and London. His book *The Natural Cook* asks readers to "Eat well and waste nothing", with recipes such as radish leaf soup.

For recipes using apricot kernels and fig leaves, see tone-setting cookbooks such as Sally Clarke's *30 Ingredients* (Frances Lincoln) and Claire Ptak's *The Violet Bakery Cookbook* (Square Peg). Trust us, before long you'll be making carrot top pesto and banana peel chutney.

4 BAIJIU: THE CHINESE SPIRIT

The UK has gin, Russia has vodka... and China has baijiu. You may not have heard of it, but it's the most consumed spirit in the world. The name roughly translates as 'white alcohol' and, like many things Chinese, baijiu connoisseurship is on the rise.

This February (in time for Chinese New Year), London's Baijiu Cocktail Week will encourage restaurants and bars to put baijiu cocktails on their menus. Chelsea bar Nam Long has launched its new baijiu menu, which suggests that more baijiu bars are round the corner – adding to the 4-10 billion litres (hard to get exact figures) drunk around the world each year.

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5 SWEET VEGETABLES

With scientists warning us off sugar, and chocolate prices set to soar over the next decade, food scientists are busy researching new ways for us to get a sweet kick... and one of the answers is vegetables. Forget a grating of beetroot snuck into a chocolate cake – the aim isn't to conceal but to celebrate. Look to Häagen-Dazs' tomato cherry and carrot orange ice creams in Japan, or US company Blue Hill's butternut squash yogurt.

It's a young trend in the UK (see p12), but this year La Maison du Chocolat's savoury collection paired red pepper, porcini mushrooms, onion and olive with chocolate, and Rude Health introduced a beetroot fudge bar.

6 FRESHLY MILLED FLOUR

The coffee revolution brought about a trend for on-site roasteries so cafés could better control the process. It's still early days for the flour revolution, but pioneers such as London's E5 Bakehouse and Brighton restaurant Silo have started milling flour on-site.

Specialist flour brands such as Shipton Mill and Lammas Fayre have also seen spikes of interest as consumers realise that good bread starts with good flour. Judging by the movement led by chef and farm-to-table advocate Dan Barber, who features in the documentary *The Grain Divide*, it's a nascent trend that still has a lot of potential to grow.

8 Insects: six legs good

For years now, trend experts have predicted global food shortages will force us to dine on insects and grubs. When it takes 10kg of feed to produce 1kg of beef, but just 1.7kg of feed for 1kg of crickets, it's easy to see the logic.

This spring sees the launch of *Eat Grub: The Ultimate Insect Cookbook* (Frances Lincoln), which features "more than 55 exciting recipes using a variety of bugs, from grasshoppers to mealworms" and advice on how to liven up your cocktails using whole insects. Despite live ant dishes served by Noma (voted the world's best restaurant), the prospect of frying grasshoppers or blending mealworms in home kitchens seems far-fetched.

A more digestible trend is the wider culinary use of insects – for example, making a high-protein flour by grinding dried crickets. London-based company Crobar uses 'flour' made from dried, ground crickets as the base for their protein bars. Pembrokeshire restaurant Grub Kitchen features 'black ant and olive crusted goat cheese' and 'sweetcorn chowder with grasshopper crumb' on its menu. So who knows, 2016 could just be the year to learn how to say 'entomophagy'...



7 Seaweed

The seaweed trend has been rumbling along for some time (see Food Trends 2013: Foraging), but when Jamie Oliver backed the ingredient in his new book *Everyday Superfood* (Michael Joseph) it was thrust into the limelight. No longer the preserve of health food shops, it's now on supermarket shelves too.

Last year Tesco started stocking fresh sea spaghetti from May to October. Various types of dried seaweed, including dulse, kombu and wakame, are available from The Cornish Seaweed Company (which supplies Tesco), Clearspring, Atlantic Kitchen and Scotland's own Mara Seaweed (stocked by Harrods). Odds are a pack will appear in your storecupboard soon too.



9 LIQUORICE

Forget Bassett's Allsorts. Proper liquorice is a must-have hot ingredient. As cooks seek more challenging flavours there's been a movement towards bitter ingredients – Campari, chicory, cassia and cocoa... and now liquorice is in the limelight.

Chef Anna Hansen serves roast nectarine and liquorice relish with pork belly at The Modern Pantry in London. At Newcastle restaurant Peace & Loaf, liquorice is used to flavour the mayonnaise and the celeriac fondant, and at Norwich bistro Benedicts, venison is rolled in liquorice powder, then seared.

Of course, the bitter flavours work well in desserts – liquorice meringues feature at Danish restaurant Snaps + Rye in London, and the dried root can infuse creams or custards for pannacotta or ice creams – as Laverstoke Park Farm has found out. If you want to experiment with the black stuff, Lakrids (liquorice.nu) is a good brand.

What we're hoping for...

10 COMMON SENSE

The culinary trend has swung madly between 'dirty burgers' and 'clean eating'. Here's hoping for a new era driven by common sense. It looks promising thanks to books like Bee Wilson's *First Bite* (4th Estate; see p13) – her logical advice is a refreshing antidote to the usual wave of detox babble in January.

The enduring popularity of other sound, sensible voices such as Joanna Blythman and Diana Henry bodes well too.

Perhaps 2016 will be the year we learn to trust our common sense and eat accordingly.

And one we hope to see the back of...

National Burger Day, National Doughnut Week, Ice Cream for Breakfast Day... Enough! Here's hoping there's a backlash against the PR-driven trend for arbitrary days celebrating food. We'll choose what we eat and when we eat it, thank you very much. ☑