



FORECASTING FLAVOR AND MENU TRENDS FOR 2017

The New Year is nearly upon us and experts are gazing deeply into their crystal balls in an effort to foretell what trends and changes 2017 holds for the foodservice industry. Curiously, paradoxes abound as seemingly contradictory trends take hold.

While restaurateurs embrace the cuisines of individual Asian and Latin American countries, they also are keeping close to home as they rely more on local and regional ingredients. In another balancing act, operators seek to cater to customers' desire to eat more healthfully while at the same time menuing high caloric indulgences to those who owe themselves a treat. Meanwhile, the culinary South rises again while the Pacific Northwest sets the trends for innovative beverages. All in all, it looks to be an interesting year as operators endeavor to accommodate a diverse range of trends.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Even as global cuisine becomes more country-specific, chefs and restaurateurs are making the most of indigenous products raised closer to home. They are also showcasing the artisans and specialty foods which their regions have come to be known for. According to Arlene Spiegel of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, at a recent international food show in New York, "Visitors could find aisle after aisle of Taste of the States showcasing their foods: smoked salmon from Oregon, pickles from Texas, cranberry jam from Wisconsin and cheeses from Vermont." These celebrations of regional and state specialties are being showcased on restaurant menus and provide a halo effect, she says. ■