

# Entrepreneurial **Chef** Magazine

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# How to Take Advantage of This Year's Trends

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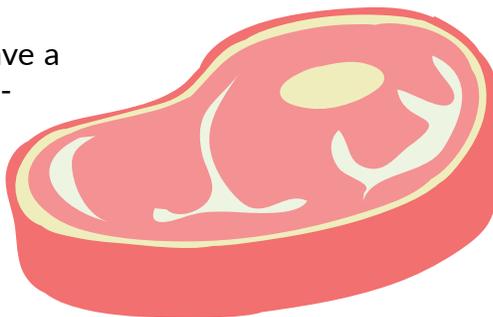
# It's

no surprise that trends and fads in the restaurant industry ebb in and out of popularity. Restaurants have always had to adapt to the volatile market that is the restaurant industry.

Once a new craze presents itself, there is a small window of opportunity for restaurant owners and chefs to capitalize on what has the foodie world buzzing.



It's imperative for chefs to have a keen eye for trend management, and more importantly, distinguishing a trend from a new norm. Certain trends exist within a larger sociocultural movement. Think superfoods. Over the last decade, we've had one superfood after another becoming the hottest ingredient for a while before another took its place. That superfood changed from time to time, whether it be acai berries or kale, but there was always a superfood leading the movement. These are the kind of trends restaurant owners and chefs should be on the lookout for as they build out their menu and marketing efforts.



cally sourced food at least once weekly.

In recent years there's been a crusade against non-organic food that's undergone some kind of genetic tampering in one way or another. Food manufacturers were forced to face the tough reality that cutting corners to increase output is not going to sit well with consumers, so we're going back to basics. The word "local" has been tacked onto green initiatives, making it blend with everything else in the health movement. It's not just consumers that recognize the power of local, either; local is a word being praised on both sides of the industry. The National Restaurant Association recently polled 1,600 chefs about the hottest 2016 food trends and out of the top 10 responses, 3 of them included the word "local." They were:

1. Locally sourced meats and seafood
2. Locally grown produce
3. Hyper-local sourcing

Consumers have more than one reason to support the staggering popularity of the locally sourced movement. More than half of the respondents from the Technomic survey claim that locally sourced products taste better.

## Locally Sourced Foods

Continuing off the superfood discussion, one of the largest trends we'll see go strong throughout 2017 and beyond is the support of locally sourced food. According to a survey conducted by Technomic, over 60 percent of consumers said they're likely to purchase locally sourced food or beverages. Additionally, 26 percent said they would pay more for these items, and more than half of consumers report eating lo-

Whether that's a placebo effect from the "feel-good" moment you get from doing something right is not for us to judge, but we certainly can use it to our advantage.

Which brings us to the final reason why this trend isn't going anywhere. Unlike most trends, buying locally sourced products comes with intrinsic values aside from health and taste. Buying locally inspires a forward-thinking attitude when it comes to environmental issues. It creates a more tangible feeling that consumers aren't buying from industrial factories, but local farmers instead. This is the kind of goodwill that isn't marked with a price tag. When consumers buy local, they're supporting their home team. As long as buying local creates that value for the consumer, it will continue to be a fan-favorite, which makes it the perfect trend for chefs and restaurant owners to take advantage of.

## Combining Farm to Table and Tech

Farm to table has a direct link to the success of locally sourced goods. Its public surge has allowed farm to table operators to work on a very granular level because of the necessity to focus on local farms. In fact, farm to table has gotten so popular it's caught the eye of Silicon Valley. Seemingly every day a new food tech startup pops up to try to fix a new inefficiency. After all, technology is changing the way food is produced and distributed by farmers and eaten by consumers.

Food Tech companies are all trying to find their niche of the value chain. This is where restaurant owners and chefs come in. In order to fully capitalize on farm to table and locally sourced goods, you'll need to implement



current systems to optimize distribution. It wasn't all that long ago that these kind of tech solutions that can aggregate big data and synchronize multiple systems were reserved for the bigwigs at major corporations.

We're living in an era of accessibility and efficiency. The tools you need to take advantage of food and beverage trends are readily available to you, whether you need to be connected to new healthy local food suppliers or imple-

ment smart inventory management systems to cut down food waste.

Farm to table is not a new trend. Yet, new crazes come and go that bolster the impact that farm to table initiatives have on our consumer experience. In just 6 years between 2008 and 2014, farms experienced a 72% increase in organic produce sales. Out of all of those sales, almost 50% of the products were sold within 100 miles of the farm's location, and 80% was sold within 500 miles.

There is an undeniable cohesiveness between locally sourced food, farm to table initiatives, and tech. Finding the sweet spot for combining all three to take advantage of the biggest food trends in the industry will guarantee success for any chef looking to bolster their restaurant's sales.



**Will Harmon** is a marketing associate at [BlueCart](#), an online and mobile ordering, inventory, and operations platform for the hospitality industry. When he's not busy being a social media guru and creating content, you can find him learning about procurement practices and up and coming restaurant trends.