

Pique Your Culinary Curiosity With These Trends

(Family Features) Forget the rules and restrictions. Today's food trends are about enjoyment and simplicity – from decadent flavors your taste buds can't wait to explore, to convenient packaging that makes it incredibly easy to eat no matter where or when you make time to dine.

Whether you're a foodie keeping tabs on the latest culinary trends or an everyday eater with a dose of culinary curiosity, these trends can give you something to chew on.

Unique Herbs & Spices

Most often associated with salad dressings and hummus as a flavor additive, tahini has stepped beyond just savory foods and has found its way into many new dishes, including desserts and cocktails. From ice cream and milkshakes to muffins, cookies and other baked goods, this toasted ground sesame seed spread used in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine can also be added as an alternative to nearly any dish that calls for peanut butter.

On The Go

For most people, a busy day is just part of the program. Even if you take your hectic lifestyle in stride, chances are it affects your eating habits to some extent. Fortunately, you're not alone, and conveniently packaged foods can make eating on the go tasty and enjoyable.

Ugly Eats

Save your judgment for someplace else; ugly produce is actually in vogue. A growing number of chefs and brands are promoting recipes made with ugly foods – usually produce that is perfectly useful and edible but likely to be overlooked at the store due to a physical imperfection.

Think oddly shaped tomatoes or a smaller melon than you might not normally choose.

Often those options are offered at a discount and it's a savvy way to reduce food waste.

Hot & Spicy

Palettes are growing ever-adventurous, and that means flavors that pack a strong punch are gaining traction. If you're not sure your taste buds are up to the challenge, try adding some spice to a familiar dish like rice or pasta.

For example, you can find a spicy take on Rice a Roni, Pasta Roni and Quaker Instant Grits with jalapeno cheddar varieties, which include cheddar cheese and real jalapeno bits that leave lingering heat. Include these as the perfect side for your next taco night or try it in place of mashed potatoes for an extra kick.

Move Over, Meat

Opting for more plant-based foods in place of meat no longer means forgoing those flavors and textures. While not a completely new trend, plant-based and blended burgers and sliders have become more mainstream and found places on menus at restaurants nationwide with more people (even non-vegans) searching for a break from meat or ways to add flavors like mushrooms into meals and snacks.

Salty-Sweet Flavors

Sweet-meets-salty combos are hardly new, but products featuring this blend are showing up in more and more places, including at the breakfast table. Sea salt is a perfect match for the sweetness of chocolate or caramel; it adds a rich depth of flavor that strikes a balance between too sweet or too salty.

Source: Quaker



Restaurant Spotlight



Husband and wife Roshan Balan and Kim Iyer of Jaipore Royal Indian Cuisine in Brewster.

Jaipore a Popular Spot for Indian Cuisine

By Holly Crocco

Jaipore Royal Indian Cuisine in Brewster has been serving traditional Indian cuisine to hungry diners from near and far for almost 27 years.

"We are passionate about food," said Roshan Balan, who manages the restaurant with his wife, Kamakshi (Kim) Iyer.

When the couple came to Jaipore five years ago, they didn't do any major renovation to the building. "Our customers like it the way it is because they feel very much at home," said Iyer.

They also kept Chef Malkit Singh on staff, who has been with Jaipore for 18 years. "He's so good at what he does, we just blindly trust him," said Balan.

"Some of the stuff he makes for the buffet is out of this world," added Iyer. "No one can make kadhhi pakora the way our chef can."

Jaipore offers a variety of

Indian-inspired meals, but specializes in traditional Indian cuisine. Balan explained that their dishes are blended in such a way that they can please the American palate, or the Indian palate.

"A lot of people think Indian food is spicy, but that's not always the case," said Iyer.

However, those seeking the traditional Indian kick can still get it at Jaipore.

Dishes range from the traditional chicken tikka masala to various lamb meals, to tandoori meat and vegetables, and a variety of vegetarian and vegan options.

Balan said their "famous" Sunday dinner brunch, as well as their daily lunch buffet, is a great opportunity for diners to sample a variety of traditional Indian street food and other offerings they may have been afraid to try.

"The buffet is what attracts everyone, mostly," said Balan.

And many of those diners keep coming back.

"Eighty percent of our customers are loyal customers," said Iyer. "They're like family to us."

"It's a destination spot, too," added Balan. He said there are many customers who travel between New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York who stop in for a meal.

Balan earned his bachelor of business administration degree in hospitality while in India and opened a restaurant in his home town. Although his mother encouraged him to go into the engineering field, Balan said he liked the culinary arts.

"This was my flare," he said.

In 1998, he began working for a cruise line.

Two years later he married Iyer, and the two managed a four-star restaurant in southern India. Balan eventually came to New York and was sponsored, and joined the staff at Chola in New York City as a waiter. He became a manager, and later took over management of other properties that were owned by the same group of investors that owned Chola – and about 20 other restaurants in the NYC area.

During this time, Iyer was still overseas, living in India and later Australia. "We had a long-distance relationship for more than 10 years," she explained.

In 2013, she finally joined her husband in New York.

In 2014, the couple decided to leave the metropolitan area and took over management of Jaipore, which was another property owned by the partners that opened back in 1993.

Balan and Iyer moved to Brewster with their children and have called the village home ever since. "After 17 years of marriage we got twins," said Iyer.

Jaipore is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week. It is located at 280 Route 22, Brewster (about a 1½ miles from Croton Falls Road). For more information call 845-227-3549 or visit www.jaiporenyc.com.

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