

mosaic

MORGAN STANLEY

The Latest Culinary Trends and Buzzwords

In a globalized gastronomic scene, every country's cuisine, produce, food fads and languages are open game. Here's a look at the terms that capture the year's most popular ingredients and techniques.

*By Brienne Walsh
Original photographs by Scott Semler*

Do you know what omakase is? What about umami and ube? Maybe you're the kind of connoisseur who already orders "fancy salt" and prepares seacuterie. In that case, you probably know that the culinary world constantly changes—sometimes in weird and wonderful directions.

The top food buzzwords of the moment help capture this evolution. With this guide, presented in alphabetical order, venture into a wave of new food experiences, and take a globe-trotting tour through a whole new world of inventive dining.





BIRRIA

Originating in Mexico, birria is a sweet, spicy and smoky meat stew that's traditionally served in tacos but is increasingly being added to sandwiches, pastas and nachos by top chefs. According to the National Restaurant Association, it's one of the hottest menu items of 2024.



BOBA

Made from tapioca starch (and generally a sweetener like brown sugar), boba are a Taiwanese invention widely used in boba tea, or “bubble tea,” around the world. (The boba are those little tasty balls floating in your beverage.) Now boba are also being used as a flavor in treats, such as cookies and candies.

BREADFRUIT

Harvested from a tree in the mulberry family, breadfruit is a round fruit that's being more widely seen in high-end restaurants. Its innards, which can taste nutty, sweet or like artichoke hearts depending on the ripeness, are used as a potato substitute across Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean. Breadfruit tree cultivation could also expand into the southeast United States.

BUCKWHEAT

In this era of responsible consumption, buckwheat, which is generally grown as a cover crop to replenish soil, has become more popular. Whole Foods trend forecasters predicted that this nutritious ingredient—used in soba noodles and baking—would be among the most popular “superfoods” of the year.

CACAO PULP

To make chocolate less wasteful, brands are increasingly making products with cacao pulp, the white marshmallow-like substance that surrounds cacao seeds (and is usually discarded). Expect to see cacao pulp jellies, jams and sugar alternatives on grocery store shelves.

CALAMANSI

Naturally very sour, calamansi is a small citrus fruit (similar to a lime) popular in Filipino cuisine. It can be used in a wide variety of products, including beverages, condiments and chocolates.

DRY AGING

The dry aging process traditionally sees large cuts of beef hung up to mature in temperature-controlled environments. This helps them develop flavor and become more tender. Recently, more chefs have begun to experiment with dry aging other foodstuffs, including lamb, duck, fish and even vegetables.

FANCY FAUX FISH

Following the recent surge in sales of caviar and tinned fish, Whole Foods predicted that fancy faux fish—such as plant-based snow crab and salmon—would have a moment this year to accommodate vegan diets and assuage environmental concerns.

FANCY SALT

It's no longer enough to have a pinch of salt in your dish. According to Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants' annual *Culinary + Cocktail Trend Forecast*, sophisticated diners want to use colored “salt with a story,” such as black Hawaiian salt, kala namak, Persian blue salt, Celtic salt and fleur de sel.

FIG LEAVES

If eaten straight off the tree, fig leaves would taste like, well, leaves. But when toasted, they yield a mildly sweet, coconut-like flavor. In 2024, they're being combined with oils, dairy products and syrups for mousses, curries, pastries and other delights.

FUNCTIONAL WATER

As attested to by the #watertok trend on TikTok as well as the popularity of the Stanley tumbler, consumers are interested in fun and creative ways to drink...water. The National Restaurant Association predicted that functional waters—which include natural and artificial additives that may enhance focus, improve stamina, help gut health and ease inflammation—would join flat and fizzy options in restaurants this year.

HOT PEPPERS

Scorpion peppers, guajillo and Tajín, oh my! Not only are the sales of hot sauces climbing, but unusual hot peppers from around the world—including Hungarian goathorn peppers and Calabrian chilis—are being used in surprising places, such as bottled drinks and condiments. Biquinho peppers in particular (native to Brazil and typically served as a bar snack) are one of the top peppers to try in 2024.

HWACHAE

Trendy on TikTok (likely due to its pink color), hwachae is a traditional Korean punch typically made from watermelon, fruit cocktail, lemon-lime soda and strawberry milk.

KRILL MEAT

Consumers in 2024 are concerned about both sustainability and putting good food in their bodies. Enter krill meat, made from a type of marine crustacean and sold in cans (like sardines). It has many health benefits and can be harvested with fewer disruptions to marine environments than other seafood.



MEAL-FLAVORED COCKTAILS

Would you try a cocktail that tastes like a Waldorf salad or drink a Caprese martini? Well, these meal-flavored cocktails and others are appearing at some restaurants, and *The New York Times* said that “drinks that taste like specific dishes will proliferate.” Apparently you can now *drink* your dinner. Sort of.

MENUDO TONKOTSU RAMEN

A crossover dish that blends Japanese and Mexican cooking, menudo tonkotsu ramen consists of a traditional bowl of ramen mixed with menudo, a Mexican stew made with beef stomach and sometimes hominy and pig’s feet.

MILK TEA

Technically any beverage that consists of tea and milk, milk tea is being used as a flavor in snacks, including popcorn and doughnuts.



OMAKASE

Directly translated to “I leave it up to you,” omakase is a menu-less Japanese dining experience where the chef (whom you are face-to-face with throughout) chooses your meal for you in the moment. Omakase is most often offered at sushi restaurants and includes delicious, seasonal ingredients.

RAMBUTAN

This prickly red fruit native to Southeast Asia looks like a sea urchin and tastes like a lychee. According to a recent market report, its popularity is expected to rise in the United States in the coming years.

SAKE

Imports of Japanese sake, a fermented rice drink served in Japan for about 2,000 years, more than doubled in the United States between 2012 and 2022, leading to hopes that U.S.-owned sake breweries will continue to multiply this year and beyond—much like craft breweries did recently.

SALSA MACHA

A paste of dried chile peppers, garlic, nuts and seeds cooked in hot oil, salsa macha is a flavorful Mexican condiment listed as an “ingredient to watch” in Kimpton’s trend report.

SEACUTERIE

Just like a charcuterie board only made with seafood instead of meat, seacuterie boards typically include tinned, smoked and even pickled fish, along with sides like cheese, vegetables and crackers. Yum!

SHRIMP TOAST

This Chinese appetizer usually consists of a paste of minced shrimp and seasoning spread on bread and pan-fried like grilled cheese. Shrimp toast is gaining attention on TikTok, a sure sign of cultural currency.

SOTOL

An earthy cousin to tequila that is described as tasting brighter than mezcal, sotol is liquor from the “desert spoon” shrub commonly found in the Chihuahuan desert. The long rise in agave prices may have helped sotol gain a bigger foothold in the market.

TAMARIND

Native to Africa, tamarind grows in tropical environments and has a complex mixture of sweet and sour flavors that makes it perfect for cocktails, desserts, candies and curries. McCormick, the spice brand, declared tamarind the flavor of the year.



UBE

A purple root vegetable long cultivated in the Philippines, ube has a more subtle sweetness than sweet potatoes. Used both for its taste and its extraordinary color, ube is now a popular ingredient in ice creams, macarons and doughnuts, and makes an appearance in more surprising places too—such as hamburger buns.

UMAMI

The fifth basic taste—the others are sweet, sour, salty and bitter—umami is the savory flavor most commonly found in foods like cooked meat, cheese, mushrooms, soy and ripe tomatoes.

UNIQUE SNACKS

Snacks have always been a key part of life, but this between-meal opportunity has become bigger and more trendy than ever. Innovators are collaborating with brands to bring new flavors and ingredients to market—such as the shawarma crunchwrap, the Taco Bell x Milk Bar truffles, French’s Mustard Skittles, Pringles and caviar, and Lay’s potato chips flavored with roasted curry lamb skewers.

WAFU-ITALIAN

Wafu is a Japanese term that means “Japanese-style.” Wafu-Italian, broadly, is Japanese interpretations of Italian food and includes dishes such as meatballs with soy sauce and seaweed and mushroom pasta.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the various authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Morgan Stanley. The information contained herein has been obtained from sources outside of Morgan Stanley, and Morgan Stanley makes no representations or guarantees as to the accuracy or completeness of information or data from sources outside of Morgan Stanley. Morgan Stanley is not responsible for the information and data contained in this magazine. Neither the information provided nor any opinion expressed constitutes a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any security, product or investment.