

The Best Food Trends of 2015



Cupcakes are still vastly overrated and the grip of juicing had morphed into a spin-off, [souping](#). But at Paste Food, we like to focus on the positive. This year offered some intriguing trends, many of them further developments of long-stewing groundswells. Here's what we got excited about.

The True Potential of Canned Bean Juice Is Discovered, Then Embraced

The gloppy liquid drained off from a can of beans turns out to be the holy grail of vegan baking: a decent substitute for egg whites. To make it sound more appetizing, American software engineer Goose Wohlt coined the term “aquafaba.” We're not so hot about that name either, but that's probably splitting hairs. Sure, canned bean juice won't save the world, but this small and delightfully thrifty discovery is a bright spot for anyone who's ever cursed the gluey results you get from a box of that powdered Ener-G egg replacer crap. As a huge bonus, you can use canned bean juice—er, aquafaba—as an emulsifier in this surprisingly good DIY Earth Balance-esque buttery spread shared in the [Washington Post](#). So much suddenly realized potential for a liquid I used to just dump on my dog's food! (Sara Bir)

More People Use Exciting Whole-Grain and Alternative Flours

I am so excited that people are finally waking up to the fact that using plain all-purpose white flour is entirely boring. Not to mention, not very nutritious. There are so many recipes employing all kinds of whole grains and flours, from rye to spelt, and it's nice to see these more and more ancient grains making a comeback, not to mention, that often these grains are grown and milled locally, which is revolutionizing the artisan baking industry. (Anna Brones)

Euro-Style Yogurts Take Over the Dairy Aisle

Yogurt used to be considered a blah food here in the US, something to add lots of convoluted flavors and artificial sweeteners to. A few years ago, Greek yogurt took the American food world by storm, and since then, other European countries have popped their heads up, bringing the States a taste of [their take on the dairy product](#). Bulgarian, Swiss, French, even Icelandic yogurts have all grown increasingly popular. Trader Joe's offers its own, general “European Yogurt,” which is creamier and sweeter than their “just yogurt” line. These in turn have opened the palate to milk kefir, a drinkable cultured dairy product similar to yogurt that hails from Eastern Europe, and brings a distinctly sour and light taste. (Madina Papadopoulos)

Edible Insects Move Closer to the Mainstream

From Chapul, the cricket power bar that took on *Shark Tank*, to the slow ascension of cricket flours like [Bitty's](#) (Paleo-friendly, use cup-for-cup instead of all-purpose wheat flour), the public's general "eww" attitude to entomophagy has decreased drastically in a relatively short time.

[Eating bugs](#), at least the kind that come in fancy packages, ain't cheap, but perhaps that will change. We hear insects are not in short supply on this planet. (Sara Bir)

Frozen Food Goes Gourmet

Millennials are some of the biggest consumers, yet more also very conscious of what they consume. Their influence on brands is huge, and the grocery store is not immune to their effects. In an effort to please the customers with little time but a high standard, [gourmet frozen food products](#) have been growing. Most notably, gourmet frozen shops like [Babeth's Feast](#) have popped up, which even offers frozen delivery. Sam's Club has offered frozen appetizers and meals for a long time, while Trader Joe's and Whole Foods upped the ante. (Madina Papadopoulos)

Jackfruit Becomes an Unprocessed Meat Analogue Power Player

It puts all the soy meat and seitan to shame. Jackfruit is the new veggie meat. I've seen it in Indian curries and as grilled "carnitas" in tacos a lot lately (LA's [Plant Food for People](#) food truck does them right. ¡Qué rico!) Great for anyone sick of soy and seitan. (Shawna Kenney)



High-Profile Restaurants Ditch Tipping

The concept of no tipping at restaurants hit a fever pitch this year, when Joe's Crab Shack became the first full-service chain to try it out, and when famous New York [restaurateur Danny Meyer](#) eliminated tipping at 13 of his NYC restaurants, including some rather fancy ones. The idea—a controversial one in the industry—is to pay the waitstaff a living wage, but this also entails raising menu prices. Even though patrons aren't supposed to tip, sometimes they still do. At no-tipping eatery Casa Nueva in Athens, Ohio, they donate those unwanted tips to charity. I hope and think in 2016 more restaurants will follow suit, as we need a more egalitarian approach to dining. (Garin Pirnia)

Drinking Hot Water Picks Up Steam

Nothing steeped in it. Nothing dissolved in it. Nope, just plain ol' water, except heated. A bunch of woo-woo health and wellness websites endorse drinking hot water as a way to lose weight and improve digestion. Whatever—hydration is hydration. I like hot water because it really hits the spot when you want to ingest *something*, but nothing splashy. Ahh, neutrality. (Sara Bir)

Vegan Cheese Is No Longer a Butt of Jokes

There are [so many damn good vegan cheeses](#) out there now that it's hard to keep up. No need for the old hummus-like homemade stuff anymore with products like Miyoko's artisanal wheels, Daiya-topped frozen pizzas, and the vegan truffle brie from Vromage vegan cheese shop in Los Angeles, just to name a few. (Shawna Kenney)

Food Waste Is Seen as a Lucrative Stream of Income and Nourishment

The food that goes into US landfills accounts for 40 percent of solid waste. And most of that is at the consumer level (hint: [us](#)). But businesses are leading the way in choosing not to squander food—by realizing that when you throw away food, you are throwing away money. This year, people gobbled up news stories about [the supermarket in France that sells ugly food](#), and many [high-profile chefs](#) embraced root-to-leaf cooking or hosted one-off dinners at their restaurants to not only shed light on the issue of food waste, but let what's otherwise seen as trim and excess push their creative boundaries. Manufacturers are making inroads, too. For example, companies are [processing the parts of coffee cherries that don't end up in coffee beans](#) into nutrient-packed juices and flours. The moral implications of food waste—that it represents a thankless, lazy mindset—are being eclipsed by the financial bottom line: ultimately, the less food goes into landfills, the bigger the profit margin. Whatever it takes, this shift is a very a good thing. (Sara Bir)

Really Roasted Stuff Makes a Splash on Restaurant Menus

2015 was the year of roasted and charred vegetables, cooked at a high heat until the edges are [practically burnt](#). This year I saw charred dishes like artichokes, heirloom carrots, Brussels sprouts and more, all with a deep, smokey flavor as if they were cooked over an open flame. It's rustic cooking at its best. (Laurel Randolph)

Big Food Phases Out Preservatives and Artificial Colors

This one's a little tricky. In 2015, it seemed every week a different food manufacturer announced it was going to phase out preservatives and artificial colors, and people would cheer. Why are companies doing this, after years of plugging their mass-produced, iconic foods with ingredients no one could recognize? It's because the public demanded it. Companies are listening because they have to if they want to survive. Even so, preservative-free [Fruit Loops](#) and Hot Pockets are still packed with processed fats and refined sugars and flour—in other words, they're not nutrient-dense. They remain sometimes foods, not things that should be staples of our daily diets, and this “greenwashing” of processed food is at once encouraging and worrisome. Will it change how we eat, or is it just lip service, a symbolic gesture? (Sara Bir)

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