

## The Hottest Trends for 2008

**Andrew Freeman & Co. (AF&Co.)**, a leading hospitality and restaurant consulting firm, released its 2008 Trend Watch list. Tapping into the pulse of the hospitality and restaurant marketplace for the coming year, the Trend Watch lists the top restaurant/bar and top hotel trends to expect in the New Year.

Top trends for restaurants and bars range from artisan salt selections to Izakaya bar menus; chefs growing their own gardens, and cupcakes moving from kids plates to adult menus. Top hotel trends include the rise of smallish boho-chic hotels, to the introduction of interesting "get frisky" packages for feline pets.

Industry veteran **Andrew Freeman** said of the 2008 trends to watch, "*Today, the modern diner and traveler expect a more personalized and fun approach to their experiences from the bar to the hotel suite.*" Freeman continues, "*Savvy guests are up on all of the trends and expect to be wowed. They desire unique and one of a kind offerings.*" He continued to say that now more than ever, guests make their choices based on great word-of-mouth and social networking online buzz. From the marketing standpoint, the biggest trend of the year is that giving back is essential-and both restaurants and hotels are partnering more with charitable organizations that align with their values, benefit their communities and make good business sense.

**May I Take Your Order Please. . . Catering, Restaurant & Bar Trends Saline Solution**  
Artisan Salt: fleur de sel, sel gris, Hawaiian pink, Himalayan black; even smoked salt has appeared in dishes from tuna tartar to salted caramel ice cream.

### **The Aussie Invasion**

OZ has arrived. Well beyond wine imports, menus are loading up with Aussie olive oil, honey, fruit pastes, and seafood.

### **The Lounge Around**

More full-scale dining room menus and innovative bar menus are being offered in the lounge and bars. Now, guests can relax, order as much or as little as they like, and be casual as friends come and go.

### **Small Plates Go Global**

From Japanese Izakaya, Indian Chaat, Middle Eastern Mezze to Spanish Tapas, the small plates craze keeps going and growing in every kind of restaurant concept across the country.

### **Artisans in Residence**

From house-made salumi like prosciutto, sausage, coppa, salami, mortadella to house-cured olives. Chefs take more pride in making everything in-house. You say salumi, I say salami.

### **Blooming Chefs**

Chefs with a green thumb are growing their produce, usually organic, on their own farms, behind their restaurants, or on rooftop gardens. You can't get more local than this.

### **The Cupcake Revolution**

From delicious cupcakes with buttercream frosting to homemade twinkies and old-fashioned butterscotch puddings, nostalgic desserts remain a favorite. Now many are garnished with retro treats like Pop Rocks and Caramel Corn.

### **That Size Fits You Perfectly**

Dishes now come in small, medium, and large portions to satisfy a wide range of tastes and appetites. The entrée as we know it is not going away, but size does matter.

### **Fine Dining Re-Defined**

Diners still crave four-star cuisine and service, only now they want these experiences in more relaxed settings.

### **I Can Get It For You Retail**

Fine dining goes retail. Like that pasta or hand-crafted teapot? Today, even the best places have To-go sections or catalogs.

### **Sweet Says Hello to Savory**

Caramel with foie gras, sorbet in your soup, salt on desserts, and truly tangy frozen yogurts - sweet and savory join forces with delicious results.

### **Extreme Green**

Obeying the mantra of SOL food (seasonal, organic and local) is almost the norm. Now, restaurants are going completely sustainable with biodegradable disposable tableware, eco-conscious cleaners and a suite of green business practices.

### **Sexy Unisex Bathrooms**

Please put the seat down when you're done. Unisex bathrooms are popping up in hot restaurants, bars and lounges across the country. Will this be the end of long lines for the ladies?

### **It's A Split Decision**

A range of wine service options: by the glass, the bottle, the 2 oz. taste, even the quartino. Quaffers have plenty of choices now. Still can't decide? Split the difference and get the half bottle.

### **99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall**

Gastro-pubs with dedicated beer lists, featuring special brews, house-made drafts and hard-to-find ales are all the rage. Adding to the experience are custom glassware selections and special pairing menus.

### **Reaching Beyond Riesling**

Gruener Veltliner and Blaufrankisch. These wines from Germany and Austria (and others from beyond) may be tough to pronounce, but they are easy to drink and pair. Will we be Hungary for more next year?

### **Bar None**

The chef's new signature dish - bar snacks. Homemade pretzels, paprika tossed nuts and hand-rolled sesame sticks take the place of stale popcorn and keep guests reaching for more.

### **Shaken, Stirred, Muddled and Organic**

Bar chef/mixologists get more creative with hand-crafted one-of-a-kind organic cocktails utilizing fresh fruit, herbs, spices, vegetable purees, house-made syrups, and innovative infusions. More and more bars now have a selection of organic beverage options.

The trend list was developed by **AF&Co.**, from a combination of close industry observation, coast-to-coast travel, discussions with industry experts, meetings with hotel and restaurant clients, press contacts, conferences attended and media sources. During 2007, the **AF&Co.** consultants traveled 100,800 miles, ate 1,092 restaurant meals, produced 6 restaurant openings and 4 hotel launches and finally, slept for a total of 210 nights in hotels.