

## Baking, Kale And Sauces Reign Supreme In 2013

Lois Abraham, The Canadian Press

TORONTO (Canadian Press) — When it comes to food, everyone is always looking for the next hot thing to try.

Trend watchers with their taste buds on the pulse of the leading-edge culinary trends offer up five ideas — techniques and ingredients — you might want to experiment with in 2013.

### 1. Baking is in vogue.

More people are trying their hands at baking, inspired in part by a plethora of shows like "Sugar Stars," "Bake with Anna Olson" and "Cupcake Wars."

Yet there are people reticent to take on the challenge.

"And for good reason," says Dana McCauley, a judge on Food Network Canada's reality competition show "Recipes to Riches." "You do have to measure when you bake and so if you've not been taught the basics of measuring and if you don't have the appropriate baking tools it's not going to work.

"But it's not that difficult either."

People who don't bake but want to try are turning to kits, which contain all that's needed to make everything from cupcakes to gingerbread houses to smores.

"It shows that baking's gone from being something you just do because you want something sweet and into the realm of macrame and knitting," says McCauley. "It's become project based."

Alison Fryer, owner of The Cookbook Store in Toronto, says she's seeing fewer general baking books. Instead, books devoted to single topics such as marshmallows, doughnuts, cupcakes and so on are populating the shelves.

### 2. The lowly doughnut is elevated.

Doughnuts aren't just the old-fashioned sugar-sprinkled or glazed pieces of deep-fried dough with a hole in the middle any longer — though of course those are still available. These sweet morsels are yet another iconic food that has undergone a makeover, with unusual flavour combinations and decorations, and are even served at upscale restaurants.

"It's kind of ironic because Tim Hortons got out of their core business being coffee and doughnuts to become a restaurant and now everybody wants doughnuts," said McCauley, who is also responsible for new product innovation for the frozen foods

company Janes Family Foods.

Glory Hole in Toronto, which advertises its doughnuts as being "handmade with love," offers pretzel, bread and butter, and beer flavours in addition to sweet choices.

"Doughnuts might be the new macarons," said trend watcher Christine Couvelier of Culinary Concierge, adding they fall into other categories she's keeping an eye on: small bites with a big taste (people can have a tasty indulgence without consuming a large portion) and they can be sold from food trucks, which are popping up everywhere.

Macarons, the pretty pastel confectionery with a crunchy meringue shell and a soft centre, didn't take off as much as people thought they would.

"They're certainly here, but they are more sophisticated and they almost always contain nuts, so that again makes them less mainstream," McCauley says. "Plus they're harder to make. They're much more labour intensive than rolling out some dough, cutting a hole in it and tossing it in a deep fryer."

Cupcakes have mainstreamed. "You literally can't avoid a cupcake shop these days," McCauley says.

### 3. Kale and hearty

Nutrient-rich kale is hip and getting hipper, say several trend watchers.

The vegetable appears on blogs and is even the sole subject of a cookbook, "The Book of Kale: The Easy-to-Grow Superfood" by Sharon Hanna (Harbour Publishing).

Dana Speers, executive chef for President's Choice test kitchen in Brampton, Ont., says the company is looking at selling baby kale. "It's a tender version of the big leafy green kale. It looks like baby arugula and it's great in salads."

Until then, she offers a tip for preparing large kale leaves for use in salads: Massage the entire leaf with a little oil, then chop it. "It is so delicious."

### 4. Sauce it up

The fermented Korean red sauce known as gochujang that goes on the dish bibimbap could be the new sriracha, McCauley muses. She thinks we're going to see more of the savoury gochujang, which isn't as hot as sriracha.

She's seen some recipes lately that call for gochujang and don't give alternates, "which is a sign that in that real hard-core foodie world they're starting to think that you should have it on hand."

Dilute it with sesame oil and soy sauce for a great dipping sauce for spring rolls, she suggests.

Figs are lending a Mediterranean tangy sweetness to condiments, spreads and jams.

McCauley drizzled a fig-based mixture over a whole cheese, topped it with berries and served it with crackers and it was a huge hit at a party she hosted. "It was so simple. I didn't have any time to prepare and yet it looked as if I had this elegant appetizer."

A heightened interest in South American cuisine has caused a resurgence in the Argentinian chimichurri sauce, said Couvelier. It's ideal with grilled meats.

The traditional Spanish sauce escabeche generally consists of capers, raisins, olive oil, shallots, garlic and sherry vinegar and can top fish, sardines and salads. "It's a vinaigrette, it's a sauce, it's fantastic," says Speers.

A Sicilian version, which is a bit sweeter and thicker, is called agrodolce. It also complements fish or octopus. The eight-armed sea creature is another big food trend for 2013.

### 5. Molecular gastronomy for the masses

The modern style of cooking known as molecular gastronomy, practised by scientists and food professionals in labs and professional kitchens, is trickling down to the home cook.

This is no doubt spurred by the former chief technology officer for Microsoft, Nathan Myhrvold, who last year published the hefty six-volume "Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking" and has turned his attention to the home cook with this fall's slimmer "Modernist Cuisine at Home."

For those who want to get a toehold into the modernist cuisine movement without buying any special equipment, McCauley offers this tip from a demonstration she saw Myhrvold do.

"Take a bottle of red wine and instead of decanting it super gently what he does — and I've done it a few times as a party trick now and it's so much fun — is he takes and just dumps the bottle into the blender and he puts it on at high speed, lets the foam dissipate for a couple of minutes and then pours it.

"Of course people are like, 'Oh my God, what are you doing to this \$40 bottle of wine?' But it's perfectly decanted because the whole idea of decanting is to get air into the wine.

"So if you're going to try something next year, pull out a good bottle of wine, run it through your blender and be surprised at how fantastic it is."

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