

The wild food trends of 2015

Game and foraged ingredients join the versatile cauliflower on 2015's tasting menus

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Clocking the major culinary trends in the year ahead would be impossible if chefs were genuine artists, given to mysterious bouts of isolated creativity. But, fortunately—at least for the purposes of this column—the culinary world actually functions much more like that of fashion.

Which is to say that the popularity of butter, cream and lobster rises and falls, just like hemlines. Completely new ideas come around far less often than the familiar past gets an invigorating tweak. And, thanks to TV and Instagram, when something successfully original really does land on the runways or plates of Paris or New York, barely a month will pass before the cheap knockoff conveniently materializes at your local Joe Fresh, Earls or Cactus Club.

So, on the what's-old-is-new-again front, take note that the tasting menu is making a dramatic comeback. Five or six years ago, diners' budding fatigue with the hyper-expensive, three- or four-hour experience of the *menu dégustation*, combined with belt-tightening during the recession, dealt this high-end dining format a near-death blow. But a few stubborn hangers-on ([Hawksworth](#) restaurant in Vancouver and Toqué! in Montreal) kept the tradition alive. Now, new practitioners are reinvigorating the format with an unpretentious approach.

Versatility is the spur. [Jamie Oliver](#) makes cauliflower risotto. While in Hong Kong, the Calgarian chef at a restaurant called Yardbird put a Korean spin on it, battering and deep-frying florets, then lending them heat and sweetness to arrive at something they call KFC (Korean fried cauliflower)—which spawned imitators from Vancouver ([Hawksworth](#)) to Toronto (Thoroughbred Food and Drink). But the one I find most fun is the whole, roasted head that Anthony Rose serves up at Fat Pasha, cradled like a brain on a plate, sprinkled with pomegranate seeds and oozing tahini, stabbed with a steak knife, *Walking Dead* style.