

THE FOOD FRONTIER

TREND SPOTTING ON SAN FRANCISCO MENUS

The city by the bay is also the city by the vineyard, the orchard, the vegetable plot and the family-run farm. There is such a bounty of fresh produce surrounding San Francisco — and such demand from an informed, food-passionate public — that it's only natural that San Francisco led the delicious farm-to-table approach that has since swept the country's culinary capitals.

Now San Francisco restaurants are on to the next food frontiers, so keep your eye out for these new trends that are popping up as San Francisco's chefs strive to keep things fresh and interesting.

EXTRAORDINARY ECO-EFFORTS



While restaurants all over the world are jumping on the green bandwagon by composting, recycling and using locally sourced ingredients, San Francisco restaurants are already on to the second wave of green innovations. Take Scoma's Restaurant, which collects and filters its used vegetable oil to fuel their company vehicle and for

donation to the Golden Gate Bridge's maintenance trucks and equipment. Or Salt House, which utilizes a wine-on-tap system, rather than opening dozens of bottles each evening. Then there are the restaurants such as Spruce and Poggio's that have taken "locavore" to new levels by cultivating their own gardens. At peak growing times, 75 percent of Spruce's food comes from its own garden. For more information on green restaurants in San Francisco, visit onlyinsanfrancisco.com/green.

GRAB-AND-GO GOURMET



Always the trendsetter when it comes to San Francisco dining movements, the Mission District has seen the recent emergence of several food carts selling...how do we say?...*not* your typical street food. Magic Curry Man, Sexy Soup Lady, Crème Brulee Cart (shown left), SF Cookies and other grab-and-

go gourmet carts have joined more traditional *carteros* and are promoting themselves via Twitter to let fans know their daily whereabouts, flavors and special deals. The first annual San Francisco Street Food Festival in 2009 was a rousing indication of this city's love for such movable feasts.

Quick-bite hot spots on our radar outside the Mission include: Happy Belly's imaginatively topped hot dogs in Golden Gate Park, sandwiches from the Warming Hut in Crissy Field (can't beat the view) and Little Skillet, delicious Southern food served from a window in SOMA.



Nibble on San Francisco's food news. Read our food blog at onlyinsanfrancisco.com/taste/foodie411.

SURPRISING INGREDIENTS

In the skilled hands of San Francisco chefs, unexpected ingredients are going from a skeptical "hmmm" to a resounding "mmm." Here are just a few worth noting:

DOUGLAS FIR TIPS

Each spring, Douglas firs sprout new growth at the end of their branches. These "tips" hold a high level of sugar, making them a sweet yet pungent and aromatic addition to oils, dressings, rubs and garnishes. Daniel Patterson, chef and owner of Coi, insists there's a "delicate, ethereal note of mandarin orange" to them.

NO ORDINARY EGGS

Duck, quail, pheasant, ostrich and emu eggs are gaining popularity for their various flavors, textures and appearances. Even chicken eggs are going gourmet. Eggs from Soul Food Farm in Vacaville fetch up to \$7-8 a dozen for their unique, slightly herbal flavor. The taste, favored by chefs across the city, is attributed to the fact that hens are free to roam 20 acres of pasture, eating organic grass and grains as they wander.

LEAF-WRAPPED CHEESES

Artisanal cheese-making has soared to new heights in San Francisco. Chefs love to experiment with new cheeses, and ones that are wrapped in leaves are a new trend we've spotted recently. The leaves impart subtle flavors (and dress them up a bit). Recently seen examples are Andante Dairy's Figaro cheese, wrapped in fig leaves soaked in white wine, and Cowgirl Creamery's St. Pat cheese, wrapped in stinging nettle leaves, adding a smoky, artichoke flavor.

PURSLANE

Often considered a garden weed, this nutrient-packed plant is gracing salads, soups, fish and poultry with its slightly salty, crunchy presence.

SOY SAUCE CRYSTALS

Soy sauce is fermented for years in cedar vats to create these light and flaky salt crystals. The city's fusion chefs are going mad for them, sprinkling them on everything from seafood to vegetables in order to bring out the flavors.



OVERHEARD ON *twitter*

@NoReservations: If you want more info on any of the places Tony visited in San Francisco they are listed here: [#bourdain](http://bit.ly/J51Ju)

Q&A WITH ANNIE SOMERVILLE



Annie Somerville, long-time chef at Greens Restaurant, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, raised the profile of vegetarian fine dining to a national level — long before vegetarian dishes were commonplace on menus. She took a moment to dish with us about cooking and dining in San Francisco.

Q. What about San Francisco inspires your cooking?
A. It's just such a rich environment in so many ways. We are surrounded by amazing farmland and microclimates. We have a Mediterranean climate, which means we are able to eat well year-round. And there are also a lot of really talented people. We're very spoiled here, and we know it.

Q. Why do you think San Francisco has such a thriving culinary culture?
A. San Francisco has always been a boom town (think of San Francisco during the Gold Rush). In a sense, the wealth of wonderful ingredients that are available are what have made it a booming culinary city.
Q. What changes or trends have you cur-

rently noticed in the San Francisco dining scene?
A. I think it has to do with the economy and everything being a little shaken up, but mobile food and food carts are on the rise. Places where people can go and grab a quick bite or have a very casual dining experience are also thriving. Food is on the move right now.



Find the full interview and a sample recipe at onlyinsanfrancisco.com/somerville.