

# The top 10 local food trends of the year

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As the clock ticks down to New Year's Eve, it is time to reflect on the many meals devoured this year and digest all the changes that have been bubbling over the edges of Vancouver's culinary hotpot. For its final course of 2011, The Dish serves up the year's top 10 local food trends.

## Neapolitan Pizza

That's amore! After an eternity of subsisting on greasy buck-a-slice, Vancouver exploded with thin-crust Italian pizzerias. Tear into authentic Neapolitan wood-fired pies at Nici Antica, The Bibò, Novo and Via Tevere (opening shortly) or feast on their blistered gas-baked paesanos at Pizzeria Marina, Verace, Campagnolo Roma and Pizzeria Barbarella (the last also opening soon). Hands down, this is our favourite trend of the year.

## Brunch

Weekend mornings were once the domain of such energetic pursuits as biking, hiking and jogging around the seawall. But the city has slid fast and hard into the lazy ritual of brunching the midday away. Notable newcomers include Hawksworth and Tableau for haute hotel breakfasting; The Flying Pig and Oakwood Canadian Bistro for hearty maple-syrup-drenched classics; Jethro's Fine Grub and The Waldorf for globally inspired fare (Cajun omelettes and Mexican molletes, respectively); and Red Wagon Café for to-die-for pulled-pork pancakes.

## Boutique Butcher Shops

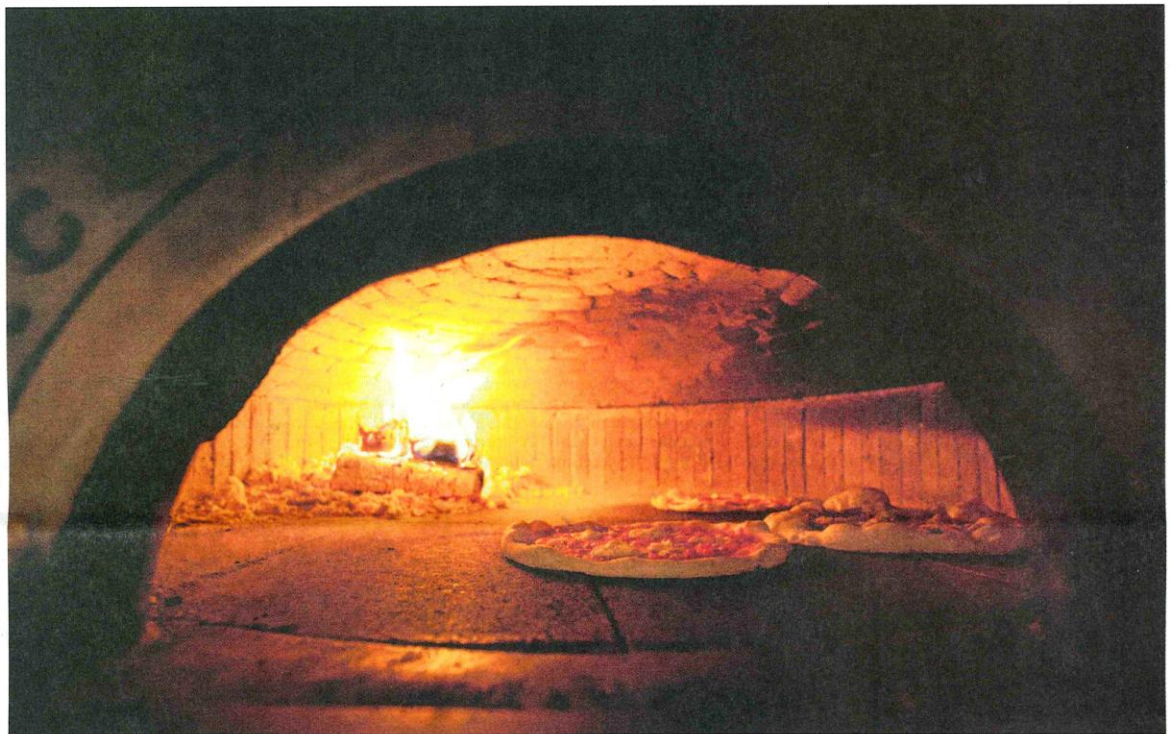
The lost art of butchery is back. A new breed of young, independent, hipster butchers are bucking shrink-wrapped meat and catering to our appetite for sustainability. You will find local pork, naturally raised duck, grass-finished beef and all sorts of odd bits carved from whole carcasses at The Honest Butcher, Pete's Meats, Save on Meats, Big Lou's and Pasture to Plate. Are these happy-animal cuts worth their premium prices? Stay tuned. We'll be reviewing the fresh herd very shortly.

## Seafood Rising

What style of restaurant does Vancouver lack? Seafood, shockingly enough. Sure, we have several high-end eateries that specialize in dainty morsels of richly glazed sablefish and Dungeness crab panna cotta, and no shortage of sushi. But it's still difficult to find a plain piece of simply grilled fish in this town. Finally, the tide appears to be turning with the opening of an indoor Go Fish, the new seafood focus at YEW in the Four Seasons Hotel and the rebranding of Goldfish Seafood and Chops.

## Unsung Ocean Dwellers

One cannot live on wild salmon alone. So the surge of uncommon yet sustainable local seafood is a welcome evolution. Vancouver Island octopus has been receiving lots of well-deserved regional love (fried into mirin-marinated chips at Boneta, tossed in lemon-mint yogurt at Ulla in Victoria and served thinly sliced over piperade at Goldfish



The Nici Antica is one of several local restaurants that offered up delicious Neapolitan pizzas. LAURA LEYSHON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Seafood lovers were happy to see an indoor version of Go Fish open this year. LAURA LEYSHON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

and Sonora Resort). Fraser River white sturgeon, farmed at Sechelt's Target Marine Hatchery, is a terrific new byproduct of Northern Divine caviar.

Although notoriously difficult to cook, the tough fish was smoked into tender submission at Fraiche and succulently cooked Sicilian-style at Cioppino's.

## Hand-Held Lunch

Is this a food truck spinoff? Gourmet and classic sandwich shops have been popping up faster than a toaster oven. In Gastown, Notturna Paninoteca fills rustic ciabatta with grappa-poached pear and caramelized fig, while Nelson the Seagull features a daily carnivore and herbivore on freshly baked bread. Downtown, Bel Café layers soft butternut squash and Asian pear between multigrain, Dunn's Famous piles Montreal smoked meat sky high on rye and The American Cheese-steak Co. specializes in traditional Philly subs.

## Sweet Stuff

Move over, Thomas Haas. Vancouver's legendary purveyor of chocolates and pastries has begun facing some smooth competition. Most noteworthy is Thierry and its dazzling array of French baked goods.

But there is also Faubourg (fantastic croissants), Betas (exquisite chocolate confections), Bel Café (avant-garde black sesame macarons) and the quirky rise of pop-up sweet shops in fashion stores (Kitchening with Carly in Holt Renfrew and Cocolico by Wendy Boys at LYNNSteven Boutique).

## Barrel-Aged Cocktails

The hottest international cocktail craze rolled onto our shores, with Clive's Classic Lounge in Victoria being the first to jump on the bandwagon. Closer to home, we sipped a smoky negroni at the Fairmont Pacific Rim lobby lounge and an oak-mellowed martinez at L'Abattoir.

## The New Naturalism

Vancouver has long been an epicentre of local eating, seasonal cooking, heirloom vegetables and heritage breeds. But a new tribe of hunter-gathering chefs is adopting the old-fashioned practices of foraging (Swallow Tail Supper Club's Robin Kort), canning (Edible Canada's Jennifer Dodd) and crusting meat in vegetable ash (Fraiche's Jefferson Alvarez).

## Critter Cuisine

Insects do not appear on many local menus. Actually, there is only one dish we know of – roasted cricket Indian-style pizza at Rangoli. Still, this alternative green protein puts us on the cutting edge of entomophagy, singled out by the Huffington Post as one of the biggest talked-about food trends of 2011. And now that Rangoli is cultivating edible grasshoppers and mealworms, you can bet we haven't tasted our last creepy crawly.

## WEST COAST WINES



### CedarCreek Ehrenfelser 2010, BC VQA Okanagan Valley \$18.90

Resolve to get out of your wine drinking rut and taste some unknown (or uncommon) varietals. (Why not aim for one a month?) A good starting point would be CedarCreek's high-acid Ehrenfelser, made from the fruit of 25-year-old vines. This German grape is a rare cross between Riesling and Silvaner, and now becomes better wine in British Columbia than in its land of origin. It's a wonderful food-friendly grape that complements a variety of cuisines. The acidic bite pairs well with spicy Indian and Thai curries. It's a classic match for roast chicken, pork and semi-soft cheeses. It also works well with egg dishes, such as quiche. Available at VQA Stores and private wine shops.

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