

SPICE UP YOUR FOOD

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My teeth penetrate the smooth, domed top of the macaroon, sparkling with a dusting of gold powder shimmer, and the shockingly creamy mousse of foie gras filling spills into my mouth. I feel the same illicit rush that a prepubescent boy feels the first time he discovers nude magazines; a twinge of guilt at its sheer decadence and wary that it will be discovered. Foie gras macaroons: a stroke of creative genius by the Parisian master pâtissier Pierre



Hermé, the courageous man who stood defiantly on the line between sweet and savory to combine rich, fatty meat products with delicate pastry. As in any industry, food also undergoes a constant evolution, what people recognize as fusion, molecular gastronomy, or a new interpretation of a classic—and it is precisely this shifting of trends that makes the subject just as riveting as the hype behind the dream machines from silicon valley.

When you think about a pizza or a burger, you already have a preconception of these foods in your head. In my very hungry mind, pizzas are round, have a garlicky crust, and are smothered in a sweet tomato sauce blanketed with melted mozzarella. Burgers are a generous hunk of juicy, ground beef, crisp lettuce, and tomatoes, suspended between two buttery, squishy buns. In a competitive industry though, these traditional versions are not enough, with the arrogant view that “my interpretation will destroy your interpretation in a culinary throw-down.”

Even long established chains are fighting for survival and joining in the evolutionary melee. Domino’s pizza in Asia has an array of toppings that are sadly not available outside of that region: mayonnaise, corn, kimchee, and eggplant; but the coup de grace is the Domino’s Millefeuille pizza in Japan, inspired by the Napoleon, a puff pastry with layers of thin crispy flakes of filled with cream. As a nod to its “thousand-leaf” namesake, it is a four and a half layered monstrosity of rotating crust, cheese, topping, and repeat to excess.

As with every revolution, there are counter-revolutions and the minimalist movement, long associated with art and design, has trickled down to food in forms such as raw veganism, using uncooked, mostly vegetables, to create “tiramisu” or “burritos”, or the ungarnished simplicity of sashimi, immaculately sliced uncooked fish lightly flavored with vinegar. Ever the overachieving community, some restaurants take the deconstruction of food one step further to employ the art of molecular gastronomy-- where food scientists-cum-chefs up the ante and redefines minimalism by altering the molecular structure of food, using blowtorches and pH meters to create liquid beef and foaming sauces.

When Ferran Adrià recently announced that he would close his restaurant for two years, followers mourned that they would now have to look elsewhere to get their parmesan “snow” and candied citrus peel made with liquid nitrogen. These seem more like the type of food stuff that the Jetsons would eat at a space cafeteria, rather than something belonging to a small restaurant overlooking the Cala Montjoi bay in Spain; albeit this “small” restaurant, El Bulli, is merely small in physical space and a powerhouse in reputation. Not only was it awarded the coveted three stars in the Michelin Guide, akin to winning the Oscars in the food realm, named by Restaurant magazine as the best restaurant in the world for five years running, but despite the 200 plus euro price tag, only approximately 8000 people are rewarded a reservation out of the one million reservations requested, making even the college admission process seem about as selective as intramural ping pong.

While you may not have the resources and connections to fly to Catalonia and get a seat at El Bulli, you too can be a part of this movement. Hundreds of foodies, food enthusiasts, with a bottomless appetite for high-quality sustenance and gravitation towards novelty trawl the cyberspace for the latest fads, do the field work, and take macro-pictures to post on the blogosphere, captioning these photos with sexy metaphors, all for your amusement. Kind of like how you don’t have to make porn to watch it.

If you are more of the hands-on, experiential type, take the perennial, boring peanut butter and jelly and transform it into peanut butter and cheese, or peanut butter, jelly, and nutella. I know. Rest assured, these combinations have been taste-tested by the Loudbus team and even loved. Even if you end up hating it and wanted to vomit in your mouth, it only costs a small amount to make, but you have walked away with absolute certainty of your tastes and preferences or, like I did, discover a mind-blowing addition to your sandwich repertoire. You’re welcome.