



# EAT, PRAISE, LOVE

These food trends are sure to take the plate this year, writes **Elizabeth Meryment**

**I** have a vivid memory of the first time I bought a bottle of water. It was the early 1990s and I was backpacking around Europe, when on a sweltering day in Paris I stopped at a street cart to buy some fizzy Evian.

I remember it clearly because I couldn't bring myself to part with two francs for the non-carbonated variety. Imagine paying for water! As if.

Of course, bottled water turned out to be the drink of the 1990s and is something we can't live without today. And although I didn't know it at the time, the exercise of buying it was life-changing. Just like the first times I tried sushi, wagyu, vine-ripened tomatoes, rocket, focaccia and Valrhona chocolate, there was no going back.

These first experiences may have been bizarre, or perhaps insignificant, but the next thing I knew, the products had become part of my life.

So what will be familiar to us this year, next year and beyond? Here are some predictions.

**1** **Regional Asian**  
 Australians are enthusiastic consumers of all things

Asian, but greater awareness of regional Asian cuisines is entering our lives. "Already when people come to my restaurant they want to know whether the food is from North Vietnam or South Vietnam," says chef Luke Nguyen, star of SBS's *Luke Nguyen's Vietnam*. "People travel and when it comes to food, they know what they're talking about." While regional Vietnamese will be a hot trend, Cambodian, Lao and provincial Chinese such as Sichuan, Uighur, Hunan and Yunnan are also on the up.

**2** "The quality of meat we can offer used to only be supplied to three- or two-hat restaurants," says Anita Puharich of newish Sydney meat emporium Victor Churchill. "But there's a cooking movement at home at the moment. People used to go out if they wanted to have a great meal or

do something special but now they're cooking at home." Consumers are prepared to pay more for better meat from suppliers they trust. Coles this month launches Angus patties and wagyu sausages.

**3** Modern cooks have long scoffed at faithfuls like corned beef in favour of simpler pasta and stir-fry. But "unfashionable" foods from the '60s, '50s and earlier are coming back. Natalie Oldfield's *Gran's Kitchen* (HardieGrant, \$45, released in April) will draw on the recipes of her 95-year-old grandmother, Dulcie May Booker, to introduce new audiences to old faves such as steak-and-onion pie, Cornish pasties, deep-fried scallops, coconut ice and more.

**4** We're all too busy to grow our own veggies, right? Maybe not. Interest in edible plants is surging as people seek to reconnect with food, care for their health and save money. "It's a very, very noticeable trend, and the nurseries all say the same thing," says gardening writer Helen Young. Even



**7** Foams, smears, gels and streaks were huge in the Noughties but diners are seeking a return to honest fare, especially beautiful produce from trustworthy farms. As chef and writer Christine Manfield says: "We're going to see a greater appreciation of what I call 'honesty' in food; moving away from processed muck and getting back to what is just good food."

**8** Shoppers used to look down on home-brand products, but that's changing as supermarkets capitalise on the growing demand for specialist lines such as free-range, organic and gluten-free

**9** Aussies still love a T-bone, but unusual cuts of meat are gaining traction. Take bavette and onglet cuts, two traditional French styles that "used to be kept back by butchers, so people weren't even given the chance to try them" according to Anita Puharich.

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**5** We've had detox shots and energy drinks. Next come relaxation shots. Introduced in the US as an antidote to the fast pace of life, relaxation shots contain natural ingredients like valerian root, rosehip and melatonin, and are designed to calm jangled nerves without medication or alcohol. American bloggers, at least, are enthusiastic. "Not to sound like an ad," wrote one, "But this stuff does work." You've been warned.

**6** Gorgeous, sweet and gimmicky, these squat peaches bred from an Asian variety are hitting greengrocer shelves in a big way. Specialty fruit and vegetable wholesaler Perfection Fresh says the peaches are showstoppers that consumers love. "The interest is amazing," says spokeswoman Lucy Howkins.

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**10** Just as wine buffs can name a favourite vineyard or region, chocoholics are beginning to arm themselves with a similar level of knowledge about cacao-growing districts. Importer Nathan Wakeford, of Melbourne's Somage Fine Foods, says food-lovers are becoming highly aware of the role regionality plays in flavour. "Because of food bloggers and travel, there's a lot of information around and consumers are able to pick the exact product or flavour they prefer," he says.

**11** We've seen baby capsicums, cherry tomatoes and ever-smaller lettuce, but a new tot causing a sensation in the UK is the baby lemon. "People are very conscious now of food waste, and with households shrinking there's a lot of interest in baby vegetables," says Lucy Howkins. The little lemon is half the size of a regular lemon and much sweeter.





**12** We've all done tacos and fajitas to death and now Mexican food is being revolutionised in Australia, as new waves of Latin-American migrants bring fresh ingredients and flavours with them. Steve Marks, owner of the Guzman y Gomez taqueria chain, says when he started the stores in 2006, Australians were largely ignorant of authentic Mexicana. "People slopped sour cream and cheese over everything, and they don't even eat that in Mexico," he laments.

**13** **New wine varieties** We all love our mainstream varieties like shiraz and sauvignon blanc, but 2010 will see more and more new names on the shelves as the so-called emerging styles come increasingly on line in volume and winemaking experience. National wine writer Tony Love says while we continue to sip the favourites, you'll also be opening the screw caps on whites such as vermentino, arneis, savignin (formerly known as albarino), and tempranillo, sangiovese and nebbiolo among the reds. They are all grape varieties at the source of mostly Italian and Spanish styles, and play an exciting role beside many kinds of shared foods. In the fancy drinkers' corner, imports have gone nuts from large retail barns selling cheapies to terrific foreign regional and varietal styles.



