

What's happening in the restaurant industry?

 By [Ryan Cole](#)

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As the industry slowly but surely recovers from the impact of the last two years, I want to take a look into what the year ahead may hold when it comes to restaurant, food and drink trends



Image supplied: Ryan Cole, head chef at Salsify at the Roundhouse

Food trends

There will probably be a shift away from international cuisines and techniques, with kitchens looking towards heritage and origin. It's going to be about the discovery of land at a hyper-local level.

For instance, we'll be looking at what Camps Bay used to be, what has been eaten here in the past, and how it was cooked. The discovery of what was will lead to what will be.

It's going deeper into those buzzwords of locality and seasonality, the country's restaurants have long proven that they cook to an international standard. Now it's time to discover the country and even the continent's own culinary history. Looking at food in a regional, South African and African context.

We have so much culture, history and heritage on this continent, and I really think that's going to be the next point of

exploration.

There's been a lot of talk around fermentation the past few years too but again it's going to go deeper into history and heritage. Ancestral fermentation techniques like fermenting in honey, or fermenting berries to must – it's essentially lacto-fermenting - but these were all techniques used by past generations to preserve and extend ingredients through seasons.

Think local versions of vinegars made using indigenous ingredients or expressions of the oldest alcoholic beverage, mead, making appearances on menus.

Africa rising

From the hyper-endemic to continental cooking, I expect to see the further development and ownership of African identity in food - looking up into the continent and seeing what's happening across it.

The capabilities of the continent really come to the fore. We have so much culture, history and heritage throughout Africa, and I really think that's going to be the next point of exploration.

The same will be true when it comes to ingredients. Expect the likes of madumbi, casava, okra and river greens to be incorporated into dishes. The same can be said about game meat and poultry – the chef sees a move towards using more local venison, guinea fowl and quail.

Though, it's not only in the food where Africa will shine. This year I hope to see the honouring of African hospitality.

We don't need to be implementing European standards of hospitality. Here at Salsify, we have a Nigerian sommelier, waiters from Zimbabwe, and young chefs and students from across the country – we should be bolstering and celebrating all our identities. That African warmth, bringing people in, treating people like they're in your home. It's something that's special and deserves to be celebrated.

Fine dining remains

There was a lot of hype around fine dining dying but, post-pandemic, it can be seen that couldn't be further from the truth. People are excited to come out and value experiences more than ever.

In a way, it's the same as going to a theatre, or a concert - something that is firmly here to stay. It's been incredible seeing the appetite for what we offer here at Salsify, now more than ever people are excited to come out and experience new things, there's almost a new lease on life.

As such, restaurants will be investing more time, money and energy into creating these culinary experiences. Expect constantly changing menus and even spaces, and plenty of bespoke crockery made just for a certain dish or style of presentation.

This also creates the opportunity to celebrate and champion local makers and artisans. Allowing the restaurant to further support communities in surrounding areas, through this drive for bespoke and custom-curated pieces, processes and artworks.

Niche varietals and wines

When it comes to wine, I expect a host of interesting and often unheard-of grape varieties or different styles of wine to be popping up – especially on tasting menus. These are wines that patrons are unlikely to have come across in a shop or tried elsewhere.

We really love working with unexpected and unusual varieties, when it comes to pairing. Many of the lesser-known types of

wine make for phenomenal food wines and it enhances the experience when the guest can try something new that they may not have even heard of before.

ABOUT RYAN COLE

Head Chef at Salsify at the Roundhouse

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