

# PIE AND PROPHECY

*Pie, popsicles and dirt are heating up this year's trend lists*



**T**rend spotting is all about where to put your money. What's going to take off and make a lot of people happy, like the cupcake phenomenon? What's on its way out?

This year, the trend spotters suggest you put your money on pie, but first, let's take a look at the trend and ingredient landscape.

The crystal ball over at Mintel says transparency is the big issue of the day. The folks at Datamonitor concur. They have published the *Simple Ingredient Foods Case Study*, which claims that we'll see an abundance of foods "with few and natural ingredients to address health and transparency issues." Who'd have thought that a furniture-maker would pick up on that? IKEA has

released an online dessert cookbook. The company makes the recipe visual by deconstructing the dessert into its ingredients and arranging them artfully, to be photographed as geometric mounds of sugar, flour and cocoa. These are punctuated with adroitly placed eggs, bits or sticks of butter and, where called for, lively curls of lemon zest. Dessert laid bare, as it were. You can't help but feel a sense of reassurance, satisfaction and wonder at being shown a dessert in this way. You also can't help thinking of the instructions that come with IKEA furniture, which was probably the main purpose of publishing the cookbook in the first place.

Back in the world where baking isn't tied to furniture-making, Business Insights reports, "traditional flavours will dominate baking." In response, and paraphrasing [www.nutraceuticals.com](http://www.nutraceuticals.com): Yes and no. They say the crossover of savoury ingredients into sweet applications will soldier on. For some, this might mean more bacon in chocolate.

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Google Trends says: "Pie Tells Bacon and Cupcakes to Shove Off," with a chart to prove it. The source is [www.eater.com](http://www.eater.com), who adds, "When is it not time for pie?"

"Every year I predict the death of the cupcake, and I'm always wrong," Bonnie Wolf complained to her National Public Radio audience on Jan. 2, but only for dramatic effect. The food maven and

author of the book *Talking With My Mouth Full*, reports that trend spotters are calling pie the food of the year. She points to pie happy hours at Texas and New York City restaurants, pies at weddings, and pie shops "in a neighbourhood near you." This is particularly true if you live in Toronto's Riverdale 'hood, where the Canadian Pie Company opened in January and can't keep enough pies in stock, sweet or savoury.

Looking at the national picture, the *Globe and Mail* makes pie the leader of its top three foods for 2011. Rounding out the top three are popsicles and dirt.

Let's leave dirt alone for a minute. First, are popsicles really a food? The *Globe* reports that popsicles will be the medium for food experimentation. The example cited: snap pea popsicles. Second, the consumer base buying in to that is, thankfully, relatively small. I'm calling it a lost leader; yet, I'm not discounting its nostalgia quotient.

To put a final foretelling of pie's top spot in the food pantheon this coming

year, I'm going to play the Oprah card. Since she either has her finger on the pulse or puts the pulse on anything she puts her finger on, Oprah has a lot to say about pie. All of it is emotional, featuring very few words, and with the same words repeated again and again. The key word is a resounding "pie!" You can hear it for yourself. Here's a link to a montage of Oprah losing it over some pies, set up by the irreverent Joel McHale on the program *The Soup*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4AdmHN-wDg>.

Now for a few words about dirt. When the *Globe* refers to dirt as a top trend, it doesn't mean real dirt any more than basil puree painted on a plate as a sauce or garnish refers to actual paint, even if it is applied with a brush. Dirt is good old-fashioned marketing. Perhaps the developer would call it a creative discovery. To that, I'd say, "That's marketing too."

The dirt in question is an ingredient that's been crumbled, powdered or dried into dust. (I wonder when "dust" is going to show up as a dish descriptor.) To this bright idea, the baking industry would like to say one word: cocoa. What else is new?

Ironically, I have a favourite dirt dish. Dirty rice is a traditional Cajun fry-up of rice with liver and kidney. When I first heard of the dish, I could immediately visualize it, and because I love liver, I could taste it. My first thought? "Yes!"

Unless it is in an application that can produce that kind of reaction, dirt is a no-go, an assured risk. Pie, apparently, not so much. / **BJ**

Stephanie Ortenzi ([www.pistachioiwriting.com](http://www.pistachioiwriting.com)) is a Toronto-based food marketing writer.