



## Setting the Table

How do food trends take hold?

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TASTE OF THE FUTURE;  
SETTING THE TABLE

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CONTENT: STAR CHEF CONGRESS, MARCUS SAMUELSON  
MARTIN BASHIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Trends in what we eat tend to come and go. But the hot items on a menu don't just happen by accident. We discovered that they're conjured up by the world's cookery gods who assemble and then plan the tastes that will delight us, as Bill Weir now reports.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) Fashion is no accident. A trend worn on the streets of Minneapolis began on a sketch pad in Milan and then survived a gauntlet of runways and magazines, buyers and sellers to get into your consciousness and your closet. And now more than ever, our taste buds are being influenced in similar fashion, thanks to the Star Chefs Congress, a veritable fashion week of food when the most respected chefs in the world leave the test kitchens and mingle in a New York armory of interesting ingredients, methods and trends emerge, cross pollinate and spread.

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Star Chef event is one of our - it's sort of our fashion week, you know, for all the chefs.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) Marcus Samuelson made a name for himself as the head chef of New York's revered Aquavit. And he is my guide through this foodie fantasy camp.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Now, are chefs inherently competitive?

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Very competitive.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) What's it - so what's it like mingling them together?

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

No, but it's cool because we're both. We're competitors but we are also very good colleagues. You know, we borrow from each other and we borrow ideas, we borrow staff. There is also camaraderie that's really nice, you know.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Okay.

CHEF (NEW YORK)

They are telling me that the cheese are better than in France.

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Because of events like this and because there's so many diverse chefs, our, our, our taste buds has changed. Latin came into the food space. Asian came into the food space. So what you thought was spicy ten years ago and what your kids are going to think about spicy ten years from now, it's completely different.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) Norman Van Aken helped define that trends by combining Southern and Caribbean styles in the 80s.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) What do you like today? Is there anything that's going on here, any ideas? What are people going to be eating across the country in a couple of years?

NORMAN VAN AKEN (CHEF)

Well, I mean, the line that was over there for the Vietnamese baguette, the Vietnamese sandwiches was instructional.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) If you never had one, think pulled pork with fiery Asian spices and pickled vegetables. And idea that could easily trickle down to fast food menus. Another is charcuterie.

CHEF (NEW YORK)

27% of chefs have an in-house charcuterie program and it's a big trend all across the country.

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

About four years ago, small plates were introduced here.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Small plates...

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Tapa style. Small plates.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Yeah.

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Today, menus may look, you know, across the country - but like the Cheesecake Factory is introduce small plates into the menu.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) How you get your fine food is also changing as gastro trucks become all the rage in big American cities. Instead of serving stale sandwiches to construction workers, these mobile chefs are creating cult followings with specialized, savory fare.

NORMAN VAN AKEN (CHEF)

My secret fantasy is to get to that. I mean, you know, it's nice to have like the big restaurant with 15 chefs running around. But there is something about being American and just kind of like being a hobo with your little hot plate and your grill and hitting the streets.

GRANT ACHATZ (CHEF)

Can you imagine in there would be like being on the moon.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) Meanwhile, Chicago's Grant Achatz is on the cutting edge of the so-called molecular movement, using the latest technology to cook with laboratory-like precision. He came up with a reverse griddle that freezes food instantly.

GRANT ACHATZ (CHEF)

So we can make a liquid center, something frozen on both sides. If you flip it like a pancake, you have a liquid in the center which makes a really cool texture.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) And a favorite toy is the rotary evaporator which uses low heat and a vacuum tube to extract perfect flavor.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) What you have here is the, you know, the culinary equivalent of NASA, right? How soon before this ends up at William Sonoma?

GRANT ACHATZ (CHEF)

I don't know. This is a pretty expensive machine. You know, we're talking \$8,000, \$10,000 here.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Wow.

GRANT ACHATZ (CHEF)

Okay. By the time that gets to the home - by the time you can buy this at Target...

WILL BLUNT (STARCHIEFS.COM)

Chefs are sharing ideas and they figure out what works and what doesn't work. And that's happened for

hundreds of years in cooking. It also means they need to be more competitive, just like the fashion world in fashion.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Right.

WILL BLUNT (STARCHEFS.COM)

They come here to learn the latest trends and learn from each other and make each other better.

RICHARD BLAIS (CHEF)

I'm a huge fan. Sorry to do that on camera. I think like that's part of it too. Like we're all here and we're fans of each other's work and like it keeps us current. You know, that - actually this is what keeps you away from saying, wow that's really dated. Because if you come here every year, you can't be dated.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) So while you may never wear this to the office, you might appreciate the belt. And while you may never order lobster bisque with rotary evaporated saffron, you might just get some fresh grated corn on your salad at Chilis. Because in fashion and food, artists may dazzle the elites, but simple genius spreads to the masses.

MARCUS SAMUELSON (CHEF)

Thank you so much.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) Thank you so much.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Voiceover) Bill Weir, for "Nightline" in New York.

BILL WEIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) All right, where's the beer tent?

ANNOUNCER

(Off-camera) Keeping the masses well fed. Our thanks to Bill Weir.

MARTIN BASHIR (ABC NEWS)

(Off-camera) And when we come back, new details about the tragic death of a young actress.

COMMERCIAL BREAK

December 22, 2009