



Tapas Out, Meat In by Rod Weatherbie

Local, traceable, and meaty are in, while equatorial fruit and small plates are passé.

A quick not-statistically-accurate-at-all poll of a few city chefs shows that the buying local trend hasn't run out of steam, although being able to intimately map a food's source is quickly gaining ground.

[Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar](#) chef Tobey Nemeth said this traceability is definitely an emerging trend. "We're starting to see a lot of products that celebrate a unique local heritage." She said foraged items such as spruce tips, cattail hearts, huckleberries and pinot noir grapes from Prince Edward County, are becoming more important.

"These are things that can be traced to their roots. You know the grower, you know the feed that the pigs are being raised on, you know where it came from." On the other hand it's "so long" to the banana boat. "I'm always startled when I see tropical fruit on a menu. I think people are beginning to realize that there are things locally available that are just as good."

And although the 100km diet remains popular, Nemeth said it isn't entirely realistic. "It's a benefit of the global marketplace that we can get all of this wonderful stuff, but it's about traceability and honouring artisan producers."

[Healthy Butcher](#) executive chef Jonathon Abraham agreed that local and artisanal remain popular. He finds that now consumers are better educated about sources, they are also becoming better educated about the products. Little known cuts of pork and beef are starting to show up on shopping lists. "People are taking a lot more risks with what they are cooking. They are

venturing into cuts that they normally wouldn't use. So, I'm seeing more people asking for obscure cuts of meat."

Braising is becoming more common, too. "But braising whole joints rather than just stewing beef and stuff like that." And confit of pork and duck is making a comeback. "And some people are looking for pork and fat to render themselves."

So what's had it? "I can't tell you how many menus I've seen with a mango salsa on. It's so played out."

[Splendido](#) sous chef Brian Semenuk said he's seeing more and more Wagyu beef, the highly marbled Kobe-style beef, on menus. "[Cumbrae Farms](#) is doing their own version of Wagyu beef and [Pusateri's](#) are actually getting the real Kobe right from Japan. It's taken them eight years to get that into the city." He said because of the price point it will mostly be the higher-end restaurant carrying it.

Local and organic produce gets a third vote as a continuing trend. "The term locavore is a bit overused but people aren't sick of the concept. It doesn't even have to be organic really, it's more about supporting the local farmers."

So local produce is in, as is Japanese beef. What's overstayed its welcome?

Tapas are tapped out. "When done well it's a great way to eat, but everyone and their mother are doing it. We've definitely seen enough. Especially last year when everybody in the city was doing some form of tapas and not too many of them were doing it very well. That is definitely the food trend of 2007 that I would like to see die in 2008."