

Seven top taste trends for 2016

With restaurants having already developed their winter menus for this year, the Slo-Jo team has its fingers on the pulse of taste trends for 2016.

“Slo-Jo keeps tabs on international trends in tastes, flavours and formats, and then works carefully with our customers to create new on-trend products that will be popular with the South African palate,” said Chrissy Beedle, research and product development manager of Slo-Jo, also known as the company’s ‘Palate Sensation’. “This year will see some of last year’s trends evolve, while new developments in the likes of water, for example, are going to pique the interest of restaurants and their patrons alike.”



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Beedle points out that creating on-trend beverage solutions is about so much more than flavour – it’s about texture and visual appeal too. “The drink you order with your meal is part of the whole culinary experience, and South Africans are taking more time to plan their meal experience, choosing flavours and textures that will complement one another while they’re at the table.”

So what’s on trend for 2016?

Sugar-free bliss

Consumers are increasingly looking for healthier menu choices, with items that offer low sugar or sugar-free variants likely to be popular. With this in mind, Slo-Jo will introduce a range of sugar-free iced teas during 2016, with popular flavours of peach and lemon leading the way.

Signature drinks

With increasing demand for the consumer’s attention, outlets are making their mark with signature drinks and cocktails. A true signature drink offers a unique taste and texture experience not available anywhere else, and should be created with the restaurant’s unique target market in mind.

Pop out with presentation

Whether it's the result of the Instagram/'foodstagram' generation, or because South Africans are more aware of the visual presentation of the food and beverage they choose, thanks to MasterChef and other similar programmes, presentation has become increasingly important to the success of a drink. Developing a successful drink is as much about choosing the correct glass, mug or carafe to present it in, along with choosing the most appropriate toppings, garnishes and decoration to make the drink a truly remarkable and memorable experience, worth coming back for more (and photographing for social sharing)!

Lay low on alcohol

We're more aware of the dangers of driving under the influence, and alcohol's 'cool' factor is fading. Add in the fact that religious observance is on the increase among young people, with many choosing to abstain. However, there's still a timeless appeal to the cocktail classics, not least because they're lovely to look at, so on-trend outlets have got even more reason to include mocktails on their menu this year.

Happy to be healthy

Almond milk is growing in popularity, standing tall on its own merits beyond just being an alternative to dairy. Other alternatives inspired by changes in dietary preferences include the introduction of coconut flavours, chia seeds teas, and protein shakes, giving patrons the ability to complement their healthy food choices with healthy beverage choices too.

Wild about water

No longer relegated to just being 'tap, sparkling or still', water is taking its rightful place on the menu as a preferred choice – but spiced up with a wide range of subtle flavours to add interest. As with all other drinks, the presentation of water as a drink has been taken up a notch or two, with trendsetting establishments taking as much effort to serve their waters as they do with cocktails and mocktails. An emerging trend is that of water pods, similar to the coffee pods that have stormed the local market, which are used with a special machine to add fresh flavour to water.

Textures are top of mind

It's no longer just about how a drink looks or tastes – it's about how it feels in your mouth too. Bubble tea made its way onto the market a few years ago, but textures like popping candy, crunchy biscuit bits and cookie dough have added interest to what would otherwise have been rather ordinary drinks.

“South Africans are having more and more fun with their drinks, and they are expecting high standards from restaurants, as the rise of artisanal food and drinks has revealed the world of exciting flavour and texture that is possible,” said Beedle. “At Slo-Jo, we work closely with our clients to help them respond to their patrons' evolving tastes and demands in a sustainable way. This year is going to be an exciting one for us all, as we balance changing economic conditions with a need for fun and enjoyment!”

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