

Eat food that boosts health

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The trend this year is all about well-balanced menus with lots of fruits and vegetables, a limited amount of sugars and processed foods.

Last year we were all still recovering from the economic downturn. Cooking budget-friendly meals at home, eating out on the cheap and shopping for food bargains were the buzz words.

This year sees healthy eating taking the lead, says *True Love* magazine food editor, Tumelo Sebopa.

Sebopa says many foodies base their decisions on what to cook and to buy on health and the environment.

She says obesity and the global movement towards healthier eating has had a very big influence on people's diets.

Mohammed Fathy, a restaurant owner, says revellers are becoming more and more health conscious and discerning.

"More and more people are becoming aware of low GI products, zero-calorie drinks, less preservatives and clearer food labelling.

"The demand for zero-calorie drinks has increased from 10 to more than 50 percent," Fathy says.

"Even men, who are not the most health conscious of the creeds, are now asking for healthier options.

"Our chefs are always conscious of providing well-balanced menus with lots of fruits and vegetables, a limited amount of sugars and processed foods," he says.

Fathy says smaller food portions are also becoming popular, with some restaurants encouraging sharing menus.

Other food trends:

Drinking and eating at home

Sebopa says though police visibility has been the main driving force behind many drinkers imbibing in the privacy of their homes, more people are choosing to entertain at home because it is a cheaper option.

"A lot of people realise that eating at home is more liberating. People can decide what will be on the menu, can create their own cocktails, which is more fun, and they do not have to put up with expensive parking and rude waitresses in restaurants," Sebopa says.

Men in the kitchen

Sebopa says more men are joining their women in the kitchen and also helping out when hosting guests.

"Black men these days are getting more comfortable in kitchens, particularly the ones in their 20s and early 30s.

"Cooking is no longer seen as a gay thing or for weak men. The celebration of male chefs on TV is also a big factor in inspiring young men to cook or to become chefs for that matter," she says.

"Also, women view men who cook as romantic," Sebopa says.

Children's dishes

Sebopa says parents are becoming more aware of feeding children correctly.

"Parents are choosing energy foods to preserve vitality and to delay the aging process.

Nutritionally balanced children's dishes have replaced fries and burgers and more lunch boxes contain fruits and vegetables," she says.

New convenience store competition

Sebopa says retailers are offering a wider range of nutritious food, treading on restaurant turf. In particular, convenience store operators are adding more food items and are upgrading the quality.

Growing your own

More people in South Africa are planting their own food. There has also been an increase in the numbers of shoppers at fresh produce markets, Sebopa says.

Omega-3 such as EPA and DHA are catching on fast.

"These fatty acids have some of the broadest and strongest impact on health," Sebopa says.

Meatless meals

Sebopa says that meatless meals are also becoming more popular because of their health benefits.

Wholesome legumes, fish and vegetables are big on most menus these days.

Source: Sowetan