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HEALTHY EATING WITH CAROLYN O'NEIL

Hyper-local sourcing trending on menus

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By Carolyn O'Neil - For the AJC

Tender green asparagus spears signal that spring is in full swing on restaurant menus. But when you order a plate of jumbo asparagus topped with a poached egg, bacon lardons and brioche croutons at the Century House Tavern in Woodstock, chef Daniel Porubiansky sends another sign of the times.

He wants you to know that the egg came from a Bantam chicken raised by Tim and Nichelle Stewart of Rockin' S Farms in Canton. This is more than a focus on locally grown. This is what's being called hyper-local sourcing. Many people today want to know a heck of a whole lot about where their food is being grown. The National Restaurant Association's annual round up of top 20 menu trends places hyper-local sourcing at No. 7, ranking higher than demand for sustainable seafood (No. 8) and gluten-free cuisine (No. 12).

Menu with a hyper-local view

The ultimate in hyper-local sourcing is when restaurants grow their own right on the property, either in raised beds, on the roof or as part of the landscaping. A short distance from hectic Los Angeles, Terranea Resort in Rancho Palos Verdes, is a welcome oceanfront oasis complete with three swimming pools, a spa, a nine-hole golf course and lush landscaping dotted with edible gardens to supply the resort's chefs with just-picked produce.

When you savor the Meyer lemon cheesecake with strawberry tomato basil salsa on the menu at Terranea's Mar'sel restaurant, your dinner comes with a taste of the resort's fresh picks and a view of Catalina Island. While guests sip cocktails and take in the sunset from the cliffs high above the Pacific's crashing surf, chefs are busy preparing meals made with a hyper-local grocery basket of leeks, eggplant, parsley, basil, citrus and strawberries harvested on the property. It's good to know all that southern California sunshine benefits the flowers and the food.

Up on the roof

Ahead of the culinary curve, chef Robert Gerstenecker of the Four Seasons Hotel's Park 75 restaurant in Atlanta added herbs, vegetables and even honeybees to his roof top Terrace Garden a few years ago. The arugula, kale and green beans are ready now, the peppers are flowering and the heirloom tomatoes have just been planted to ripen in time for summer menus ahead. The hotel's spa has gone hyper-local too. Honey-based skin treatments utilize the sweet stuff from Gerstenecker's bees buzzing on the fifth floor terrace.

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