

FOODSERVICE CONSULTANT

FUTURE OF FOODSERVICE



David Burke

US restaurant owner, celebrity chef and author

"We're ending the year cooking for recovery crews after Hurricane Sandy. We just drove to the Jersey Shore in our food truck with 700 sandwiches for rescue workers and families impacted by the storm. We lost power there for nearly two weeks and in SoHo we were closed for a week. It makes you realise how much weather has affected our business this year. We had a very hot and rainy summer, which affected our places with outdoor seating. There are so many variables.

During 2012 we've seen people feeling more confident about the economy and tired of not going out. There's more optimism and restaurants are offering good deals. Today, we are seeing fewer high-end restaurants and more gastropubs, cool bars and farm-to-table concepts. Brooklyn is thriving with new restaurants. I'm seeing more restaurants with Asian flavours and spicy foods.

There's less anxiety about design - a recognition that high-quality choices don't have to be fancy and are less defined by design than by cooking, vibe, hipness and of course, the service. First timers can invest a lot less money without big loans for a designer.

Food costs are up this year and we distribute food from the market in our own truck, which keeps costs down. The cost of labour is going up and people will have to be more creative with employer hours. The Obamacare impact on benefits will mean some price increases to cover costs and it will mean more hard work as food, rents and benefits rise.

Next year I think we will see more unusual cuts of meat, smaller portions of proteins and more vegetables as the centre of the plate. I expect more grilling, more whole grains. We're gravitating toward this as economics fuel what we do. Pizzerias and burger places thrive in a recession because they have the right price points. Expense account dining has changed as people have more restrictions on what they can spend for food and wine. It's not what it was 10 years ago.

With regard to energy, we're not quite there yet but we do some recycling, we have a water purification system and, one day, we'll do green buildings.

Today, natural, organic and green are very popular. Fishtail is a sustainable seafood restaurant. People are a lot more conscious of these things today. We know our farmers and strive to work with them. Local is important. My sons and I brew our own beer - a couple of hundred cases - once a year at Sam Adams brewery and sell it in our restaurants.

Next year, I will do some new restaurants, mainly in the New York area, but am looking at opportunities in other East Coast areas." >

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