



Trends for the Tip of Your Tongue

Local food stars serve up tips on hip holiday fare

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'Tis the season! Time to decorate, get those Christmas cards out, and plan holiday parties.

And what's a party without a feast? But we all know serving Vienna sausages and saltines probably won't get you return guests for next year. We asked Jonathan Stirnweis and Melissa Mihelich of **Two Sisters Catering**, Doug Brown of **Beyond the Box**, Florence Chauvet of **Wendy Krispin Catering Co.**, and George Brown of **George Catering** what's in for party food these days. Here are their tips for hip holiday fare:

Comfort Foods:

Roasted turkey, ham, root vegetables are big requests this season. "We found many people want these for the holidays, but they don't have time to cook like they used to," said Melissa Mihelich. "Food which reminds you of big elaborate family get-togethers," summed up George Brown on the cuisine many clients are asking for now.

Retro:

From sophisticated martinis to nostalgic flavors like peanut butter and jelly, everything old is new again but with a modern twist. "We recently did a glamorous old-Hollywood, style party with a menu inspired by dirty martinis (martinis made with olive brine), chicken breasts with an olive relish, sage and parsley mashed potatoes, asparagus and cherry tomatoes, and chocolate fondue," Mehelich said.

Fun Desserts:

Fondue is hot, especially made with updated flavors, ingredients and sauces such as George's chocolate cardamom, passion fruit citrus, cajeta caramel with dippers made of homemade marshmallows, devil's food croutons, cherries, and buttermilk pound cake. Wendy Krispin's fondue drew raves because of a candy apple station she made featuring white chocolate, tiny lady apples, and dried fruit. Doug Brown said "S'mores, made with marshmallow, homemade graham crackers, and dense chocolate cake are really hot." He also named chocolate fountains and fortune cookies covered with chocolate as well as pistachios and filled with custom messages as the treats his clients love.

Food-on-a-Stick:

Vertical forms like skewers of chicken and pork satay, exotic rumaki (such as quail and apricot wrapped in bacon),

kabob-like presentations of fruit, vegetables, cheese, and bite-sized appetizers served in flat-bottomed Asian spoons are a hit everywhere you go. Lollipops, ice cream cones, and cream-sicles are in whether they're jazzed up sweet dessert versions or playfully done as savory appetizers such as salmon and goat cheese cones, or apple-bacon lollipops, for example.

Color Themes:

Décor of one single color, particularly pink, white, orange, or red in food, drink, and décor is big, big, big. "We created trays made of colored plexiglass, pierced with holes to hold those vertical ice cream cones specifically to meet a client's request for an all-orange party," said Doug Brown.

Wine Varietals:

Wine-tasting dinners are very much in

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George Brown of
George Catering



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vogue. Pinot Noir makers have enjoyed a boost since the movie *Sideways* and the clients of caterers are requesting this and other interesting varietals such as Chianti and rosé for their party plan.

Specialty Drinks:

For libations, most clients eschew an open bar setup in favor of beer, wine, and perhaps one specialty drink themed to the party. "Vodka is the number one seller in

our restaurant," George Brown said. In martinis, cosmopolitans, and other drinks, vodka blends well with colorful liqueurs to carry a color theme. Mojitos, made with rum, mint, and sugar is popular with Doug Brown's clients. For the holidays, Wendy Krispin is a fan of hot drinks as well. She suggests warm cider spiked with cinnamon Schnapps (2 parts cider to one part Schnapps) garnished with a cinnamon stick or red hots.

Classics:

Two flavors that never go out of style: chocolate and champagne. Wendy Krispin suggests Moët and Chandon Brut Rosé as the perfect ending to a perfect party.