

Cross-Cultural Cuisine: Long-Term Trend or Short-Lived Fad

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Defining a consumer interest as a long-term trend or short-lived fad has significant implications for restaurateurs' management decisions. The terms "trend" and "fad" can be operationally defined for the food service industry. The authors examine today's popular cross-cultural cuisine to determine its trend or fad status and discuss the catalysts that promoted or hindered its trend/fad status, as well as implications for the food service industry.

Commercial food service in the United States is a dynamic industry with frequent changes in menu offerings. Public opinions and desires influence when operators alter and market menus. These public opinions can be expressed in terms of either a fad or a trend. Operators can damage their firms by inappropriately reacting to a fad as menu alterations made are often cost ineffective because of the relatively limited time that the fad is popular. Recognizing, responding to, and possibly even initiating a trend, however, can be profitable as the theme in question will hold long term public enthusiasm, making menu changes both cost effective and useful in marketing the firm.

A recent theme introduced in food service operations is cross-cultural cuisine. This style of cuisine, also referred to as "fusion cuisine," incorporates two or more different nationalities of food or preparation techniques into one dish or product. A question arises: "Is this popular theme a trend or a fad?" The answer to this question would help operators determine the extent to which they should adapt their menus to capitalize on the theme's popularity.

The word "trend" is frequently used indiscriminately in food service discussions with no apparent definitional rules. Often the words "trend" and "fad" are used interchangeably. However, examination of the literature from diverse areas outside the food service industry provides evidence that other disciplines recognize

the differences in meanings of the terms and discriminate when using them.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1986) provides a general definition of a trend as "The general movement in the course of time of a statistically detectable change."¹ Celente and Milton indicate that a trend is "a definite, predictable direction or sequence of events."² Synthesizing these definitions, a trend may be considered to be a general movement. This definition suggests that trends take time to occur, and that they are not a spontaneous, single burst; they evolve. Celente and Milton clarified this assumption by indicating that one event does not constitute a trend. At least two points, or events, are needed to plot the direction. Although two points describe the direction an event is moving, a continuum of points is necessary to observe the progression of an event. Multiple points can be used to describe the speed of the event, the frequency, and the direction.³

Defining "trend" for usage in the food service industry is challenging, as this industry is one that offers a spectrum of choices to consumers. Senauer *et. al.* suggest that "a trend indicates a general movement or direction of in attitudes or behavior."⁴ This definition considers the human element of attitude, thus adapting the usage of "trend" into a qualitative perspective which may be more appropriate for the food service industry.

Compared to a trend, a fad may be defined as "a practice or interest followed for a time with exaggerated zeal."⁵ Fads can be seen as unpredictable, gimmicky, and short lived. Tapas are an example of a short-lived fad. Although the craze for these Spanish appetizers has faded, the concept of a meal made out of multiple appetizers is now seen as a type of "grazing," and is one of 1991's top trends.⁶

Trends Are Predictable

Naisbitt⁷ suggests that trends are built in a society from the bottom up, hence the predictability. Fads, however, occur at the top and drift down, thus the spontaneity. Although fads appear to be inconsequential, they are a measuring stick against which to compare trends and may even be the building blocks for trends. Senauer *et. al.* contend that a trend is a "grown-up fad – a fad that has been tried, liked, and adapted by a significant number of people."⁸

Trends are identified and tracked by following current events. This general process is easily adapted to the food service industry by examining current events, over time, that relate to the industry. Just as the daily newspaper yields information on current world and local events, publications such as *Nation's Restaurant News*, *Restaurants and Institutions*, and *Food Management* provide current information on topics which relate to the development and tracking of food trends, such as cross-cultural cuisine.

Content analysis of publications, past and present, provided information with which to begin analyzing trends. Naisbitt⁹ explains that a confidence level is obtained from the process of content analysis when monitoring social change. In the arena of printed media, the amount of space allotted to news in a newspaper does not change significantly over time. Therefore, when a new subject is introduced, something else, or a combination of things, must be eliminated. It is this share of the market, or addition of media space devoted to a specific issue, that makes trend tracking in the food service industry possible.

Trend tracking is useful in observing the occurrence and longevity of trends. This process leads to forecasting future trends and to projecting the longevity of current trends. Success in the industry is based on knowing what the customers want and providing it. By tracking trends, and thus having insight into consumers, operators can adjust and meet customers' desires. Current trend tracking done by Celente and Milton¹⁰ and *Restaurants & Institutions* indicates that there will be a strong market for restaurants with foreign cuisines because of the current globalization trend.¹¹

Ethnic Foods Are on Rise

Murcott¹² has indicated that what, how, and why people choose to eat or drink may be defined by the social and cultural organizations with which they are associated. While the United States has a history of diversity in foods and food preparation styles, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that ethnic restaurants emerged. Then, for example, it became chic to sit on the floor and eat with hands or chopsticks rather than forks. Hochstein¹³ related that Americans learned from their neighbors and experimented with their dishes.

The trend of welcoming distinct national cuisines continued into the 1980s. By this time, Americans were so fond of these intriguing tastes that they wanted to produce them in their own homes. Magazines such as *Gourmet* helped aspiring chefs create foods they had tasted at restaurants in their own kitchens, and grocery stores responded to the public demand by stocking the new, unique ingredients needed.

By the late 1980s, ethnic food had become so common that the abundance of foreign cultures offering distinctive dishes encouraged even the most conservative consumers to try these cuisines. This interest in ethnic foods was verified in a 1989 survey by the National Restaurant Association which found Chinese, Italian, and Mexican to be the most preferred ethnic foods, followed by Greek, Latin American, Spanish, French, Caribbean, and Japanese foods.¹⁴ In 1991, Senauer *et. al.*¹⁵ predicted that the ethnic diversity in the U.S. would continue to increase the diversity of consumer demands for the next 50 years.

The abundance of ethnic foods, choices in preparation techniques, and consumers' interest in and preference for foreign foods encouraged young, creative chefs in their search for new and exciting tastes. The increase in Americans' experimentation with food choices and their love for new and exciting food items led to the beginning of fusion or cross-cultural cuisine. "Culinary wanderlust" has become the latest progression in the ethnic evolution of American commercial food service. Levin¹⁶ and Fabricant¹⁷ both indicated that cross-cultural cuisine is the product of the American "melting pot" concept. They noted that, while a plethora of cuisines had taken root in the United States for hundreds of years, they did not blend in the "traditional" melting pot. Rather, the multiple ethnic cuisines became a collection of ingredients which, in the 1980s, began evolving into a real melting pot in which any number of these ingredients are simmered together to form the emerging cross-cultural cuisines.

The evolution of this ethnodiversity is apparent if viewed in the style of trend tracking previously noted. The media space given to cross-cultural cuisine has varied during the past decade, increasing and decreasing as the public varied its attentions. Mentions of mixing cuisines appeared in various sources such as Brooks and Bosker,¹⁸ Fabricant,¹⁹ and Lamalle.²⁰ These sources indicated that almost anything occurs in American food service.

Cross-Cultural Cuisine Is Enduring Trend

The opening of Chinois-on-Main in Santa Monica, California, in 1983 is credited as being the beginning of cross-cultural cuisine.²¹ However, the media attention toward cross-cultural cuisine did not become prolific until 1987. One of the early advocates of this cuisine was Ken Hom.²² He explained that the pairing of multiple nationalities of foods was a natural progression from the favoring of singular ethnic cuisines. The techniques and ingredients from China, France, Japan, and Italy are borrowed and lent to create composite dishes. He indicated that the fusion of many cuisines was not a fad, but a continually evolving style of cooking that is being explored by food service operators.²³ Fabricant²⁴ echoed Hom's opinions, agreeing that cross-cultural cuisine may be the most persistent and enduring food trend of the decade. In her columns, Fabricant has consistently referred to cross-cultural cuisine as a trend.

The attention given to cross-cultural cuisine continued to build during the following years. East-West fusion cuisine became so popular that numerous articles such as Fabricant,²⁵ Levin,²⁶ "San Francisco Restaurants Explore East-West Fusion,"²⁷ and Ryan and Stephenson²⁸ featured assorted chefs and operations along with their inspiring dishes. *Nation's Restaurant News* featured articles on cross-cultural cooking in their "Focus" and "Currents in Cuisine" sections.

Restaurateurs such as Tommy Toy of Haute Cuisine Chinoise, San Francisco, and Jeanette Holley of O'toto, Los Angeles, were interviewed by trade publications for their comments on cross-cultural cuisine. Liddle²⁹ and "World Flavors Take Root in U.S."³⁰ described Tommy Toy's as combining nouvelle Chinese-style presentations, in which foods were artfully arranged on plates and served with French butter and cream based sauces. An example of this combination is breast of duckling smoked with camphorwood and tea leaves, served with a plum-wine flavored buerre blanc. Holley, from O'toto, also uses a Euro-Asian cross-cultural fusion, reflecting her multicultural heritage and training. Her combinations include items such as goat cheese flan with grilled Japanese eggplant and fresh tomato sauce.³¹ The most current phase of the cross-cultural cuisine trend is the marriage of Mediterranean and Pacific Rim influences into unique combinations, giving chefs more creative opportunities than ever before.³²

Inexperienced chefs, though, can mismatch the ethnic ingredients and produce "international gibberish." Fabricant contends that "even if some of the ingredients do not speak the same native tongue, they should be suited to each other."³³ It is often these poorly combined dishes, nicknamed victims of the "chop suey-burrito syndrome," that discourage consumers' interest in cross-cultural cuisine. However, the appearance of many new and different restaurants producing cross-cultural cuisine seems to indicate that it is, and will be, a continuing trend.

Food Service Operators and Editors Interviewed

Structured telephone interviews were conducted with two groups: operators now using cross-cultural cuisine on their menus and food service editors who have industry-wide exposure to cross-cultural cuisine. Each respondent was asked a series of 15 structured, open-ended questions which were similar in nature to allow for triangulation between the operators, editors, and the literature reviewed.

This survey was administered during a two-week period in the spring of 1992 to a non-random sample of six operators, all located in California, the locale identified in the literature as the focal point of cross-cultural cuisine development. The establishments were identified from articles appearing in various trade journals, through travels in California, and from casual referrals. Five food service editors were interviewed representing *Food Management*, *Restaurant Business*, *Restaurant Hospitality*, *Restaurants & Institutions*, and *Food Service Director*. The respondents were read the series of scripted questions for their group, and their responses were recorded in a log book.

All respondents indicated that they were familiar with the term/concept "cross-cultural cuisine." All of the respondents were also in general agreement that cross-cultural cuisine was the mixing of two or more cultures' flavors, techniques, and ingredients.

The operators agreed that the multi-national mixes have to co-exist harmoniously. This composite definition corresponded with the synthesized definitions of Hom³⁴ and Fabricant.³⁵

Five of the six operators emphatically indicated that cross-cultural cuisine is a definite industry concept. They felt that the prime motivator for consumers exploring cross-cultural cuisine was the diners' increased sophistication levels, a change also noted in the 1989 consumer survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association. The operators also noted the cost benefits for both the operation and the consumers. One of the respondents explained that cross-cultural cuisine produces value for the restaurateur as the style is cost effective for the operation and cost popular for the consumer. For example, slipper lobster can be used in dishes versus the more expensive Maine lobster. Also, marinated second cuts of beef and lamb can be used instead of sirloin and tenderloin.

The dissenting operator explained that cross-cultural cuisine is not a concept in the entire industry, as the style is so complex and multi-faceted that very few chefs can prepare the dishes with expertise. Those chefs with appropriate expertise are in fine dining establishments which are not frequented by the general consumer population. This limitation was also discussed by Fabricant³⁶ who suggested that, although many chefs seeking attention attempt to create cross-cultural cuisine, the mixtures they produce are non-harmonious in flavors.

All of the editors agreed that cross-cultural cuisine is a definite concept in the food service industry. However, one editor qualified his answer by commenting that, in the restaurant business, terms are often applied loosely. He defined cross-cultural cuisine as a definite concept when the fused cuisines are studied and blended knowledgeably.

Three of the six operators indicated that they acknowledged cross-cultural cuisine as a theme in the food service industry around 1983, the year Chinois-on-Main opened. Two of the operators cited 1989, and one indicated 1972. Three of the editors also cited 1983, while the other two indicated 1989 as the year they saw cross-cultural cuisine as an industry theme.

Three of the operators indicated that they began using cross-cultural cuisine at their restaurants in 1990, but the other responses varied over a 13-year period. The editors indicated that their publications began writing about cross-cultural cuisine during the same years they acknowledged recognition of the theme, three in 1983 and two in 1989.

Operators Want New, Exciting Tastes

There were varied responses as to why the operators decided to market cross-cultural cuisine. However, the predominant factor that influenced them was their desire to introduce the consumers

to new, exciting tastes. One operator commented that Marco Polo had introduced pasta to King Ferdinand; so, he likewise wanted to introduce a new product to the general population. Many of the operators cited the fusion of their native homeland cuisines with cuisines from their formal training as a factor that drove them to promote cross-cultural cuisine. This blending of cuisines allowed them to express the "best of both worlds." The editors reported that their publications wrote about cross-cultural cuisine because of its progression toward a mainline trend. They also felt that the elements of cross-cultural cuisine appealed to many sectors within the industry because of its cost-efficiency, freedom of boundaries, and product excitement factor.

The six operators specified a total of seven different cuisines used, with Chinese mentioned the most frequently. Italian and Japanese were the next most frequently mentioned cuisines. The editors identified eight different cuisines as those most apparent in cross-cultural cuisine blendings. However, they mentioned Italian, French, and equatorial cuisines most frequently. The literature supports these reports of cuisines used as it suggested that East/West mixing is prevalent in current operations, but that newer establishments are experimenting with newer cuisines such as the equatorial cuisine.

Three of the six operators estimated that between 60 and 80 percent of their menus used cross-cultural cuisine. The other three operators reported that 100 percent of their menus contained cross-cultural cuisine. Only one editor responded to this question indicating that he thought 10 to 15 percent of restaurants were using this cuisine.

The menu price range stated by the operators ranged from \$10 to \$50; editors made no response to the question. The operators using cross-cultural cuisine in all of their menus indicated prices covering the complete price range. The remaining three chefs explained that the pricing fluctuated based on ingredient supply and demand, and that they could not give numerical answers. The operators commented, though, that because of the lower food cost required to produce the fusion dishes, their profit increased with the sale of cross-cultural dishes. The editors all confirmed that cross-cultural cuisine is very cost efficient. An example was given of a mixture of vegetarian ingredients and French flavors that produced an "expensive flavored" dish with a low food cost percentage.

The six operators indicated a variety of dishes as their customers' favorites. Examples of responses given were a signature dessert called Fortune Cookie Cannoli; Mein Platter which resembles a pupu platter combining antipastos with Chinese dim sum; filet of salmon with a black bean, ginger, garlic, and cilantro sauce on a bed of arugula and watercress, finished with a mango vinaigrette; squab with water chestnuts on iceberg lettuce; seafood bisque made with coconut milk, topped by puff pastry; Chinese

mushrooms made into duxelles, with foie gras. The editors, in contrast, focused their responses on cultures' flavors that were popular rather than actual dishes. The comments ranged from serving variations of salsas with everything, to Southwest spices mixed into French foods. The two editors that gave this last combination as an example noted that the fiery Southwest flavors harmonized well with the cool sedateness of the French style.

Appeal of Cross-Cultural Cuisine Grows

While the six operators' answers varied, the composite consumer was identified as a white collar business professional between the ages of 25 and 50. The operators could not comment if men or women were more likely to order cross-cultural cuisine, nor could they identify if marital status was a determining factor in consumer choice. The editors' combined responses described the clientele most likely to order cross-cultural cuisine as being cosmopolitan, white-collar professionals who are well traveled, and between the ages of 25 and 55. One editor noted that cross-cultural consumers are likely to spend a large portion of their disposable income on foods eaten out of the home. Although the composite consumer of cross-cultural cuisine is currently a rather elite cosmopolitan person, cross-cultural cuisine appears to have qualities that may be appealing to many more segments of the population. Because the general public may still be unable to afford trying this cuisine, pricing may be a deterrent to public knowledge of this cuisine style.

Four of the six operators predicted that cross-cultural cuisine would continue to be profitable for at least the next hundred years. They based their opinions on the increasing "globalization" and the abundance of cuisines still to be explored and experimented with in blending. The other two operators were more cautious in their longevity predictions for cross-cultural cuisine, basing their six to 13-year forecasts on consumers' changing palates. One operator commented that just as people previously ordered more red meat, they were now apt to order more fish and vegetables.

The editors were quite varied in their responses to the longevity of cross-cultural cuisine. The responses ranged from fusion cuisine being popular for only this season to it becoming mainstreamed and existing forever. Two editors predicted that cross-cultural cuisine would be profitable for another five to 12 years. Two qualifications on the time periods were how well cross-cultural cuisine is marketed and how skilled the chefs are that produce cross-cultural cuisine. As one editor replied, "When it's good, it's great, but when it's bad, it's lousy."

Globalization May Increase Growth

Respondents who were less optimistic about the profitable duration of cross-cultural cuisine cited consumer boredom as the major factor in their predictions. The boredom factor may be eliminated,

however, because of the increasing globalization that continues to introduce new ingredients and styles of preparation. A more specific statement may be that East/West fusion cuisine will be declining in the next five to 12 years, only to be replaced by new ethnic combinations.

Five of the six operators defined cross-cultural cuisine as a trend rather than a fad, based on the definitions read to them. A trend was defined as an occurrence which is predictable, developing over time, and constantly evolving, while a fad as an occurrence which is unpredictable, short lived, spontaneous, and gimmicky. The five operators also agreed that the stated definitions were appropriate for the food service industry. The sixth operator had no comment. Responding operators agreed that serious chefs encouraged cross-cultural cuisine's being seen as a trend. However, they felt that chefs who prepared cross-cultural cuisine only to be a part of the trend usually were not knowledgeable enough to create harmonious blends and, consequently, contributed to the recognition of this cuisine as a fad. One of the operators commented that cross-cultural cuisine started as a fad and evolved into a trend as more people enjoyed it. This change was related to the evolution of pasta from being a fad food in the late 1970s to maintaining the trend status it occupies today.

Four of five editors defined cross-cultural cuisine as a trend versus a fad based on the definitions read to them. However, they based their decisions on different reasons. One stated that, with the general population enjoying cross-cultural cuisine, its trend status was solidified. Another two editors remarked that the increased "globalization" has affected food consumption patterns and led to cross-cultural cuisine. The final editor responded that defining cross-cultural cuisine as a trend "legitimized" the creative blendings that chefs have been doing for years. The dissenting editor defined cross-cultural cuisine as a fad tied to the stronger trend of ethnic foods.

The general responses from the operators was that cross-cultural cuisine is here because of consumers dictating demand and chefs educating their guests and influencing product development. Consumers want new, exciting tastes at reasonable prices. Because of this two-fold demand, chefs are working with traditional and new ingredients and preparation styles to give consumers what they want at the prices they want to pay. Editors were in general agreement that cross-cultural cuisine's future is based on increased marketing efforts and clearly defining the product to the public. With the American public being more exploratory in the search for new and exciting foods, if cross-cultural cuisine is merchandised well, it will be a trend for years to come. The second major comment from editors involved the spread of cross-cultural cuisine from fine dining operations to the untapped chain restaurant market. The editors' combined responses indicated that cross-

cultural cuisine has the following to move into this market; thus, it could become widely introduced to the general population.

If cross-cultural cuisine is really a trend, then interest in this type of food should have continued in California and gained at least some acceptance in other areas of the United States since data were collected in the spring of 1992. To see if there was further indication that cross-cultural cuisine was indeed a trend and not just a passing fad, a brief review of current industry periodicals was conducted in late spring of 1993, and an additional seven operators were interviewed in the summer of 1993 using the same procedures and questions that were used in the original data collection.

Cuisine Spreads to Metropolitan Areas

Indications in the literature were that cross-cultural cuisine concepts, or the blending of foods of different ethnic or cultural origins, was not only still well established in California, but had also spread to other major metropolitan areas throughout the U.S. As an example of some of the discussion in industry periodicals, Fabricant³⁷ mentions a number of restaurants across the country from Las Vegas, Nevada, to New York City that have developed new, exciting menu items that incorporate new cuisine mixtures, such as a terrine of peppered goat cheese with walnut pesto served by La Bellecour in Lexington, Massachusetts, or the grilled Atlantic salmon with red wine sauce, savoy cabbage, and pesto mashed potatoes served by the Rose Cafe in Manhattan.

Tougas³⁸ noted that Kevin Delahunt, vice president of marketing for Sargento Food Service, sees even more ethnic and pan-ethnic concepts on the horizon than are already being used, and that the National Restaurant Association's 1992 Menu Analysis revealed a greater availability of multiple ethnic cuisines in restaurants than ever before. Many of the cross-cultural creations are being used to enhance the signature style of the restaurants creating the new cuisine. For example, Tougas³⁹ mentions that Goldstein's Square One in San Francisco offers an appetizer of deep-fried eggplant chips with cilantro chutney and that the Anaqua Grill in the Plaza San Antonio offers a tapas bar which reflects not only the traditional Southwestern foods, but also offers a sampler plate of hot tapas that reflect Thai, Pacific Rim, Italian, and Southwestern flavors, among other restaurants and menu items noted.

Still other examples of the continued interest in and spread of cross-cultural cuisine include the creations of Robert Reash, Jr. at the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel's Riva Restaurant. Reash, known for his ability to develop menus offering a harmonious range of Southwestern, Pacific Rim, and Mediterranean flavors, has created new menu choices for the Riva which include Szechuan-style baby back ribs with baby corn relish and steamed

sea bass in lemon-ginger broth with lobster won tons and papaya chutney.⁴⁰ Even chefs traditionally offering classic French cuisine have joined the cross-cultural trend. Fabricant⁴¹ notes that French cooking has gradually been moving into the multicultural mainstream. To illustrate her point, she cites examples such as the Chinese spiced red snapper with port sauce and crepes which Le Bernardin is serving for the Comite' Colbert and the pan-seared squab with potato puree and white truffle oil followed by a sorbet of lemon grass served by the Le Chantilly.

Cross-Culture Cuisine Becomes Routine

Responses of operators interviewed in 1993 also strongly indicated that cross-cultural cuisine was even more prevalent than it had been in the spring of 1992. Indeed a key point made in some of the initial phone contacts with California operators to try to set up interviews for the data collection was that cross-cultural cuisine was now so much a part of most restaurants' menu selection that it was no longer a news-worthy topic. It had become part of the customers' routine expectations, and operators had to see that at least some cross-cultural items were included in their menus.

The seven operators interviewed in 1993 included two in California and five from other states including Arizona, Washington, New York, and Florida. It was decided to talk with operators outside of California because of the indication from initial phone calls to California operators that cross-cultural cuisine was well established there and to verify that this concept had indeed spread across the U.S. and was now widely accepted in many metropolitan areas.

All seven respondents indicated that they were familiar with the concept of cross-cultural cuisine. When asked their definition of cross-cultural cuisine, most included some reference to a blending of multi-national, regional, ethnic, or cultural flavors and techniques in their responses. Some referred to it as "new world" cuisine representative of the cultural "melting pot" which has been the heritage of the United States.

All respondents also acknowledged that cross-cultural cuisine was a definite concept in today's food service industry. One respondent commented that the concept had been developing over time as a natural out-growth of American chefs developing their own style as opposed to relying on traditional tried and true classics. Also, as was the case with the original respondents, one respondent commented that all cultural combinations do not work and that inexperienced chefs can often create a "mess" rather than a gourmet delight. Most respondents indicated that they believed cross-cultural cuisine had existed as a concept for many years and the several cultures that made up the United States population gradually blended together. However, two indicated that it had received new attention as a concept over the last seven to 10

years. Three respondents indicated that they had used cross-cultural cuisine in their restaurant for seven to 12 years while the other four indicated that they had incorporated it into their menus only in the last two to five years. There was no geographic pattern related to the length of time that the operators had used cross-cultural cuisine in their restaurants. Market demand was unanimously given as the reason for offering this type of cuisine, and six of the seven respondents indicated that all of their menus consisted of cross-cultural cuisine. The seventh respondent indicated that about 80 percent of his menu was this type of cuisine. The respondents indicated the use of 10 different cuisines in their recipes, ranging from the pioneer foods of the American immigrants to Caribbean and African foods, among others. Asian and French cuisines were mentioned most, followed by South American and Italian, a pattern similar to the one found in 1992.

Menu Prices Are Moderate

Six of seven respondents indicated a moderate price range from about \$6 to \$17. The seventh restaurant was an upscale restaurant with menu prices of approximately \$50 per person. The prices indicated by the six operators with moderate prices are a little lower than the 1992 prices quoted, indicating that these foods may be moving more into the mainstream of restaurant selections. The indication that almost all of the foods on these operators' menus were this type of cuisine may lend credence to the supposition that these foods are becoming part of the expected items on restaurant menus.

A wide variety of dishes were indicated as customers' favorites: grilled fish with conch citrus couscous and citrus butter; salmon with Moroccan spices and basil mashed potatoes; crabmeat croquettes with pico de gallo; lamb ravioli with cilantro pesto; and lamb parfait made of Armenian lamb, chick peas, eggplant, and oven roasted tomatoes. Again it seemed that the variety of foods offered was limited only by the imagination of the chefs preparing the foods.

Operators' responses regarding the demographic characteristics of clientele most likely to order cross-cultural cuisine provide further evidence of the cuisine's movement into the mainstream of foods. Only two narrowed the age range of clientele who preferred this cuisine to the 20 to 45-age range which paralleled the age range indicated in 1992. All others said that all types of persons of all ages requested these foods. The only characteristic that all respondents indicated as being a defining characteristic of cross-cultural clientele was that they were upper class, even though six of the seven operators indicated a moderate price range for their foods.

Respondents were unanimous in their opinions that cross-cultural cuisine will be a saleable item for a very long time and that it is, without question, a trend. One respondent even went so far

as to say it was in the trend toddler stage, indicating that it as yet had a strong growth period and a long life span ahead. Their emphatic responses in this regard, compared to the hesitancy noted in some of the responses made in 1992, would seem to indicate that cross-cultural cuisine has solidified over the past year as an important trend in restaurant cuisine and has gained increasing acceptance wherever it is offered.

That cross-cultural cuisine is a trend in the food service industry was not only indicated through data collected in 1992, but also in follow-up data collected 15 months later. Operators stated that only serious chefs produce "true" cross-cultural cuisine because of the knowledge it takes to harmoniously mix ethnic cuisines. However, an expanding force of such chefs, responding to the demands of an ever expanding customer base for this style of cuisine, will serve to promote cross-cultural cuisine as an even stronger trend in the future.

Cross-cultural cuisine is the newest dimension in today's food service industry. Although its roots can be traced back to Marco Polo's and Columbus' voyages, the modern version of fusion cuisine is just beginning. With the wide variety of ingredients now available by jet from around the world, chefs have more freedom than ever before to explore the unlimited culinary possibilities. This freedom is encouraged by the consumers' demands for healthy, price conscious products. The answer lies in cross-cultural cuisine with the creativity and options indigenous to fusion cuisine.

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- ³⁵Fabricant, 1987, *op. cit.*
- ³⁶Fabricant, 1989, *op. cit.*
- ³⁷Florence Fabricant, "Pesto's Variety: The Spice of Life," *Nation's Restaurant News*, (April 12, 1993), p. 31.
- ³⁸Jane Grant Tougas, "Appetizer Appeal," *Cheers*, (May/June 1993), p. 29.
- ³⁹Jane Grant Tougas, "Signature Style," *Cheers*, (May/June 1993), p. 31-32.
- ⁴⁰Richard Martin, "Robert Reash Jr.: Culinary Creativity by the Sea," *Nation's Restaurant News*, (May 31, 1993), p. 27, 29.
- ⁴¹Florence Fabricant, "The French Fight Back," *Nation's Restaurant News*, (May 31, 1993), p. 25.

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