

# PLANET JACKSON HOLE

## THE FOODIE FILES: Distinctive Desires

By *Annie Fenn, MD* on January 12, 2016



A trend that will perhaps never die: the delicious comfort of chocolate bread pudding at Rendezvous Bistro. (Photo: kendra allesandro)

Jackson, WY – One of the things I love most about living in Jackson is that our town is not trendy at all. Most locals don't pay much attention to what's in style outside of our cozy mountain bubble, where a puffy jacket thrown over jeans and a T-shirt is almost always appropriate dinner attire.

But when it comes to food and drink, even the most anti-trendy mountain dweller appreciates an infusion of new flavors — a twist on a classic cocktail to mix up after a day of skiing, a novel ingredient to throw into the elk stew or the next seasonal menu from a favorite chef.

Fine Dining Restaurant Group owner Gavin Fine agrees that our food scene is not about keeping up with the latest national trend. "Nothing we do is trendy," he said. Urban dining trends that are hatched in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago can take years to reach us out here in the Mountain West. Or not. Some trends — like the national obsession with cupcakes — die out before they even get to Jackson. Luckily, we never had to endure the opening (and closing) of a cupcake shop in our town.

In an attempt to define the food trends of a non-trendy town, I spoke with some of the leading culinary minds in our community — the chefs, grocers, restauranteurs, butchers, farmers, mixologists and food enthusiasts who pay attention to what we eat and drink. 2015 was a great year for eating in Jackson Hole. Based on what these local food luminaries are predicting, 2016 is poised to be even better.

## **Comforting, nostalgic desserts**

What's trending on dessert menus in Jackson Hole? Executive pastry chef Chad Horton, who creates all of the desserts for Fine Dining Restaurant Group's restaurants and catering, says that Jackson diners don't go for trendy sweets. Arguably the busiest pastry chef in Jackson Hole, Horton dreams up new desserts while he sleeps. He has an eye on all the dessert trends and keeps those he thinks are interesting and that would fit with what locals love. Last year he saw mini desserts, savory donuts, asymmetrical plating, cones as food, black garlic in dessert and a long run of the popularity of salty with sweet. (I loved it when he put caramel corn in his crême brûlée). Although he likes to debut a new dessert menu each season, there are some things locals demand year round — like the chocolate bread pudding at Rendezvous Bistro. "If I take it off the menu, diners write me notes in crayon on the tables begging to bring it back," Horton said. What is he excited about in 2016? "Homey, nostalgic, old-fashioned cakes" that take him back to his Ohio childhood with visions of June Cleaver in the kitchen baking a cake. "My grandmother's name was actually June," he said, "and I love making down-homey, imperfect cakes that take us back to a simpler time." Horton sees 2016 as the year of the "messy dessert," the "nostalgic dessert" and another big year for ice cream. "Even when it's 20 below, people here love eating ice cream," he noted. That's especially true when the ice cream is Horton's signature ice cream sandwich. Horton and Fine Dining will soon launch Cream + Sugar, a new artisan ice cream company. "That ice cream sandwich — it will be my legacy," Horton said.

## **The year of the neighborhood butcher shop**

And Fine Dining executive chef Joel Tate has honed his charcuterie and butchering skills to create an entire line of meats now offered for sale in the market of the Bodega at Teton Village. This year it will be possible to buy truly exceptional meat products, easily traced back to the animal and farm of origin, from a score of butchers who will have no problem telling you exactly what's in that sausage you are about to eat. Let's hope that's a trend that is here to stay. PJH