

Our changing tastes in 2012

It's a new year and time to reflect on what and where we'll be eating. **Elizabeth Meryment** consults the experts on what we can expect.



COLIN FASSNIDGE
Head chef at the Four In Hand Dining Room, Paddington

What's your food highlight of 2011?
Going to Noma (in Denmark), mainly because of the service, which is the way it's starting to happen over here — laid-back and informal, relaxed and interactive.

What's your food prediction for 2012?
More simple, no-waste restaurants without million-dollar fit-outs and chefs more involved with their customers.

Who is your food hero and why?
(Melbourne chef) Andrew McConnell. I love his food, his rooms are all different, and his style changes with each new restaurant rather than creating a chain.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Pork! Surprise! But I'll be starting to use more chilli with it and spicing it up.

MATT MORAN
Chef and co-owner of ARIA Restaurant, Circular Quay, and MasterChef judge

What was your food highlight of 2011?
Dinner at Andre in Singapore. I had no expectations and all 18 courses of the degustation menu were knock-out.

What's your food prediction for 2012?
People will want different dining experiences, as well as the traditional three-course dinner. They will also want more relaxed dining options with shared-plates menus. Fresh produce and its traceability to Australia and our local regions will continue to be important.

Who is your food hero and why?
I don't have a one-food hero. There are so many influences, but would have to say Greta from Junior MasterChef is a force to be reckoned for (at age 11) and in years to come.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Moran's Family Lamb (I'm being cheeky). But as I am opening a restaurant with a market garden (see Top 2012 Restaurants, page 102) I would have to say baby vegetables.



ENRICO PARADISO
Co-owner of Fratelli Paradiso, Potts Point and 10 William Street, Paddington

What was your food highlight of 2011?
My dad's chicken drumettes with chicory.

What's your trend forecast for food in 2012?
Barbecueing, bio-dynamically of course.

Who is your food hero?
The next winner of Junior MasterChef.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Avocado.



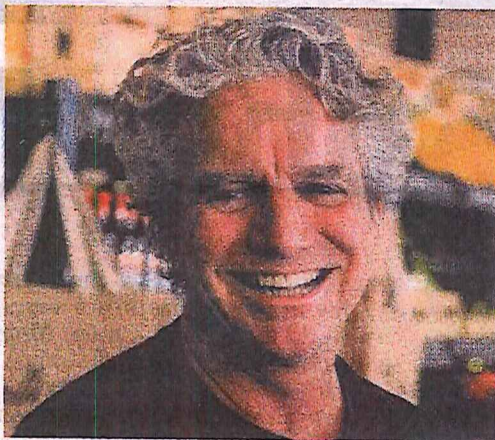
CARMEL RUGGERI
Restaurateur and hostess at La Casa Ristorante, Russell Lea

What was your food highlight of 2011?
At Easter time we Sicilians from the region of Ragusa make a dish called scacce (similar to pies). It had been a couple of years since we had them, so this year my gorgeous 4-foot zia (aunt) Dora made enough for a small village when there were only 10 of us for lunch.

What's your food prediction for 2012?
People will go back to the rustic charm of simple, real tasty food. They won't really care any more if it's grown on the south valley of the Po River where the sun sets at a 90 degree angle or if it's sous vide. More and more I hear customers want to eat like they are home, but as long as someone else is doing the cooking.

Who's your food hero and why?
My current food hero is my one and only and always hero, my great aunt, zia Matilda. She is in her 80s and still making fresh pasta, biscotti and feasts for the family.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Ricotta of course. We Sicilians put it in everything!



BARRY MCDONALD
Owner of the Fratelli Fresh produce chain

What was your food highlight of 2011?
Going to Chez Panisse in San Francisco with my wife and two daughters, for its incredibly simple, produce-driven food. And it's more than 40 years old.

What's your food prediction for 2012?
Accountability and provenance for the food we eat.

Who is your food hero?
Nick Lander writes on restaurants for the Weekend Financial Times. He has insightful comments and a different perspective.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Same as every year — a great tomato.

VALLI LITTLE
Food director at delicious. magazine

What was your 2011 food highlight?
Eating freshly made, warm tofu at Dragon Well Manor at West Lake in China.

What's your food prediction for 2012?
Foraging and food trucks coming to Sydney.

Who's your food hero and why?
Gabrielle Hamilton from Prune restaurant in New York. I have just read her book and to quote Anthony Bourdain, it's "simply the best memoir of a chef ever!"

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Valrhona PI25 chocolate. They use a different method to extract cocoa. When you make ice cream with it the result is a luscious soft style that tastes sublime.



ROBERTA MUIR
Manager of Sydney Seafood School

What was your food highlight of 2011?
A week eating with my Mum, husband and 16-year-old niece Grace, in Paris's wonderfully inexpensive, beautifully authentic bistros, including Aux Lyonnais and Chez Dumonet-Josephine. I loved the charcuterie, rustic terrines, escargot, endive and roquefort salad, stuffed morels, great bread and simple desserts like meringues.

What's your food trend forecast for 2012?
Regionality. There's no such thing as Italian or Chinese, for example. Instead there's very distinctive cuisines from the diverse regions that make up these countries.

Who is your food hero?
David Thompson. He's single-handedly taught Australians about Thai food.

What ingredient can't you live without in 2012?
Pepe Saya butter and Sonoma miche bread — I can eat it for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

