

# TOP ASIAN FOOD TRENDS FOR 2016

A new veg hero, an awful lot of offal and Instagrammable food: we take a look at what's hotting up in the Asian restaurant world in 2016.



## THE NEW VEG IN TOWN

Cauliflower may have been the veg du jour for 2015, appearing roasted, fried until crispy and made into 'cous cous', but in 2016 kohlrabi looks set to steal the veggie limelight.

The sputnik-shaped member of the cabbage family is being championed by chefs such as Yotam Ottolenghi, and praised for its mild flavour and radish-like crunch. In Asian restaurants it's likely to appear shaved into light, zesty salads, made into fermented kimchi, added to curries or even deep-fried as tempura.

## LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD...

As the British foodie public becomes increasingly adventurous and eager to sample novel flavours, global cuisines that have previously been little-appreciated in the UK are ever more in demand. Diners who are eager to travel through their taste buds are now looking to the Philippines, Taiwan, Laos and Sri Lanka for gastronomic inspiration.

## ...BUT ALSO KEEPING IT LOCAL

It may seem counterintuitive, but Asian chefs are increasingly looking to incorporate the best of local British produce into their menus. As well as encouraging innovative cooking, this has the added benefit for proprietors of helping to make their restaurants more sustainable. (See our feature on sustainability page 26)

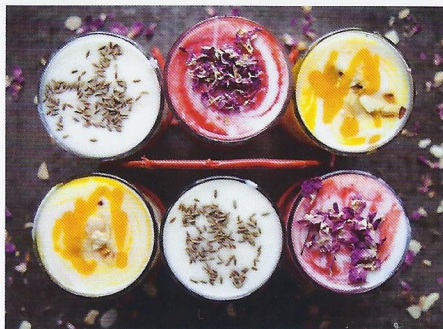
## BONE MARROW AND OFFAL

The high-end British restaurant market

has embraced offal over the past few years, with the economical nose-to-tail approach to cooking becoming more popular with chefs and sophisticated diners alike. Of course, the use of offal is nothing new to Asian cooking, but until recently UK diners have been reticent to try curried brains or seared beef heart. This may be changing, however, with dishes such as Sri Lankan restaurant Hoppers' bone marrow varuval or Sichuan Folk's trotters with pickled chilli encouraging diners out of their comfort zone.

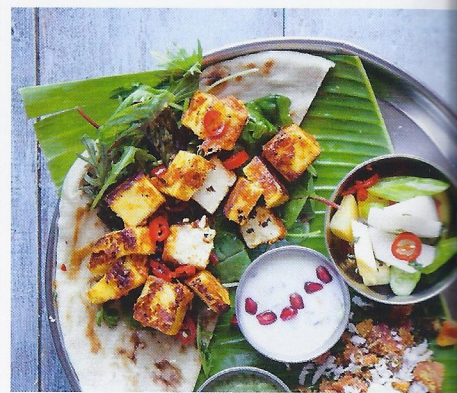
## 'EAT AND TWEET': SOCIAL MEDIA-FRIENDLY FOOD

Not a new trend for 2016, admittedly, but diners' desire for show-off meals they can share on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter shows no signs of abating. Similarly, savvy restaurateurs are capitalising on ever more food-centric social media platforms to create a buzz about their new season menus or get the word out to diners



## REGIONAL SPECIALITIES

In November 2015 Asian Curry Awards judge George Shaw reported 'a strong industry trend towards more authentic, regional dishes'. This is epitomised



by restaurants like the Chilli Pickle in Brighton, which employs chefs from different parts of India, drawing on their expertise to create regional dishes.

'Customers are looking more and more for new eating experiences and are generally no longer content to accept the standard templates for menus on offer,' explains Curry Pickle chef and owner Alun Sperring. 'In Indian cuisine regional offerings have become more fashionable. India is such a vast and diverse country full of so many cultures, climates and religions that offer an endless palette for a curious and passionate chef.'

Although Indian restaurants in the UK have been offering regional fare for some time, this is now looking likely to roll out to Chinese restaurants, which until now have tended to offer a selection of dishes to meet UK diners' expectations. Just as many British curry fans now recognise the difference between the food of Kerala and that of Kashmir, devotees of Chinese food may soon be distinguishing between Sichuan, Shandong and Anhui cuisine. **AR**