

Insects Innovation in Gastronomy

COURSE SUPPORT



Module 2 Unit 2:

From aversion do adventure. Persuasive strategies to propose rare ingredients to customers

Disclaimer:

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Food trends are constantly evolving, and history shows us that what was once considered undesirable or even discarded can become a sought-after delicacy. By understanding the psychology behind food perception and applying thoughtful strategies, chefs and restaurateurs can inspire curiosity and encourage consumers to embrace rare and unconventional ingredients. This journey from aversion to adventure relies on blending cultural storytelling, creative presentation, and persuasive techniques to shift perceptions and redefine what we consider desirable food.

The evolution of rare and discarded food into delicacies

Throughout history, cultural shifts, social norms, and environmental conditions have transformed the way certain foods are valued. Many ingredients now prized as gourmet delicacies were once seen as undesirable or even discarded. Lobster, for instance, was once regarded as food for the poor, while offal and organ meats were commonly consumed out of necessity. Over time, innovative chefs elevated these ingredients, crafting refined dishes that gained social prestige. The social psychology of food plays a key role in this transformation. Rare or complex-to-prepare foods often symbolize wealth and exclusivity. Ingredients such as foie gras, truffles, and caviar reflect this shift from abundance to luxury, becoming markers of status in elite dining. More recently, sustainability efforts have influenced this trend further, with chefs reimagining discarded foods, such as vegetable scraps and fish bones, as creative, eco-friendly ingredients in fine dining. The tradition of utilizing all parts of animals and plants has long been a way to reduce waste and maximize resources. Ingredients such as kidneys, blood sausage, and lamb intestines were once considered "poor food" yet have remained cultural staples in various regions. Similarly, cod, once a common and affordable fish, has become a rare delicacy due to environmental pressures, turning it into a prized feature on gourmet menus. Forgotten fish species, once popular but later overlooked, are now being revived in sustainable dining movements. Wild herbs, once foraged out of necessity during wartime, are now celebrated in Michelin-starred restaurants for their distinctive flavors and natural qualities. Similarly, perceptions of animals vary greatly across cultures. While horses are viewed as pets in some countries, they are considered traditional food in others. This contrast illustrates how cultural norms shape our understanding of what is acceptable to eat.

Insects have also emerged as a promising food source, supported by EFSA's recognition of their safety and nutritional value. While insects have long been consumed in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, Western chefs are increasingly experimenting with them to align with sustainable food practices. Even controversial foods like *casu marzu*, the Sardinian cheese fermented with live maggots, demonstrate how deeply cultural traditions influence perceptions of what is edible.

The world-renowned restaurant *Mirazur* has embraced unconventional ingredients like roots and imperfect fruits, turning them into celebrated features of its menu. By showcasing these ingredients

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as part of a luxurious dining experience, they challenge traditional ideas of what qualifies as "desirable" food. This movement emphasizes creativity, sustainability, and a deeper connection between consumers and the origins of their food.

Persuasive strategies for promoting rare ingredients

Successfully encouraging consumers to embrace rare and unconventional ingredients requires strategic approaches rooted in psychology and marketing. One effective technique is to reframe these ingredients as desirable by emphasizing their nutritional benefits, environmental sustainability, or cultural significance. By presenting offal, insects, or forgotten vegetables as gourmet and ethically responsible choices, restaurants can elevate their status and attract curious diners.

Creative presentation plays a key role in overcoming initial resistance. By plating unfamiliar ingredients in visually appealing ways, chefs transform hesitation into curiosity. Descriptive language further enhances this effect—describing a dish as "rich," "velvety," or "robust" draws attention to its flavor profile rather than its origins, making it feel more inviting.

Interactive dining experiences create opportunities for engagement and discovery. Chef-led tastings, storytelling about ingredient origins, and themed dinners turn unfamiliar foods into immersive experiences that diners are more willing to explore. Through this approach, rare ingredients become conversation pieces rather than culinary risks.

Leveraging social proof is another powerful strategy. When diners see friends, influencers, or respected chefs enjoying unconventional foods, they are more likely to try them themselves. Social media campaigns featuring attractive images, creative plating, and engaging narratives can help normalize rare ingredients and position them as trendy or desirable.

Connecting rare foods to sustainability values further strengthens their appeal. As consumers become more conscious of environmental concerns, promoting insects, offal, or overlooked vegetables as eco-friendly alternatives taps into their desire to make responsible food choices. By highlighting the reduced waste, lower environmental footprint, and ethical advantages of these ingredients, restaurants align themselves with modern dining values.

By blending these persuasive strategies—reframing ingredients, enhancing presentation, offering immersive experiences, and promoting sustainability—chefs can transform rare and discarded foods into exciting culinary opportunities. This approach not only helps redefine what is considered valuable in food but also encourages consumers to explore new and enriching dining experiences.

Conclusion

We hope this unit will help you find motivation to reframe rare ingredients as desirable, using creative presentation, and embracing the power of storytelling, chefs and restaurateurs can inspire curiosity and expand the culinary landscape. With thoughtful strategies, discarded foods can become gourmet delicacies, and rare ingredients can take their place as prized elements of modern dining. Thank you for your attention and see you in the next unit.