

# TASTEMAKERS

FOOD & DRINK TRENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



**ALL HANDS ON DECK**  
American chef Blaine Wetzel preparing a dish at a Gelinaz! event in Tuscany

TUSCANY

## Team Players

A merry band of international chefs is bucking the trend of the culinary solo act

BY JAY CHESHES

This July, 17 of the world's most creative chefs huddled over pots and pans in the kitchens of a luxe Tuscan villa, riffing off each other and the region's traditional fare. Guests sat like monks at long wooden tables in the darkened dining room. As somber music filled the halls, out came the first course, a sweet-savory soup of pig's blood and chocolate from Italy's Agata Felluga. Next, three Latin American chefs—Argentina's Mauro Colagreco, Peru's Virgilio Martínez and Chile's Rodolfo Guzmán—sent out a plate of seven varieties of potato, which they had smuggled across international

borders. Swede Petter Nilsson and the French-Basque Inaki Aizpitarte followed up with tripe and wild mushrooms, and everyone pitched in on the crispy pig's head that Belgium's Kobe Desramauts unveiled toward the end of the night—a last minute addition after a suitcase full of ingredients failed to arrive.

These days, chefs have more opportunities to join forces than ever before, sharing food-festival stages, restaurant kitchens and TV sets. No single enterprise, however, has pushed the collaborative spirit quite as far as Gelinaz!, a confederacy of

culinary experimenters. The group, a sort of gastronomic jam band, meets a few times a year to blow the roof off conventional cooking, hosting ribald evenings of experimental cooking and free-flowing drink, like the four-hour, 13-course Tuscan feast described above.

Andrea Petrini, the Italian food writer who launched the group with chef Fulvio Pierangelini, considers it a performance troupe. "We want to break the boundaries between food and art," he says. The name, for example, is a jokey homage to the virtual rock band Gorillaz, whose members all come from disparate musical styles. ■

⇒ Gelinaz! started small in 2005, with five chefs from Western Europe each offering a version of the same dish at San Sebastian's Gastronomika food conference. The performance raised questions about creative ownership and a chef's role in the spotlight—revolutionary thinking for such an ego-driven industry. Last year, after a long hiatus, the group grew its ranks to 25 chefs and reconvened for a 10-hour dinner during a Belgian food festival, with each chef serving a take on a 19th-century chicken dish—a test of stamina and palate fatigue. “How many variations on the same dish can you eat?” wondered Petrini. The event featured Japanese dance, a violinist playing an Iron Maiden song and topless women in *Eyes Wide Shut* masks. Octopus was the star last fall at a feast in Peru, which this time included shirtless young men and a performer in a *Predator* costume.

The recent Tuscan event was billed as a “spiritual retreat.” The feast closed out a hedonistic weekend at the Acqua Panna company's 450-year-old Villa Panna estate, and participants mapped out future endeavors in the on-site chapel. “We'll be building more bridges between cuisine and other means of expression,” says Petrini, whose next spectacle will take place in a still-secret location in the spring.



**CIN CIN!**  
A Gelinaz! dinner  
in Tuscany



**BOARDING PASS**

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## Croptails

Vegetable-based cocktails move beyond the Bloody Mary

Why not nourish your body while getting a buzz on? Inspired by the green juice craze, mixologists have begun adding kale,

beet, cucumber and carrot juices to their concoctions. And while these ingredients indeed add a boost of vitamins and antioxidants, don't think of them as purely restorative or, worse yet, medicinal. These crisper-drawer finds pack an earthy punch that just can't be achieved with the more popular—and more aggressive—fruit juices that usually show up in cocktails. At Denver's Mizuna, Austin Carson muddles watercress, grown hydroponically in-house, with fresh lime and simple syrup for the gin-based Prudence and Hammersmith. With its notes of pine and juniper and its bright, herbaceous quality, gin pairs especially well with veggies. At LA hotspot Willie Jane, Derrick Bass freezes English peas to accentuate their vibrant green color before puréeing them and shaking them up with gin for the Princess and the Pea. And Chicago's Mercadito combines kale and cilantro with lime, grated ginger and pineapple to make a tasty blend worthy of any juice bar. It all sounds super healthful—until you add the tequila. —JACQUELINE DETWILER



**EASY BEING GREEN**

Austin Carson straining a Prudence and Hammersmith at Denver's Mizuna

*Prudence and Hammersmith*

Created by Austin Carson of Mizuna

- Handful fresh watercress
- 2 oz. Sipsmith London Dry Gin
- 3/8 oz. simple syrup
- Splash of ginger beer, preferably Barritt's
- 3/4 oz. fresh lime juice
- Ice

Muddle watercress, simple syrup and lime juice. Top with gin, a splash of ginger beer and ice. Shake. Serve straight up in a dessert wine or tequila glass. Garnish with a lime wheel.