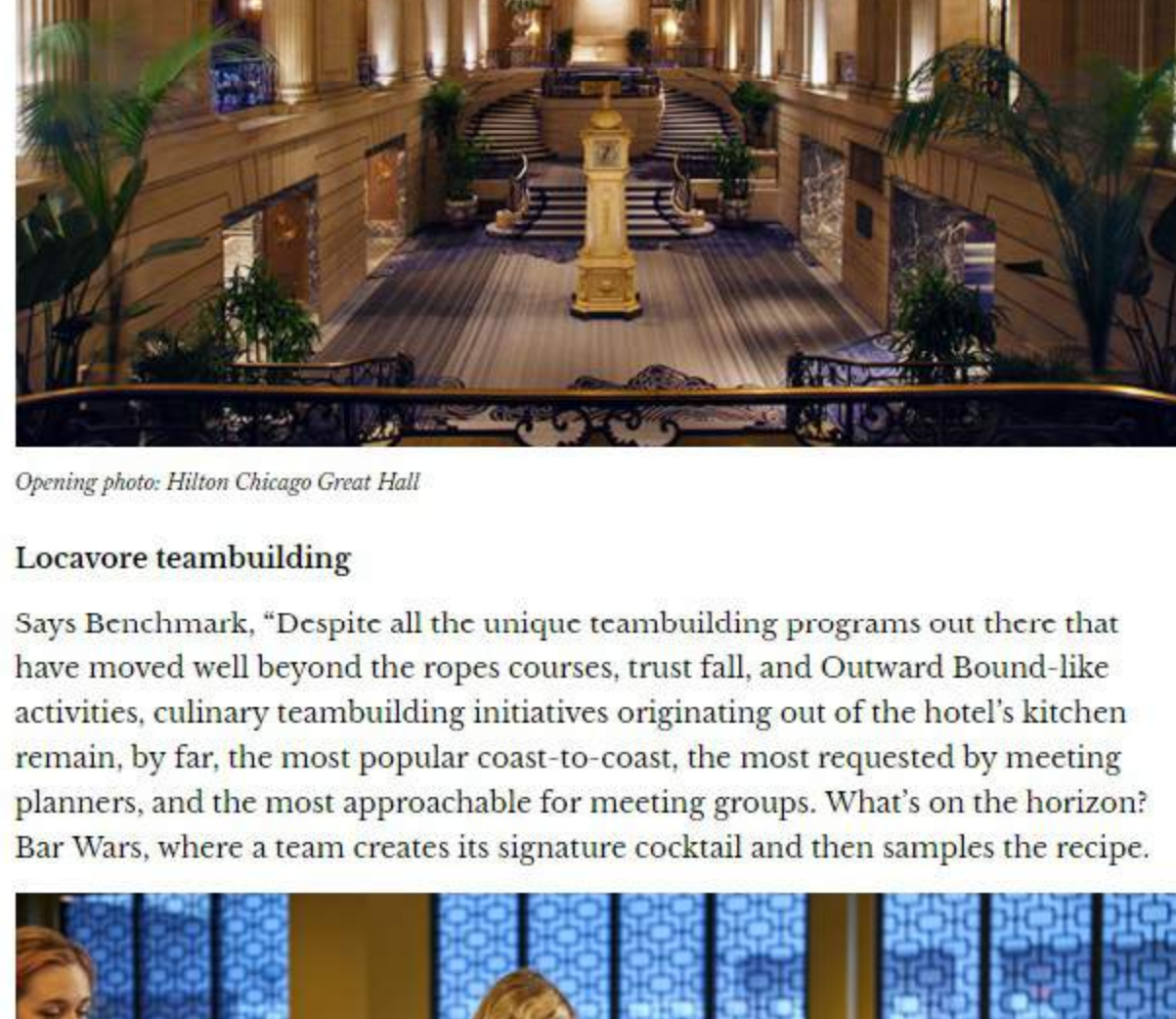


## Hotel F&B Trends for 2018



By *Kathleen Stoehr*  
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After polling hotels, resorts, and conference centers in locations coast-to-coast, off shore, and internationally, **Benchmark**, a global hospitality company, released its findings for 2018 meeting, convention, and event trends. Here is a close look at some of the more prominent F&B trends.



Opening photo: Hilton Chicago Great Hall

### Locavore teambuilding

Says Benchmark, “Despite all the unique teambuilding programs out there that have moved well beyond the ropes courses, trust fall, and Outward Bound-like activities, culinary teambuilding initiatives originating out of the hotel’s kitchen remain, by far, the most popular coast-to-coast, the most requested by meeting planners, and the most approachable for meeting groups. What’s on the horizon? Bar Wars, where a team creates its signature cocktail and then samples the recipe.



Beignet making session at Hilton New Orleans Riverside. Photo courtesy HANNAFOTO LLC / Sam Hanna



Here are some examples from properties working on this type of concept:

**Hilton New Orleans Riverside** recently introduced culinary classes in the new Lagniappe29 private meetings space on the 29th floor, for groups to interact with the chef and beverage team. While overlooking the Mississippi River, groups enjoy classes including beignet making with the chef, Ilurricane mixology classes at Public Belt bar and lounge, and demonstrations making Drago’s Restaurant’s signature charbroiled oysters drenched in butter and cheese for a true Big Easy culinary experience.



Cooking demo at Fairmont Scottsdale Princess

At **Well & Being Spas** (**Fairmont Scottsdale Princess**, **Four Seasons Resort & Club Dallas Las Colinas** and **Red Rock Casino, Resort + Spa**) groups can enjoy live cooking demonstrations, where they’ll learn from superstar chefs how to make healthful meals of their own at home. For an interactive experience, groups can participate in the popular Mason jar salad challenge, a creative breakout that challenges teams to build the healthiest and most delicious salad.

In an effort to make guests a part of the culinary experience, **Grand Hyatt Baha Mar**’s new Regatta Food Hall boasts open kitchens throughout the space to encourage guests to interact with the chefs. The resort’s Executive Chef Brent Martin is known to welcome guests personally at the door, as well as make personal suggestions that perfectly match their taste personality.



From a pizza making session at Hilton West Palm Beach



Smoked Old Fashioned at Hilton West Palm Beach

**Hilton West Palm Beach**: The newly redesigned restaurant at Hilton West Palm Beach, **Galley**, known for its art-meets-local vibe, offers interactive approaches from garnish-your-own pizza to tableside mixology team building. Other highlights for groups include company themed cocktails crafted by in-house mixologist to celebrate corporate pride; tableside cocktails created by the Smoked Old Fashion, presented in an aromatic glass globe and made with the restaurant’s own bourbon; potted herbs on each table for personalized seasoning of the wood fired steaks; and chef-guided DIY pizza making classes.

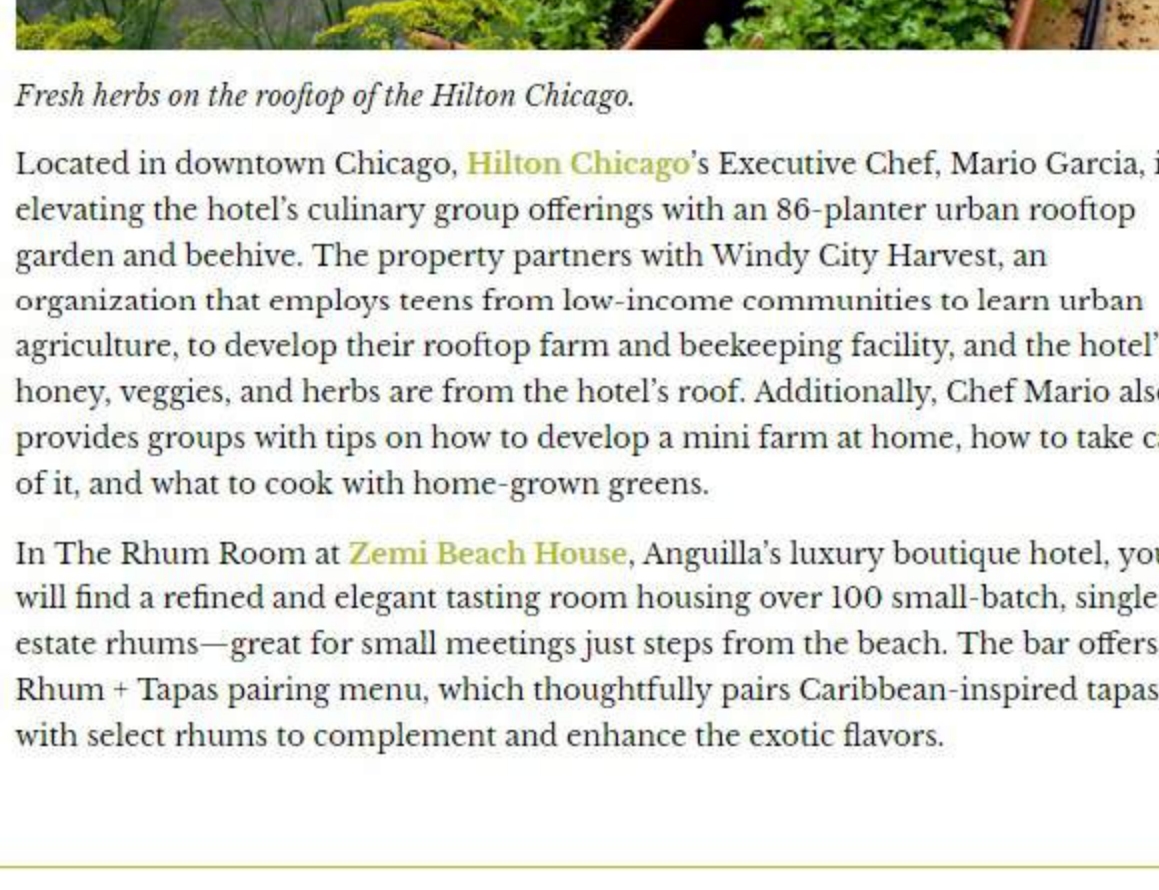
### Fab food

When the teams aren’t involved in activities, food is still a huge part of the meeting experience. “Superb, creative, participatory, and healthful food options sourced locally,” says Benchmark, are at the utmost of importance in 2018 and beyond. Additionally, food trucks on property, Iron Chef competitions, customized dining experiences, and highly creative refreshment breaks are top of mind.

And though not mentioned by Benchmark, **Catersource**’s recent annual conference and tradeshow emphasized catering options for food allergies and dietary restrictions in venues of all kinds.

Let’s have a look:

**Jewel Grande Montego Bay Resort & Spa** makes it simple for dietary sensitive meeting attendees. Business travelers have the option to schedule facetime with the catering team to carefully curate a personal dining menu for the duration of their stay. In addition to personalized menus, the chefs at Jewel Grande always create prefixed catering menus for events with allergies in mind, noting all common allergy items on buffet menus. Trained to inquire about each attendees’ food allergy when serving in the a la carte restaurant, the food and beverage team and chefs are always prepared to provide alternative dining options for guests at any given time.



Flexible allergy options are available at the Harbour View Inn in Charleston

**Harbour View Inn**, a boutique, B&B-style property in Charleston’s historic district is making it easier for guests who have specialty diets and allergies to find something to enjoy within their complimentary F&B offerings. For breakfast, groups staying on property are provided with a fully complimentary, locally-sourced artisanal spread consisting of warm breads, pastries, quiche and fresh fruit delivered directly in-room or on the hotel’s private rooftop terrace. Those with allergies can enjoy gluten-free, vegetarian and even vegan options in all categories upon request, as well as hard-boiled eggs, GF toast, yogurt, almond milk and seasonal fresh fruit. During afternoon wine and cheese, gluten-free crackers and crudites are also offered for those unable to eat wheat.

The catering team at DC luxury hotel **The Jefferson** considers patrons’ dietary restrictions when arranging dishes for a menu. The hotel recently prepared a Paleo carrot wedding cake for a couple’s big day at the hotel. The cake’s ingredients included coconut oil, unsweetened almond milk, tapioca flour and almond flour, and ground cinnamon and ginger, along with coconut frosting made with coconut milk powder, sea salt and raw honey.

### What’s shakin’ in your hood?

Authentic experiences and what is happening in a property’s neighborhood—more importantly, what *locals* recommend as the quirky, under-the-radar highlights of a destination is another trend Benchmark highlights. And, if your guests can’t leave the property, some properties are bringing local to its guests.

in the heart of downtown LA, for example, **the Courtyard and Residence Inn by Marriott at LA Live** has celebrates the Southern California community by partnering with local breweries such as the Firestone Walker Brewery in Venice and the 3 Weavers Brewing Company in Inglewood. After a day of meetings, guests can enjoy happy hour in the hotel’s RI Lounge and sip on Expatriate IPA or 805 Blonde Ale. At Marriott at LA Live, guests not only get to experience the local LA lifestyle but get a taste of it too.



Fresh herbs on the rooftop of the Hilton Chicago.

Located in downtown Chicago, **Hilton Chicago**’s Executive Chef, Mario Garcia, is elevating the hotel’s culinary group offerings with an 86-planter urban rooftop garden and beehive. The property partners with Windy City Harvest, an organization that employs teens from low-income communities to learn urban agriculture, to develop their rooftop farm and beekeeping facility, and the hotel’s honey, veggies, and herbs are from the hotel’s roof. Additionally, Chef Mario also provides groups with tips on how to develop a mini farm at home, how to take care of it, and what to cook with home-grown greens.

In The Rhum Room at **Zemi Beach House**, Anguilla’s luxury boutique hotel, you will find a refined and elegant tasting room housing over 100 small-batch, single-estate rhums—great for small meetings just steps from the beach. The bar offers a Rhum + Tapas pairing menu, which thoughtfully pairs Caribbean-inspired tapas with select rhums to complement and enhance the exotic flavors.



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