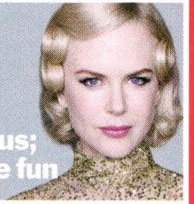


**Barack Around The Clock**  
Behind the scenes in the war for Iowa

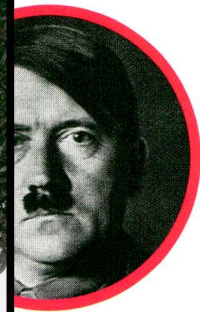
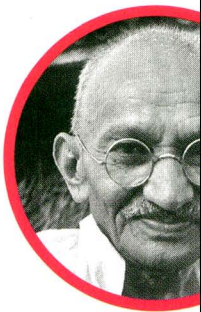
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# TIME



**FOOD**  
**Black Is Beautiful.** An Asian culinary trend heads west as ebony ingredients begin to show up on fashionable menus

BY LISA MCLAUGHLIN

BLACK HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A CHIC color to wear when going out to dine, but for most Americans it seems slightly less à la mode for an entrée. Recently, though, some of the most sophisticated chefs in the country have begun incorporating black grains, vegetables and even poultry into their dishes.

The craze for ebony-tinged foods can be traced to Asia, where inky ingredients have a long and illustrious tradition. The nutty flavors and raven tones of forbidden rice were once reserved for Chinese emperors. Silkie chickens, whose snowy white feathers cover birds with black skin, flesh and bones, are prized throughout Asia for their deep, gamy flavor and used in soupy tonics said to enrich blood and improve health. And in Japan, dark foods like black vinegar drinks, black soy milk and black sesame breakfast cereals are currently so popular that Häagen-Dazs even sells a black sesame ice cream.

In the U.S., chefs are interested less in the purported health benefits than in the deeper flavor profiles and the wow factor that dark foods offer. "Black is just fun

to work with," says Tim Love of the Lonesome Dove Western Bistro in Fort Worth, Texas, where he just started serving a fig-and-black-lime margarita and surrounds his mango-sautéed salmon with an intense puree of earthy black trumpet mushrooms. "It's unexpected. It looks great on a plate," he says. The visual élan also appeals to the chefs at DavidBurke & Donatella in New York City. "We focus on eye-catching presentation," says chef de cuisine Eric Hara. "Black chicken definitely intrigues diners." David Myers of Sona in Los Angeles fully embraces the dark side by serving black chicken and forbidden rice, and black limes show up unexpectedly in a tart ice cream. Silkie chickens have become so popular that Iowa-based Murray McMurray Hatchery now sells about 10,000 a year, up from a few hundred to years ago, when it first started raising them.

"Black can either be strikingly beautiful or a complete disaster," says Clark Frasier of Arrows Restaurant in Ogunquit, Maine, who has grown black carrots in the restaurant's sprawling garden. "Because they have less chlorophyll, they take longer in the ground and achieve a more intense flavor." And, of course, they look cool. ■

Black trumpet mushrooms

Chinese forbidden rice

Black carrots

Dried premium ancho chili

Black soybeans

Black limes

Wood ear mushrooms

Black radishes

Silkie chicken

\$4.95 US

