

FOOD & DRINK

“FOMO is real”: Why one-night-only restaurant collaborations are taking over Toronto

We spoke with five chefs and restaurateurs about the trend that’s sweeping the city

BY DEEPI HARISH | APRIL 1, 2026

One-off collaborations between restaurants are turning ordinary service into a series of pop-ups. For diners, the draw is obvious: the blink-and-you’ll-miss-them meals will never be served again, which is why these events tend to sell out quickly.

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To understand what has driven the recent surge in collaborative menus, we spoke with the chefs and restaurateurs leading the trend about the reasons, the risks and the rewards of cooking together—if only for a night.

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Normand Laprise or Marc Thuet. It's something that has always existed, but now it's being talked about more, which is great."

Yannick Bigourdan, Lucie

Past collaborations: Anna Olson (Canadian pastry chef), Victor Barry (Piano, Piano), Rafa Covarrubias (20 Victoria), Steven Molnar (Quetzal), John Horne (Auberge du Pommier), Afrim Pristine (Cheese Boutique), Jason Bangerter (Langdon Hall), Michael Hunter (Antler)

How do you decide whom to collaborate with?

"Collaborations usually happen organically. A meeting while travelling, a visit to another restaurant or simple admiration for another chef's work can spark the idea. The starting point is always a human connection and mutual respect.

"When two chefs come together, they each bring their own sensibility, techniques and ingredients, and that contrast can create something really exciting for diners. It's incredible to see the teams in the kitchen building something fun together.

"There's no single way to merge styles: sometimes chefs divide courses; other times they collaborate on every dish. The key is that the menu tells a coherent story. As the city's culinary scene matures, chefs are increasingly open to sharing ideas and cooking together—and diners are responding enthusiastically to that spirit of collaboration."





Takja BBQ chef Jeff Kang and Alder's Patrick Kriss Photo via [aldertoronto/Instagram](#)

Patrick Kriss, Alder

Past collaborations: Fat Rabbit, Pearl Morissette, Hexagon, Casa Paco, Takja BBQ, Quetzal

How do chefs merge different styles in a one-night-only menu? And why do these dinners seem especially popular in Toronto now?

“Sometimes the choice comes from aligning styles; other times it’s based on admiration for a restaurant we’ve visited and truly enjoyed. Recently, we’ve started hosting restaurants outside of Toronto to give diners access to chefs they might not otherwise experience. Typically, the guest chef takes the lead while the hosting chef fills in the gaps to support the flow. In the end, it’s about balance and making sure the progression feels natural for the guest.

“It’s always a challenge for a team to execute a unique menu and service for a one-night-only event while still accomplishing the standards we strive for every day. However, at the end of the night, when you’ve pulled it off and truly created an exclusive and memorable experience for both your guests and your team, nothing beats that feeling.

“There’s something special about being part of a one-off event that’s tailored for that specific night. It feels unique, and there’s an excitement around knowing it won’t be repeated in the same way again. Diners look for these experiences.

“I don’t think collaborations are necessarily more popular now—I think they’ve always been part of the restaurant scene. Even earlier in my career at





Emiliano Del Frate, Radici Project

Past collaborations: Zach Keeshig (Naagan), Shotaro Ozawa (sake expert), Aiko Uchigoshi (pastry chef for Aburi Restaurants Canada)

Are these dinners primarily about creative exchange?

“Because Radici Project blends Italian and Japanese techniques with Canadian ingredients, I look for people who are open to a dialogue between cultures. A collaboration is successful when it feels like a true creative exchange—not two separate identities sharing the same space. These dinners are a way to step outside of routine, challenge ourselves, and see ingredients or techniques through someone else’s perspective.

“We focus a lot on precision, storytelling and service, so bringing in another chef for one night requires alignment very quickly, from the kitchen to the floor. But the rewards are powerful: creating something that exists only once, an ephemeral experience that reflects what Radici Project is about—a moment, a connection, something that cannot be replicated. The goal is not to compromise identity but to create harmony, allowing each chef’s voice to be present.

“Guests are drawn to both the exclusivity and the story of the food. A collaboration dinner becomes a live expression, almost like a conversation you can taste.”



Sam Corkum, Enigma

Past collaborations: Pearl Morissette, On Seven Estate Winery, Leaning Post Wines

Why do you think diners are so drawn to these one-night-only events?

“They offer guests truly one-of-a-kind experiences. For example, bringing together two Michelin-starred restaurants, Pearl Morissette and Enigma, for a single evening lets us create something special that can’t be replicated. That sense of rarity is exactly what draws in diners.

“Many diners have their favourite go-to restaurants, so these collaborations provide a way to discover new chefs within a familiar setting, making the experience feel both accessible and elevated.”



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Michael Degrazia, Animl

Past collaborations: Andre Rush (former White House chef) and Antonio Park (former chef and owner of AP Restaurant, current chef at Park in Montreal)


What's in it for the diner? And what are the biggest risks and rewards?

“For diners, novelty is the draw. We're open seven days a week, and our regular menu—which we're very proud of—is always available, but one-off experiences have scarcity built in, which adds value and urgency. FOMO is real. People look forward to being surprised and impressed by something outside the norm. It's an occasion worth spending money on.

“The risks lie in the build-up to the event: unsold seats can mean unrecovered costs, and disrupting regular service carries challenges. The rewards, however, are significant—energizing the team, creating learning opportunities and opening doors for networking.”

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