

STORY



## CARLO RATTI: 'HERE IS THE EXPO 2015 FUTURE FOOD DISTRICT'

A chat with the Italian architect Carlo Ratti - the man in charge of the Future Food District project at Expo Milano 2015.

BY FDL ON DECEMBER 01, 2014

Visitors to *Expo Milano 2015* (<https://www.finedininglovers.com/search/?Expo+Milano+2015>) will have the chance to interact with a *Future Food District* (<http://www.expo2015.org/en/future-food-district>) - a specifically designed area that will investigate how new technologies can change our interaction with the food chain.

The space, designed by the Italian architect **Carlo Ratti** (<http://www.carloratti.com>), will feature augmented reality, new horizontal visual displays for products and high ambitions to show people that, as Ratti puts it, "Digital data and new technologies will help us make every step of the food chain more transparent; we will be able to acquire a new consciousness about what we eat, that in turn will influence both the production and distribution processes."

Ratti and his team have created a number of exciting features, including a small robot that will constantly work to write on the walls of pavilion, as he explains: "We are now working on the last details of our vertical plotter, that will constantly re-design the pavilion walls by writing words shared by the visitors. A dynamically changing canvas using crowdsourced global input."

We caught up with Ratti to speak to him about the exciting project, exactly what he has planned for the Future Food District (FFD) and to find out more about his love for a rather famous Thai restaurant...

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## Tell us about the future food district project, what do you hope the experience be like for visitors?

"The FFD is composed of a pavilion and a square. The supermarket is the main exhibition area where products are presented on large display tables. The horizontal landscape – rather than the standard vertical shelving units - fosters human interaction and creates new relationships. As in a traditional markets, the space becomes a meeting place once again, where technologies create new interfaces and simplify interactions, giving back to the selling chain its social dimension. "

"More technically, by lightly touching the products you can obtain augmented information about its characteristics - a very intuitive way to display Augmented Reality information. We believe that this information will promote a more informed consumption and transparent food chain. Finally, local producers who register online can use the supermarket space as a free-exchange area - a step towards a future where everyone can become both a producer and a consumer. "

## What are the future food district features you're most excited about?

"I'm really interested in discovering how information can change our experience of food, while creating a place where everyone can be both a producer and a consumer. Thanks to augmented labelling each product will be able to communicate by itself its history, origins, etc."

"It reminds me of **Italo Calvino's** character Mr. Palomar, who entered a cheese shop in Paris and thought he was in a museum: *"Behind every cheese there is a pasture of a different green under a different sky: meadows caked with salt that the tides of Normandy deposit every evening; meadows scented with aromas in the windy sunlight of Provence; there are different flocks, with their stabbings and their transhumance; there are secret processes handed down over the centuries. This shop is a museum: Mr. Palomar, visiting it, feels as he does in the Louvre, behind every displayed object the presence of the civilization that has given it form and takes form from it."*

## Why is Expo Milano 2015 important?

"Universal expositions have always been exciting events, as they contribute to speeding up the innovation process. In the field of design you can recall Crystal Palace in London in 1951, the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1889 or the Mies van der Rohe's Pavilion in Barcelona in 1929. I had the opportunity to design a Pavillion for Expo 2008 in Zaragoza and now I'm working on the FFD for Expo 2015. For us these are great opportunities to implement our research in more concrete projects."

## What projects from other countries are you most excited to see?

"Among many, I'm interested in visiting the "transparent" UK project by **Wolfgang Buttress** - not a traditional architect or engineer, but an artist. "

## What's your favourite food? Any foods you really don't like?

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Expo Milano 2015 - should say I love pasta, but actually I hate it - at least intellectually. <https://www.finedininglovers.com/stories/expo-milano-2015-f...>

As Futurist **Filippo Tommaso Marinetti** wrote in the *Manifesto of Futurist Cooking*: "No more pasta, as it causes lassitude, pessimism and lack of passion!" Regarding my favorite food, I love Thai cooking. Every time I am in Bangkok I stop by *Nahm* Restaurant, and also take cooking classes if I have time."

### What's your best dish, your signature go-to recipe?

"Okay, here let's veer towards Italian cooking, as that's where I am most skilled. One of my classics is Risotto with pumpkin, marsala and saffron. It's a variation on the traditional Italian "Milanese" risotto, whereby the pumpkin adds a bit of texture to the 'saffron' recipe and the marsala wine (instead of white wine) confers an edge to the pumpkin. I thought it was my invention but then I googled it and realised that others had tried it and presented it as their recipe - it's tough to be creative at the time of the Internet!"

"Also, I am very attached to a recipe that was given to me by an old Swiss friend. It's main ingredient is venison: you marinate it for a week with carrots, garlic, celery, onions and juniper berries - and then stew it in the traditional way, perhaps adding pieces of apple. I like the taste but also what it reminds me of."

### What's the most memorable bite you ever had and what made it so special?

"A dinner at Le Quartier Francais in South Africa - not only for the great food but also the odiferous nature surrounding it."

### Any cookbooks/ food books you would recommend?

"I would go back to **Pellegrino Artusi** and his masterpiece *Science in the kitchen and the art of eating well*. (<https://www.finedininglovers.com/search-box/?artusi>) In the introduction he quipped: "Don't trust books that talk about this art!"



*S.Pellegrino is Official Water partner of the Italy's Expo Milano 2015 and Padiglione Italia* (<https://www.finedininglovers.com/blog/news-trends/s-pellegrino-expo-2015/>).

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