



Get ready to eat Spanish, dine on donuts and sip some Cognac in designer jeans

By Harry Mount

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The United States will turn into the land of metrosexuals and the home of the obese, gorging on Spanish food and doughnuts, pausing only to knock back Cognac and watch disposable DVDs - if current trends are followed.

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According to the most influential trend-spotter in America, the Baby Boomer generation's choice in clothes, food and politics is changing dramatically as it turns 50.

The pattern of consumer choice will also in time be reflected in Britain, according to Michael Tchong, the author of *Trendscape 2004*, the latest of his annual reports that track the most important trends that will shape next year's American lifestyle.

"Certain trends - particularly in clubbing, electronics and music - are born in Britain," says Tchong. "But America remains very powerful, particularly when it comes to food."

The doughnut shop was the fastest growing US dining category in 2002, with sales growing nine per cent in the last year, and that is to be reflected over here: [Krispy Kreme, the market leader, is to open 100 outlets in Britain](#) over the next five years.

But the real change comes with the boom in popularity of Spanish food. California, the birthplace of McDonald's, is now the home of the latest Spanish fast-food revolution: Guatemala's Pollo Campero is the fastest expanding fast-food chain.

The assimilation of Hispanic culture into mainstream

American life has grown apace elsewhere. The number of Hispanic actors on US network television and in films, most notably Jennifer Lopez, has grown fivefold since 1990. In 2002, Hispanics surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group.

When it comes to drink, brandy is the coming thing. Five years ago, France's Cognac region was on the brink of ruin because of the economic crisis in Asia - brandy's number one market. Now, Americans consume £1 billion worth of cognac annually. Young blacks make up 60 to 85 per cent of domestic sales, as a result of its popularity among rap artists: P Diddy is known to like a drop and Busta Rhymes had a big hit in 2002 with his single, Pass the Courvoisier.

The wearing of suits has slumped massively in the last two years, and jeans are on the slide. Denim sales shrank eight per cent in 2002 to \$10.1 billion, partly due to what Tchong calls "closet saturation" - females own an average of 17 denim garments. The slide is reversed when it comes to designer jeans, and in the teenage market which goes for "micro stitcher" brands - much embroidered jeans.

America is getting increasingly in touch with its feminine side. David Beckham is held up as the epitome of the "metrosexual" - "a term used to identify urban, well-educated men who are secure enough in their heterosexuality to embrace their feminine side", according to Tchong.

Homosexuals form the quickest expanding commercial market. In May 2003, Avis introduced its first advertising campaign aimed at the gay market, and Ford now markets its Jaguars expressly to gay buyers. One of the most popular television programmes in the US is Will and Grace, which features the friendship between a woman and a gay man.

The increased power of women in making decisions in the home has been enshrined in a new term, "WAF" or Wife Acceptance Factor. This means that a wife has final say on the look of anything in the home.

Tchong is particularly struck by the influx of "porno chic" into America from Europe. Explicit sexual imagery to sell products is on the up, with beer makers in particular opting for the Swedes-in-bikinis school of advertising.

The biggest changes are among the Baby Boomers, that generation born in the years after the Second World War.

The sale of long-playing vinyl records has boomed, spurred by DJs. Baby Boomers' political opinions are changing, too. Sixty-six per cent of Boomers today favour more military power, compared to 41 per cent in the early Seventies.

Generation Y, the Baby Boomers' children - born between 1977 and 1994 - will be the most adept ever with emerging technology. Disney is testing the EZ-D, a disposable DVD. Once an airtight seal is broken, these DVDs can be played for at least 48 hours before self-destructing.

For those who can't bear to be parted from their technology, E-wear is on the up - clothes specifically

designed to hold electronic devices.

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