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WELCOME



WELL, THE MUCH ANTICIPATED 'FREEDOM DAY' HAS COME AND GONE AND WE NOW FIND OURSELVES RESIDING IN A SLIGHTLY LESS TRUMPETED KIND OF LIMBOLAND. BETWEEN THE TIME IT TAKES TO BECOME INFECTED AND THE TIME IT TAKES FOR NEW CASES TO BECOME APPARENT IN THE FIGURES. BETWEEN THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THE VACCINES WILL PREVAIL AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE VARIANTS WILL.

Having said that, the initial signs do appear to be encouraging, with infection rates reportedly dropping across England. One theory is that we are simply no longer paying the penalty for the English team's extended run at Euro 2020. After all, a similar decrease occurred when Scotland left the competition (maybe finally explaining an ulterior, selfless motive for Scotland's keeper's previously baffling decision to decline to stand directly in front of his goal, as is normally customary, during the defeat to the Czech Republic).

Anyway, with the country now being more open than England's route to the final, we have reflected this by covering some sectors that have barely been touched on since we relaunched to cover the whole of contract catering almost a year ago. The Foodservice forum (page 26) asks if all is A-OK for the return of B&I, while this month's Industry expert (p56) finally focuses on events. And, don't forget, education is also opening up, which is reflected in our Back to school special (p30). Hopefully this time it will be for good – not just for education, but for the whole of hospitality.

H Norman

HENRY NORMAN



The initial signs appear to be encouraging, with infection rates reportedly dropping

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READ ON THE GO

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ELIOR SIGNS WITH BIRMINGHAM CITY



Birmingham City FC recently added to its summer signings with a lucrative new five-year partnership contract worth £13m with Elior UK, becoming the club's new catering partner. The five-year deal sees the company providing catering services for matchday fans, hospitality, general admission, and conference and event services at St. Andrew's. It started on 1st July.

Elior brings a wealth of sporting experience to the club, as well as award-winning customer service and expertise in stadium catering. Its pioneering approach to food and drink brings the latest digital innovation to B9, launching a fully cashless service, click-and-collect ordering through its bespoke Breaz app, and upgrades to the hospitality suites.

Ian Dutton, chief commercial officer for Birmingham City FC, said: "The new partnership will benefit every match-going fan, corporate partner and attendee at our events. Elior really impressed us during the tender process with the team's forward-thinking approach to hospitality and the investment package that will upgrade our offering. We are really excited about working alongside them over the coming seasons."

Kenny Finlayson, managing director of Elior, added: "This is a fantastic partnership and we truly believe this will be a long and successful relationship. Our shared goal is to deliver exceptional food and drink experiences to all spectators and guests at the St. Andrew's."

"This will be led by our investment in general admission and hospitality areas, and a fresh and innovative approach to our catering offer. Exciting times ahead."

Our shared goal is to deliver exceptional food and drink experiences

SODEXO WINS CONTRACT FOR NEW COVID LAB

Sodexo has been awarded the contract to provide a range of facilities management (FM) services at the new Department of Health and Social Care owned and run Rosalind Franklin Laboratory in Royal Leamington Spa. The new lab is part of the NHS Test and Trace laboratory network and will increase the UK's Covid-19 testing capacity by hundreds of thousands a day as it scales up its operations over the coming months.

As part of the FM contract, management positions are already being filled from the local area to assist in the mobilisation of the new laboratory, and a local waste management provider has been contracted for waste and recycling services. The range of services that Sodexo will provide includes communal area cleaning, security, grounds maintenance, waste management, logistics, maintenance and 24/7 catering services.

Stuart Winters, CEO – healthcare for Sodexo UK and Ireland, said: "I am extremely proud that we continue to play our part in the fight against this pandemic, supporting Test and Trace to increase the UK's Covid-19 testing capacity."

"We know that working in close partnership with our client, and being agile and responsive to their needs, is absolutely vital, and I am delighted that we have been recognised for our ability to do this for Test and Trace."

SSP LANDS IN THE WEST INDIES



SSP Group has secured its first contract at an airport in the West Indies with Société Aéroport Martinique Aimé Césaire. As part of a major redevelopment project, the airport's food and beverage space will be expanded by over one-third, with the number of units increasing from three to eight.

SSP will operate all of the new outlets, five of which will be landside and three airside. The new offer will include a tailor-made blend of local casual food outlets. There will also be a selection of international brands, including the first Starbucks in the West Indies, which is due to open in July 2023.

Gérard d'Onofrio, managing director of SSP France, Belgium and Luxembourg, said: "As a popular tourist destination with over 2m passengers passing through its gates in 2019 and ambitious plans for expansion, Aéroport Martinique Aimé Césaire faces a bright future. We're delighted to have a presence at this new location and in particular to be bringing the first Starbucks to the island."

The renovation project is due to start in October this year and is scheduled to be completed in 2023.



BARTLETT MITCHELL: WELLBEING OVERTAKES INNOVATION

Workplace wellbeing will be more important to organisations than product and service innovation, according to new research conducted by Bartlett Mitchell. Titled *Reimagining Catering post Covid*, it also found that 80% of people are still formulating how their company will implement remote working practices, with a further 75% concerned about the challenge to company culture from hybrid working.

With the return to the workplace still being impacted by the government's Covid-enforced lockdown, building footfall is still uncertain in some industries. It is widely believed that the role of catering in bringing people together will be crucial in the next 12 months.

The research suggested that in order to respond to customers' changing needs, and to enhance their experience, there also needs to be a greater investment in technology-based catering services. This, in part, has come from the changes that consumers have had to make in their personal lives when ordering – with more services now reliant on apps. It is also believed that we are likely to see more smart tills and smart vending being introduced into workplace catering.

Wendy Bartlett, founder of Bartlett Mitchell, said: "This research has been invaluable in helping us shape our future direction and activity. We know that organisations are going to have to adapt quickly, and sometimes regularly, to enable them to continue creating a work environment that is going to be fit for the new ways of working."

"It is quite telling that so many people are prioritising wellbeing above and beyond any product or service innovation. People are going to make the biggest difference in our new economy."

People are going to make the biggest difference in our new economy

BENNETT HAY DELIVERS FOR THE POST BUILDING

Bennett Hay has won a new contract to provide front-of-house services for The Post Building in London. The eponymous space is a former Royal Mail sorting office that has been converted into standout office and retail space at the heart of an emerging, creative, urban quarter for the capital.

The new three-year agreement adds to a recent series of wins for Bennett Hay and will see the company assert its high-impact service levels and efficiency into The Post Building's extensive workplaces. It will be responsible for the guest experience at the building, a 263,000 square foot, design-led space with a panoramic roof garden.

Anthony Bennett, founder of Bennett Hay, said: "The Post Building is an architecturally significant destination, and we are over the moon to be able to help with the guest experience at such a commanding destination. We will bring our guest-centric approach tailoring our service provision to reflect The Post Building brand, while also helping to create amazing experiences for workplace guests and visitors as they return to an office set-up."

"Our team is trained to recognise the need to show empathy and confidence when workers head back and adapt to a more hybrid working routine. This new partnership further endorses Bennett Hay as a bespoke guest service provider within workplace buildings."



14FORTY WINS £15M CONTRACT WITH CADENT GAS

14forty recently won a £15m total facilities management (FM) contract with Cadent Gas to provide soft and hard services across more than 70 UK sites. Cadent is the UK's largest gas distribution network. It manages a network of more than 80,000 miles of pipe, most of it underground, which transports gas to approximately 11m customers.

Under the new three-year agreement, 14forty will serve 15 large office premises and a variety of critical supply depots for Cadent's gas engineers, who maintain, repair and replace piping and respond to emergency callouts. 14forty has worked for Cadent since 2016, but previously only supplied soft FM services, such as reception, catering, cleaning and security.

"We've worked hard over the last five years to win the client's trust and build an excellent working relationship," said Mauro Ortelli, 14forty's managing director. "So, when our original contract was due for renewal, we incorporated hard FM services, which relate to physical building structures, into our provision."

"These were previously undertaken by another company. However, the client loved our proposal and gave us the work."



TWEET ALL ABOUT IT

HENRY DIMBLEBY

@HenryDimbleby

We've published the National Food Strategy today. A Manifesto for a better food system alongside a Strategic Plan to achieve it.

SOIL ASSOCIATION

@SoilAssociation

UK Govt should respond to the #NationalFoodStrategy within 6 months. It's essential the response is robust & ambitious

ARENA EVENTS

@Arenanetworking

David Mulcahy, Food Innovation and Sustainability Director, Sodexo UK & Ireland: "How we talk about plant-based food depends on the demographic. For kids, we have to make it 'cool' and 'trendy'. If we want to change behaviours, we have to change our approach."

HOSPITALITY ACTION

@HospAction

If you're feeling anxious this #FreedomDay please remember we're here for you. Give our confidential helpline a call day or night on: 0808 802 0282 #wevegotyout



ELIOR ANNOUNCES CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT HOMELESS

Elior UK has teamed up with client BT Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh to donate around 3,000 hot meals to the vulnerable in the local community over the Christmas period. For every Christmas party booking received, the caterer will supply hot meals via a partnership with Social Bite, an Edinburgh-based organisation that distributes food and hot drinks to people experiencing homelessness and food poverty.

Craig Stewart, regional managing director for Elior, said: "With the return of the Christmas party this year, we are determined to provide an offer with purpose that gives back to the local community that we have strong ties to. We are delighted that this year's festive offer will not only give revellers a wonderful night to remember, but at the same time we will be distributing around 3,000 free hot meals to people for whom this time of year can be particularly difficult."

Josh Littlejohn MBE, co-founder of Social Bite, added: "It's great news that, by having fun at BT Murrayfield, locals will, in effect, be helping other local people in the community who will be struggling at Christmas. It is through the generosity of organisations like Elior and Scottish Rugby that we are able to make it that little bit brighter for so many vulnerable people who would otherwise go without."

We are determined to provide an offer that gives back to the local community

NATIONAL HOSPITALITY DAY SET FOR SEPTEMBER

National Hospitality Day will be held on 18th September, celebrating the nation's brilliant and resilient outlets, restaurants, hotels, pubs and bars, and the suppliers that support them. On one amazing day in September, the organisers are planning to spark the mother of all parties – and all to help businesses that have been thrown to their knees by Covid-19.

Lockdown has taught us just how much richer our lives are for having hospitality in them. Now, our favourite venues and eateries are back – but they need the nation's support if they are to survive, thrive and continue to provide the experiences that make life worth living.

National Hospitality Day is a chance for the nation to say "welcome back – we've missed you" by voting with its feet. It will be a celebration of all that's great about UK hospitality; a collective shout-out for the places we've all missed; and a financial shot in the arm for a sector that's been hit hardest by Covid.

A spokesperson said: "We're challenging foodservice providers, restaurants, hotels and pubs up and down the land to pull out all the stops to put on a damned good show, give the nation a reason to fill your tills and help your get back on your feet – and have some fun while they do so. All we ask is that participating venues build a charitable element into their activities, so that guests will be helping four key hospitality industry charities while they're enjoying themselves."

The four charities involved will be Hospitality Action, Springboard, the Drinks Trust and the Licensed Trade Charity. For more information, go to www.nationalhospitalityday.org.uk.

3

New research from St. Pierre has revealed that, even during lockdown, British couples enjoyed three food-based dates per month.

UKHOSPITALITY REACTS TO THE REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS

UKHospitality welcomed the lifting of many Covid restrictions on 19th July as planned – in both Scotland and England.

First minister Nicola Sturgeon moved Scotland to level zero of restrictions. As a result, increased numbers of people are allowed to meet indoors, though limits on outdoor meetings remain. The return of office workers was also delayed.

She added that the wearing of masks will have to say place for the foreseeable future, adding that the plan now is to move beyond level zero on 9th August.

Leon Thompson, UKHospitality Scotland executive director, said: “The move to Level zero – with a few modifications – for all of Scotland is very welcome and allows some of our members to finally reopen after many, many months of closure. They will be relieved.

“However, hospitality continues to trade in a very difficult environment, which will not improve until all major restrictions are removed. We had hoped to hear something definite on this. Instead, businesses burdened with expensive short-term debt will continue to struggle, unable to break even while ongoing and seemingly endless restrictions continue.

On the situation in England – where the prime minister removed most of the remaining restrictions as planned on 19th July – Kate Nicholls, CEO of UKHospitality, commented: “Confirmation that social distancing measures will be lifted brings huge relief for hospitality venues hoping to finally head back towards normal trading in England. For the first time in 16 months, they will be able to move towards profitability, which is vital for the future of a sector beset by Covid-related debts.

“For profitability to be reached as soon as possible, it’s vital that businesses are able to reach their own solutions, to suit their settings, satisfy their risk assessments and optimise implementation costs while ensuring safety. The voluntary nature of the government guidance should ensure that this is achievable.”



OUR SERVICE IS ALWAYS BESPOKE TO YOU

Guest Education Editor: Clare Lovett,
Managing Director, Relish School Food Ltd

THE ROLE TECH PLAYS IN ENSURING ALL SCHOOLS CAN HAVE A BESPOKE MENU

Brian Cooley, the Editor-at-Large and tech specialist for CNET in the USA, was famously quoted as saying: “The best technologies are those that are transparent, intimate and intuitive,” which really resonated with me.

When we set out on our journey back in 2015 to create our Relish-OPS (Operating & Procurement System), we were driven to create groundbreaking technology, which would have the intelligence to bespoke each and every menu to a school.

In the initial and ongoing development stages, the greatest challenge we faced was ensuring the software could be developed to recognise and control not only allergens, but also the food group requirements of the School Food Standards (SFS), which included portion sizes and frequency of ingredients served on a weekly basis. We programmed 18 tests into the software across a weekly menu cycle, analysing our proposed combination of ingredients, including starchy foods, sugar, salt, proteins, fats etc, to ensure they met the SFS. If the menu didn’t meet all 18 tests, it was changed.

Today, we have 2,575 recipes within the Relish-OPS software, each of which can be bespoke to a school, whilst also being fully compliant with the SFS and all HACCP related legislation. It also manages all allergen and special dietary requirements. Cleverly, the software has been configured to make instant dish and menu changes and is automatically updated every evening. If our manufacturer changes an ingredient the recipe and menu is re-analysed in line with the SFS, which is why we’re ahead of the compliance requirements for Natasha’s Law.

I recently spoke with Tanya Flinders, Operations Catering Manager at the Spencer Academies Trust and she had this to say: “We have full responsibility for our menus and with the support of the Relish-OPS technology, we are able to tailor and create a different menu for each individual school in accordance with the School Food Standards and HACCP guidelines. Additionally, we would have struggled to prepare for Natasha’s Law in October. However, now, we’re well and truly ready.”

We are extremely proud of the in-built intelligence behind Reli-Till Classroom, not only in the battle to keep children with allergies safe, but also to ensure every child receives the meal they’ve ordered for lunch. It is not only fun and easy for the children, but also engages and empowers them about healthy meal choices.

When I spoke with Lisa Gabriel, parent of 4-year old Tyrese, to ask her thoughts on him using the technology, she had this to say: “Tyrese along with the other children, are safely empowered to pre-order their lunch themselves during the morning registration through the Relish technology. It’s quite genius. The kids are shown a whiteboard, which actually shows pictures of their faces - so, Tyrese clicks on his face to view the day’s lunch options and because of his allergies, only dishes compatible with his dietary allergy profile held in the system are shown. He loves doing this - he finds it fun”

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EVENT PREVIEW

PLANT BASED WORLD EXPO

ESSENTIAL INFO

What?

Plant Based World Expo

Where?

London's Business Design Centre

When?

15th and 16th October 2021

More info:

www.plantbasedworldurope.com



Hospitality has had to adapt quickly to the ever-changing tide of the pandemic, and while the industry was adjusting, its customers were evolving too. Lockdown allowed many to slow down, reflect and reprioritise, causing a shift in attitudes towards health, well-being and diet.

Recent research from Mintel shows a staggering 25% of Brits aged between 21 and 30 say that the pandemic has made a vegan diet more appealing. So it is now more essential than ever that restaurants get their plant-based offerings right.

THE MAIN EVENT

Plant Based World Expo, which is organised by JD Events, is taking place at London's Business Design Centre on 15th and 16th October 2021. The new trade event will offer hospitality professionals the opportunity to discover more about plant-based foods, to help create exciting and tasty dishes that rival the rest of their menus. It is Europe's first business event dedicated to plant-based foods; and the only place to learn about the benefits of plant-based diets, connect with world-leading suppliers, and learn from experts that are transforming meat-free meals, all under one roof.

EUROPE'S FIRST 100% PLANT-BASED TRADE SHOW IS COMING TO LONDON THIS OCTOBER

Meat alternatives will be in the spotlight, as many people look to reduce their intake by choosing recognisable meals that don't contain animal products. The Meatless Farm will present its range, including mince, burgers and sausages, that can create enticing meals such as a meatless ragu with truffle gnocchi, and miso meatless balls with an Asian salad. Pioneers of fishless seafood, Good Catch, will join with its range of tuna alternatives, so realistic that they even flake and are available in three varieties: naked, Mediterranean, and oil and herbs.

Also presenting a meat-alternative is Omni-Pork. The company has combined Western innovation with Asian application to create a range of plant-based pork alternatives that are both succulent and tender and are suitable for steaming, pan-frying, deep-frying or turning into meatballs.

Dairy alternatives will also be a key focus on the show floor as Miyoko's presents its range of dairy-free cheeses inspired by the cheese-making traditions and flavours of Europe. The line-up

includes artisan cheese wheels made from cashew milk and cultured cream cheese, which is suitable for savoury and sweet dishes.

In addition, US innovator Eat Just Inc will be launching its products in Europe for the very first time via the show. It will present its ground-breaking egg alternative made from mung bean, which is so good that it even scrambles.

PLANT BASED WORLD TASTE AWARDS

Elsewhere at the show, the first annual Plant Based World Taste Awards will unveil the top

*A staggering
25% said the
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made a vegan
diet more
appealing*


It is no surprise that interest in vegan and plant-based diets has grown substantially



taste sensations on the market in a range of categories, including best chicken alternative, cheese and dessert. The winners will be announced on day two of the Expo, allowing visitors to leave the show armed with the latest knowledge of the best tasting plant-based foods for their menus.

For those looking for additional information and advice on incorporating plant-based dishes onto their menus, Plant Based World Expo will also present a two-day conference programme tailored for retail and foodservice buyers. Here, leading industry figureheads will share their first-hand experience and knowledge on delivering plant-based meals that are good for consumers' health but also excite tastebuds.

"2020 was a turbulent time for everyone, but with the uncertainty came an opportunity for consumers to take stock and re-evaluate their priorities," says Jonathan Morley, managing director of Plant Based World Expo. "With an increased onus on health and wellbeing, it is no surprise that interest in vegan and plant-based diets has grown substantially.

"We are excited to deliver an event that will allow hospitality professionals to deepen their knowledge of the capabilities of plant-based products. They can also connect with the best suppliers in the world to deliver world-class, plant-based dishes." 

THE FUTURE IS PLANT-BASED



PLANT BASED WORLD CONFERENCE & EXPO

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?



RETAIL



FOODSERVICE



HOSPITALITY



SUPPLIERS & INVESTORS

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Business Design Centre
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plantbasedworld europe.com

APPOINTMENTS



TIM SEWARD

IOH ELECTS NEW SOUTHERN CHAIR

The Institute of Hospitality (IoH) recently elected Tim Seward MIH as the new chair of its southern branch. Seward will remain chair of the BH Area Hospitality Association, a role he has held since March 2020.

Seward said he will be looking at ways to support hospitality teams as the regional economy, heavily reliant on tourism, tackles labour and skills shortages associated with the resumption of business post-lockdown. There are already plans to further strengthen links with colleges and universities in the region, as well as to bestow recognition on businesses and individuals that have acted in exemplary ways during the pandemic.

Robert Richardson FIH, chief executive officer of the IoH, said: "In this stage of our evolution as a professional body, the Institute needs leaders like Tim, who understand the challenges and are great at building bridges and see collaboration as essential for our industry to move forward as one hospitality family. I look forward to working closely with him in the years to come."

HOBART'S BENDER ENDS 40-YEAR CAREER

Hobart's Tim Bender recently called time on an illustrious 40-year career in the catering equipment industry. Beginning in 1984 with a position at W.M. Stills, he has held numerous positions at Hobart before assuming the mantle of sales director in 2012.

Hobart managing director David Riley said: "It's not possible to do justice to all of Tim's achievements in one short quote, suffice to say that he will be sorely missed by the entire company and especially me. He has been my right-hand man for a long time, and without his support and assistance the equipment division would not have become what it is today."

"In his retirement, he plans to revive his love of sailing, improve his frankly appalling golf and spend more time with his grandson. We wish him all the very best for the future."



TIM BENDER



NEW CHEFS FOR MAPLE OF CANADA

Maple from Canada UK has appointed four new ambassadors for 2021. They are chef, author and presenter John Gregory-Smith; chef and Bake Off the Professionals winner Laurian Veaudour; Chef of The Year award winner and Glasgow restaurateur Peter McKenna; and renowned food writer, stylist and broadcaster Rosie Birkett.

The ambassadors will be using their extensive culinary knowledge to create new content, including recipes for both the home cook and professional chef using maple as a key ingredient, as well as other food projects that are currently in the planning stages. The focus on this year's work will be seasonality and sustainability, with cooking insight, tips and recipes based on seasonal UK ingredients.

NEW LEAF FOR ESTA

The European Specialty Tea Association (ESTA) recently appointed two new directors, Ajit Madan and Joyce Maina, to its board. The former established Camellia's Tea House as a leading player in the specialty and wellness tea market from a standing start in the UK, Saudi Arabia, Japan and South Korea.

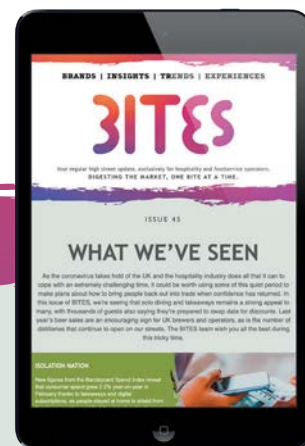
Having worked with many of the larger tea companies such as Taylors, Unilever, Twinings and Tetley, Maina, meanwhile, founded Cambridge Tea Consultancy in 2019. It specialises in areas such as tea business advisory services, education, training and communications, media and public relations, strategy building and implementation.

David Veal, executive director of the ESTA, said: "There is so much work to do as our Association expands rapidly. The addition of these two first class members to our board will add much value and experience to our mission."

BRANDS | INSIGHTS | TRENDS | EXPERIENCES

BITES

AUG 21



H2O Publishing is generating BITES, a digital product that keeps foodservice and hospitality operators up to speed with high street activity. Arriving by e-mail, it summarises key high street findings every two weeks, allowing operators to shape their business according to the lessons learned that fortnight...



PUBLIC HUNGRY FOR DATES

New research has revealed that, even during lockdown, British couples enjoyed three food-based dates per month. After 16 months of intermittent lockdown, a recent survey from St. Pierre found that food is still at the heart of the nation, with interesting insights for foodservice and wider hospitality operators.



NEEDS SOME MORE OIL

A quarter of UK consumers would trust a robot to cook their meal in a restaurant, while 30% say they are happy for one to serve them food and drinks in a hospitality venue, according to new research. The study of more than 2,000 consumers looked at whether robots are likely to dominate future hospitality experiences.



HOT IN THE HEAD GEN Z

New research has identified the top frustrations for customers when visiting a pub or restaurant, with generation Z being the most easily irritated. Over half of gen Z-ers (defined here as those aged between 18 and 24) get frustrated when they are forced to wait for the server's attention when ready to pay.

95%

JOIN OUR CLUB

Nearly 95% of young Brits aged 18 to 30 planned to head back to late night leisure venues after final lockdown restrictions were lifted on 19th July, a new survey has revealed. According to the REKOM Night Index, 20.7% intended to return to late night venues as soon as possible, and more than half will return within a month of opening.

73%

GET A PROPER JOB!

Job postings for roles in hospitality were up 73% in May and June 2021, according to new findings. The data, shared by CV Library, goes on to reveal that applications were down by 0.3% and that 33% of the public feel that roles in hospitality offer little progression and are not considered 'careers for life', with family opinion not helping matters.

THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH BEHIND POOR DIETS

FOOD SYSTEM REFORM NEEDS TO ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF GROWING SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, ARGUES **JANE RENTON**

It's been a busy few weeks for anyone engaged in food and more particularly the future of food and farming on this island. Last month saw the publication of Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy: The Plan, a thoughtful study, three years in the making with conclusions that included proposals for an extension of sugar and salt taxes on unhealthy foods. Yet it has already reportedly been kicked into touch by the British prime minister, keen no doubt to reassert his tarnished credentials as a socio-economic libertarian.

Closer to home was The Future of Food event, an equally thoughtful exploration of some of the challenges faced in attempting to fix our broken and unsustainable food system. This seminar was staged by Compass at the QEII Centre in London on 20th July for clients and suppliers.

Some of the speakers at that event talked of the need to educate people more fully about the importance of healthy food. "You can eat a plate of healthy food done in a sustainable way on a budget – we have proved that," said Ryan Holmes, culinary director of Compass's business and industry division.

A lot of us don't have the opportunity to get healthy meals at an affordable price

But for others, such as Christina Adane, a 17-year-old activist and co-chair of Bite Back 2030, a youth organisation committed to ending food poverty, it is as much about societal fairness as education. Access to healthy food simply doesn't exist, she said, for those growing up in what she calls Britain's "food deserts".

"A lot of us don't have the opportunity to get healthy meals at an affordable price, or to get fruit and veg on our way home," she said. "No, we're going to get chicken and chips because that's what's there for a £1."

She is right. According to the Food Foundation, 14% of UK households have experienced food insecurity – the trauma of not being able to afford a decent diet. Processed and unhealthy food is much cheaper to consume than fresh produce is to buy and prepare.

The food system, as it currently stands, is relatively adept at feeding the 7bn or so people on this planet. As Sir Charles Godfray, a professor of population biology at Oxford University, pointed out at the Compass seminar, the level of hunger is going up, but this is predominantly because of geopolitical conflict rather than as a result of the current food system. However, there are huge pressures building up in the ability of agricultural supply to keep feeding us. Climate change, water scarcity, soil degradation and epidemics will continue to challenge the existing status quo.

"Technology might get us out of jail, but how realistic is that when you see the terrible heatwave across America and the floods in Europe at present?" he asked. The continued reliance on such an environmentally flawed system, and one that is damaging to health, will become even more unreliable due to more frequent shocks and disruptions as the population



ALISON FRITH

STRATEGY SUMMARY

Alison Frith, owner of Artizian, reviews the National Food Strategy

What was good about it?

- Its simplicity: the increase in fruit and fibre, and the reduction in meat and HFSS [foods and soft drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugars]. These four recommendations focus on great areas, particularly Eat and Learn targeting the young – our young. We know millennials eat more healthily and sustainably than any other generation in the workplace.
- The Community Eatwell Programme recommendation: dealing with the root causes of poor diet will be far more effective than merely treating its symptoms.
- The Holiday Activities and Food programme clubs: again, they focus on the young, and the proposal to extend them to non-free school meal children for a small fee.
- A reduction in land use for livestock farming in favour of plant-based proteins.
- Strengthening government procurement rules and limiting spend to healthy and sustainable produce will ensure they are leading by example.
- The trial scheme for local food suppliers should be accelerated, providing minimum food, health and safety standards are properly monitored through the supply chain.

Any concerns?

- Having a sugar and salt reformulation tax is a good idea, but only if it isn't replaced with something else that impacts health negatively. The tax should be allocated solely to the other beneficial initiatives, such as Eat and Learn or Community Eatwell. However, the tax itself is unlikely to change the buying habits of customers, even if manufacturers pass on the tax through their pricing.
- Extending eligibility for free school meals will only be beneficial if the current meal options are addressed and deliver food that is nutritious, rather than just cheap and easy to make, as well as filling. School meals should supply the energy and nutrients required to optimise learning and immunity.
- Guaranteeing the budget for agricultural payment until at least 2029 subject to switching to more sustainable practices is a much better approach to subsidies, but support needs to be provided in order to ensure that transition plans are achievable and monitored.
- Trade deals for less sustainable produce should not compete with what UK farmers are producing sustainably, or undermine a reduction in land for livestock rearing in favour of more plant-based proteins.

Any industry-specific concerns?

- Mandatory reporting: while I understand the aim of it, it could be cost-prohibitive for many companies reeling from the negative financial impact of Covid.
- The national food system data programme relies on accuracy of information and is resource-reliant for company compliance. It would be better employed on the other initiatives until the economic climate for our sector improves significantly. We would prefer to see monitoring and reporting on the achievement of the recommendations we support rather than add more burdens on businesses.

According to the Food Foundation, 14% of UK households have experienced food insecurity

climbs to 10bn by 2050, he said. "There will be more population on earth, and they will be richer," Godfray added.

Not everyone would agree, however, with the premise that people will be lifted out of poverty by globalisation, or even that globalisation will remain in place in its current form, largely because of growing geopolitical tensions. Rapid technological change, and the current pandemic, are creating a more stratified society, with wealth being concentrated at the very top in a post-industrial society where social mobility is decreasing.

American academic Joel Kotkin, who has undertaken major studies in East Asia, the UK, Canada and in many cities in the US, believes a new form of feudalism is emerging, one that is already leading to a decline in the middle classes globally, on which much of traditional liberal democracy depends. In his book, *The Coming of Neo Feudalism*, he refers to the hundred or so tech billionaires who now own as much as half the world's assets as a new "emergent aristocracy". They will

THE BIG ISSUE



permanently cement their ascendancy and that of their offspring through an insidious form of “surveillance capitalism” and cognitive enhancement through biotech engineering.

“In much of the American west, billionaires have created vast estates that many fear will make the rest of the local population land-poor,” writes Kotkin. In the UK, where land prices have risen sharply over the past decade, less than 1% of the population owns half of all the land. “Rates of home ownership are stagnant or plummeting in the high-income world, including in the United States, Canada and Australia,” Kotkin adds.

There are signs of kickback from struggling middle- and working-class sections who believe they are already bearing the brunt of a new order that seeks to replace nationhood and family with progressive ideas about globalism and what Kotkin calls the new religion of environmental sustainability. These rebellions, against higher housing costs and taxes to pay for the green agenda by those who can least afford them, are only likely to intensify and give rise to yet more populist anger and protest.

Even Henry Dimbleby’s 290-page Food Strategy report, with its proposals for taxes on sugary and salty food, has been condemned by one thinktank as “showing disdain for the poor”, who it has been claimed would be most affected were his proposals to be enacted. “Punitive taxes of this kind make the poor poorer... poor people already pay through the nose for energy, credit, insurance and other essentials,” said Jason Reed, a UK liaison at Young Voices and a policy fellow at the Consumer Choice Center.


Reed also castigated Dimbleby, who was educated at Eton, as “the

epitome of socio-economic privilege”, who he said “could never begin to understand the implications” of his proposed policies. “He would hardly notice if the price of a box of Frosties went up by 87p, as would be the case under his proposal – but a working parent shopping to feed their children would feel the strain.”

This is not entirely fair, as Dimbleby’s report was not based purely on his own views, but those of many diverse community groups from across the entire food chain. As a former chef, he has actively worked, through his charity, Chefs in Schools, to help raise the standards of school food and to teach children how to cook. He also co-authored the School Food Plan that did much to raise standards over the past five years.

His work was also defended by Godfray at the Compass seminar. “Some of the tropes that came out about the nanny state, about hurting hardworking people, were disappointing,” he said. “We need a much more positive narrative about what diet change can do.”

While it was fine to have government discussions about nudging to get the appropriate behavioural change required to improve people’s health, it wouldn’t cause “sufficient change on the scale we need”, he said. Fiscal and regulatory change is what we need, he concluded.

As Godfray says, if we fail on food, we fail on everything. After the major resets of Brexit and Covid, we have a great opportunity to level up by creating a fairer food system where everyone in this country gains access to affordable, healthy food. 

We need a much more positive narrative about what diet change can do



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EVENTS

StrEATFood Awards

WE SPEAK TO FINALIST NICK SHARMA, WHO WAS ALSO ARAMARK'S STREET FOOD CHAMPION FOR 2020



NICK SHARMA

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE TITLE! WERE YOU EXPECTING TO WIN?

While I knew I was up against some stiff competition, I was confident in my chosen concept as it is both exciting and diverse, and there is definitely a gap in the market for it. I strongly believe that organisation is a key factor in building your confidence, and I was prepared from the get-go for this competition.

It was great to meet some of the exceptional chefs that I was competing against. It made for an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, which made taking part in the competition even more enjoyable.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH YOUR WINNING DISH?

The concept I came up with is called 'Bird 'n' bun'. I believe that street food should be both simple

A doughnut is a welcome alternative to a sandwich or burger

and flavoursome. I always push myself to work my hardest and to produce consistent results at my working environment at the University of East London. I truly believe that my concept is simple, exciting and vibrant. It is a tailor-made concept for both the present day and for future grab-and-go consumer trends.

My idea was to create a fusion of diverse cultures and flavours from around the globe from the basis of something as simple as chicken in a bun. It incorporates a range of different regional and national chicken recipes, all packed with flavour. This concept can be expanded upon exponentially by utilising different chicken recipes from around the world, all served within the medium of a savoury vegan doughnut.

Bird 'n' bun lends itself well to the plant-based revolution with a range of vegan and vegetarian alternatives. Therefore, I chose to make a vegan doughnut base to ensure consistency for all consumers. A doughnut is a welcome alternative to a sandwich or burger, yet it is still very portable, which is a necessity for street food. These dishes are light and yet packed with flavour.

YOU ARE COOKING IT IN THE FINALS OF THE STREET-FOOD AWARDS, ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO THE EVENT?

I am looking forward to this event with a great sense of anticipation. Not only will I be surrounded by other talented chefs, but we will get to learn tips and tricks from each other and increase our knowledge base.

I truly believe that I perform to the greatest of my abilities in a competitive environment. It gives me the opportunity to showcase my skills and capability, and prove the strength of my concept and the theory behind it. Pressure is always part of being a chef!

For competitions, I always ensure that I am confident and totally prepared, both mentally and with regard to concept. This highlights my organisational skills, my developed palate, and, simply, my love for the catering industry and the flavoursome food we can create. Competitions like this are a valuable opportunity to garner feedback and insight from top-level judges.



ARAMARK'S PAUL BLOXHAM AND NICK SHARMA



I truly believe that I perform to the greatest of my abilities in a competitive environment

HOW IMPORTANT IS STREET FOOD ON YOUR EVERYDAY MENUS?

It is very important, as street food is exciting and gives us the opportunity to interact with our customers. The majority of consumers want to have a flavoursome and freshly cooked meal, something different from the usual limp sandwich. An exciting lunch can lift a day that is otherwise dragging and invigorate you for the rest of the day.

We have countless options to implement street food menus at work. Contract catering has changed

massively over the years, and so has the very the principle of street food. Convenience, innovation and big flavours are now the demands for consumers' various work environments.

I'm also ecstatic to have our company food van, which can be moved around and between our sites - it is fully suited. Add to this, we have also been utilising our beautiful trikes within our business, which gives off a true street food vibe.

Finally, we have the live-action counter at my workplace, which gives us the opportunity to cook for, and interact with, our valued customers. They can see their food being prepared in front of them, which always excites them. What more could a chef want!

HOW DO YOU SEE STREET FOOD EVOLVING IN THE FUTURE?

Street food has always been extremely varied, but I do feel Indian is our next destination. The endless combinations of flavours give you the opportunity to explore all the delicious spices and beautiful fragrant food.

As I implied before, it needs to be simple and quick, but also affordable. These principles are at the core of what I believe and what I am developing next - make sure to look out for it! ☺

STREETFOOD 20 awards 21

THE CONTRACT CATERING STREETFOOD AWARDS

2019's event was the third annual search for the UK's most innovative street food chef from the workplace and event catering sectors.

Following the initial judging process, the chefs went through to the live cook-off final, which was held in London. The winners were then revealed during a presentation and drinks reception that evening, with over 200 exclusively invited trade guests from the contract catering industry.

The next competition - with the chance to win £1,000 and the title of Street Food Dish of the Year - will be held near Watford in September. For more info, go to www.streetfoodawards.co.uk



IT'S ALL GO!

ACCORDING TO NEW RESEARCH FROM IGD, THE FOOD-TO-GO MARKET IS SET TO RETURN TO PRE-COVID LEVELS IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2022

In its latest channel forecasts for the food-to-go sector, the Institute of Grocery Distributors (IGD) has predicted that the channel will be worth £15.6bn at the end of 2021, which is 82.5% of its 2019 value. It is forecast to return to its pre-Covid levels in the second half of 2022, six months earlier than expected.

Nicola Knight, senior analyst for food-to-go for IGD and author of the forecasts, explained: "This is a better-than-expected result, so is really positive news for the sector. By 2026 the market will be worth £22.7bn, which is 20.5% more than 2019. This will be the outcome of five years of growth at above pre-pandemic levels, following significant contraction in 2020, and will predominantly be driven by foodservice operators."

However, recovery is not consistent across sub-sectors. Foodservice food-to-go operators (and quick-service restaurants (QSRs) in particular) have been the main drivers of the growth, increasing market share from 77% in 2019 to 79% in 2021. Covid restrictions have played a significant role, predominantly due

to consumers suffering from cooking fatigue and opting for affordable treats, which has in turn benefitted 'destination' food-to-go sites.

Knight continued: "To survive and meet new demand, operators have fast-forwarded

This is a better-than-expected result, so is really positive news for the sector

innovation at an unprecedented speed. Delivery, digital and proposition development have placed survivors in a good position to maintain momentum as restrictions ease. But it's important to note that QSRs, coffee shops and food-to-go outlets may experience a dip in sales growth in the second half of this year, as consumers have more choice on where and how to spend their money."

In retail, the share of the food-to-go market is forecast to reduce to 21% in 2021 from 24% in 2019. This will gradually increase to 23% by 2026 as momentum starts to return to retail food-to-go.

Knight explained: "In 2021, retailers have faced increased competition from foodservice operators who adapted quickly to changing consumer habits and demands. And, due to the decrease in demand and shift in shopping habits, retailers reallocated space to other categories.

"While larger stores have benefitted from consolidated shopping missions, smaller stores have experienced a greater dip in sales. However, conversely, they are likely to recover more quickly as some pre-pandemic behaviours return.

"While there were new product launches and major projects that were delayed that are now appearing in stores, the challenge for retailers is whether they can close the gap in market share. It will depend on how far consumers return to pre-Covid habits and how fast retailers adapt to changes in behaviour that stick." ☞



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DESERT ISLAND DISHES



ALEX BAILEY

EXECUTIVE CHEF, FOODITUDE

STEAK AND OXTAIL PIE WITH SUET PASTRY

This is a dish of pure luxury and winter warming. The experience of preparing and lovingly shredding the oxtail from the bone, reducing the red wine cooking liquor and baking in a rich flaky suet pastry, served up with a zinfandel, is all you could ever need to banish a cold December night.

THAI GREEN CHICKEN CURRY AND JASMINE RICE

A clichéd dish in many ways, but one of such vibrancy, aromas and spice. It always leaves you wanting more, hunting that lingering heat and cutting kaffir lime.

BEEF RENDANG

I adore the flavours of the far east and of Malaysia in particular. This classic curry, full of fiery red chilli and complex spices softened by kerisik, is a dish that transports me to another world.

ROSÓŁ

This traditional Polish clear chicken broth with noodles is the taste of Poland and health. My wife is Polish and this dish is one we enjoy regularly at the weekends. It is a huge favourite with my boys.

FAMILY ROAST

Food for family and sharing is what really makes me happy, cooking a big roast in the autumn and winter is an act of pure pleasure. Brining a chicken overnight, making a massive heap of Yorkshire puddings – and having to defend them with a ladle till dinner – all served up with a burgundy – what more can you ask for?

SOURDOUGH PIZZA

Baking sourdough has been a long passion of mine and

I adore the flavours of the far east – and of Malaysia in particular

Friday nights are pizza night – and you just can't beat a great sourdough. The perfect way to relax with a beer on a Friday night!

BARBACOA BRISKET TACOS

The joy of mixing the different chillies and toasting the spices before dry-rubbing the meat overnight, then slow-cooking it on a barbeque for five or six hours, served up with pico de gallo, homemade tortilla, guacamole, mole, charred peppers and corn, nachos and sour cream. A feast for all – and guaranteed smacking lips and happy grins.

LEMON TART

After all this, something sweet is definitely in order! A great lemon tart with crisp short pastry is a light, lip-smackingly great palate cleanser from the gods. A little slice of heaven!



WHAT ONE BOOK WOULD YOU TAKE WITH YOU?

*This for me is quite possibly the hardest question to answer – dishes sprang readily to my lips, but a book... that is much tougher. There are so many I have yet to read and so many I could read again! If squeezed I would say *The Collected Short Works* by Somerset Maugham. His beautiful, graceful prose has a way of creating a character in a sentence, and his stories of the Orient conjure a different age.*

WHAT LUXURY ITEM WOULD YOU TAKE WITH YOU?

A yacht – so I can sail away when I choose!

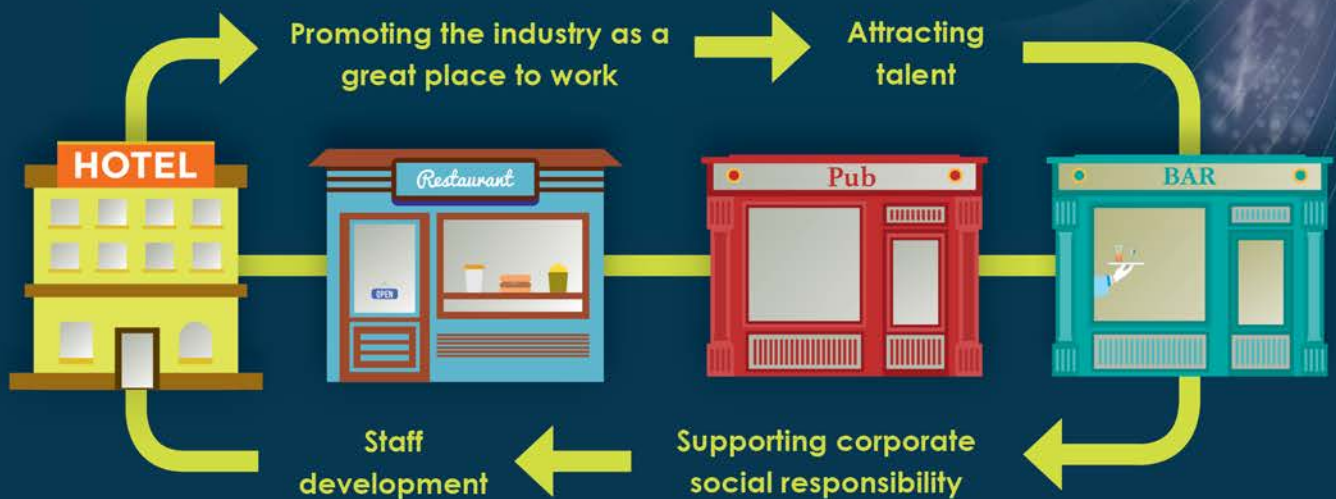


FINALLY, IF YOU WERE ONLY ALLOWED ONE DISH WHICH WOULD IT BE?

It would be any of the above, shared with my family!



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Ask Our Experts

GETTING YOUR BUSINESS NATASHA'S LAW-READY



ARVIND THANDI
TEAM LEADER - FOOD HYPERSENSITIVITY
FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY



RACHAEL SAWTELL
MARKETING DIRECTOR
PLANGLOW

Are you prepared for Natasha's Law? This October, new labelling laws will come into effect to help better safeguard people with food allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease which could mean big changes to your business and the ways in which you label your food and drink products. Fear not. Working in partnership with the Food Standards Agency (FSA), labelling experts Planglow have tackled your top allergen concerns ahead of the autumn deadline. Here they discuss: what the law is and its impact on you, creating legally compliant labelling - plus plenty of tips and resources along the way...

WHAT IS NATASHA'S LAW & HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?

On 1st October 2021, Natasha's Law will become just that. Any business that produces PPDS food will be required to label it with the name of the food and a full ingredients list, with allergenic ingredients emphasised within the list.

WHAT IS PPDS?

(FSA) Prepacked for direct sale or PPDS is food which is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers and is in this packaging before it is ordered or selected.

It can include food that consumers select themselves (e.g. from a display unit), as well as products kept behind a counter and some food sold at mobile or temporary outlets.

WHO DOES IT APPLY TO?

(FSA) Food businesses packing their food products on site to sell to consumers.

Prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food can include the following:

- Sandwiches and bakery products which are packed on site before a consumer selects or orders them
- Fast food packed before it is ordered, such as a burger under a hot lamp where the food cannot be altered without opening the packaging
- Products which are prepackaged on site ready for sale, such as pizzas, rotisserie chicken, salads and pasta pots
- Samples of cookies given to consumers for free which were packed on site
- PPDS food provided in schools, care homes or hospitals and other similar settings will also require labelling

WHAT DO I NEED TO INCLUDE ON A PPDS LABEL?

(FSA) The label for PPDS food will need to show:

- the name of the food
- an ingredients list
- any of the 14 allergens emphasised in the ingredients list, if these are present in the food.

DO SUPPLIERS HAVE A LEGAL OBLIGATION TO INFORM US IF THE INGREDIENTS IN PRODUCTS HAVE CHANGED OR WILL BE CHANGING?

(FSA) Food businesses supplying food and ingredients, from operator to operator, have a duty to pass food information down the supply chain.

They should ensure that food businesses are provided with sufficient information to allow them, where appropriate, to meet their labelling obligations as set out in food law.

WHAT ABOUT PLATED MEALS & MADE TO ORDER?

(FSA) PPDS does not include food that is not in packaging. Food placed into packaging or plated at the consumer's request is not PPDS. This food is not PPDS and can include products such as:

- unpackaged cakes, and unpackaged food behind a glass display counter or in a hot hold cupboard
- meals made or plated to order.
- Non-prepacked (loose) food does not require a label and must meet current allergen information requirements for non-prepacked food.



WHAT ABOUT PACKAGED FOOD PROVIDED BY ANOTHER BUSINESS?

(FSA) You may also sell pre-packaged food that was packed by another food business at a different site to where it is offered to consumers, or food that has been packaged by another business.

This is not 'prepacked for direct sale' food but is 'prepacked' food. Prepacked food requires a label with a name, ingredients list, allergens and other mandatory details.

HOW DOES THE INGREDIENT LIST NEED TO BE PRESENTED?

(FSA) The list of ingredients must be headed or preceded by a suitable heading which consists of, or includes, the word 'ingredients'. The ingredients used must be listed in descending order of weight at the time the product was made.

HOW DO I ENSURE ACCURATE LABELLING IF I OPERATE A MULTI-SITE OPERATION?

LabelLogic Live enables head office to create, roll out and lock down a master database that everyone can access to print labels at site level and control localised permissions. With automatic syncing updates can be applied instantly ensuring sites are compliant at all times.


WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO LABELLING IF THE PERSON MANAGING IT WAS OFF WORK?

We would recommend involving two or three members of your team in the labelling process such as the catering manager and chef. This way, you are able to check the accuracy of labelling together as well as ensuring that someone else is able to create labels when one is away.

WILL EHO BE CHECKING NATASHA'S LAW DURING VISITS?

Local authorities will be taking a supportive, precautionary approach in the early months providing advice and guidance in the first instances. Escalating an issue would depend on the level of risk posed.

For labelling and software enquires contact Planglow on 0117 317 8600, info@planglow.com or planglow.com/natashaslaw

For legal requirements see food.gov.uk/PPDS. 

Planglow

WHERE DO I START?

1. DECIDE HOW YOU ARE GOING TO CAPTURE THE INFORMATION

You need to determine how you are going to capture the ingredient and allergen information for your products and print this onto a label. You will need to create recipes for each product - including the quantities - so that the ingredient declaration is in descending weight order.

There are a number of software solutions available on the market with varying levels of capabilities and support. You should review any existing software to make sure it meets your needs both now and in the future.

In terms of printing, some solutions require you to invest in specialist label printing machines. You need to consider the cost especially if you want to have a backup printing solution.

WHAT IF I WANT TO PRINT LABELS MYSELF / AVOID SPECIALIST PRINTING EQUIPMENT?

Our labelling app - LabelLogic Live - can help. This allows you to create and print your own food labels using any internet connected device, and then print your labels using your office / home printer, without any specialist hardware. It prints clear labels with allergens, ingredients, Reference Intakes, nutritional data, barcodes and more. What's more, it's quick, easy to use and fully compliant with both current and future labelling laws no matter what changes may come.

WILL I HAVE TO ENTER ALL MY PRODUCT DATA MANUALLY?

No, with LabelLogic Live you can access up to date nutritional data for thousands of branded products - including the full ingredients declaration and allergens in bold - directly to your food labelling. That's a whopping 42,000+ branded products from 800 manufacturers and 140 regional and national wholesalers right there at your fingertips.

WHAT IF I'M ALREADY USING A 3RD PARTY RECIPE PLATFORM?

Planglow has partnerships with all of the leading third party platforms to enable seamless integration of ingredient and recipe information into LabelLogic Live. If you are using a third party recipe management platform, we can link your accounts so that you don't need to duplicate data entry.

IS MY SOFTWARE FUTUREPROOF?

What happens if there is a compliance change? How easily can you change your labels fonts, fields, label templates etc. With LabelLogic Live, because the app is browser-based, any legislative changes can be applied instantly.

2. REVIEW YOUR PPDS PRODUCTS

We recommend that you start by identifying all of the products that would be considered PPDS and how they are packaged. Gather all of the container shapes and the smallest size pack that you have that will require a label.

Identify your worst case ingredients list - something like a coronation chicken sandwich with lots of compound ingredients.

Then review the available label templates with your labelling supplier. Identify a shape that fits your worst case ingredients and that fits across all of your products to minimise the number of labels you need to stock.

How are you preparing for the increase in business and industry catering?



PAUL WILLIAMS
BUSINESS DIRECTOR, EUREST

Although many of our industry clients, such as those in distribution and food manufacturing, have continued to operate at full capacity throughout the pandemic, it has been different for our business clients. For many of them, working from home has been the rule, but now they are encouraging workers to come back to the office. This will result in an upturn in numbers using our workplace restaurants, so naturally we are already preparing.

Firstly, we are planning to excite returning workers with food hampers and our Kitchen Club initiative, where our expert chefs bring teams together by developing their culinary skills and raising awareness about nutrition. We are also looking to reconfigure our workplace restaurants as areas to collab-

orate where possible, implement flexible service times and extend opening hours to make our healthy, nutritious food more available to business clients.

Across August, we will be testing our service delivery to ensure we are ready for September. This is when we expect the real influx of office workers to arrive.

We are planning to excite returning workers with food hampers



FRANCOIS GAUTREAUX UK MANAGING DIRECTOR, BARTLETT MITCHELL

Like much of the industry, we are looking forward to seeing the sector pick up over the course of the next few months. We have had over a year to prepare and adapt, not only to the current situation, but also to what the next stages are likely to be.

We have trained teams, adopted new technology, launched new services and communicated with our customers and clients throughout. We do believe this is going to stand us in good stead.

As always, our people are going to play a vital role in the recovery. Much has been said about the people challenges in our sector, and I don't believe we will be totally immune from this, but we are in a stronger position than most as we have been in constant contact with our current and former team members.

We have developed an arsenal of all new online training tools to help our teams as they re-enter the workforce. We also engage our teams regularly with fun events, educational workshops and strategy sessions, always making sure they feel they are a part of something and that we are there for them. Mental wellbeing has been a big focus for us and we've developed multiple resources to aid our people if they are struggling. We have also placed great emphasis on rebuilding our talent team, which is our in-house employment agency of highly trained hospitality professionals, to cope with the shortage of available people our industry is currently struggling with.

The whole industry will be working through their transition plans and we're continuing to roll out Mosaic, the industry's first subscription-based, and completely flexible, catering model. This brings all the benefits of WSH under one roof and is going from strength to strength. With specialist divisions such as reception services, events, venues and vending, we are going to be well-placed to offer a wide range of services to clients.

In addition, our PearPay app will offer an expansive suite of capabilities that will not only allow us to be Covid-safe, but will also give us huge added services, flexibility and real-time data. This will allow us to maximise opportunities while minimising wastage.

Our new small, medium and large logistics packages, to support working from home, hybrid working and traditional office working formats, can easily adapt to whatever our clients need. They are designed to confidently manage the anticipated ramp-up in numbers.

It is difficult to predict how the next few months will pan out; however, what is in not in doubt is the fact the everyone has missed seeing their friends and colleagues, and people can't wait to start sharing experiences in person once again. Whether it's a coffee, a stronger drink, a business meeting, a meal, concert or sporting event, the hospitality sector is ready.

Our people are going to play a vital role in the recovery



PHIL ROKER MANAGING DIRECTOR, VACHERIN, PART OF CH&CO

It's all about strong communication. Every client has their own approach to how they are opening up their offices and the direction they are giving to their own people. This, of course, impacts on our services and the expectations on our teams.

Some of our teams have worked the whole way through, but there are also individuals and entire teams who have not worked since last March. We recognise that this is a long time and we have developed a programme to support them and help ease them back into the routine of work. For example, getting up at work time, walking the course and coming into sites to understand the measures the client will need them to follow.

We've used this strange time to upgrade almost every aspect of our back-of-house systems, including our trading, procurement, payroll and IT systems, health and safety, and even our relief team scheduling platform, so there's been loads of positive change. Again, our returnees need to get up to speed, so we are encouraging them to visit both head office and buddy sites to ensure they understand what has changed over the past 18 months and how this impacts their roles.

Our services are crucial to enhancing life at work for our clients' employees returning after a long period of working from home – from the joy of having someone else cook interesting food for you, rather than having to cook (and clean up!) every meal, to a continued emphasis on healthy, nutritious, sustainable choices, as well as the reassurance of a safe and comfortable space to socialise, collaborate and refuel. We've subsequently created a series of promotions to support and celebrate coming back to work.

Our app and payment technology has also moved on enormously and we can offer more choice and convenience to customers around how they interact with us. This includes pre-order, click-and-collect, click-and-deliver, and self-pay.

We're naturally an optimistic bunch, but we can't ignore that all of this is clouded slightly by two things: the recruitment challenge that we're all currently facing, and the continued uncertainty around the return-to-work directive with rising case numbers. We are still living with Covid and all that this entails, including test and trace and self-isolation. So, while we're preparing and raring to go, it's essential that we remain alert and agile, and in constant communication with our clients and teams.

Having said all that, we can't wait to get back to busy offices, hospitality, parties and having fun!

We've used this time to upgrade our back-of-house systems

FEEDING THE FRONTLINE

BAXTERSTOREY HAS CREATED OVER A MILLION MEALS FOR NHS STAFF SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN



BaxterStorey has now provided over a million free nutritious meals to support frontline NHS staff across the UK since the start of the pandemic. With many of its workplace dining and hospitality locations unable to operate during national lockdowns, the caterer used its extensive local supply chain to provide daily meals to fuel workers from 45 NHS facilities across the UK as part of FeedNHS, a campaign aimed at delivering fresh meals to front-line NHS teams.

"It was launched by Leon founder John Vincent and actors Damian Lewis, Helen McCrory and Matt Lucas to raise money to feed

NHS workers," explains Noel Mahony, co-chief executive of BaxterStorey. "We teamed up with FeedNHS and Mealforce to provide a central coordination role for the campaign and supply meals every day to NHS staff across 90 hospitals."

BaxterStorey colleagues volunteered their time to work, from kitchens across London and the south up to Edinburgh and Aberdeen, to create nutritious, fresh food for staff at NHS hospitals, food banks, emergency services and community centres. "Throughout the pandemic, we have all seen the incredible work and dedication of our heroic frontline NHS staff," says Ma-

We all have a part to play in beating the pandemic

hony. "Essentially, this was our way of saying thank you.

"Many of them started to work longer and more arduous shifts at the peak of the pandemic and, of course, surrounding restaurants and cafés shut, so it became difficult

for frontline staff to feed themselves. We believe that we all have a part to play in beating the pandemic and together we can make a difference. At BaxterStorey, we were proud to be able to supply free, nutritious meals to frontline staff when they needed them most."

The caterer developed a range of menus, but they all had one thing in common: they all used fresh and nutritious produce. "In Slough, our teams worked from the WePrepare kitchens to produce delicious meals to hospitals including the Royal Marsden, St George's and Kings College," says Mahony. "Elsewhere, our London food team delivered food first aid kits direct from their homes."

The team of six lifted the spirits of frontline staff across London, Essex, Hampshire and Surrey by delivering fresh meals to emergency and community centres, NHS hospitals and food banks. "We provided everything from hot grab-and-go meals to sandwiches and snacks," says Mahony. "These included plant-based, nutritious dishes, such as vegetable tagine and smoked tomato stew. All of these used vegetables that had been kindly donated by Watts Farm, one of BaxterStorey's long

-standing suppliers."

The grab-and-go items included chicken salad sandwiches, tuna and cucumber sandwiches and fruit pots. Meanwhile, the caterer's NatWest team in Scotland produced 1,000 pieces of Scottish tablet. Its supplier Benzie's also donated vegetables for soups in Scotland.

Mahony truly appreciates all of their hard work, saying: "We were proud to recognise the extraordinary efforts of our frontline staff in responding to Covid-19, and our teams up and down the country truly came together."

"Frontline staff have expressed their gratitude to us. Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation, for example, was conscious of the huge outpouring of support from the public for acute hospitals, but really appreciated that we were ready to recognise the equally extraordinary efforts of its community health staff too."

And their incredible work has been recognised across the industry. The BaxterStorey team at NatWest has been shortlisted for Team of the Year at the 2021 Public Sector Catering Awards, while the London culinary team was shortlisted at the Heinz Hero Awards.

Looking to the future, Mahony concludes: "We recognise the enormous impact these challenging times are having on us all. As restaurants are reopening, staying connected and responsive is one way we remain committed to supporting our customers, clients, colleagues and local communities. We are also always looking for other opportunities to support our local communities, so watch this space." 

This was our way of saying thank you

STATS AND FIGURES

To date, BaxterStorey has:

Raised over £2.5m in third party donations via the WSH Foundation

Delivered over 860,000 meals to critical care teams (15 hospitals), ambulance and control room teams (in 12 locations) and vaccination centre volunteers (11 locations) across London

Prepared 28,000 meals for NHS staff across Edinburgh and the Lothians (seven locations)

Prepared 2,000 free meals for NHS Grampian in kitchens provided generously by Halliburton

Delivered food first aid kits to lift the spirits of frontline staff across London, Essex, Hampshire and Surrey



BACK TO SCHOOL

EDU-CATERING

After a year-and-a-half of turmoil, children are due to return to what is hopefully a post-pandemic environment – and, all being well, they will be there to stay. The sector may have been rocked during this period, by reduced capacities, closures and food waste caused by last-minute lockdowns – but, despite all this, it remains big business.

“The school catering industry is worth £1.2bn a year, offering a vast opportunity for contract caterers across all food categories,” says Scott Oakes, commercial manager for Baker Street. “The British Educational Supplies Association says that there are more than 10.3m full- and part-time pupils at school in the UK, and it is no secret that demand for places is rising, which only increases the opportunity for efficient and effective catering solutions.”

RASH DECISIONS

Even once the pandemic passes, education remains probably the fast moving – and most political – sector in the catering industry. For example, throughout the Covid crisis, one of the most influential individuals involved has been a certain England and Manchester United forward.

“There has been a lot of attention over the past year, led by the campaigning footballer Marcus Rashford, on the number of children who rely on their school meal to provide their main

AFTER A TURBULENT 18 MONTHS, SCHOOL'S IN – HERE'S HOW TO ENSURE YOUR PROVISION IS A CLASS APART

meal of the day, highlighting just how important school food is for many,” says Simon Biggs, senior consultant for Litmus Partnership. Compliance with the School Food Standards is a must for all schools in order to ensure that all the health factors are fully considered.

“Schools also play an important role in promoting healthy eating habits to children. Introducing them to new tastes, offering them healthy options and showing them alternatives is all part of helping children establish a positive relationship with healthy food options.”

One way to promote this is to embrace one of the biggest foodie phenomena of recent years. “School caterers wanting to keep on top of food trends should be catering to the plant-based revolution that is occurring across the UK at the mo-

ment,” says Steve Hemsil, sales director – UK and Ireland for Welbilt. “A recent study by The Vegan Society found that 54% of respondents said they had bought alt-meat products for the first time during lockdown, and 78% intended to continue buying them.

“Toasted sandwiches, paninis or wraps are quick, easy and delicious, and school caterers can deliver on the latest plant-based trends easily by offering tasty toasties such as tofu, sweet chilli and spinach wraps, or a tomato, pepper, cheese and onion panini.”

“As the recent Heinz Fit 4 Future research highlights, 20% of parents want more veggie and vegan options on school menus,” agrees Gordon Lauder, MD of Central Foods. “However, more than a quarter of processed, vegetarian meat-substitute products do not provide a source of protein, according to research by Ireland-based food safety and nutrition organisation Safefood, which

*The school
catering industry
is worth
£1.2bn a year*



GREEN StrEAT KITCHEN FROM QUORN

looked at the nutritional content of more than 350 meat-replacement products.

"Therefore, it's important to choose carefully when it comes to plant-based ingredients and meat alternatives to serve on school menus. As well as products that are high in protein, opt for healthier meat-free items that are also low in fat, low in sugar, a source of fibre and have salt levels below the Public Health England [PHE] 2024 targets for a more nutritionally balanced menu."

The company's KaterVeg! vegan mince, which is also gluten-free and will therefore appeal to a number of dietary requirements, fulfils all of these criteria. It can be used as a meat-free swap in a wide range of favourite dishes, from spaghetti bolognese, tacos and chilli, to lasagne, shepherd's pie and even pizza toppings.

Developed specifically for secondary schools Quorn, meanwhile, has launched the Green StrEAT Kitchen concept, inspired by high street favourites that pupils love. The brand has also launched its Conscious Cantina concept, which is specifically designed for secondary schools and universities.

They offer dishes including Quorn breakfast muffins, Quorn pad Thai noodles and Quorn peri peri pitta. They are all healthy and tasty options with the added benefit of being meat-free, helping to deliver a lower carbon footprint on menus.

"We're really excited about the launch of our concepts," says Phil Thornborrow, head of food-service for Quorn. "Green StrEAT Kitchen has had a great reaction so far and Conscious Cantina was a huge success in its initial phase of pop-ups in the south of England.

"We will hopefully see these rolling out across the country this year. Through them we'll be supporting our foodservice customers and delivering delicious vegan and vegetarian meals inspired by our love of fast food."

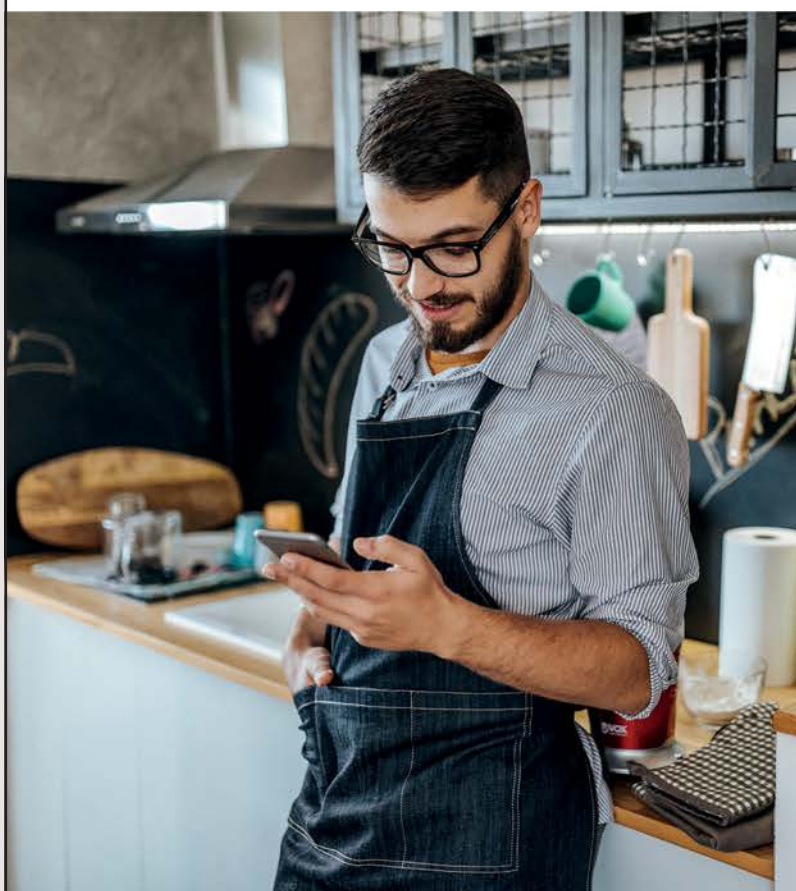
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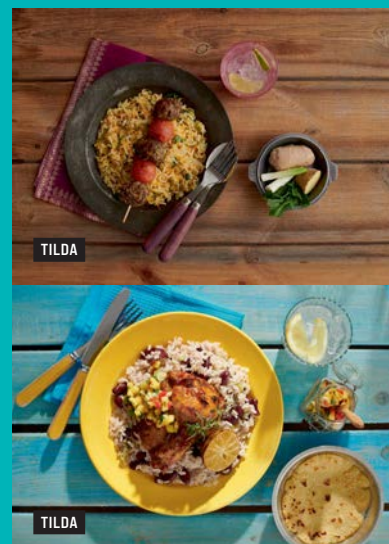
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BETTER TOGETHER

Tilda has produced the Together Recipe Collection

Tilda has a range of school-friendly and tasty recipes available on its website to inspire and aid busy school caterers in menu planning. All the dishes use Tilda Brown and White, bringing together the health benefits of wholegrain with the taste and popularity of white rice.

The recipes include smoky pulled chicken, Indian lamb koftas with coconut rice, jollof rice with chicken, Asian sweet potato curry, jerk chicken with rice and peas, and hearty vegetable stew with Middle Eastern rice and black beans. They offer caterers, teachers and parents the reassurance that their children will eat healthy, exciting meals full of wholesome goodness. To discover the recipes, visit www.tildafoodservice.com.

There has been a lot of attention, led by Marcus Rashford

ME OLD CHINA

Chinese cuisine has proven to be one of the best-loved choices among younger diners, and a recent YouGov poll found that Chinese food was the most popular takeaway choice with 25% of Brits. "School caterers provide an extensive range of interesting lunchtime menu options, many inspired by global cuisines thanks to greater awareness of world foods and access to a range of innovative food products," says Greta Stroltyte, brand manager for Lucky Boat.

"Latest trends mark the uptake of vegan and vegetarian diets, which has surged in recent years,

with more students seeking meat-free options, especially if they are from meat-free households. A poll of 1,500 children between the ages of eight and 16, commissioned by Linda McCartney Foods, states that 70% of British children want to see more vegan and veggie meals on the school menu.

Lucky Boat offers a range of noodles that are suitable for a variety of diets without sacrificing on taste. As well as addressing the demand for global cuisines, the noodle range also answers the call for vegetarian and vegan options and is completely free of egg.

So all-encompassing is the rise of healthy foods, especially in this market, that you can even get a compliant milkshake to wash it all down with. "Yazoo sugar-reduction plans are in-line with PHE targets to reduce added sugar in milk drinks by 20%," says Wayne Thompson, business unit controller – out of home for FrieslandCampina. "The plans also mean our milk drinks are no longer classified as being high fat, sugar and salt, and based on last year's sales of over 48m litres of Yazoo, we would have removed in excess of 400 tonnes of sugar from being consumed.

"Dairy drinks have benefitted from the existing

levy and provide a healthier alternative to traditional soft ones. This encourages retailers to stock dairy drinks in soft drinks fixtures. We have a duty to help shoppers to make responsible choices, but ultimately flavoured milk is a taste-led category that is often chosen as a treat or reward."

It's worth remembering that, in a post-Covid world, the value of a dish or ingredient that can be used in multiple ways should not be overlooked. "Anything that can be used across different day-parts is a real advantage for school caterers, as they find they can do more with less and reduce waste and cut costs as a result," says Nicole Pisani, education chef ambassador for Philadelphia Professional.

"Traditionally thought of as just a topping for bagels or an integral cheesecake ingredient,

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*FrieslandCampina, Yazoo added sugar content reduced from 4.7g to 3.9g per 100ml



The plain fact is that caterers must plan to combat the virus


Philadelphia's versatility, allied to its taste, quality and stability, makes it a fantastic ingredient in the school kitchen. Its ability to absorb different flavours makes it the most versatile of ingredients and, because of its superior quality, it won't split when heated."

And, when put to the test, chefs were unanimous. "Recent independent research identified Philadelphia Original as the clear frontrunner in terms of taste and quality when compared to three competitor products," adds Pisani. "Some 89% of chefs agreed that Philadelphia did not split during cooking, while blind taste tests revealed it to be significantly creamier than the competition."

Of course, when it comes to children, coronavirus and catering, the most important factor is obvious: safety. "Sanitised cutlery, drinkware, pots, pans, plates and serving dishes are the health factors fundamental to the running of a safe kitchen when the schools reopen,"

says Paul Anderson, MD of Meiko UK. "The pandemic has shown that, despite the best protective measures, it is not unknown for schools to detect cases of the coronavirus.

"The plain fact is that caterers must plan to combat the virus and stop it spreading, and that the most vital area of the kitchen to sanitise is the dishwasher. This is because it is where the virus can be spread to the whole school."

Anderson's advice is not to rely on anyone else but a dishwashing specialist to ensure the school dishwashing operation is running totally hygienically. "Dishwashing safety is about getting the time, temperature and chemicals operating in harmony," he concludes. "It is not enough just to wash – the temperature must be hot enough to kill bacteria and that can only be guaranteed after an engineer has calibrated the dishwasher thermostat. Book the maintenance visit for the dishwasher ASAP." 



NATASHA'S LAW

Paul Greathead, divisional sales director for Civica, on meeting the law's health and safety requirements

"From 1st October 2021, any food that is prepacked for direct sale [PPDS] on site must be labelled with a list of ingredients, including emphasised allergens in bold, italics, uppercase, coloured text, or any combination of these. PPDS is food packed before being offered for sale by the same organisation, on the same premises/site.

"This may include prepacked sandwiches made on site, boxed salads, fresh pizzas served on a tray, or bagged cookies/cakes when baked on the premises. It does not include food packed at a consumer's request, food not in packaging, or food that is supplied prepacked to the school.

"However, best practice goes beyond simply achieving compliance. The key to ensuring food safety is in effective and auditable catering management processes. By using software like Civica Saffron, staff can help to improve visibility, ensure compliance and enhance efficiency through paperless systems, bringing all aspects of catering management into one simple-to-use platform.

"Civica Saffron gives catering and management staff easy access to data, including nutritional and allergen information, supplier information and more. This data can be exported to your chosen labelling supplier to support compliance with Natasha's Law, and linked with Civica Cashless to prevent any individual pupil or staff member from ordering food that contains allergens that they should avoid."

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* except Vegan Bangers 28g 1 x 60

BACK TO SCHOOL

A CLASS ACT

Why did you think of the findings of the recent National Food Strategy?

Naturally, as an independent contract caterer to primary and secondary schools, I was especially focused on the areas relevant to children and the report's recommendation for The Department of Education to launch a new Eat and Learn initiative for schools, aimed at children aged three to 18 years. It recommends five core elements: curriculum changes, accreditation, inspection, funding, and recruitment and training.

The report states that changes to the curriculum are needed because "food education remains a second-class subject". At Relish, we believe we have a duty of care to ensure our young customers are fuelled with nutrition for physical growth, mental development and sustainability throughout afternoon school. We therefore load our main meals with vegetables and nutrients that all comply with the School Food Standards.

The report also advises on 'sensory food education'. This is something that we already do, because we feel we have a responsibility to broaden the food experiences and extend the tasting palates of the children.

In terms of accreditation, the recommendation is that schools should adopt a "whole-school approach", by integrating food into the school life, while working with accreditation schemes such as

WE SPEAK TO CLARE LOVETT, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF RELISH SCHOOL FOOD, ABOUT THE STATE OF THE SECTOR AT THIS PIVOTAL TIME

Food for Life. This is an excellent idea. We already work with Food for Life to improve school food and education. We run growing clubs, from seeds on window sills and mini-greenhouses by dining room windows, to outdoor planting spaces.

The report suggests that Ofsted include inspections on the quality of food and nutrition lessons with the same rigour they do for English or maths. We'd be delighted to invite Ofsted to join us for lunch at one of our schools, or indeed at our hugely popular cookery clubs, healthy living days, assembly talks or at a parent masterclass.

The recommendation is that the government doubles the funding for the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme from £40.4m to £80.8m, with the money going directly to schools. Nothing more to say here, but yes, absolutely.

What should caterers be doing more to help prevent child poverty?

In April, footballer Marcus Rashford encouraged the government to provide free school meals for

children during the summer holidays. No child should ever go hungry and the government should be responsible for making provisions to ensure the health and wellbeing of children all year round. At Relish, irrespective of financial circumstances, no child will go hungry on our watch.

What are your most popular meals in schools?

Our curried lamb meatballs with a coconut curried sauce is an absolute favourite with the children. In the warmer months, the children like to make paella with Stefan, our head of operations, who has a huge paella pan that serves over 60 people. They love to help make the dish and use the big paddle to stir the pan. However, their favourite part is watching the mussels open as they cook. It is wonderful to see them so engaged.


What is the single biggest issue currently affecting school meals?

The coronavirus. The provision of support for children outside of term time has been contentious to say the least and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

What one tip would you offer on getting your school food provision right?

Keep communicating – with clients, pupils, parents and suppliers.

What are your plans for the future?

With our Relish-OPS technology, we're changing the way our menu module works to deliver even greater flexibility. For example, we could focus a day on vegan or plant-based options and allow children to build and pack their own lunchboxes, all with the use of smart technology. 

*We believe we
have a duty
of care*



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BACK TO SCHOOL

STRATEGY
SUPPORT

Henry Dimbleby, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' lead non-executive director, recently unveiled his independent review to develop recommendations to shape a National Food Strategy. The plan addresses the challenges of supporting people to eat healthy diets, producing food sustainably and protecting national food security, while also looking at related issues such as the price of food and trade.

It contains a diagnosis and recommendations for actions to reorient the food system to be healthier, both for ourselves and the planet. The government has committed to responding to the review's recommendations in the form of a white paper within six months.

The Food Foundation responded positively, with a spokesperson saying: "The new National Food Strategy presents a bold and exciting plan for the UK food system. It makes a crystal-clear case for the need for government intervention, explaining why it would be near-impossible for citizens to make the necessary changes to their diets on their own.

"We are pleased to see strong recommendations on sugar and salt taxes to help encourage reformulation, mandatory business reporting, action on children's food insecurity, increasing

WSH AND THE FOOD FOUNDATION ARE BACKING HENRY DIMBLEBY'S NEW NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

access to fruit and vegetables, and strengthening food system governance."

Laura Sandys CBE, chair of the Food Foundation, added: "We really welcome the Strategy, which is both very comprehensive and clear in its recommendations to government. As the Food Foundation has said from its inception, the challenges cannot be solved with piecemeal, one-off initiatives but require deep systemic change. This whole system change is very well represented throughout the Strategy.

"The Strategy, having highlighted the problem and developed the solutions, now needs to be acted upon and we will be continuing our campaigning for system change."

Commenting specifically on schools, Alastair Storey, chairman of Westbury Street Holdings (WSH), told us: "The Eat and Learn initiative is a recommendation I fully support. Education on food is essential for every child and should start from the early years.

"Introducing children to food, ingredients, provenance and nutrition at an early stage is something that creates healthy connections with food and ingredients. Food is an integral part of daily life, and to address diet, health and obesity, we must use education to make real


and positive change.

"Observing behaviours in countries such as France or Italy, I believe we can learn from their attitude to food and nutrition. The connection to food is so important and this is something that comes very naturally. They take care in the detail; children learn how to make simple, seasonal dishes from scratch, and there is an important connection to the ingredients.

"A continuation of focus on food is also essential as children progress through the education system. Our industry is suffering from a skills shortage and attracting young talent is essential to protect the future of hospitality. We must engage with children, show them the opportunities available and build a pipeline of future hospitality leaders."

The Food and Drink Federation struck a note of caution, however, with chief scientific officer Kate Halliwell saying: "This report will help inform the wider conversation around the future of the UK's food and drink industry. Food and drink manufacturers welcome the intent to bring forward measures that will help to increase access and affordability of food and drink for children and families on lower incomes.

"In contrast to this, a salt and sugar tax will ultimately impact those families who are already struggling to make ends meet, by making food and drink more expensive. After many years of cost pressures, businesses in our sector are already operating on very tight margins, and any further costs would simply have to be passed on to the consumer in the form of higher food prices."

The prime minister seemed to agree with the latter, saying: "I'm not attracted, I must say, to the idea of taxes on hardworking people." 

*Education on
food is essential
for every child*



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Relish-OPS (Operating & Procurement System) is our groundbreaking, market-leading technology. Why is it groundbreaking? Because we genuinely bespoke each and every menu to a school, which means every recipe fully complies with the School Food Standards (SFS) and all HACCP related legislation, whilst also managing all allergen and special dietary requirements. Please visit YouTube and in your search add **"Reli-Food Menu Bespoking"** for a demonstration.

If our manufacturer changes an ingredient, the recipe and menu is re-analysed automatically every evening in line with the SFS, which is why we're ahead of the compliance requirements for Natasha's Law. So, if you're a school struggling to prepare for Natasha's Law in October, don't worry, as our Relish-OPS technology is here to quickly help.

To find out more about our bespoke menus, or if you need help to prepare for Natasha's Law, visit:

<https://relishschoolfood.co.uk/>.

E: info@relishschoolfood.co.uk,
or call: **03300 240016**

**Quote from Tanya Flinders,
Operations Catering Manager,
the Spencer Academies Trust**

"We have full responsibility for our menus and with the support of the Relish-OPS technology, we are able to tailor and create a different menu for each individual school in accordance with the School Food Standards and HACCP guidelines. Additionally, without Relish and their Relish-OPS technology, we would have struggled to prepare for Natasha's Law in October. However, now, we're well and truly ready."

BACK TO SCHOOL



CAMPUS CATERING

**How has the last year or so affected the sector?
How have you had to change your operations?**

Like many businesses throughout the pandemic, we encountered a lot of uncertainty around demand due to many students studying from home. As a result, we had to reduce our operations and adapt our food offering to more grab-and-go items, in line with customer expectations and needs. As a business, we are currently looking at how we transform our food operations away from traditional on-site food to a more integrated and agile model that blends new off-site solutions.

What have you done to reassure students that premises are now safe?

Keeping people safe will always be the number one priority for Sodexo. In addition to more regular cleaning, we have reduced touchpoints and always maintain social distancing.

To increase the convenience of food ordering we have onboarded Twelve Pay, which is the safest way to order and pay in the marketplace. Twelve Pay allows our students to order ahead and select where they want their food and drinks to be collected or delivered, as well as scan and

JAMES MUNDY,
FOOD AND RETAIL
TRANSFORMATION
DIRECTOR FOR
SCHOOLS AND
UNIVERSITIES FOR
SODEXO, UPDATES
ON CATERING
FOR RETURNING
STUDENTS

go, like a supermarket. This ultimately allows our students to beat the queues and avoid the need to pay by cash or card at the till point.

What did you think of the findings of the recent National Food Strategy?

Health and wellbeing is a critical strategic pillar for Sodexo, and the findings, in some ways, hav-

We are currently looking at how we transform our food operations

en't come as too much of a surprise. For example, the idea of applying a sugar tax levy is something that has been raised for a while.

At Sodexo, we want to find the right balance between healthier eating and treats. We'll continue to work closely with the industry, schools, parents and pupils to adopt as many of the findings as possible and improve the health and lives of the children we serve.

What are your most popular meals in universities?
Chicken remains the number one preferred pro-

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BACK TO SCHOOL



tein on campus. However, we are seeing more of a demand for providing healthy plant-based foods, and we can see this trend increasing in the long term. During the pandemic, we have tended to focus on speed and convenience, so more of the items we have been selling have tended to be more takeaway items.

What is the single biggest issue currently affecting university catering?

The biggest issue is how service providers adapt and become more agile in the face of such uncertainty, even going into the new academic year this September. The lack of predictability for on-site volume is both a threat and an opportunity. Here at Sodexo, we have been working hard to change our operating model from traditional contract catering to a more flexible approach, utilising partnerships with delivery franchises which has allowed us to diversify our revenue streams.

What one tip would you offer on getting your university food provision right?

The critical tip I'd suggest is to become insight-driven, utilising a combination of local research and data


One of our key plans for the future is to ensure that our food approach is sustainable

to make truly customer-centric decisions. With the ongoing uncertainty and many food choices being available on and off-site campus, it's imperative that providers really understand the customers they currently serve. Twelve Pay is the ideal tool for us to make some of those data-led decisions as we go forward and continue to transform our food services.

What are your plans for the future and how do you see university food evolving?

Our future food solution needs to be designed to be agile, responsive and flexible to suit consumers' needs for value, variety and convenience. Integrating the right digital payment solution to make the experience as seamless as possible is crucial to the overall approach.

As a business, one of our key plans for the future is to ensure that our food approach is sustainable, delivering social value that is measurable. We have outlined an increase in plant-based meals as a key action towards our target of 34% carbon reduction by 2025. With the recent appointments of myself and David Mulcahy, as food innovation and sustainability director, into the schools and universities segment, the business recognises the need for change and the willingness to invest.

Ultimately, what the pandemic has taught us is that we need to adapt and we're on a journey. We'll work with the universities and our students to listen and adapt quickly – we know we have more to do, but we're excited about what the future holds. 

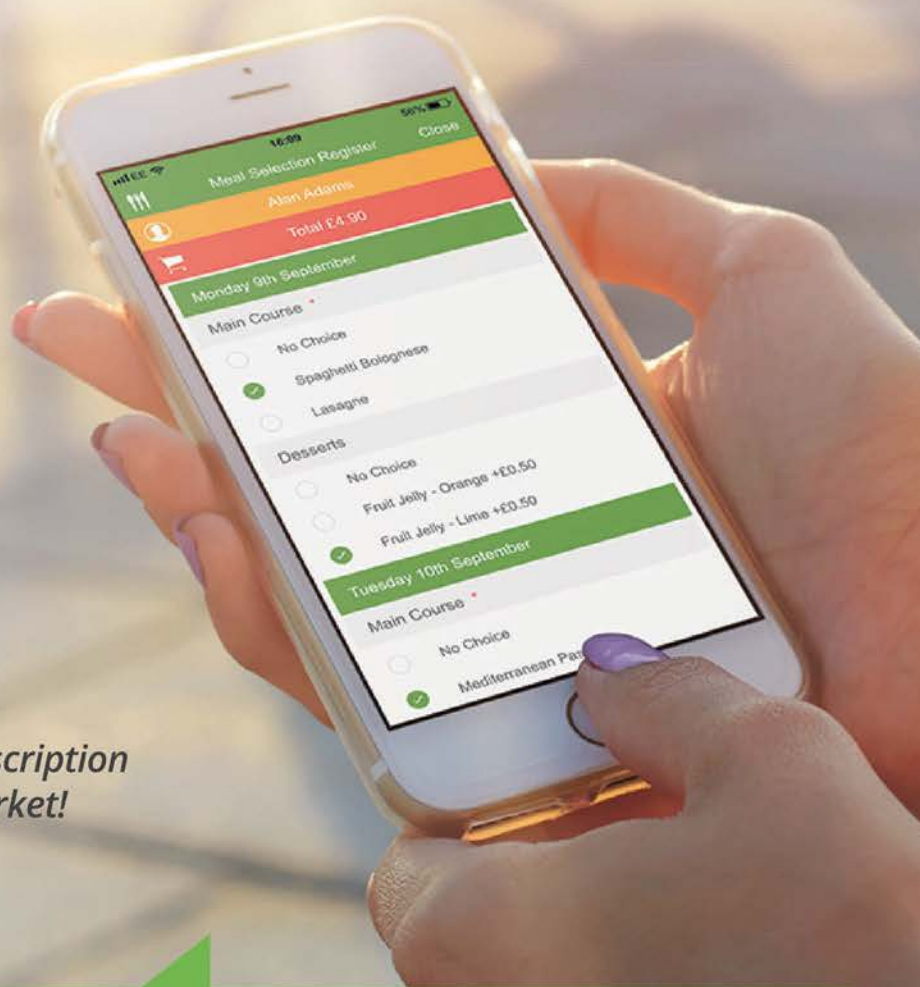


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BRITISH FOOD AND DRINK

Close to home

From the 18th September, British Food Fortnight will once again take place to celebrate homegrown produce. The aim is to encourage people to seek out British food on menus and in shopping aisles, and to hopefully inspire them to carry on that way once the event has ended.

At the same time, hospitality and foodservice operators are encouraged to put British food on their menus – and there has never been a more important time to do so. The extreme flooding that has recently occurred in China and Germany is proof – if ever it was needed – that urgent action must be taken to combat climate change, and buying British goods is just one way that caterers can help play a part.

“Outlets that buy British products will be working towards a more sustainable catering approach,” says Christopher Banks, chief executive of Crafted Drinks. “One major benefit of buying British is the fact that products will travel a less-

WITH BRITISH FOOD FORTNIGHT APPROACHING, GEMMA BRADISH REVEALS WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO SERVE FOOD AND DRINK THAT IS PRODUCED IN THIS COUNTRY

er distance from factory to shop, thus resulting in a lower carbon footprint than most comparable imported food and drink.”

What’s more, buying and selling British products will help to pull in customers for two other important reasons. Firstly, it taps into the trend for provenance. We are now living in an age of transparency, and consumers want to know exactly where their food and drink has come from. Items that have racked up huge air miles are out of favour, while those made closer to home provide far more appeal.

The second reason is linked to the pandemic.

Having seen how countless businesses struggled to survive, many consumers are now keen to buy British and lend their support. “It goes without saying that buying British food and drink ultimately aids in boosting the economy,” says Banks. “With more and more consumers seeking to support local businesses in the wake of the pandemic, there has never been a better time for caterers to put British food and drink at the forefront of their menus. In fact, 66% of British consumers said that they are more likely to buy more British goods post Covid-19 in order to support the economy.”





BRITISH FOOD FORTNIGHT

THE HISTORY

The first British Food Fortnight was held in 2001 when the foot and mouth outbreak had brought the farming industry to its knees. Founder Alexia Robinson wanted to give farmers a reason to remain optimistic and continue farming. To this day, the overall purpose of the event is to support the farming industry. By encouraging people to discover and purchase food that is made in this country, the team hope to make it viable for farmers and producers to continue to invest in farming and domestic food production.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

This year, British Food Fortnight will run from 18th September to the 3rd October. Here, the team behind the event reveal how caterers and foodservice organisations can go about sourcing British food:

- Contact your existing suppliers to see whether the produce they currently supply you with is British.
- Contact the large producer organisations for a list of British meat, dairy and vegetable suppliers that can cater for large foodservice sourcing requirements.
- Send current and new suppliers a copy of the menu you would like them to supply British food for and invite them to pitch for the business.
- Don't be put off by prices that initially may seem higher. Buying large volumes can make the whole process affordable.
- If you are catering in the public sector, consider forming a partnership with other public organisations to aggregate demand and make savings through bulk purchases.
- Larger suppliers can still provide local produce. Be specific when talking to them about what you want and don't shy away from specifying local products as part of your requirements.
- Involve your client in the sourcing process. If they are concerned about increased costs, explain that healthy eating is a hot topic at the moment and their employees/customers will expect them to respond to this.



One major benefit of buying British is that products will travel less distance





GROWING SUPPORT

In 2020, OnePoll conducted a study called The Farmer Favourability Survey to gauge the level of support for British food and farming

75% of people voiced a positive view of UK farming, which is the highest amount since OnePoll began conducting the annual survey in 2012

86% agreed that British farms should grow as much food as they can to ensure national food security

88% feel it is important that Britain has a productive farming industry – the highest figure for three years


89% of the public feel farming is fairly or very important to the UK economy – a 4% increase since 2019

77% of respondents agreed that farmers should continue to receive financial support post Brexit

RAISING AWARENESS

So, how can you go about promoting the fact that the food you serve is made in Britain? As well as using point-of-sale materials and flags, it's important to update your menu, stating where items were produced. Also, staff members should be briefed on new products and dishes in advance, and encouraged to discuss them with customers.

Another idea is to take advantage of different events in the national calendar. "Sporting events are a great example and a way in which you can encourage consumers to get behind Team GB at the Olympics, for instance," says Jonny Pons, professional pubs and restaurants chef ambassador for Philadelphia. "Highlight these dishes on your menus or make them a special – help customers along with their decision by giving them a reason to choose a British dish."

With British Food Fortnight approaching, there is no better time to look at your menu and think about which items you could swap for British options. We are lucky in this country to have so many farmers and producers supplying a diverse range of delicious goods – and it makes complete sense to work with them. 

CONTACTS

British Food Fortnight

www.lovebritishfood.co.uk

Crafted www.crafteddrinks.co.uk

Philadelphia

www.philadelphiaprofessional.co.uk

British became the most popular cuisine during lockdown

COMFORT FOOD

Thanks to the pandemic, there has been a surge in appreciation for traditional dishes. Here, Pons of Philadelphia elaborates

"Increased delivery may have meant global cuisines were more accessible than ever during the pandemic, but analysis has found that it was British that became the most popular cuisine during lockdown, as customers craved the simplicity and comfort of some of our most beloved staples in their own homes. And, as things continue to return to normal, tapping into consumers' taste for revived British classics could be a real opportunity for contract caterers."



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FESTIVE FEASTS

WITH CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS HIGH FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON, CONTRACT CATERERS NEED TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS

CENTRAL FOODS

Despite the sun setting well into the evening and no hint of colder weather, it's that time of year when caterers' thoughts turn to festive menus. With dampened celebrations last year, consumers will be championing at the bit to make the most of any special occasion, so menus need to be thrilling.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Celebration meals are meant to be exciting, but that doesn't mean caterers have to kill themselves trying to produce a standout menu. By

putting some serious thought into menus and how they can be executed with ease, foodservice operators can make their lives so much easier while still appealing to the masses.

"If there is one area where caterers can justifiably give themselves a helping hand at Christmas, it's with desserts," says Scott Oakes, commercial manager for Baker Street. "Cooking three courses is a challenging task and busy chefs know there is no shame in cutting corners with pre-baked products; even moreso when you can still add ingredients to create a home-made showstopper."

Of course, menus should include the traditional Christmas pud. However, it's not everyone's favourite dessert, so it's essential that menus feature alternative options. From festive flavoured ice cream and decadent tarts to impressive layer cakes and brownies, there are quality readymade treats that can help caterers offer a broad selection of tasty desserts with little effort.

Pre-made flan and tart cases, for example, allow chefs to get creative, offering bespoke desserts. Simply fill and top with any number of delicious ingredients for a fuss-free sweet. For those looking for a lighter and more healthy option following a full-on feast, why not serve a tart or flan packed with colourful fresh fruit?

"One of the biggest challenges caterers face when preparing a three-course meal for residents is inevitably time," points out Scott Duncan, managing director of Unox.

"Cooking a starter, roast dinner and puddings from scratch in one day is virtually impossible with low staffing levels, not to mention limited

Christmas is the ideal time for caterers to go all out with their offerings

kitchen space, even when cutting corners with pre-prepared food products.”

With this in mind, caterers really should make the most of their equipment, maximising its potential. It's therefore a good idea that caterers revisit any training to reacquaint themselves with their kit and even contact their equipment dealers for support with innovative cooking equipment.

If caterers are looking to invest in new equipment to help raise productivity and reduce stress levels, they should be looking for technology that enables them to get ahead of the curve. For example, advances in technology mean that there are products on the market that help caterers to maintain food safely at the temperature at which it is served and eaten, and above the danger zone for bacterial growth.

Food can be cooked in a combi oven and held for days, before being served exactly when it is needed. “At Christmas, this opens a whole host of opportunities,” says Duncan. “Warm puddings, vegetables, even joints of meat can be cooked the day before and kept until ready to serve on Christmas Day. This means freeing up staff – and ovens – on the day itself to focus on other essentials.”

BREAK FROM THE NORM

Not everyone is looking for a traditional meal during the holiday season, so it's important that caterers consider other dishes. By taking advantage of new product development, caterers can ease the pressure in the kitchen while also maintaining customer experience. “The simple alternative, without creating more work for the

There is no shame in cutting corners with pre-baked products

kitchen, is to take the lead on retail new product development and indulge in Christmas sandwiches,” says Oakes. “They are easier to hold, are lighter and are simple for staff to prepare too.”

Sandwiches are the ideal grab-and-go option for foodservice outlets. Whether you serve turkey and stuffing baguettes or brie and cranberry paninis using leftovers, it's important to use the perfect carrier. From gluten-free and wholemeal products to white and sourdough loaves, variety is the key to consumer engagement.





TILDA



BAKER STREET



CENTRAL FOODS



CENTRAL FOODS

Turkey will always be a festive favourite

According to The Vegan Society, some 3.5m people in the UK now follow a vegan diet, while a further 7m are vegetarians, which is a significant demographic to cater for. "Christmas is the ideal time for caterers to go all out with their offerings and create irresistible plant-based dishes with a festive twist," says Annette Coggins, head of foodservice for Tilda UK. "From Christmas rice to butternut wellingtons, our recommendation for creating festive menus that will stand out is to ensure caterers are using the highest quality and premium ingredients in their dishes."

By using vegan-friendly products, such as fragrant jasmine or nutty brown basmati rice, caterers can add authenticity to their dishes. Using premium ingredients to make it extra special for the festive season will also justify a higher price point, offering a better profit. "Demand for plant-based products has been rising for some

time and, while the number of vegans is increasing, there's also growing interest in plant-based products from flexitarians and meat reducers, who are either cutting down on animal products or just prefer something different but still tasty," points out Gordon Lauder, MD of Central Foods.

With options like beetroot and thyme tarte tatin – featuring sticky, caramelised balsamic roasted beetroot wedges, delicately flavoured with thyme on a crisp puff pastry base – on the menu, it's not just veggies and vegans that will be ordering plant-based meals. Beetroot is a popular vegetable that's healthy, tasty and provides a beautiful rich colour that's perfect for festive menus and can be accompanied by a simple salad for a lighter lunch, making it a versatile ingredient to have in stock.


"Turkey will always be a festive favourite and, for meat lovers, we have recipes that make the most of your leftovers to minimise food waste," says Coggins. "Our tasty turkey pilaf recipe uses our brown and white rice, a 50/50 mix that keeps the visual appeal of white rice while also offering the health benefits that come with wholegrain. It's the perfect lighter dish for diners looking for a healthier option, or those who feel they have overindulged during the festive season."

Cross-contamination is a big issue when it

comes to food allergies and intolerances, so best practice should be in place to safeguard customers. One way of minimising this risk is to make use of pre-prepared and frozen free-from products. "When it comes to Christmas meal options for your free-from diners and customers, choose pre-prepared frozen items that are simple to put together and serve," suggests Lauder.

"Great-tasting, pre-prepared, frozen savoury products are ideal for those with dietary requirements. They make a great centrepiece for the festive meal, but could just as well be served at other dining occasions throughout the year. They are perfect to have to hand in the freezer."

No one wants to miss out on dessert, so it's essential that foodservice outlets have at least one gluten-free sweet for the one in 100 people with coeliac disease, as well as others who are avoiding gluten for other health reasons. Opting for a pre-made dessert is the ideal solution, as it will minimise food waste and cross-contamination, ensuring everyone can enjoy a festive feast. Rather than defrost a whole dessert, caterers can just remove the portions needed from the freezer.

With the past year or so having been particularly difficult for the foodservice industry, there are high hopes for the coming months. Consumers will be keen to make the most of any celebratory occasion they can and eating out will be a big part of the festivities. By offering a diverse menu, suitable for a range of tastes, foodservice outlets will maximise the opportunities that the coming months present. 

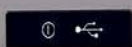
CONTACTS

Central Foods www.centralfoods.co.uk

Baker Street www.lovebakerstreet.com

Tilda www.tilda.com/professionals

Unox www.unox.com/en_gb



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Salad days



FLORIAN DE CHEZELLES AND JAMES DARE

FOUNDERS **FLORIAN DE CHEZELLES** AND **JAMES DARE** TELL **HENRY NORMAN** HOW THEY SUCCESSFULLY PLANTED THEIR NEW **THE SALAD PROJECT** BUSINESS IN SHOREDITCH DURING THE PANDEMIC

“We would always joke with each other that we had a guardian angel above our heads throughout the process. We were constantly frustrated with how slow things would be developing.

“However, every time we got delayed, another announcement from number 10 would come and we’d collectively offer a sigh of relief. ‘Could you imagine if we’d opened already?’ was a common catchphrase throughout 2020 for us.”

Fast-forward to 2021 and all Florian de Chezelles’ and James Dare’s hard work (and a little luck) has paid off, as they tell me how the salad business they seeded somehow succeeded in launching in Shoreditch amid the small matter of a global pandemic. “The biggest issue for us has been the unpredictability of the current office levels – it seems that small factors play a huge part,” they continue. “The gradual easing of restrictions, and therefore increasing footfall, has allowed us to finesse our operation.”

The operation they are discussing is The Salad Project, which the friends and business partners began working on way back in 2019. They had come to realise

that they shared a dream of opening their own fast-casual restaurant with an emphasis on excellent service. This concept then finessed further when they identified a gap in the London market for a place with delicious but (crucially) healthy lunch and dinner options.

“The term business seems very academic to us,” they say, as they reflect on this process. “It’s always been a passion and, although it’s a cliché, a ‘baby’ of ours. We both believe that in hospitality, you don’t have to reinvent the wheel. You have to put your spin on it and try hard to improve every aspect of the operation until you are ahead of your competition. It is the culmination of many small things which, together, we hope will build something special.”

The pair quit their jobs in hospitality towards the end of 2019, with the intention of opening their first location in April 2020. “2020 obviously needs no introduction to anyone, but for us, as a business, we were able to take stock and look for positives,” they reason. “We evaluated what we wanted to achieve and we had the time to make sure we got there.

“Now we are here, The Salad Project has its first of hopefully many homes. Aptly, we are located in the old Fruit and Wool Exchange building [in Spitalfields] and are just so proud to be part of this neighbourhood’s ever-developing tapestry.”

Despite the less-than-ideal trading conditions, the duo report that The Salad Project has been performing “solidly” on weekday lunchtimes and “remarkably well” on Deliveroo and UberEats throughout the day. “It’s been better than we could have imagined considering where we are as a country. It will be very interesting to see how it picks up as the office returns, as it really is our bread and butter. It also increases the opportunity for brand partnerships and corporate catering.”

The key to fostering this kind of early success is, of course, the food. For this, James and Florian teamed up with friend, chef and nutritionist Clementine Haxby, who helped create the extensive menu, which is based around healthy, customisable options. It features salads, bowls, soups and fully customisable dishes to suit all dietary needs, as well as seasonally changing specials highlighting the best of what can be grown in the UK.

So, are there any issues with having to balance taste with health with the menu? “There are, but we would caveat that we are not preachy in our message. We want to open up the ‘salad’ as an enjoyable lunch for Londoners, and you won’t achieve that if all you are offering is kale and cucumber. The nature of our concept encourages each customer to build their meals to their specific needs. Also, what is labelled ‘healthy’ for one person is not for someone else.”

The pair reveal that that they conducted a survey prior to opening, asking if they should highlight the nutritional information on the in-store menu. “Overwhelmingly the response was that customers would rather it not be present, citing a mental stress attributed to the information that would outweigh almost any benefits. For those who want to know, all of our

As a nation, we need to get better at offering healthy food to our communities




information is available on our website."

Much less stressful, however, was the new product development stage. "Clementine made the process very easy on the culinary side," they say. "We both had to stick to our guns to ensure we had a bit of both of us on the menu, and as a result we were very happy with the final product."

There was also a little luck involved, as the G.O.A.T salad has been one of the best-sellers – despite the fact it almost didn't make the cut. The creation is a largely rocket-based salad with sweet potato, caramelised red onions, cherry tomatoes, basil, Salad Project chicken breast, goats' cheese and maple walnuts. All this is then tossed in a fresh carrot top dressing. "Our build-your-own option has been the most popular item, though, which is great to see. Starting at £6.50, it's a really accessible option and allows the customers to get creative and build exactly what they want."

The same could be said for the duo's formula for building The Salad Project, so what business tips have they picked up so far along the way? "It's very simple. The devil's in the detail and make sure you have someone to enjoy the highs and lows with. It makes each end of the spectrum so much more enjoyable."

The result has certainly also been successful, with the fledgling business enjoying a 5/5 Google review rating and 4/5 on TripAdvisor at the time of going to print. Despite this, Florian and James insist that they aren't going to try and grow too fast, too soon. "This summer is about proving that London wants The Salad Project and that we are able to execute our vision," they insist. "After that, who knows?"

"As a nation, we need to get better at offering healthy food to our communities. If The Salad Project can play its part in that goal, then that would be wonderful. One thing we can guarantee: we will continue to love what we do for as long as we can keep doing it." 

We want to open up the 'salad' as an enjoyable lunch for Londoners



NEW PRODUCTS

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Retaining its consistency during frying, grilling and baking, while providing the same great flavour for blending and chilling, Heinz's all-new Professional Mayo is ideal for use in a range of recipes. Perfectly carrying subtle or strong flavours during blending and chilling, it retains its smooth texture in dishes that require frying, grilling or baking.

Tasty and creamy, hot or cold, chefs can use Heinz Professional Mayo in coleslaws, sauces and sushi, as well as comfort classics like fritters and pizza. Ready to rock direct from the shelves, it binds hot or cold ingredients, blending flavours with ease.

Asmita Singh, marketing lead – UK foodservice for Kraft Heinz, said: "Consistent food quality and operational simplicity are more important than ever. This new product delivers on delicious creamy flavour while providing much sought-after versatility across a variety of applications and temperatures."

To get a free sample (while stocks last), e-mail heinzfs@clementsretail.com with your name, business, address and telephone number.

www.kraftheinzcompany.com



PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Tetley has announced the launch of its improved enveloped tea range. It is now available in 100% recyclable packaging, and hygienically sealed for safety and freshness.

The revived range is available in 10 specially selected blends, all with the great taste of Tetley. It includes best-selling English Breakfast, herbal variants such as Fresh Mint and Lemon and Ginger, and a selection of fruity and green infusions. This refreshed new look range comes off the back of Tetley herbal's popularity within the retail marketplace, now expanding to out of home consumers.

Initially available from all major wholesalers, the range is also available to order directly from the dedicated Tetley Foodservice website below. For a free sample, and to find out more about Tetley's out of home offering, contact help@tetley.co.uk.

www.tetleyfoodservice.co.uk



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Essity has invested £9.5m at its industrial site in Hondouville in France, to extract 98% of the paper fibres contained in beverage cartons with a view to recycling them. These fibres will then be used in the manufacturing process of Tork branded products.

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www.essity.com



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Simply Roasted will shake up the snacking industry with its new range of non-high fat, salt and sugar crisps, created using a patented roasting process costing over £20m and developed over a 10-year period.

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www.simplyroastedcrisps.co.uk



NEW NUTS

KP Snacks has announced the launch of KP Aromatic Thai Chilli Coated Peanuts in a new pub card format. The coated nuts offer a combination of explosive flavour and satisfying crunch, with the new pub card format optimised to drive impulse sales.

This new product delivers two textures as consumers bite through a crispy outer shell to reveal a tasty peanut inside. It adds to the market-leading KP Nuts range, which includes Original Salted, Dry Roasted, Honey Roast, and Salt and Vinegar.

www.kpsnacks.com



GREAT SERVICE

Hobart has re-emphasised its ongoing service delivery promises to new and existing customers. Keith Mackie, managing director of Hobart Service, said: "It is now more important than ever for customers to understand the value of working with the manufacturer for equipment service and repair – our 94% first-time fix rate improves operator revenue and profitability"

"We have over 90% of parts in UK stock, which is why our clients trust us as the manufacturer to look after their equipment and minimise downtime."

www.hobartuk.com/service/overview

INDUSTRY EXPERT: EVENTS



The main event

ALLAN HEARD, ACCOUNT DIRECTOR FOR SEARCYS,
ON HOW TO UNLOCK EVENTS POST-LOCKDOWN

What a year! Following the country's unlocking in July, it's only a matter of time until events, meetings and conferences return fully, and we plan to come back with a bang. Nothing can substitute the sheer enjoyment of a live event; the socialising, positive energy and creative sparkle is like no other. Confidence is growing as we take tentative steps to reopening the industry, and there is no better time to get inventive and make events bigger and bolder than ever before. Let's indulge ourselves.

Since the introduction of the roadmap and the progress of the vaccine drive, there has been a distinct boost in bookings – Searcys event enquiries are up 70% from March 2021, with restaurant businesses being the first to come back, followed by wedding enquiries. And now we are seeing the return of the corporate booker. More positive news comes from the latest Corporate Event Buyers Survey, carried out by our partners Venue Search London, reporting September as the month where live events will really show a healthy return, with 30% of respondents having events booked already.


Safety is, and will always be, a high priority. While step four removed all restrictions, we are faced with constantly changing Covid-19 restrictions. As venues, we need to be flexible, offering postponement policies to give bookers peace of mind, and adjusting spaces to manage numbers safely.

Searcys at the Gherkin serves as a prime example for finding innovative answers that allowed us to continue trading since last summer. Developing a bespoke range of restaurant packages that were pre-sold through our online ticketing platform saw 7,000 guests in May and July this year, and a system was developed to manage volume and market the offer in a structured, measurable

to treat people will be Christmas. Guests will be looking to make up for the missed moments and celebrations, and the enquiries are already coming in for office parties and experiences. Being at the heart of events since 1847, Searcys know how to throw a party! Menus, packages and champagne at the ready, the more inventive the better. Christmas is truly a time to sparkle, whether it is through

menus – we've gone for a three-course homage to the Brussels sprout – to surprise and delight moments.

Across our business, we've witnessed an increase in venues looking to relaunch their events business. As one of the UK's oldest restaurateur and caterers, we are delighted

to be welcoming new event and conference venues into the family, including The View at the Royal College of Surgeons, London's newest destination venue launched in July this year. As we navigate through the second half of the year, I think Searcys speaks for all in looking forward to raising a glass to a great 2022. 

Searcys event enquiries are up 70% from March 2021

way. Other venues with open spaces and beautiful gardens, such as The Honourable Artillery Company with five acres of Artillery Gardens, have also seen a huge increase in event bookings.

From the restart of the events, we found that customers are craving a touch of indulgence and we are doing our best to impress. What we must remember is that most events have been a year in the making and organisers know what they are after. New experiences and tailored packages, such as champagne fountains, themed tasting menus, masterclasses and afternoon teas, are proving popular in the revival of events.

Looking ahead, the biggest opportunity



GET A FREE #FLEXUPYOURMENU TOOLKIT!

Garden Gourmet has identified three key ways to improve plant-based menu options. This comes in light of research which shows that more than two-thirds of flexitarians are actively trying to cut down on meat.

The plant-based meat alternative brand has partnered with Julie Cleijne from the Sustainable Kitchen Consultants to produce a practical toolkit to guide operators on how to flex up menus successfully and drive appeal of plant-based dishes amongst flexitarians, vegans and vegetarians alike. Along with expert advice and insight, the toolkit includes handy printable posters that can be used as reference points for operating sites, including a calendar of plant-based national days and events. Also included is a checklist that is designed to support operators throughout the process of evolving their menu options.

Cleijne said: "Consumers are increasingly seeing the link between what they eat, their health and the health of the planet, and making conscious food choices as a result. Recent research shows that only a dedicated subset of consumers are fully committed to having zero animal products in their diet, with more wanting to reduce their intake, rather than remove animal products completely.

"Therefore, it makes good commercial sense for operators to make sure their menu offering can cater to as many customers as possible, with some great plant-based options to choose from."

To download the free #FlexUpYourMenu toolkit from Garden Gourmet, visit: www.nestleprofessional.co.uk/plantbasedtoolkit



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The BM60 is an easy and affordable way for any establishment to take its menu outside this summer and increase profits. Hurry, this limited price of £499+VAT is only available while stocks last! Simply e-mail readeroffer@h2opublishing.co.uk to take advantage of this offer.



AGNIESZKA BERNACIAK

COMPASS APPRENTICE CHEF OF THE YEAR

WHAT DO YOU CURRENTLY DO?

I currently work as a chef for ESS Government Services, which supports sites across police, secure environments, local and central government. I'm also working towards completing my Chef de Partie level 3 apprenticeship which I began four months ago. I love apprenticeships because they allow me to work and learn at the same time, enabling me to develop my skills and progress as a chef.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK IN THE FOODSERVICE?

I have always enjoyed cooking and being able to do this, alongside writing my own new recipes and being creative, is the main reason why I wanted to join the industry. I love to show my imagination and culinary knowledge, particularly when paying attention to the small details within my dishes.

HOW DID YOU COME TO ENTER COMPASS APPRENTICE CHEF OF THE YEAR?

I entered the competition because it was a great opportunity for me to show my character and abilities outside of my own kitchen. It took me out of my comfort zone, as during the competition I had to manage my workload under pressure and against the clock.

WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO DO WHEN ENTERING?

We had to get through the semi-final heat first and then for the final we had to create three courses, which had to be cooked and presented within a three-hour time limit. Marcus Wareing judged both competitions and, after the final, he said he was blown away by the progress of all competitors, from the semi-final to the final.

HOW DID IT FEEL WHEN YOU FOUND OUT YOU HAD WON?

Initially I was in complete shock, but I was extremely happy with what I had managed to achieve in the competition. I really didn't expect it, so to be named as the winner was simply amazing!

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR CAREER DEVELOPING?

Completing this apprenticeship will give me qualifications and skills that will be fully recognisable in any chef environment in the future. I really enjoy competing – creating beautiful and delicious plates of food under the watchful eye of the judges was a great learning experience. Listening to advice from judges such as Marcus is a great way to develop my career and evolve my culinary skills.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST AMBITION?

Before the competition, my biggest ambition was to win the Compass Apprentice Chef of the Year competition. Now I have done this, I have proved to myself that anything is possible! I want to pass my final assessments and would love to create my own new dish or menu that will one day be served at one of the Compass sites.



[L TO R] NATHAN RACEY, AGNIESZKA BERNACIAK, DYLAN PATEL



BERNACIAK'S WINNING FIRST COURSE

I really enjoy competing



Pings and passports

KATE NICHOLLS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF UKHOSPITALITY, WARNS THAT SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLES STILL REMAIN, EVEN POST 'FREEDOM DAY'

'Freedom day' has certainly not been the triumphant or celebratory moment that I think either the government or the country envisioned when the roadmap out of restrictions was announced earlier this year. While the removal and easing of pandemic restrictions will be welcomed by the contract catering industry, there is clearly still some way to go, and significant hurdles need to be cleared, before we can experience anything like 'freedom'.

Some big challenges remain, the most significant of which is that coronavirus is not going anywhere soon. There's also the 'pingdemic' caused by difficulties with the NHS Covid-19 app – something which is exacerbating existing staff shortages – and the looming threat of Covid vaccine passports being an entry requirement at 'large' events. And, of course, we are still waiting for the government to issue a 'back to work' message with any real enthusiasm or clarity.

The aforementioned pingdemic is already causing havoc for the wider hospitality sector, with


Customers will be required to show Covid vaccine passports

the super-sensitive NHS Covid-19 app alerting hundreds of thousands of uninfected people, causing up to a fifth of sector workers to isolate. This leaves many businesses on a staffing knife edge, as they reduce their operating hours or close completely, thus derailing any chance of recovery. While the government has granted exemptions for contract catering workers in hospitals and prisons, much of the foodservice workforce is still vulnerable to being pinged.

The pingdemic is also adding to what is rapidly becoming a staff shortage crisis in hospitality, with thousands having already left the sector fearing they have no future in an industry ravaged by the pandemic. Some prospective recruits are also shunning it, worried about job security. Our joint research of 350 businesses that are operating across tens of thousands of venues found that 100% currently have vacancies, while a third are experiencing managerial role gaps. Vacancy levels are running at 10% across the sector, implying a shortage of more than 200,000 workers.

The hammer blow, though, I have left until last: nightclubs and large-scale events, closed for 16-months, were stunned to learn on 19th July that, from September, their customers will be required to show Covid vaccine passports before they can enter. It was concerning news for the contract caterers, many of whom operate at large events and venues that are affected by this move. Not only will having to have such a passport put off many would-be attendees, but it could spark flashpoints between staff and guests, never mind the huge issues raised concerning equalities legislation.

Freedom day, then, has proven to be something of a false dawn. The easing of all legal restrictions in England should have been a pivotal moment for contract catering businesses desperate to lose the fetters, kick on, trade without restrictions, rebuild, and begin to pay off their pandemic-accrued debts.

The challenges will continue as the sector and society learns to live with this virus. However, rest assured that UKHospitality will continue to bang the drum and fight our corner to ensure that we remain on the path to recovery. 



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