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WELCOME



WELL, WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN – AGAIN! – FOR THE INDUSTRY AND THE NATION IN GENERAL. OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS, AT THE TIME OF TYPING ANYWAY, WE HAVE HAD THREE PRIME MINISTERS, FIVE (!) EDUCATION SECRETARIES AND, SADLY, TWO MONARCHS.

We look forward, however, to more positive times, as we finish the year on something of an upbeat note. On page 16, Jane Renton speaks to Well Grounded about the incredible work it is doing to provide more much-needed skilled staff for the industry; while on page 54, I chat to The Genuine Dining Co about its newly launched mental health coffee shop in east London.

We can only hope, and I'm sure that I've said this is least once or twice before, that the next 12 months brings a return to calmer times. It just leaves me to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year on behalf of everyone here at H2O Publishing. We look forward to seeing you in 2023!

H Norman

HENRY NORMAN



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Christmas and a
happy new year!*

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ARAMARK LAUNCHES AT ALTON TOWERS AND WARWICK CASTLE



[[L-R] DANIEL CLARK AND NEIL CRITTENDEN AT ALTON TOWERS

Aramark UK has announced the latest phase in its partnership with Merlin Entertainments. Its food and beverage offering has been rolled out across Alton Towers Resort and Warwick Castle, and sees 450 staff employed by Aramark across the two locations.

In January 2022, Merlin Entertainments announced a multiyear contract with Aramark. They were initially at Chessington World of Adventures Resort, Thorpe Park Resort and Legoland Windsor Resort.

Both Alton Towers Resort and Warwick Castle have their own unique portfolio of food and beverage offerings. Aramark provides food and beverage programmes that offer family and guest favourites, fresh concepts and fun themes, coupled with industry-leading technology solutions to make it easy and convenient for visitors to navigate the varied choices.

"We are committed to offering a food and beverage experience that complements the memorable occasions Merlin delivers for our guests every day," said Daniel Clark, Merlin global account director for Aramark UK. "The launch of our food and catering services at Alton Towers Resort and Warwick Castle is a further step in our ongoing growth in the UK market, a key focus area for us."

Neil Crittenden, commercial director for Alton Towers Resort, added: "We are really excited about this new chapter in our food and beverage offering. The partnership will provide guests with some fantastic new options when visiting and staying at the resort."

We are really excited about this new chapter

£10.90

Levy UK will be paying all of its UK employees the Real Living Wage or above from 1st January. The new rate is £10.90 (£11.95 in London).

SODEXO FIRES UP SFRS DEAL

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has extended its soft facilities management services contract with Sodexo for a further two years. The deal, which has a value of £5m a year, will see the caterer's 350 colleagues continue to deliver catering, cleaning, security, and waste and grounds maintenance services for the full SFRS estate, ensuring a consistent level of service across Scotland.

The 420 SFRS locations include wholtime and on-call fire stations, offices and support locations.

Iain Morris, acting director of asset management for SFRS, said: "It is a pleasure to announce that we are extending the current contract with Sodexo for a further two years. The partnering approach has been exceptional and is being described by us as a high performing exemplar for all other contractors to follow."

Paul Anstey, chief executive officer for government for Sodexo UK and Ireland, added: "We are delighted that our colleagues will continue to deliver services for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. It provides such an important service, helping to ensure the safety of local communities across Scotland."



THE DEAL IS FOR FIVE YEARS

HERTFORDSHIRE

CONSTABULARY

ESS EXTENDS HERTS CONSTABULARY CONTRACT

The energy, government and infrastructure sector of ESS, which is part of Compass Group UK and Ireland, has won an extension to its Hertfordshire Constabulary catering and hospitality services contract. Flexibility and a commitment to promoting customer wellbeing were important elements of the deal.

The five-year contract will see ESS delivering catering and hospitality services for officers and staff at the force's headquarters in Welwyn Garden City. The restaurant, serving breakfast and lunch, will be complemented by a micro-market offering hot and cold grab and go food and refreshments 24/7. The company will also provide planned and emergency operational feeding across the county.

Ronnie Kelman, managing director – ESS energy, government and infrastructure, said: "We're excited to be extending our interim contract with Hertfordshire Constabulary. As well as a varied food offer through our restaurant and micro-market, customers will benefit from our wellness programme which incorporates menus and educational resources to support healthier choices."

ELIOR SUPPORTS ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY



Elior recently hosted a charity dinner with renowned female chefs to increase awareness of dementia and raise money for the Alzheimer's Society. The event, which was presented by Angela Rippon, took place at Lloyd's of London and included a live auction.

The caterer has pledged to raise £100,000 for the Alzheimer's Society by the end of 2024. Less than a year into the partnership it has raised £36,000, which positions it ahead of target.

The charity dinner, raising £13,000 alone, is one of a sequence of Elior's fundraising events with further activities already being planned for 2023. It was supported by leading female chefs Sarah Hayward, Romy Gill MBE and Claire Clark. Each designed a course for the menu that was recreated and served by Elior's in-house chef team, including its Chef Academy apprentices.

Catherine Roe, chief executive officer of Elior, said: "I'm delighted that we are well on our way to our three-year target of £100,000 to support the wonderful work that the Alzheimer's Society does. Thank you to everyone that made this an incredibly successful and enjoyable evening, and to all our Elior colleagues who continue to make a difference through their various fundraising efforts."

We are well on our way to our three-year target of £100,000

JUST EAT FOR BUSINESS PARTNERS WITH CLUBZERO

Just Eat for Business has announced the expansion of its partnership with sustainable packaging business Clubzero. The move follows the latter's pilot with Just Eat Takeaway.com in 2021.

Business customers will have a choice to opt in for Clubzero reusable packaging when placing an order from a range of participating restaurants or cafés through the Just Eat for Business platform. Having enjoyed their meals, the packaging will be collected by bikes to be washed centrally and redistributed for reuse.

Safia Qureshi, founder and chief executive officer of Clubzero, said: "Our vision is to see reuse adopted as the new norm across food and beverage delivery and takeaway. We look forward to expanding this model throughout 2023 with Just Eat for Business."

Matt Ephgrave, managing director of Just Eat for Business, added: "We knew that in order to achieve minimal waste, we needed to provide a sustainable service that would stick and be easily implemented into our restaurant partners' delivery models. Our partnership with Clubzero does just that, offering a convenient service as well as an effective way to reduce packaging waste."



BM HELPS PIONEER CARBON LABELLING ON MENUS

BM has become one of the first contract caterers in the UK to roll out carbon labelling on menus across its business and industry sites. By working in partnership with Nutritics, which provides the group's nutritional software, the company now offers its team an automated carbon footprint scoring system which helps produce carbon labels for its menus.

FoodPrint will allow BM to generate a 'carbon badge' for each recipe that can be added onto menus, similar to nutritional traffic light labels on food packaging. Nutritics obtains carbon footprint data using data from suppliers if available and secondary data such as industry averages.

The scoring system will account for the entire process of getting food from farm to plate. The criteria will include the greenhouse gas emissions produced by growing, rearing, farming, processing and transporting.

Sally Grimes, quality standards manager for BM, said: "FoodPrint provides us with a reliable Scope 3 ESG reporting and carbon labelling system. Having this information empowers us to make more informed decisions to help reduce our carbon footprint, and allows our customers to see our sustainability journey, understand the impact of their food choices on the environment and make informed decisions themselves."

CLINK CHARITY TICKETS ON SALE

The Clink Charity has announced that tickets for its 2023 Awards Dinner are now on sale. Taking place on 3rd February 2023, the night will raise crucial funds to support the charity's work in reducing reoffending rates through delivering hospitality training in prison and helping and supporting prisoners upon release to find accommodation and full-time employment.

Previous charity balls have seen the amount raised increase year-on-year and the events have now raised a combined total of over £200,000. Guests will enjoy a four-course menu using locally sourced ingredients, entertainment from The Executives, an online auction and table raffle.

Clink graduates will also tell attendees how the scheme has helped transform their lives. The occasion will also help to further promote The Clink's training projects across His Majesty's Prison Estate.

"I am delighted that we can hold the charity ball at the Royal Lancaster again and we are back to our usual date after the pandemic," said Vic Laws MBE, Clink Group Restaurant ambassador and chairman of the Ball Committee. "During that time, The Clink Charity has suffered from not being able to open the restaurants, thus restricting the ability to support all of our graduates. We hope that many will support our charity ball as a good way of raising money for us and seeing and hearing about the achievements of our graduates, while having an enjoyable evening."

Individual tickets to the ball are priced at £140 per person or a table of 10 can be purchased for £1,300. To book tickets, go to designmynight.com/london/whats-on/food-drink/the-clink-charity-awards-dinner?t=tickets.

Special accommodation rates are available at Royal Lancaster and its sister hotel K West. Quote code 'CLINK2023' upon booking.

The night will raise crucial funds to support the charity's work

TNS SECURES TALKTALK TENDER

TNS Catering has secured an exclusive tender with TalkTalk at its Soapworks headquarters in Salford Quays. The caterer has introduced a focus on locality, street food and a coffee offer from ethical British supplier Kickstart, which donates every penny of its profits to supporting children's education in Uganda.

The official tender process began in October 2021, with TalkTalk searching out caterers who could put together a plan to incentivise staff returning from a long hiatus of at-home working post-pandemic. Equally important, however, was working with a supplier that could align with its inclusive culture.

Rachel Wetherill, health and safety manager for TalkTalk, said: "The feedback so far has been excellent. The restaurant is bustling and the food is terrific – new flavours, new dishes, fantastic coffee with an ethical story and a great plant-based offer too. We fell in love with TNS because of their food, but most crucially, because of their values."



TWEET ALL ABOUT IT

TNS – THE NEW STANDARD

@TnScatering



On the 5th day of Christmas, TNS gave to me... Chocolate brownies in the shape of Christmas trees
#Brownies
#Christmas

#Chocolate #Festive
#WorkingTreats

ARENA EVENTS

@Arenanetworking

Our event on the 7th has been postponed due to the train strike. But the good news is that we have rescheduled for 24th Jan! More here <https://arena.org.uk/event/4952>

UKHOSPITALITY

@UKHofficial

UKC CEO @UKHospKate and @fredsirieixI discussed rewarding careers in our industry, the art of great hospitality and a fantastic #hospitality recruitment campaign by @HospoRisingUK, on @BBCRadio4's #TheFoodProgramme.

HOSPITALITY ACTION

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The festive season is meant to be a time of joy, but for many it can be a time of stress, anxiety, disappointment or loneliness. If you're struggling our confidential helpline is open day or night. Call us on: 0808 802 0282 #wevegotyout



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CENTRAL FOODS TEAMS UP WITH ESSENTIAL CUISINE

Frozen food distributor Central Foods has teamed up with sauces and stocks specialist Essential Cuisine to launch a range of individual frozen sauce sachets for the foodservice sector. All are gluten-free, helping to make kitchen life easier for chefs and other members of staff.

Convenient and easy to use, the Premium Frozen Range sauce selection features seven different flavours that are suitable for a host of culinary applications. They are peppercorn, diane, hollandaise, béarnaise, red wine and shallot gravy, blue cheese, and smoked bacon and mushroom.

Ronnie Smith, national account manager for Essential Cuisine, said: "We are very pleased to be working with Central Foods to achieve the widest distribution among frozen food wholesalers and ensuring that the range

is available to a maximum number of customers. Central Foods' mixed pallet consolidation service ensures caterers no longer have to achieve minimum order quantities to access the range, meaning they can purchase just one case if required, helping to reduce outlay and risk."



FINN LANDS AT LITMUS

The Litmus Partnership has announced Candice Finn is joining its board as commercial director. She has spent the past eight years at Sodexo, most recently working in the independent schools sector.

Finn said: "I've been aware of Litmus for many years and I'm thrilled to

be joining the team. I'm looking forward to supporting the continuous improvement of services to existing clients and the ongoing development of our unique propositions, not only within education, but also the wider sectors we work in."

Tim Cookson, chairman of the Litmus Partnership, added: "We're delighted to welcome Candice to Litmus. Her skills, business acumen, relationships and experience mean she is perfectly positioned to help drive us forward."



TABASCO COMMENDED AT QUALITY FOOD AWARDS

Created and developed in conjunction with leading supermarket retailer Iceland, Creative Foods' Chicken Fillet Strips with Tabasco Brand Pepper Sauce Flavour received a highly commended accolade at the Quality Food Awards. Part of the retailer's Exclusive to Iceland initiative, the chicken fillet strips are finished in a crunchy, spicy coating bursting with the distinctive flavour of Original Tabasco Brand pepper sauce.



"A huge amount of time and effort was invested in developing this product and the award is testament to the skill and creativity of our development and manufacturing team, as well as the unique flavour of Tabasco," said Helen Hyde, trade sector controller for Creative Foods. "Over the years, Creative Foods has been involved in the launch of a host of Tabasco products for the foodservice and manufacturing sectors, and this award is confirmation that we continue to lead the way in the development of relevant, on-trend products for both consumers and caterers."

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APPOINTMENTS

NEW PEOPLE DIRECTOR FOR BAXTERSTOREY

BaxterStorey has appointed Arran McDowell as its new people director. He boasts experience in both the UK and globally, following 15 years with Elior as UK HR director and most recently in a group role that saw him champion best practice across countries. Prior to this, McDowell held roles at Carphone Warehouse and HSBC Group.

Ronan Harte, chief executive of BaxterStorey, said: "Strong leadership is fundamental to delivering a people-first employee proposition that celebrates creativity, ambition, inclusivity and an obsession for great hospitality. I am therefore delighted that Arran has joined the BaxterStorey leadership team."

McDowell added: "BaxterStorey has seen incredible growth, and this is thanks to the teams who have been given the support and guidance to be innovative and bring their ideas to life. Hospitality is an incredibly diverse and exciting industry to work in, and I look forward to working with the people team, and wider business, to build on our talent attraction."



ARRAN MCDOWELL

BM APPOINTS POP-UP GURU

BM has appointed Sunil Varma to the role of pop-up chef to oversee the development of bespoke and modern street food concepts across the company. The role involves identifying food trends for the business and designing concepts around these, reflecting London's evolving food culture.

Varma has worked for BM over the last 10 years across a number of sites and is also a part-time DJ. As part of this activity, he also develops specific playlists to accompany each cuisine, something that has become hugely popular with guests.

During his time, he has developed vegetarian-focused food concepts that took inspiration from the diets of countries with the longest life expectancy. He adopted dishes, ingredients and trends from nations such as Japan, Switzerland and Macau to explore creative ways in which BM could offer healthier dishes to customers.

Prior to this, he held head chef positions at other foodservice firms including Aramark, Compass and Restaurants at Work, as well as at healthy meal delivery service Fresh Fitness Food and high street chain Giraffe. He also spent four years as a chef de partie at Peter Gordon's Sugar Club in Soho, London.

Varma said: "I'm so excited to have been tasked with heading up BM's pop-up and street food offering. Having been a part of the BM family for the last decade, I've seen how well pop-ups go down both with our customers and teams, and I can't wait to explore and share the brilliant new concepts I have in mind with the teams."



SUNIL VARMA

NEW SE CHAIRS FOR IOH

Francisco Macedo FIH MI SJS, group operations director at Iconic Luxury Hotels and Cliveden, has been appointed as the Institute of Hospitality (IoH) chair of the south east region, under the Institute's new English regional structure.

Robert Richardson FIH MI, chief executive officer of the IoH, said: "I am absolutely delighted to welcome Francisco on board as chair of our new region. He is a fellow of the Institute and has been an active and involved member of our hospitality family for many years now."

Macedo added: "I am extremely delighted to be taking over as chair. I will be supporting Robert and his team in driving engagement among our members and proactive collaboration with the other regional committees."

Joining Macedo as joint vice-chairs will be Mike Wood FIH and Mark Taylor FIH.



FIRST FEMALE MD FOR HOBART

Tracy Southwell has been appointed as Hobart UK equipment division's managing director with effect from 1st January. Southwell, who joined in September 2021 as sales and marketing director, will succeed the outgoing David Riley to become the company's first female MD.

The highly experienced sales leader has 25 years of multi-channel experience in the food and beverage industry. Her remit centres on positioning Hobart as a changemaker in the industry, from a diversity and inclusion as well as a talent development perspective.

Southwell said: "I feel privileged to be appointed to lead the organisation. We now move forward with an even greater sense of purpose and a pledge to invest further to maintain our reputation for excellence and reliability, while further improving our talent management programme, focusing on gender equality, diversity and inclusion."



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DARSHIKA RAVINDRAN



SONJA WITTENBERG

Well Grounded is a small social enterprise that packs a big punch. When I first came across the charity, which specialises in training people to work in the capital's thriving speciality coffee sector, in late 2017, it had just produced its second annual crop of graduates. They are available for wide cross sections of the hospitality industry, which is already struggling for qualified talent. On that

Doing good is also good for business

particular occasion, all the graduates were heading for work experience at Gather & Gather, which is now part of CH&CO.

Five years on, they and competitors, such as BaxterStorey, are as receptive as ever to giving people who employers might have previously overlooked, those who sometimes possess little in the way of educational qualifications, their first all-important break. Some were refugees from war-ravaged countries, while others were from difficult backgrounds and were culturally and emotionally at sea. What has changed, however, is the sheer volume of growing demand for the charity's services, and the complexity and diversity of the challenges faced in getting its intake ready for the world of work.

"The need for our services [for both trainee and employer] in the current environment is higher than it has ever been," explains Darshika Ravindran, head of partnerships for Well Grounded. "The cost-of-living crisis is having a huge impact and the hospitality industry is under immense pressure to come up with new ways of finding good quality talent."

If escalating costs were not bad enough, employers in contract catering are grappling with high staff turnover, limited resources and markedly rising wages: "I was talking to one of our partners [of which there are now more than 140] who said they believed that the industry was too slow to raise wages," recalls Sonja Wittenberg, Well Grounded's commercial director. "It should have been done within the first six months of reopening after the pandemic."

Many of those partner employers are finding themselves increasingly forced to change or split staff contracts to accommodate worker demands for greater flexibility and fewer working hours. "We work very closely with our employer partners and see them making significant effort to accommodate this in their staffing structure, despite the external pressures they are experiencing," adds Ravindran.

But transforming those from more difficult backgrounds into accomplished speciality coffee baristas and roastery assistants is also considerably more challenging than it was nearly seven years ago, when the charity was first set up by social entrepreneur Eve Wagg. "What we have seen since the pandemic is a significant surge in mental health issues, and that has required our frontline team to provide so much more in the way of bespoke mentoring," explains Wittenberg. It has also prompted partner employers to work with Well Grounded on training up existing staff to qualify in providing mental health first aid to colleagues [see also Hot on the high street on page 54].

Officially, unemployment figures are at an all-time low at just 3.5% for the three months to the end of August, something the government is keen to tout as we head into recession. But the figures are misleading, as research by Fraser Nelson,



WELL GROUNDED GRADUATES AT WORK

editor of The Spectator, concludes that the actual number of people of working age out of work and not actively seeking employment is a staggering 5.3m – more than 10% of the adult population. That statistic, however, is disputed by Labour's employment minister, Alison McGovern, who claims the actual figure is nearer to 3m. However, you look at it, the outcome, it seems, is dependent on how you crunch the numbers.

Well Grounded is also of the view that the figures do not tell the full story. For a start they tend to overlook the long-term unemployed, people who have been out of work for 12 months and more, an experience that tends to shatter any sense of self-worth. "The long-term unemployed figures have increased by 35%, recent figures show, and we believe unemployment generally is set to rise," opines Ravindran. "We know unemployment is rising, and those particularly impacted are the young, from lower social and economic backgrounds and the BAME [black, Asian and minority ethnic] community," she elaborates.

The charity, however, is not only dealing with young NEETs [not in education, employment or

320 people have graduated into work, further training or education

training], who account for more than half of Well Grounded's trainee intake. The majority are indeed from BAME backgrounds, but more recently also older groups, many of whom are now seeking a second or even third career move.

"The pandemic prompted many to re-evaluate their lives," says Ravindran, citing the experience of Paul, one of their star graduates, who now holds a permanent position at Gail's Bakery. "Some who had retired have come to us wanting to re-enter the workforce."

THE BIG INTERVIEW

We have seen since a significant surge in mental health issues

“Paul had worked for about 15 years as a support worker for vulnerable adults with substance, alcohol and mental health issues.” That job, however, no longer motivated him as it once had. In fact, it was making him depressed and adversely affecting his personal life. He wanted to quit but was aware of his financial responsibilities, particularly concerning his partner, who was caring for an aged parent.

Paul considered himself well past the age for sensibly making a career switch, which in his case was to re-train as a barista. Despite his worries over how he would be able to make ends meet, his partner persuaded him to take the leap. He trained and qualified at Well Grounded. Work experience followed at Gail's Bakery and that quickly transformed into a permanent position. He has not looked back. His boss there is equally delighted by his career move and readily testifies to his diligence, maturity and can-do attitude.

But not everyone is looking for full-time work; many seek part-time roles to fit in with multiple interests. Some are simply not well enough for full-time employment and others risk losing their welfare benefits if they do so. “What we're finding is that the pandemic made everyone want to re-evaluate their lives,” observes Ravindran.

Not only are hospitality wages rising significantly, but employers are also showing increasing willingness to make job roles more flexible than might have been the case previously. “Employers usually begin by telling us they have a full-time post they want to fill and I will say, ‘I've got two really good people who might share that full-time role between them,’” observes Wittenberg, who nevertheless acknowledges the greater number of logistical challenges for the employer.

All of this places additional burdens on employers, some of whom are already struggling with a six-fold increase in their energy bills alone. It has also placed considerably higher training costs on Well Grounded, whose existing programmes post-Covid have become more expensive to deliver, reflecting the increasing diversity of demands placed upon them.

The organisation devised and launched several new programmes during lockdown, all still focused on speciality coffee, to cater for the growing



THE CHARITY SUPPLIES SKILLED STAFF TO THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

demand for higher-level hospitality qualifications. It also digitalised many of its training modules and added a number of new courses beyond entry level, including one for graduate development for its growing body of alumni who wish to attain higher levels of qualification as well as access to better paying roles.

So far 320 people have graduated into work, further training or education, as a result of Well Grounded's endeavours. That, however, is not the total extent of people helped by the organisation. It receives grants from central government, local authorities and housing associations, as well as charitable funding agencies such as Trust for London, to give people, some of whom are below employment age, a grounding in speciality coffee and hospitality in general. But in this age of increasing austerity and uncertainty,

Well Grounded's connections with its employer partners are assuming both urgency and ever-greater importance. Some such as University College London and financial behemoth UBS have donated a percentage of each coffee sold at their respective organisations towards the charity. More recently, crowd-funding initiatives with City insurer Aviva have helped to some extent with the challenge of rapidly rising costs, but more support is still needed to underpin its training work.

Those employers who host on-the-job training – everyone from community cafés, independent coffee shops and branded chains, to, of course contract caterers – clearly realise that doing good is also good for business. ☺

For further information about Well Grounded's work and partnerships, please contact the charity via e-mail at info@wellgroundedjobs.co.uk.

SEASON'S greetings

OUR PIZZA PERFETTISIMA RANGE HAS GOT YOU COVERED NO MATTER THE OCCASION!

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YOUR GO-TO PIZZA EXPERTS

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*When cooked in leading accelerated ovens

STREATFOOD awards 20 22

WE SPEAK TO MULTIPLE WINNER **ADAM COLLISON**, HEAD CHEF AT ALDERLEY PARK, CORPORATE SERVICES FOR SODEXO UK AND IRELAND, WHO SCOOPED THE TECHNICAL TITLE THIS YEAR

YOU WON THE MEAT-FREE ROUND LAST TIME, HOW WAS IT TO BE BACK?

It was amazing to be back at the awards and especially at Islington Metal Works, which is a great venue. I also love cooking in front of a crowd.

WHAT WAS YOUR WINNING DISH THIS TIME?

'What a lot a wontons'. We were tasked with using Theo's chicken and a Kerrymaid cheese product, and I wanted to create a dish with big flavours and fun. I came up with an oriental wonton dish with



COLLISON'S WINNING WONTONS

I wanted to create a dish with big flavours and fun



COLLISON'S SIGNATURE DISH

THE 2022 STREATFOOD AWARDS

The fifth annual StrEATfood Awards were held in London in September. The 16 talented finalists were tasked with recreating their signature dishes for our panel of expert judges. They also competed in other challenges on the day.

The finalists were selected after submitting their signature street food dishes for our exclusive judging panel. For more information, please go to:

streetfoodawards.co.uk

I would recommend adding a twist so that your dish becomes a talking point

syringes of chilli sauce and a satay dressing for customers to inject the sauces into the wontons themselves.

WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR DISH WON?

It was definitely a street food dish, as it was easy to eat and fun using the syringes to put the dressings on, as well as scooping up the cabbage and pickled vegetables with the pastry. It's the sort of food I like to eat on a night out.

YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY VERY GOOD AT THIS, WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU GIVE ON COMPETING?

It's all about putting the time in, practice and more practice and reading the brief to make sure you are doing what they want. I would also recommend adding a twist so that your dish becomes a talking point, enabling you to stand out from the crowd.

HOW IMPORTANT IS STREET FOOD ON YOUR EVERYDAY MENUS?

It is massive in the hospitality market at the moment; it's extremely on trend and a very social way of eating tasty food on the move. Everyone is so busy now, it is a quick and easy lunch option that packs a punch at a reasonable price.

HOW DO YOU SEE STREET FOOD EVOLVING IN THE FUTURE?

It will continue to grow as people seem to be moving away from long sitdown lunches. We are seeing our street food concepts increasing in popularity for meetings, networking and team building events. There is also the factor of the ever-increasing cost of restaurant space, so it is a cheaper way to showcase great food.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND COMPETING AND WILL WE BE SEEING YOU BACK NEXT YEAR?

I love competing and will definitely continue to do so. It's a great way to meet new people and to see what is going on in the wider business.

Getting out of the day-to-day job and testing your skills against other chefs is really enjoyable. Every time I go to an event, I learn new skills and meet new contacts, plus a day away from work is always good!

There are also many ways it helps to develop you as a chef. When people are watching you cook in a different kitchen in a very small space, it is a skill that helps your confidence in your day job, and it really tests you when you are out of your comfort zone of a familiar kitchen. ☺



COLLISON COMPETING





MAE DIONIO

JUNIOR SOUS CHEF, LE MANOIR AUX QUAT'SAISONS

Mae Dionio recently won the prestigious title of Young National Chef of the Year. Finishing in second place was Theo Hadjitofi from De Banke Group with Liam Rogers from Gleneagles in third.

Dionio created a starter of Mayfield hen's egg with mushroom, lemongrass and ginger tea. Her main course was confit salted Norwegian cod with piquillo pepper, garden courgette, crispy salted cod and chorizo brandade, shellfish sauce. Apple tarte tatin with miso ice cream was her dessert.

Chair of judges and executive chef at Northcote Lisa Goodwin-Allen said: "Mae really impressed me and the other judges today by creating three stunning plates of food that absolutely nailed the brief. The hospitality industry is challenging right now, but days and events like this show the true talent that is out there and gives us confidence that the future is in great hands."

WHAT DO YOU CURRENTLY DO?

I work at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons. I started as a commis chef and I've been here for two years.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN HOSPITALITY?

When I was at school, I attended an open day at Exeter College. I was fascinated by how much passion they had, and the care and attention to detail they put into creating fantastic food. I fell in love with it.

HOW DID YOU COME TO ENTER THE COMPETITION?

My executive chef, Gary Jones, approached me about entering and I was really excited about it. Craft Guild Young National Chef of the Year is one of the most prestigious competitions in the country. I saw it as a challenge for myself; a great opportunity to build connections and cook with other great young chefs from across the country.



I was speechless and very emotional!

WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO DO WHEN ENTERING?

I had to write a menu. The starter had to be an egg dish; main course was a provincial dish using Norwegian seafood; and the dessert had to incorporate puff pastry.

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

I was speechless and very emotional! As chef Gary always says to me, 'What you put in is what you get out'. All the time and hard work I put in practising every day during the competition had paid off. Winning the title felt like a dream and I was very honoured.

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR CAREER DEVELOPING?

Following the competition, I was promoted to junior sous chef at Le Manoir. As part of the senior team, I oversee the brigade and ensure standards are being met. I also assist the rest of the team with running the kitchen.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST AMBITION?

I'm happy with what I've achieved and I'll see where this path takes me.



MEETING EXACTING STANDARDS TO REACH YOUR TABLE

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DAICHI™



How was 2022 for your business and the industry?



CHRIS CHIDLEY
CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER,
COMPASS UK AND IRELAND

This year has been a rollercoaster. It started with great optimism, as we all sought to get back to 'normal' after two years of managing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Those parts of our business that were closed or scaled back, such as our sports and leisure and workplace divisions, roared back to life.

However, it didn't prove to be as straightforward as anticipated. Omicron slowed some of our sectors' initial return, and the Ukraine war has been impacting supply chains, energy costs and inflation.

Paradoxically, as we end the year in the midst of a recession, and having experienced months of political and economic volatility, the outlook for outsourcing remains positive. This year, we have seen a period of significant growth.

In addition to achieving strong retention of our clients, we have won more new business than in previous years, with a higher proportion coming as a result of first-time outsourcing. I believe this is due to more and more organisations wanting to solely focus on their core business post-pandemic,

recognising that outsourcing partners can deliver better value and services that support them.

Modern outsourcing should now be seen as a core part of our clients' innovation strategies. Our clients expect us to be more than just a food and support services business. It's about our ability to create amazing experiences, enduring partnerships and the value we can deliver in relation to people, planet and wellbeing. It's this shift in attitude that is bringing an extraordinary growth opportunity for our industry.

We have also embraced innovation and technology, enabling us to introduce smarter and more efficient operations. Whether it's frictionless purchasing, digital ordering solutions or cleaning robots, sites across the country are adopting new ways of working and continuing to deliver great services for our clients and customers, despite the economic volatility.

We have remained focused on making progress on our climate promise – our ambitious target to reach climate net zero by 2030. With around 80% of our emissions attributable to food, one of our primary areas of focus has been to look at how we can redesign and reduce the carbon footprint of our dishes, without compromising quality or taste. This is no mean feat when you consider that we're engaging with our over 5,000 suppliers, across 70 different categories, while reformulating our 87,000 recipes.

It is also critical to us all that we attract and retain the best people. We're a barrierless industry to enter, that once part of you can learn and develop, to navigate an exciting and successful career.

We launched Mission to a Million earlier this year, which promises to provide support to 1m people, from both within and outside the organisation, by 2030. It aims to enhance opportunities and change lives through job creation, education, training, community and charitable engagement.

While change has been the one constant for the past few years, I remain optimistic about the opportunities that 2023 will bring.

*We have won more new
business than in previous years*



JEREMY WOOD
MANAGING DIRECTOR NORTH
AND SCOTLAND, BAXTERSTOREY

Similar to the rest of the sector, this year has presented both challenges and opportunities for growth in our business. We have seen even more hybrid working at the start of the year, with clients reshaping their catering models to satisfy the changes in working patterns. Some have reverted to free issue food to encourage employees back into the office to increase productivity.

For my region (Scotland and the north of England) we have a fair mix of white- and blue-collar businesses, so the impacts of Covid weren't as significant as other areas of the country. However, clients are now definitely seeing catering as a collaborative space, particularly in business and industry, so extra steps have been taken to adapt food offers and the eating environment accordingly.

With more people spending less time in the office, but sometimes spending more than usual, there have been opportunities to create more experiential experiences. Towards the back end of the year, we have also seen more people returning to the office on Friday, which had previously become very quiet. Footfall has increased, perhaps due to the cost-of-living and energy crises.

Recruitment is still clearly a major issue for hospitality, and we have had to find new ways of tackling the people and labour shortages across the country. The ongoing battle for talent has been ramped up, and organisations have had to work even harder to look at their packages and training and development programmes for their teams. Whether it's been through introducing new apprenticeships, finding new recruitment channels, or ensuring that we are retaining our people through creating attractive working environments, this has been a significant focus for the business.

This year, we have seen some significant changes from clients and partners looking to adapt and evolve to tackle the challenges of the last few years. For example, we are seeing more activity in concession-based locations. This is giving us and the wider supply chain the opportunity to offer a more diverse product to customers and guests.

Technology has played a major role in our strategy this year, with a major acceleration across self-service and click-and-collect across our sites. Post-pandemic, customers have become far more open to using tech to make purchases, as well as using different platforms to engage with restaurants and other food outlets.

This year has really been about being nimble, flexible and adaptable.

This year has presented both challenges and opportunities



FELICITY CLARKE
HEAD OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE,
FOODITUDE

2022 feels like the year of the comeback! To say it has been a rollercoaster of a year isn't an exaggeration and I'm sure most contract caterers are feeling the same way. Our growth has been so speedy since Q2 that it's been hard to keep up.

One of the areas where we've struggled the most is with recruitment. We simply can't find enough staff and it has limited our capacity for growth. As head of people and culture, my team and I have been learning to cope with a slow job market and the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

Due to the pandemic, many professionals left the hospitality industry and those who remain seem to prefer agency work with flexible contracts and rates of pay. The summer was a particularly difficult time to recruit with the abundance of agency work available and summer events in full swing. We've had to be clever with where to recruit from, tapping into different talent pools and working with the Department for Work and Pensions to advertise to a wider pool of candidates.

Additionally, we've increased salaries considerably over the past six months to place ourselves as a top-end market payer. Our minimum pay rates are aligned with the Living Wage, however, with inflation at 11.1% and consistently increasing, attractive salaries quickly become outdated.

The cost-of-living crisis hasn't just demanded more competitive salaries, it's also made extra perks necessary. We offer a range of benefits including free meals on every shift and discounts at major retailers. Our employees can also tap into mental health and wellbeing support, including financial help.

Offering more flexible and part-time contracts has helped with some positions, as one thing the pandemic has taught us is that we all want more time to either spend with family or pursue hobbies and interests. Traditional work models have been shaken up, and when you provide contracted services to workplaces, this can be tricky to balance.

The changes in the market have been fast, and as an employer emerging from the effects of the pandemic it's hard to keep up. But it's also been a super-exciting time to be in contract catering because it feels like the traditional playbook has been torn up.

Organisations are looking for new ideas for foodservice and more and more are using food to bring people back to the office. So, despite the volatility of 2022 not looking like it's going to ease anytime soon, I'm looking forward to what 2023 has in store!

We've increased salaries considerably over the past six months



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Equal Opportunities

WITH VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN FOOD IN HIGH DEMAND, IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT CATERERS HAVE PREMIUM OPTIONS ON THEIR MENUS



Vegetarian diets have been popular for some decades, with veganism being a small niche. However, with campaigns such as Veganuary highlighting sustainability issues and health benefits of following this lifestyle, plant-based food has become increasingly popular among consumers.

"Veganuary has seen an increase in uptake year-on-year, so we can safely assume that there will be considerable growth over the upcoming years, as more consumers choose to reduce their meat consumption and adopt more flexitarian diets," predicts Luxey Dayanandan, head of wellness and nutrition for Restaurant Associates.

In fact, according to Ipsos Mori and The Vegan Society, the number of vegans in the UK has

quadrupled since 2014, reaching an estimated 600,000 in 2019. Although vegans only make up around 7% of the population, approximately half of consumers buy vegan food items as an alternative to meat.

As budgets become increasingly stretched, many contract caterers are increasing the volume of plant-based dishes, as they can be more cost-effective than meat-based meals. "Vegan mince, for example, can be significantly cheaper than standard beef mince and provides a greater yield, so it's a great meat swap in many popular dishes such as lasagne, chilli or bolognese," points out Gordon Lauder, managing director of Central Foods. "This is an increasingly important consideration at the current time, with spiralling costs for businesses."

MAPLE FROM CANADA

Veganuary has seen an increase in uptake year-on-year

VEGAN MINCE AND PEA KEEMA



This tasty dish comes courtesy of Major



MAJOR

Ingredients (serves 25)

Vegetable oil	90g
Onions, diced	125g
Major Sri Lankan Base Paste	375g
Vegan mince	1.5kg
Coriander, chopped stalk and leaves	45g
Tinned tomatoes	1kg
Garden peas	750g
Major Vegetable Stock Base Powder	16g
Soya yoghurt	500g
Water	600ml
Vegan naan	25
Tomato petals	10
Cucumber, julienne or grated	2

Method

- Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a high heat. Add half the mince and stir-fry for three or four minutes until browned.
- Tip into a colander placed over a bowl to drain. Repeat with the remaining mince.
- Return the strained meat juices to the pan and reduce the heat to low-medium. Add the onion and cook for six to eight minutes until softened. Stir in the coriander stalks and Major Sri Lankan Pan Asian Paste and cook for two to three minutes, stirring until fragrant.
- Mix the Major Vegetable Stock Base Powder with water.
- Return the browned mince to the pan and add the tinned tomatoes and stock, then season. Bring to the boil then simmer uncovered for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- After 20 minutes, stir in three tbsps of yoghurt, the peas and half the coriander leaves. Cook for two minutes, then taste and season if needed.
- Serve on naan bread, mixing the rest of the yoghurt with the cucumber julienne. Scatter with the remaining coriander and tomato petals and cucumber mix.



Pizza offers caterers an affordable fail-safe menu option

MOCK MEAT

According to Mintel's Meat Substitutes report (2021), demand for meat replacements is predicted to grow from £598m in 2021 to £855m value by 2026. As a result, new product development in the vegan and vegetarian sectors has focused on mimicking the taste and texture of animal-based proteins.

"One of the most important factors for consumers remains taste and enjoyment, delivered through product innovation and quality," says Julie Stevens, head of marketing for Mission Foods. "This is why we partnered with Birds Eye's meat-free range, Green Cuisine, to develop inspiring and compelling food propositions for caterers.

"Both brands identified a significant opportunity to support caterers with inspiring recipes that drive creativity, while also aligning to current food trends. These compelling food propositions are also positioned to offer value for money for consumers."

Innovations in technology have made producing plant-based products that emulate animal meat and poultry far easier, enabling manufacturers to create the same texture, taste and mouth feel. "In taste tests on a certain brand of wheat-based nuggets, the consumer could not identify which was chicken and which was made from plants," says David Pannell, founder of Vegan Business Tribe. "We're already seeing the same advances in seafood, with some companies even looking towards novel plant-based food production techniques such as 3D printing to recreate seafood and chef-standard filet mignon steak."

In addition to high demand for meat-free burgers, steaks and sausages, there remains a growing desire for chicken-style dishes served as 'messy builds', such as wings, strips and tenders.

Quorn recently commissioned an in-depth report in partnership with the Sustainable Restaurant Association, which found that taste is still the key consideration when creating meat-free

dishes. Flavour has become even more important during the current economic climate when eating out is more of a luxury than ever.

"Consumers are also choosing bright and colourful looking dishes that look good for social media," says Phil Thornborrow, foodservice director for Quorn Foods. "Diners are looking for vegan and veggie meals that have exciting and fresh ingredients, but still have all the same taste and protein attributes as meat dishes."

CLEAR FOCUS

While there is a huge demand for meat-style products, there remains a keen appetite for classic vegetarian alternatives, such as mushrooms, beans and jackfruit. In fact, Funnybones Foodservice has reported that demand for jackfruit products has increased throughout 2022.

"We are helping operators to meet demand for meat alternatives and trending international flavours with the likes of our crispy jackfruit wings," says Tom Styman-Heighton, development chef for Funnybones Foodservice. "These comprise succulent jackfruit, cooked in a blend of herbs and spices, then coated in crispy panko breadcrumbs and speared with a sugarcane 'bone' so customers can enjoy them the way all wings should be eaten: hands first."

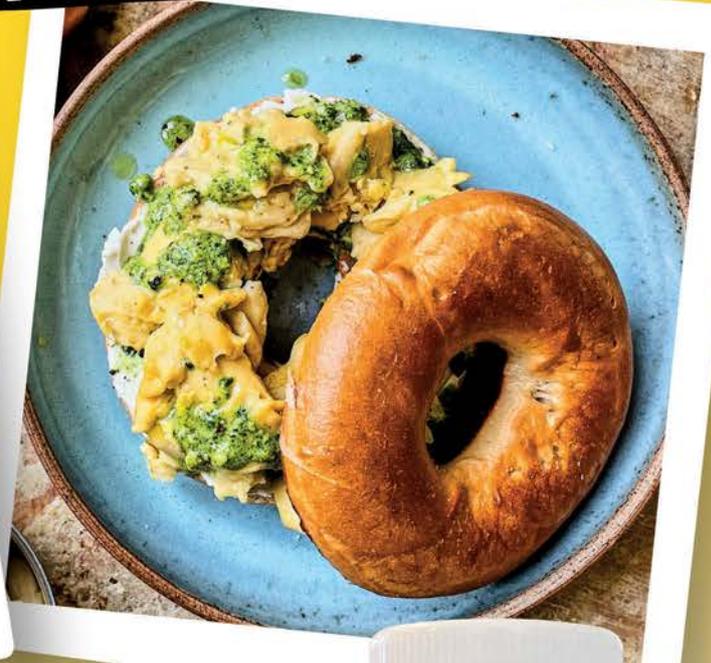
According to Lumina Intelligence, over half of consumers would prefer to eat natural plant-based foods over meat substitutes. From tofu and tempeh to seitan and jackfruit, the food industry is full of many plant-based meat alternatives.

Indeed, one of the latest plant-based proteins to hit the UK market is tempeh, which is made from cultured soybeans and water. Not only is this product minimally processed, but it has double the protein content of tofu and counts as one of your recommended five a day.

"Not only is tempeh 100% natural and nutritious, but it fills a gap in the market for a minimally processed meat-free protein," says

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Christopher Kong, chief executive officer and co-founder of Better Nature Tempeh. "It's quick and easy to incorporate into many different recipes, from stir-fries and curries to tacos, wraps and pasta dishes."

Tempeh is easy to cook, by either pan frying or baking in a matter of minutes. This protein is extremely versatile and absorbs flavour quickly, making it ideal for caterers experimenting with marinades, seasoning and sauces.

SWEET SENSATIONS

When it comes to dairy- and meat-free options, it's easy for sweet items to be overlooked. And there is just as much demand for sweet vegan-friendly dessert and treat items as there is main dishes.

"The move towards vegan versions of products has been seen in all sectors – sweet and savoury," confirms Helen Yates, founder of innovative chocolate snack bar Rootles. It features carrot, sweet potato and other root vegetables to give natural sweetness and fibre.

As more and more people cut down or eliminate animal products from their diets, it's leading to a surge in new product development to cater for this market. Rootles, for example, modified its dark chocolate flavour to make it suitable for vegans earlier this year, which proved to be a shrewd move as it helped the brand to capture extra custom.

"Making the dark chocolate flavour vegan by tweaking the recipe a little has led to more sales of that particular flavour," says Yates. "Both vegans and non-vegans seem very happy with the modification we made and that's great because the secret is to appeal to all. We will definitely keep a vegan option in the Rootles range, sitting alongside our milk chocolate and carrot, and white chocolate and beetroot flavours."

BEST SELLERS

Global cuisine is immensely popular with consumers and there are limitless recipes that are either vegan or veggie, or that can easily be adapted to suit these diets. There are a number of specialist suppliers that can help caterers offer a range of different plant-based options from a range of different countries such as America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

"Caterers can serve up classic callaloo stew, a dark, leafy, kale-like veg, mixed with tomatoes, peppers, onions and coconut milk for a hearty, creamy, feel-good stew," explains Styman-Heighton. "It pairs perfectly with a portion of sweet, spicy, sticky rice 'n' peas, which is served with almost every Caribbean meal. As operators gauge demand, larger portions are available to scale up, particularly as we look ahead to a busy Veganuary."

According to Mintel, the UK frozen pizza market has been growing in value in recent years.

Focaccia is suitable for real Italian sandwiches

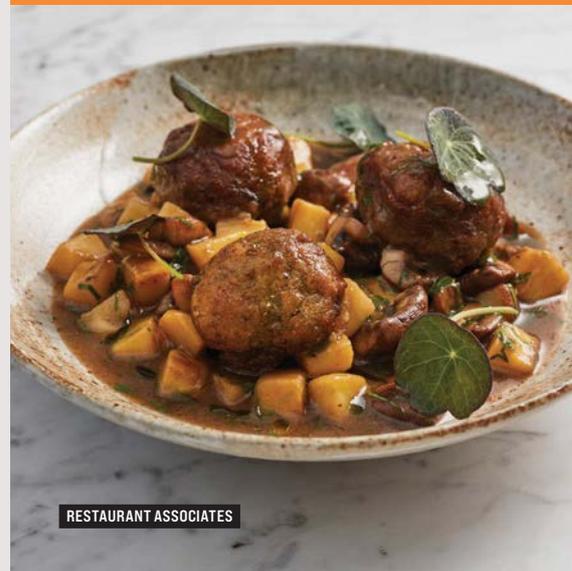
TOP TIPS

Multiple choice – "Make as many of your dishes as inclusive and accessible as possible," suggests Pannell. "Instead of having separate dishes, many restaurants simply offer the option to have the same sensational dish made with either plant- or animal-based meat."

Test the waters – "Veganuary remains the most popular time for those considering making the switch to a plant-based diet, so introduce limited-edition plant-based specials, with popular items remaining a permanent addition after January," says Paul Stanley, foodservice manager for Middleton Foods. "It's a great opportunity for diners to try something new – perhaps they're already vegan and want to embrace exciting new dishes!"

Don't forget drinks – "While many caterers are fantastic at offering a wide menu of free-from food options, many are neglecting opportunities in the drinks category," points out Michelle Younger, marketing manager for Horlicks. "When sourcing a versatile, multi-purpose vegan drinks mix, contract caterers can whip up a whole menu of delicious plant-based beverages from a single base ingredient to expand their vegan offering and satisfy demand."

Perfect balance – "Ensure you have a great selection of dishes that simply hero the humble plant proteins such as pulses like beans, lentils and peas," suggests Dayanandan of Restaurant Associates. "This category is often overlooked for the more indulgent fake meats range, but it is important to consider an inclusive approach to welcome consumers who are simply looking for wholesome balanced options."



RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES

PLANT POWER



Vegan
Quarter
pounder
113g
1 x 24



GLUTEN
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Vegan
Sausages
50g
1 x 40



IQF
Vegan Mince
10 x 1kg
(splittable)

GLUTEN
FREE



GLUTEN
FREE

Vegan
Meatballs
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Serving suggestions

Made with seasoned, textured soya protein, our **vegan range** is ideal for customers looking for delicious **meat-free alternatives**.

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- ✓ SOURCE of fibre ✓ Salt BELOW PHE 2024 Targets

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SUCCESS STORY

With many consumers expecting plant-based dishes to lack flavour, it's vital that foodservice operators ensure their vegan dishes really pack a flavour punch. Leading with plant-based dishes on menus and counters is a great way to encourage customers to try meat- and dairy-free dishes.

"Recently in our Folk House menu concept, which is solely based on eastern European cuisine, we introduced traditional and authentic dishes such as pierogi," says Trotman of Eurest. "They are dumplings filled with pork and herbs for meat eaters, or mushrooms for those who are looking to reduce their intake."

Trotman says the key to a successful offering is listening to customers. The company's Did We Make You Smile? feedback system provides valuable information to shape its future menus. For example, its Folk House concept came about because employees at a client site that employs a large eastern European workforce requested more.

"We asked some of our eastern European chefs to create an authentic menu in response," says Trotman. "Using all of these strategies has been successful. We are closing in on a 50% plant-based menu by the end of 2022, with an ambition to see that rise to 60% by 2024."



Indeed, 2020 experienced a new high of £570m being spent on pizza in Great Britain. The nation's love of this dish, which is popular across all demographics, provides operators with the ideal opportunity to maximise sales by offering a range of vegan-friendly options.

"Pizza offers caterers an affordable fail-safe menu option that's easy and quick to prepare, and is an excellent choice for a customisable menu addition," says Charlotte Perkins, trade marketing manager, Pan'Artisan. "The huge variety of free-from toppings that are now available make it suitable for all diet types."

Caterers can create authentic-tasting pizzas using pre-made, frozen bases for the ultimate in convenience, while those who want to make their own can choose from a selection of dough-balls including gluten-free pucks. From thin and deep crust to sourdough, with white and brown, gluten-free, Italian wood-fired and topped pizza base options, there are many products for caterers to choose from.

Italian bread is a popular choice for sides and sandwiches too. According to La Lorraine Bakery Group, focaccias are proving popular in the vegan and vegetarian market.

"Ideal as a sandwich carrier, focaccia is suitable for real Italian sandwiches served in food-service settings," says Kevin Hughes, country manager UK&I, for La Lorraine Bakery Group. "Flatbread is also a strong contender in the vegan and vegetarian bread and bakery market. A type of focaccia made from wheat flour, this typically long traditional Italian flatbread is ideal for spreading and dividing into multiple smaller portions.

"Also suitable for vegans and vegetarians is Lebanese flatbread. It is made from wheat and soy flour and is baked quickly on stone at a high temperature to give it its unique and inviting colour palette."

LOOKING AHEAD

It is clear that the demand for vegan and vegetarian products is only going to increase in the

100% of our soups are now plant-based

future. Veganism and vegetarianism are no longer trends, with the majority of consumers following a flexitarian approach to eating.

Moving forward, product innovation is likely to focus on better ingredients to find the perfect balance between health and sustainability. Therefore, instead of marginalising consumer choices by offering separate menus, caterers are likely to offer the same dish for both meat eaters and those following a plant-based diet.

Although a significant number of younger people follow a plant-based diet, as the health benefits become better known, there are likely to be increased numbers of older diners avoiding meat and dairy to help improve health issues.

"Sustainability, specifically sustainably sourced ingredients, and seasonality are important to consumers," says Hannah Carter, founder of Oggs. "Some 73% cite 'sustainably sourced' as being extremely important and 67% say 'seasonal ingredients' are extremely important [Future food tracker, Good Sense research IFE 2022]. Making this clear on your menu, with carbon labelling and use of seasonal ingredients in dishes, will ensure that consumers are able to choose to dine with your establishment."

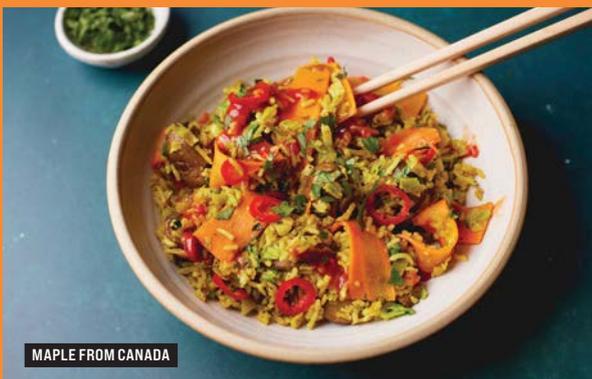
RESTAURANT ASSOCIATES



ELEVATING FLAVOUR

Simple ingredients, such as maple syrup, can really lift vegan dishes, adding a sweet and earthy flavour. This natural product not only goes well with robust and spicy flavours, but is the perfect accompaniment to elevate a salad or roasted vegetables.

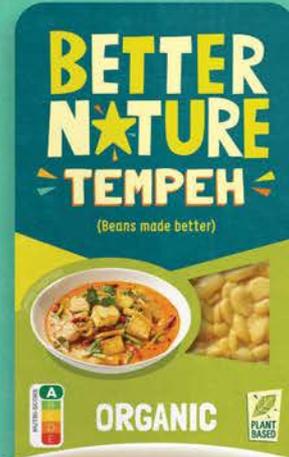
"It is a great addition to many street food-inspired dishes where meat has been replaced with a plant-based substitute," says Lance Brooks, student chef ambassador for Maple from Canada UK. "It helps to dial up the background spices in a 'meaty' jackfruit bao bun, drizzled over sweetcorn 'ribs', or to flavour tacos filled with pickled banana blossom to replace fish."



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ONE FOR ALL

There is a growing trend to serve entirely vegan meals at large functions, as it makes catering for large numbers much simpler for kitchen and serving staff. This is particularly important considering the challenges that the hospitality sector is currently facing.

“Of course, plant-based dishes need to be appealing and tasty, so that they will go down well with all diners, not just those who are looking for vegan-friendly options,” explains Marie-Emmanuelle Chessé, international development project manager for Tipiak. “The secret to success is to offer exciting and appealing plant-based dishes that look great and taste exceptional.

“Flexitarianism is much more common now, driven by people’s desire to cut down on their meat and dairy intake. As such, it makes good sense for caterers to offer a decent vegan selection.

“Gone are the days when one salad or plant-based risotto would cut it. Vegans expect to have a choice of plant-based options and many other diners do too.”



OGGS

COP27 has continued to shine a spotlight on the importance of industry collaboration in the race to net zero. With the cost of utilities and food increasing exponentially, dealing with waste has become a significant focus for many caterers. Reducing food waste is likely to cause a rise in demand for recipes that make use of the stalks and peelings from vegetables that have been used to create other dishes on the menu..

“Soups are prime examples,” says Jason Trotman, head of culinary operations for Eurest. “100% of our soups are now plant-based and many recipes include vegetable leftovers from the previous day.

“There’s a real opportunity to be inventive in this sphere. We call it ‘root to tip’ cooking, and

some of the most popular recipes so far have included coffee grind granola, kale stem pesto, ‘anything goes’ kimchi and broccoli stalk soup.

“When you consider the current cost-of-living crisis, in which some people are having to choose between eating and heating, food waste recipes have the potential to reach a large audience.”

Today’s consumers are increasingly concerned about their health, sustainability and animal welfare, and reducing meat and dairy consumption has a positive effect on all of these issues. With demand for plant-based food options predicted to increase over the coming years, offering a wide range of vegan and vegetarian options is essential in order to capitalise on this burgeoning demographic. 



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- Aimia aimiafoods.com
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- Central Foods centralfoods.co.uk
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- La Lorraine lalorraine.com/gb-en/professional
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- Mission missionfoodservice.co.uk
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VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN



[L-R] AARON JOHNSON-WATERS AND MARC FRANKL

AMADEUS' PLANT-BASED DISHES HAVE JUST BEEN ACCREDITED BY THE VEGETARIAN SOCIETY

Amadeus had its vegan dishes accredited by the Vegetarian Society across its venue portfolio recently. As caterer for the NEC in Birmingham (as well as the whole NEC Group), the business thought it fitting to make the special announcement at the venue's Just V Show Winter, with venue executive chef David Siddall holding a special cooking demonstration celebrating vegan, vegetarian and plant-based living.

The caterer's full venue portfolio has been audited by the society, including more than 100 dishes and recipes. This provides full traceability of ingredients with the additional use of the Vegetarian Society Approved vegan trademark, giving visitors full confidence that the dishes are suitable for vegan diets.

Marc Frankl, food and beverage director for Amadeus, said: "This accreditation from the Vegetarian Society is testament to the hard work of the people in our business, who are extremely passionate about the traceability of the food that we serve. I'd like to give a special shout-out

to Vicky Belton from our purchasing team who really helped drive the accreditation forwards.

"Securing the use of the approved trademark means clients and visitors to our venues have full clarity on our offering, making a clear statement about the food we serve. Whether it's sourcing the finest local ingredients or using state-of-the-art technology to help drive down food waste, we are putting sustainable practices at the forefront of our work across venues, and this is our latest step."

Amadeus has also more than doubled its vegan offering across venues in the past two years, giving its chefs the tools to innovate in vegetarian and vegan cuisine.

Aaron Johnson-Waters, executive chef at the Vox, played a key role in delivering the accreditation, recently introducing a new menu pack for the venue with 45% vegan ingredients.

He said: "I'm a proud vegan champion and I was thrilled to be involved in this project. Getting our vegan dishes accredited is testament to how hard our team works on developing our food and

beverage offering – we pride ourselves on our quality and service.

"I found that veganism on the whole is such a small part of menu design. It tends to be non-existent, with customers having to request a vegan option, so this is our clear statement and commitment to the development of vegan dishes at our venue."

Vanessa Brown, head of business services for the Vegetarian Society, added: "There's a growing demand for plant-based dishes everywhere and it's fantastic to see NEC Group's catering meeting the needs of their customers. By displaying the Vegetarian Society Approved vegan trademark, they are joining a multitude of businesses making a clear statement to their consumers that they can trust these dishes to be vegan."

Not only that but the caterer has also recently introduced a carbon labelling trial at its NEC and ICC venues. The trial is assessing the carbon impacts of 1,800 recipes sold at the venues, labelling dishes that are low carbon footprint. 

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DESERT ISLAND DISHES

DESERT ISLAND CHRISTMAS

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HELEN MILLIGAN-SMITH, UK MANAGING DIRECTOR, ARAMARK

Christmas means lots of traditional festive foods and wines with family and close friends. We have a large family, and my children are normally running around throughout the Christmas period, letting out squeals of joy and excitement anticipating what lies ahead.

At Aramark, we are having a Christmas cookalong for our final UK board meeting, where we all cook in our kitchens at home on video link with our culinary director. It's always great fun!

On the big day itself, I'm cooking for 24 and will love every minute of having everyone together sharing special times.

ANTONY PRENTICE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, BM

Although we save giving and opening most of our presents for after the Queen's speech – which this year will, of course, be the King's speech – every Christmas my sister-in-law breaks out a new set of trivia questions. We do this just before we eat Christmas lunch so we can show off our general knowledge!

Games are a big part of our family Christmas tradition and it has been known to get quite competitive at times. I'm not ashamed to admit that one year I committed the best part of a weekend to beating her score at Bop It!

CAROLYN BALL, DIRECTOR FOR DELIVERY OF NET ZERO, COMPASS GROUP UK AND IRELAND

Christmas is traditionally a holiday when you take time out to be with family and friends. This year, with the backdrop of cost of living and the Ukraine war, the harsh realities of food security being experienced by millions have never been felt so clearly.

While Christmas is often a time of excess, this year the need to waste less is even more imperative.

Seeking inspiration from Peter Kalmus first and Father Christmas second, the NASA

There are £10 turkeys being chucked through the air

scientist talks about living well to spark a revolution. This is what I want my kids to grow up believing they can help to achieve, one twinkling (LED) fairy light at a time.

A favourite example of what this looks like in practice is to waste as little as is humanly possible thanks to the Dance-While-You-Chuck-Everything-In-It soup (don't tell the chefs!). My mum's is always best.

CRISTINA COVELLO, HEAD OF GROWTH, FOODITUDE

One of my favourite Christmas traditions is the Smithfield Market Meat Auction held on Christmas Eve. Unfortunately, it has been cancelled for the past two years, but I'm crossing my fingers it will be back this year.

The auction is the most quintessentially London thing you can do. Imagine hundreds of people yelling, joking and waving cash around, with huge sides of meat and £10 turkeys being chucked through the air, caught by the ravenous crowds.

One year we risked it all and decided to make Christmas dinner with whatever we could score at the auction. We ended up with a beef knuckle! After the auction, we head over to St. John for an eccles cake and a pint. It's the perfect way to kick off Christmas!

ADAM COLLISON, HEAD CHEF AT ALDERLEY PARK FOR SODEXO UK AND IRELAND

Christmas over the last two years has been very different as I have worked with the team providing meals for the 800 scientists at

Lighthouse Labs, the government response to Covid. This year I am really looking forward to getting back to normal and spending the day with my wife, two young daughters and not forgetting our poodle.

Like most families with young children, we will be up early. Breakfast will be honey roasted ham, crumpets and poached eggs, with a strong possibility of a glass of champagne for my wife and I. By Christmas I am turkeyed out from serving it throughout December at work, so Christmas dinner will be rack of lamb.

We will end the day with a glass or three of homemade sloe gin and a slice of the homemade Christmas cake my daughters helped me make in October. Since they were old enough they have always helped with the cake; it is a tradition I hope will continue for many years. 🍷

XMAS AT THE NEC

Kane Bridgman, general manager for Amadeus, on festivities at its flagship venue

We're into our ninth year of Christmas Party World at the NEC, organised by event management specialists Vivid Experience. We will welcome a near 40,000 diners into our halls over the course of 22 days, so it's going to be an extremely busy time!

That said, we really see it as more than that. It's 40,000 starters, main courses and desserts – a real team effort behind the scenes. It's an event that grows year-on-year, giving our diners that special Christmas feeling.

On a personal level, I'm mixing it up this year by having a traditional Greek menu featuring klefiko, tzatziki and giant beans. Yamas!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FOODITUDE RECENTLY CANVASSED ITS IRISH CUSTOMERS ON THEIR PRIORITIES WHEN DINING AT WORK

Workplace wellness, it's so much more than a buzzword. Going into the office is here to stay, notwithstanding the rise of hybrid work. From working in catering to cyber-security, every employee needs a clear head to tackle their daily challenges effectively.

It's not up to businesses to dictate how employees should support their personal health. But, on the flip side, neither should companies force their teams to work in environments that will chip away at their wellbeing.

However, how well we eat impacts our lives. For example, years of lunching on grab-and-go meal deals from the high street will eventually take its toll on a worker's health. Therefore, it's up to workplace caterers to rise to the challenge to do better to sustain employees with varied on-site menus that are both exciting and healthy.

But what does the data say? Fooditude recently asked workplace professionals in Dublin about their experiences with on-site foodservice. What the caterer discovered is that lunchtimes are sacred to workplaces offering free food perks.

Taking time out to rest clearly matters, as 66.7% of respondents said they would spend between 30 minutes to an hour on their lunch breaks. And while 33.3% claimed they would spend between 15 and 30 minutes, not a single respondent reported taking less than quarter of an hour for their lunch break.

This feedback is essential because it suggests that with free food perks, employees put more value on taking proper breaks. By investing

in fully subsidised catering, businesses put their money where their mouth is when they say 'take your lunch break'. The fact is that, far too often, toxic work habits develop within teams when it becomes a race to the shortest lunchtime.

For the sake of productivity, workplaces need to shatter the outdated looking-busy-equals-company-loyalty insecurity that is hiding in the dark corners of Ireland's workforce. Wellness initiatives, such as free-service lunches, encourage the country's workforce to take a breather once in a while and pursue genuine productivity.

So, what does a lunch break mean to you? This is the question Fooditude posed to its survey group, with 100% of respondents answering that lunch is a time to be shared with colleagues – above all else.

Sharing a meal brings together communities, families and friends. So, why are so many workplaces not using the social power of mealtimes for their workforce?

Many of Fooditude's clients tailor their office space for collaboration and creativity. Break-out spaces are more akin to trendy hotel lobbies than traditional spaces. But these destination offices are only worth their salt if employees create those moments of engagement.

Teresa Patton, Fooditude's country manager in Dublin, says: "Foodservice can play a vital role in making a destination office come to life. These spaces ignite activity between colleagues by providing a more informal and communal experience. With an established ritual of shared lunchtimes, teams feel more comfortable interacting with fancy break-out spaces, rooftop meeting rooms and table tennis tables."

On-site foodservice works much better when it's free

The modern, state-of-the-art destination workplace is about creating an environment where employees can be proud of their company culture and collaborate to bring about innovation. Fuel a workforce with lacklustre lasagnes and soggy salads and it's likely to take the shine off their 'in office' experience.

Fooditude concluded that on-site foodservice works much better when it's free at the point of service. When an office charges for food, teams tend to disperse to visit their go-to high street eatery, supermarket or tupperware leftovers from last night's dinners.

Dean Kennett, Fooditude's managing director, concludes: "From our experience, teams will sit to eat together when every colleague has access to the same varied and exciting complimentary buffet. The destination office dream is alive when we visit our clients' dining areas during lunch service.

"Large groups sit, chat, laugh and enjoy food together. And to us, this is what a winning company culture looks like." 

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This week MCFT, took time out of Jake Hynam's (refrigeration technician trainee) busy schedule. To find out some of his top tips for making sure you keep your refrigeration equipment in tip-top shape over the Christmas break.

Jake's Top Tips to maintain your Refrigeration Equipment:

Don't overfill your fridge!

A fully stocked fridge looks great but this restricts air flow causing the unit to struggle to maintain temperature.

Not using it? Switch it off.

The most obvious tip of course, if you are planning on closing the office / kitchen over Christmas, then turn off the the refrigerators to avoid unnecessary energy consumption

Leave fridge doors ajar when left switched off

This avoids moisture and mould build up. Coming back after a week off with the doors closed will give off a nasty surprise when opened!



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A FRIDGE TOO FAR?

DON'T LET THE FINANCIAL FREEZE SWAY YOU INTO GIVING A VITAL NEW REFRIGERATION OR ICE MAKING PURCHASE THE COLD SHOULDER

A new refrigerator or ice maker may seem like an expensive outlay, but recent events have only proven even further just how crucial they are to your operation. As Kate Nicholls of UKHospitality emphasises in her column this month (see page 59), stringent hygiene standards have never been more important – and your fridge will be on the front-line of that battle.

“As some of the few appliances used 24/7, having a reliable refrigerator and ice maker is essential,” explains Roz Scourfield, national sales manager for Hoshizaki UK.

“On the refrigeration front, faulty equipment can put businesses at risk with unsafe and improperly stored food, or result in spoiled produce that can cost hundreds in unnecessary waste. In terms of ice makers, poor functioning machines can produce diluted ice, which quickly melts in customer drinks.

“Operators need to ensure they are investing in quality equipment that is able to keep up with demand.”

Rag Hulait, director of sales for Monika UK, is even more adamant, emphasising: “The importance of reliable refrigeration and temperature control within the kitchen has never been more important, from a hygiene and safety perspective, as well as an energy efficiency angle. A food poisoning incident earlier this year saw a head chef jailed for four months after

Faulty equipment can put your business at risk

one customer died and an additional 31 other diners fell ill, due to a meal not being correctly monitored during storage and reheating.

“Effective storage is crucial to ensuring the public’s health and prolonging the longevity of food to reduce unnecessary waste. With operators feeling the pinch of rising produce and energy costs, ensuring a refrigeration unit is functioning at maximum capacity can help save money.”

Moving specifically to ice machines, Mark Hogan, commercial director for Foodservice Equipment Marketing (FEM), says they are also “an essential piece of kit”. “They need to be reliable and conveniently situated,” he adds. “Most modern ice machines are designed to be easy to clean – some, such as FEM’s Manitowoc Ice range, have self-cleaning functions that make life even easier. Ask your supplier how easy the ice machine is to clean.”

FUNKY FEATURES

With the pace that technology is moving at these days, it can be somewhat bewildering

MONITORING HYGIENE

This advice comes courtesy of Hulait from Monika

Choosing an efficient refrigeration unit is only half the battle – operators must also be conscious that they do not become complacent with food hygiene monitoring. In a busy kitchen, this can be easy to overlook, particularly if the chaos of an entire refurbishment is ongoing.

Monika’s smart, cloud connected system helps managers stay on top of this, with its fully auditable temperature monitoring and task management. Team members can receive audio and visual task reminders for health checks, including regularly cleaning the new refrigeration unit so it stays in impeccable condition.

Managers can then utilise any mobile, desktop or Monika’s smart handheld PA device to view which tasks have been completed when and by whom, including while offsite. This is ideal for multi-site managers who want to compare performance of various refrigeration models to help decide which brand to purchase.

A food poisoning incident earlier this year saw a head chef jailed

keeping up with all the latest developments. So, which features should you prioritise?

“One of the biggest mistakes an operator can make when it comes to purchasing refrigeration units and ice machines is to dismiss hygiene-led features, particularly given spouts of media attention that restaurants and chains have faced surrounding ice contamination issues,” echoes Scourfield. “Although many of these reports have been found to be a result of

lack of basic personal hygiene from the operators, hygiene-led features can certainly help to ensure a sanitary ice making process.”

For example, Hoshizaki’s special ‘closed cell’ ice production feature combats build-up of bacteria. “Unique to the IM range of ice machines, this feature allows for ice to be produced in a sealed environment and, as such, prevents any kind of airborne bacteria entering the ice during the freezing process,” adds Scourfield. “You can add to this the automatic freshwater rinse cycle after each ice harvest, which provides further safety considerations for operating businesses.”

Sandro Wulkan, managing director of Aquilo Refrigeration, says, however, that storage requirements and kitchen space availability are the two areas that need to be addressed over and above all others. “Your starting point is defining what, and how much, food needs to be refrigerated and at what temperatures.



Then think through how this could be best addressed within your spatial limitations.

“For instance, a counter unit doubles up as an extra worktop. Models with drawers enable various foods to be held separately while, for some busy kitchens, a countertop prep fridge might prove convenient. Essentially, chefs and kitchen staff should be able to access what they need quickly, thereby reducing unnecessary footfall and congestion.”

BGL Rieber’s Multipolar compartmentalised fridge, meanwhile, will keep food and chilled drinks such as milkshakes cool and safe, ready for the customer to pick up. The system is ideal for feeding staff out of hours and for holding meds and snacks securely for hospital and care home patients and visitors to access.

The Multipolar Connect Refrigerator has 10 individual fridges, each with a lockable, app-friendly electronic door. Mobile phones automatically open the relevant inner fridge door so customers can take their food or drink.

Rieber Multipolar Connect is ideal in offices, university halls, hospitals, residential blocks and so on, or where there is high footfall, such as petrol stations, restaurants and retail outlets.

“It takes longer to describe what it does than actually to use it,” says BGL Rieber managing director Gareth Newton. “Use Multipolar to provide a contactless, 24-hour, chilled pick-



HOSHIZAKI



TOP TIPS

Handy advice from Wulkan from Aquilo

Looking after your fridge will maximise its efficiency and ensure food is kept in optimum condition for the longest time. A proper maintenance schedule will also reward you by increasing the useful life of your fridge.

Check fridge contents daily and discard anything that is out of date or beyond its best.

Resist placing warm items into the fridge. Doing this can increase the possibility of activating dormant bacteria and lead to foodstuffs perishing quickly – and, even more crucially, it could lead to food poisoning.

Clean both internally and externally weekly. This includes the following:

- Switch off at wall and transfer contents.
- Remove shelving and rails and wash in mild soapy water.
- Wash inside fridge and door.
- Sanitise with a commercial sanitiser.
- Power up and allow to reach temperature before re-loading contents.
- Remove gaskets, check for damage and wash as above. If they are showing signs of deterioration, do replace them. A good supplier should always have stock available that's right for your model.
- Clean coil and vacuum if necessary.
- Clean condenser – many well-specified models have a pre-filter screen which makes cleaning much easier.
- Check the air filter and keep it clean.

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Most modern ice machines are designed to be easy to clean



FEM

up point for food and drink orders.

“The system is amazingly simple, with low investment costs. Rieber Connect opens up new sales routes.”

When it comes to specifying any new ice making equipment, Hogan of FEM says that it pays to compare the benefits and cost savings offered by the various makes and models into which manufacturers have incorporated the latest energy-saving innovations and features. “It is important to consider that different ice types are important for different drinks,” he continues. “As drink trends change, so do ice trends.

“Alongside considering what drinks an operator needs the ice for, and thus what type of ice is needed, it is also important to consider production during peak operating hours – and how this can vary throughout the year. For example, within the Manitowoc Ice Sotto range, there are various sizes available in terms of how much ice is produced within a 24-hour period. The smallest in the undercounter range will give 22kg of ice, whereas the larger would give 76kg.”

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As, inevitably, has already been alluded to, the need to go green is also a crucial consideration “With operators feeling the pinch of rising energy costs, there’s a keen emphasis on efficient machines,” says Scourfield. “Beyond the cost perspective, operators must prioritise sustainable equipment in order to minimise energy expenditure and reduce



MONIKA



BGL RIEBER

environmental impact, an ambition that can be achieved with Hoshizaki’s new Advance refrigeration units.”

The innovative Advance series has been developed with an even sharper focus on efficiency than previous models. Environmentally conscious operators will appreciate the use of eco-friendly refrigerant R290, a natural gas that enhances performance and significantly reduces energy consumption, as the cooling agent.

“The Advance features a unique monoblock system – a self-contained and insulated condenser that sits on top of the unit, as opposed to inside, providing easier access for servicing for improved longevity and freeing up additional storage space,” adds Scourfield. “The fully moulded interior makes it easy to clean and more hygienic. Users simply need a matter of minutes to wipe down fully removable shelves, gaskets and surfaces.”



BGL RIEBER



ENERGY SAVING

Green tips from Malcolm Harling, sales and marketing director for Williams Refrigeration

Intelligent defrost: this feature ensures the evaporator works more efficiently.

Evaporator fans: using the best components such as evaporator fans will improve heat rejection for greater efficiency and reduced energy consumption.

Half doors: for upright cabinets, having two half doors rather than one full door will save energy – because when you open a door, only half the interior is exposed to the ambient air.

Self-closing doors: as we've seen, leaving a door open is an absolute no-no in terms of reducing energy consumption. Make sure your cabinet has self-closing doors.

Hydrocarbon refrigerants: natural hydrocarbon refrigeration are both energy-saving and environment-friendly.

High performance insulation: the better the insulation, the more thermally efficient the cabinet will be. In other words, it will maintain temperature more easily, so the refrigeration system will need to work less hard, saving energy.

Regarding energy-saving best practice:

Make sure that refrigeration units are loaded correctly. Overloading will block the airflow, not only increasing energy consumption but also compromising food safety.

Never leave a refrigeration unit's door open, however tempting it may be for convenience. It's a complete waste of energy and, again, will compromise food safety.

Clean grills and the condenser regularly to ensure they are free of dust and dirt.

Don't block ventilation grills – make sure your refrigeration can breathe.

In the ice machine market, there has been a strong trend towards energy- and water-saving features, reports David Rees, marketing manager for Hubbard Systems, which distributes the Scotsman range of ice makers and the Friulinox range of refrigeration equipment in the UK. "This has been driven both by manufacturers developing new technologies and the growing demand from operators to help curb their utility bills," he says.

"Scotsman's EcoX range of icemakers are not only among the most eco-friendly on the market, but also produce a wide choice of different ice types. EcoX represents a huge commitment and Scotsman is determined to set the pace in the development of eco-friendly ice machines.

"The refrigerants used in the EcoX machines are either hydrocarbon R290 or carbon dioxide R744, depending on the model and system. EcoX models have an ODP [Ozone Depletion Potential] of zero and a GWP [Global Warming Potential] of three or less."

This goes to show just how much of the bigger picture comes into play when you choose a refrigerator or ice maker. By making the correct purchase, you will be helping to protect the planet and your customers – not to mention your business. ☺

CONTACTS

Aquilo aquilorefrigeration.co.uk

BGL Rieber bglrieber.co.uk

ETI thermometer.co.uk

FEM fem.co.uk

Hoshizaki hoshizaki-europe.com

Hubbard scotsman-ice.co.uk

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DON'T CUT CORNERS!

JASON WEBB, MANAGING DIRECTOR, ELECTRONIC TEMPERATURE INSTRUMENTS, ON THE DANGERS OF TAKING SHORTCUTS WHEN IT COMES TO REFRIGERATION

The pathogens that cause foodborne illnesses are sensitive to temperature control and a professor of epidemiology at Tufts University even linked global warming to increased food-related illnesses.

A typical commercial refrigerator uses 70 kWh per day, which amounts to 41% of electricity consumption across all key appliances within a catering service. This is why the prospect of reducing energy costs via refrigeration may seem an attractive option to some businesses. Throw in the risk of nationwide blackouts and you have a myriad of external threats to commercial refrigeration.

In the field of food refrigeration, a small misstep could have dramatic human and financial consequences. Furthermore, public hygiene awareness has never been higher in light of the pandemic. With operational costs rising, the last thing catering firms need is a potential lawsuit.

It is a legal requirement for businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to store cold foods at 8°C or below. The UK's Food Standards Agency recommends that fridges are set at 5°C. Your refrigeration units must be kept at this temperature unless all food is removed. Keeping foods at higher temperatures accelerates the build-up of harmful bacteria, such as e-coli and listeria, which can make people sick or even cause death in extreme cases.

Catering organisations should introduce

The consequences of mismanaged refrigeration can be severe

proactive steps to keep people safe and their locations free from health and safety dangers. For example, if your food travels long distances, the risk of it spoiling can be mitigated by leveraging real-time solutions such as wireless data loggers, which track your products' temperature throughout the delivery process.

These loggers can be set up to send alerts when the food reaches dangerous temperatures, allowing for preventative measures to be taken. This data logger can also serve as reliable evidence if your delivery was mishandled by your supplier. Using a temperature logger means keeping a finger on the pulse of your food's safety.

Another pitfall is the overpacking of refrigeration units. This may initially seem like a viable option for a restaurant with several refrigeration units, and which is looking to reduce its energy consumption by overpacking units and turning off others. However, there are dangers to this.

Overfilling refrigerators and cool rooms with produce reduces the airflow and leads to hotspots, where bacteria can flourish even if you think you have the right temperature set

on the dial. To combat this, caterers should keep an inventory of how much their stock needs to be refrigerated and use the latest technology to take temperature recordings every few hours so that it never goes above critical limits.

Monitoring both air and core temperature in refrigeration units allows organisations to install early alert systems that ensure you stay one step ahead. What's more, overfilled fridges consume more energy. To counter against this strain, caterers should utilise technological devices to measure and record temperature readings on a regular basis.

Managing cost efficiencies through forecasting demand fluctuations, and adapting stock accordingly, should be prioritised, as opposed to reducing the cost of refrigeration. The consequences of mismanaged refrigeration can be severe, with instances of food poisoning and hygiene standards violations being well documented in the hyper-connected era we live in. Cutting corners on refrigeration may seem tempting, but it can negatively impact your reputation in the long run, as well as your overall fiscal performance. 



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DESSERTS

The Feelgood Factor



DESSERTS ARE AN AFFORDABLE LUXURY – SO ENSURE YOUR MENUS DON'T DISAPPOINT!

The doom and gloom currently hanging over consumers' heads means that now, more than ever, the nation is in need of a little pick-me-up. Of course, the usual festive cheer will prove to be the perfect tonic for all that's going on and sweet treats are the ideal way for people to indulge without having to splash the cash.

According to Statista, a huge £915.25m was spent on chilled desserts in the 52 weeks to December 2021. This proves that despite the general move towards healthier dining, there remains plenty of potential to profit from sweet dishes. "Considering how challenging the last few years have been for our industry, these figures just prove the market's ability to not only be resilient, but also to adapt, innovate and continue to thrive moving forward," says Kevin Hughes, country manager UKGI, for La Lorraine Bakery Group.

OLD FAVOURITES

Although consumers want to see new things on dessert menus, they also want the comfort of familiar dishes, such as apple pie, chocolate brownies and cheesecake. In fact, according to recent research from the Foodhub app, apple pie is the nation's most popular sweet pie and cheesecakes continue to be listed in the top 10 desserts, so they are important to include on menus.

"Apple pie is a great staple to have on any winter menu," says Gordon Lauder, managing director of Central Foods. "It's a retro pudding. Lovely warming comfort food, which can be served hot or cold and with custard, cream or ice cream, making it a really versatile dessert for any menu."



Apple pie is a great staple to have on any winter menu

TOP TIPS

Social eating – “Offering diners a sharing dessert can be a great way to help customers give in to satiating their sweet tooth, boosting sales without them overindulging in a massive portion, which we know is all too easy,” says Styman-Heighton.

Premium options – “Focus on creating high quality indulgent desserts that are made with ingredients that are not only premium but also on trend,” says Hughes. “This can really improve sales, as well as footfall.”

Know your customers – “Know what they’re after, what is going to drive them into consumption or on the contrary what will be seen as a barrier,” says Cook. “If you’re near a transport link such as a station, easy to takeaway options would be a smart offering.”

Alternative option – “As well as creating popular dairy-based desserts, contract caterers should also look to offer dairy-free desserts and shakes given that lactose intolerance is common,” says Karen Green, marketing manager for Aimia Foods.

Central Foods recently launched its Menuserve Deep Dish Apple Pie, which is packed with juicy, sliced apples, encased in golden shortcrust pastry and pre-portioned into 12 generous slices. Caterers can defrost individual slices as required, which can help reduce food waste in the kitchen.

HIGH IMPACT

When it comes to desserts, nostalgia often plays an important part in the decision-making process for consumers, particularly around the festive periods. That’s not to say, however, that they won’t expect to see caterers bringing something new to the traditional favourites.

Social media is full of recipes that put a modern spin on classics like crumble, cheesecake and ice cream. From salted caramel cheesecake, with a Lotus biscuit base to mango and coconut crumble, these comforting dishes are being imaginatively reworked to bring them into the 21st century.

“Reinventing established desserts is often a fantastic way to introduce fashionable flavours in a reassuringly familiar context,” says Tom Styman-Heighton, development chef for Funnybones Foodservice. “Every menu should include a tried and trusted favourite, like a cheesecake or brownie, but there is the opportunity to create innovative flavours.”

Visual appeal is also integral to consumer satisfaction, which is why manufacturers and caterers are going all out to create desserts with optimum impact. With consumers keen to share exciting eats on social media platforms, caterers can reach a wide audience with something as simple as a brightly coloured éclair.

Tipiak’s award-winning pop éclairs (such as crème brûlée, chocolate and orange or raspberry and blackcurrant), for example, combine bright, eye-catching icings and toppings with bold and

delicious flavours. “There’s a taste for the exotic,” says Marie-Emmanuelle Chessé, development project manager for Tipiak. “Consumers are more adventurous and much more willing to try sweet pastries that are unusually coloured or a unique combination of flavours.”

Doughnuts are also a great dessert option that can be served and decorated in a variety of exciting ways. The Donut Worry Be Happy brand, which is part of the La Lorraine Bakery Group, offers a range of doughnuts featuring creative designs and innovative flavours – from Goldenfry, with a traditional doughnut sugar coating, to Spectaculous, which is coated in speculoos pieces. “Caterers can look to increase sales by promoting the idea of doughnuts that explore creative flavours, and that are made with high quality ingredients as a fun dessert occasion,” says Hughes.

CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

Today’s consumers are extremely health and environmentally conscious, and their focus on reducing sugar and fat in their diets shows no sign of abating. In fact, according to Mintel, 49% of consumers are willing to change their choice of dish based on the calorie count.

“Reducing sugar and calories is becoming critically important for operators and suppliers, considering the growth of obesity-related diseases,” points out Rachel Cook, category manager – bakery and desserts for Bidfood. “Being able to offer reduced sugar options with no compromise on taste will be key, and this is something that suppliers like Mademoiselle Desserts have recognised and are working hard to make possible.”

Increasing numbers of people are also following vegan and vegetarian diets, with many believing it to be a healthier way to live. This should be



There’s a taste for the exotic

an important consideration for contract caterers when they are creating dessert menus.

In order to appeal to those looking for sustainable options, offering a range of desserts that take seasonality of fruits and vegetables into consideration will hold great appeal. This is important to consumers, with 62% saying that they agree or strongly agree that a seasonal menu is a more sustainable way to eat (CGA Food Insight Report).

“The growth in the popularity of vegan foods is one that contract caterers can capitalise on,” says Jacqui Passmore, marketing manager UK and Ireland for Dawn Foods. “Using one mix to create desserts that will appeal to all kinds of consumers – vegetarians, vegans and flexitarians – can be a real cost- and time-saver as there’s no need to buy in separate ingredients. A classic recipe can be easily transformed into a delicious vegan-friendly dessert that is suitable for all.”

Dawn’s ingredients from its product range can be used with its mixes to create vegan-friendly finished baked goods. The brand’s compounds and concentrated pastes add flavour and colour to icings and toppings. Its fruit fillings and glazes are also suitable for vegans and can be easily incorporated into desserts.

VALUE OPTIONS

Price has always been a deciding factor for consumers eating out of home, but with many feeling the financial pinch, they are now expecting more for their money. Some 83%, according to CGA, have less disposable income and one in two are cutting back on how often they eat out.

“Sweet options that provide the nostalgic comfort factor are important, but giving them the wow-factor and a feeling of unrivalled indulgence is incredibly pertinent too,” says Bicknell. “Creating something that consumers feel they couldn’t or wouldn’t make at home is key, with many quite literally going big or going home.”

SEASONAL OPPORTUNITIES

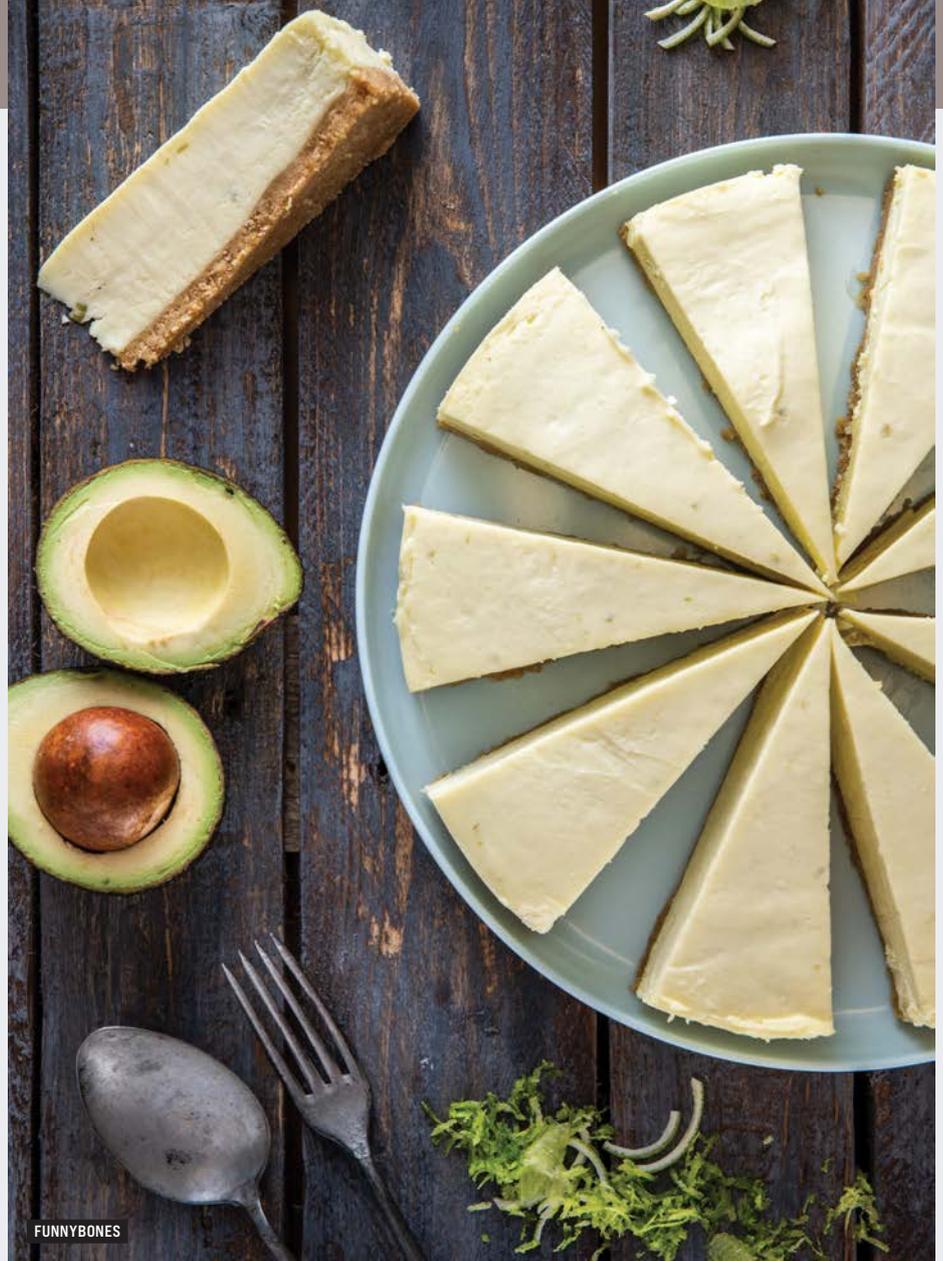
While desserts are popular all year through, the seasons will inevitably influence consumer choice and present opportunities for caterers to increase uptake. Although chilled desserts will be more popular during the warmer months, and hot puddings in higher demand when it’s colder, there remains interest for both regardless of the weather.

“If your product is consistently good it should sell whatever the weather,” says Hughes. “The beauty of any ice-cream, cake or dessert is that they are products that are loved all year round. However, adding seasonal influences to dessert options can really help contract caterers to drive profits.”

Panesco’s Apple Crumble Cheesecake is a delightfully indulgent winter treat, featuring sweet apple pieces on a speculaas crumble, topped with a tantalising crumble with cane sugar.

Funnybones’ Argentinian-inspired Pastel de Manzana will also be a welcome addition to winter menus – moist sponge, spiced with festive cinnamon and toffee, studded with pieces of in-season, tangy apple and offset with a sweet dulce de leche sauce.

“As the weather steadily becomes colder and the nights draw in, autumnal and wintry nutty



Reduced sugar and calories is becoming critically important

flavours are becoming more popular on dessert menus, and these flavours are often paired with natural sugar alternatives like maple, date and honey,” says Lara Bicknell, head of sales for Creed Foodservice. “Homely and evocative of cosiness and warmth, on menus they give instant appeal.

“Not only are flavours reflective of the seasons being used in desserts and shakes, but colours are mirroring the time of the year too. Rich browns and muted orange toppings and decorations have strong appeal, and the concepts of ‘Dutchcore’ and ‘Gezellig’ join Scandinavian ‘Hygge’ as cosy concepts that are being applied in a dining arena.”

This time of year is renowned for extravagance, indulgence and drama, so it’s important that caterers pull out all the stops to create a dessert menu that not only tastes fantastic, but has high visual impact too. Desserts remain as popular as ever and the fact that they offer consumers a little slice of happiness on a plate for a very

modest outlay means that they are an easy sell. By offering a selection of old favourites and innovative new desserts, caterers can maximise the opportunities that this segment presents.

“Consumer behaviour has changed in so many ways over the past 12 months and has undoubtedly had an impact on the industry,” says Hughes. “However, the outlook for the dessert segment is still optimistic and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for the sector.”

CONTACTS

Aimia aimiafoods.com

Bidfood bidfood.co.uk

Central Foods centralfoods.co.uk

Creed creedfoodservice.co.uk

Dawn dawnfoods.com

Funnybones funnybones.co.uk

La Lorraine lalorraine.com

Tipiak tipiakfoodservice.co.uk





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I'D RATHER JAAQ

HENRY NORMAN SPEAKS TO TIM AXE, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE GENUINE DINING CO, ABOUT THE NEW MENTAL HEALTH COFFEE SHOP THAT HAS JUST OPENED IN EAST LONDON

When sifting through the potential candidates for these profiles, it is handy if they have some sort of 'hook' to make them interesting or relevant (or maybe even both). Some more obvious examples would be an innovative use of technology. Or a new opening. Or an initiative that supports a good cause.

But it's rare that you get wind of a launch that combines all three.

Well, The Genuine Dining Co has just announced a new partnership with Just Ask A Question (JAAQ), a brand-new mental health platform that offers answers to 50,000 interactive questions across 50 topics, ranging from depression to the menopause. They have just combined with the contract caterer's clients The Office Group (TOG) and Fora to launch a new mental health café, JAAQ Coffee, in Whitechapel. And all of the proceeds will go towards helping JAAQ to grow its important work.

There's clearly a lot to unpack here, so I swing by the new outlet, which is right next to fashionable Shoreditch in east London – an area known for its great coffee and food, as well as its large office population – to meet Tim Axe, the managing director of The Genuine Dining Co.

"We feed people at work," he explains of his own company's background. "We work with the likes of Spotify and News UK in creating experiences around food, which both encourages people back to the office and gives them nutrition and sustenance while they are there."

In the case of the new café, which is also open to the public, this will be done by serving up JAAQ coffee, teas and drinks, as well as a range of local

The main way you strike up a conversation is to grab a coffee



cakes, pastries, healthy snacks and salads. However, there will be a lot more on offer than merely the refreshments.

"Coming back from lockdown, it was quite a stop-start approach across our sector," explains Tim. "Also, people were expected to work incredibly hard, having been through, frankly, hell, for the last two years. We were trying to find ways in which we could support people through mental health initiatives."

As a result, The Genuine Dining Co began looking to form new partnerships, which was how it came across JAAQ, whose mission it is to break the stigma around conversations about mental health. "We were talking to them about how their quite incredible platform could support our teams, and over several months we realised that the main way that you strike up a conversation with someone is to go and grab a coffee," continues Tim. "So we created JAAQ Coffee, and it's incredibly exciting to be a part of it, because they are genuinely doing something unique, on something that should be tackled across the globe."

When the working world started to re-awaken following the last lockdown, I have to admit, I did wonder if companies would still have the time and commitment to pursue these kinds of altruistic initiatives. However, Tim reasons that, instead of pushing them down the list of priorities, it has made this focus more even crucial.

"The most important facet of hospitality is its people," he reasons. "If we're



ALL STAFF ARE TRAINED
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST-AIDERS

We want to break the stigma around talking about mental health

not supporting their mental and physical health, then we are letting down the hospitality industry, which is why something like JAAQ is so important.

"In this industry, you can get lost in lots of conversations about new tech, efficiency and all this good stuff. However, fundamentally it's about people who deliver brilliant hospitality via conversation and engaging with people to create that emotional relationship with each individual customer."

This isn't to say, however, that JAAQ Coffee won't utilise the very latest in technology. Indeed, in order to deliver its message, it features interactive screens with free access to the JAAQ app and its brand-new voice recognition and AI technology.

"It's a free-to-use platform," elaborates Tim. "It's obviously online, but in wanting to break the stigma around talking about mental health, we felt we needed to expose that conversation as much as possible."

This means that in the Whitechapel coffee shop, the technology takes the form of a huge interactive screen with a directional speaker above the user's head. "This means you're not in a booth having a private conversation," says Tim. "There are no barriers to it and you don't feel like you are doing something discreet, which is an important part, we think, of breaking down the barriers."

The ultimate goal of all of this, though, is not to fix people's mental health. It's to limit the amount of time between someone unfortunately experiencing a problem and that developing into a crisis.

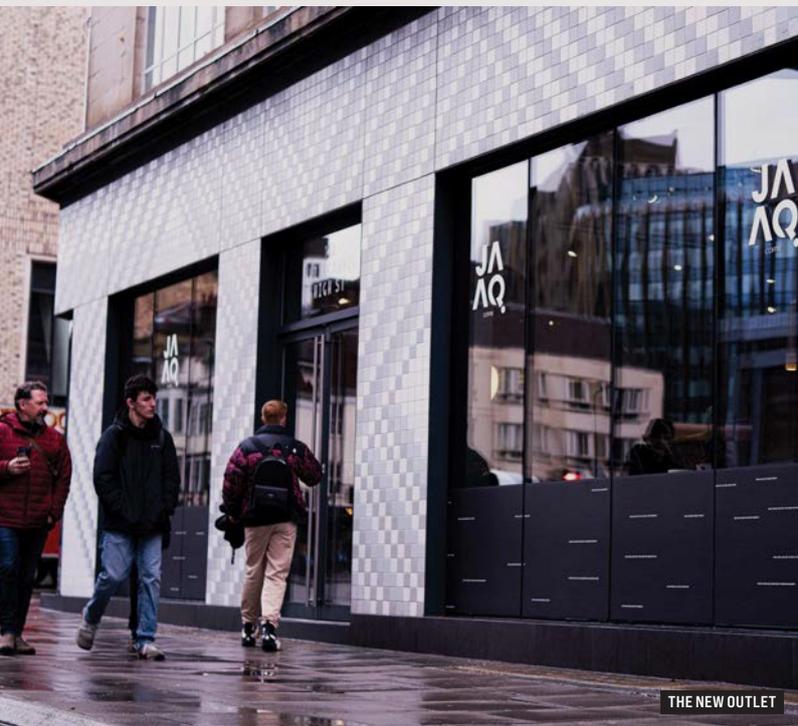
"Typically, that takes 10 years," says Tim. "When you hit crisis point, you get referred to a doctor and it takes a number of months within our current healthcare system to get seen."

JAAQ, however, can help to speed up this process by offering free information from a wide variety of experts, as well as from people who have been impacted by different mental health issues. "As opposed to from, say, a TikToker who doesn't really know what they're talking about, but their job is to get hits," says Tim.

And the great news, as previously mentioned, is that this incredible resource will be available to members of the public, as well as TOG workers. "Some of our client sites with The Office Group [there are 14 in total] are, because of where they are, open to the public," says Tim. "While we want to roll this out for our business and our teams, the most important thing is to make sure JAAQ is available to as many people as possible. Therefore, being open to the public is a brilliant way of doing that."

This dedication extends to the fact that the specialist barista team at the outlet are all also mental health first aiders, which means they are trained to recognise signs of emotional distress. In practice, this could take the form of having an initial conversation or directing a customer to the AI technology that is available in-store. "Not only do they have the answers for our customers and partners, it's also a key investment on their personal behalf and for their growth and development," says Tim.

Looking to the future, the good news for those who aren't located in the east London area is that there are already plans to open a further six coffee shops in and around the capital next year. "Our focus is to work with our existing client base to celebrate the values and the mission of JAAQ," concludes Tim commendably. "I don't think there is any corporate organisation that doesn't want to invest in mental wellbeing. The more we can work with our partners on JAAQ, the more benefit, we think, the population as a whole will get."



THE NEW OUTLET



JAAQ BRANDED MERCHANDISE

NEW PRODUCTS



VEGANUARY PRODUCTS

Central Foods has launched two new vegan products for the foodservice sector ahead of Veganuary 2023. KaterVeg! Battered Vegan Chicken Nuggets and the KaterVeg! Battered Vegan Chicken Burger are both made from soya and vegetable protein and coated in a light tempura batter.

The vegan chicken nuggets have been given a triangular V shape, the vegan battered chicken burgers a round shape, so that they can easily be differentiated from their meat equivalents. Both can be deep fried, or oven baked, providing fast food- or casual dining-style plant-based options for vegan and vegetarian customers.

Gordon Lauder, managing director of Central Foods, said: "The demand for vegan-friendly food continues to rise and we have matched this with an ever-expanding range of convenient-to-use, delicious plant-based options. These two new KaterVeg! products are ideal for the foodservice sector, offering easy-to-cook and easy-to-serve vegan options of two popular chicken products."

centralfoods.co.uk



CHRISTMAS CREATIONS

Maple from Canada UK's development chef, Olivier Briault, and his team have created a collection of new Christmas recipes. They include starters such as maple-glazed courgette and prawn sticks, squash and a maple caramelised onion tart and goats' cheese fritters with maple pea purée, while the mains include a one pot maple roast chicken and maple gnocchi crab pie.

In the dessert category, the new recipes include an indulgent maple, vanilla and chocolate yule log and the leftover-friendly maple and Baileys panettone and butter pudding.

Briault said: "We have really gone to town with some fantastic ideas that are suitable not just for home cooks, but for professional operators too. Whether you're a chef at a white tablecloth restaurant looking for some additional inspiration, a contract caterer or running a coffee shop, we have something for everyone."

maplefromcanada.co.uk

AA+ STATUS FOR MIDDLETON FOODS

Middleton Foods' main site and its bespoke gluten-free production facility have both achieved the highest possible AA+ certification, following recent unannounced BRC Global Standards and Gluten Free Certification Program audits for food safety.

Paul Stanley, foodservice manager for Middleton Foods, said: "I'm extremely proud of the AA+ certifications achieved following the first unannounced audits of both our main site and our gluten-free site. There's no higher recognition than this and I'm absolutely delighted for the entire Middleton Foods team.

"This is testament to their commitment and dedication to maintaining such excellent standards of food safety. Everyone within the business should take enormous pride in these fantastic achievements."

middletonfoods.com



HEINZ COMPETITION

Heinz Professional Mayonnaise has been working with operators to bring morale-boosting recognition to their hardworking teams. In its latest operator partnership, the company joined forces with the casual dining chain Giraffe to launch a cooking competition for the chance to secure three coveted spots on its nationwide menus in 2023.

In a zestful cook-off finale, 10 shortlisted chefs battled it out in front of a panel of industry judges at Giraffe's Birmingham Grand Central site. This followed a rigorous month-long selection process.

Raf Zielinski, head chef from Giraffe London Victoria, sous chef Adam Adour from Birmingham and chef de partie Safia Stewart also from Birmingham were crowned the winners for their innovative use of Heinz Professional Mayonnaise. Their creations were a spicy chicken brunch muffin, truffle loaded fries and a brisket filled dumpling.

kraftheinzcompany.com

URBAN DINING

Urban Eat is activating a refresh campaign to promote its wider and improved range. The move is designed to broaden the times of day consumers on the go access the brand to include breakfast and any other moment hunger strikes.

The relaunch follows the company actively listening to its trade customers, with packaging improvements made to elevate its appeal and increase the range's 'shopability' at the fixture. The refresh includes updated recipes and fillings across the portfolio, new flavours, bigger eats, salads and pasta pots, and a wider breakfast offering, extending Urban Eat's consumption occasions outside its lunchtime stronghold.

The packaging is also now 100% recyclable, with a bigger window and improvements to the design to help with merchandising and make it easier to shop.

urbaneat.co.uk





School report

FORMER LACA CHAIR PAT FELLOWS MBE UPDATES US ON THE LATEST IN THE SCHOOL FOOD SECTOR

I welcome the opportunity to write an update on the current situation in the school catering industry in this, the last edition of Contract Catering Magazine of 2022. What a difficult year it has been for everyone and we can only hope that 2023 will be better.

The difficulties that the school catering industry is experiencing have been in the media spotlight constantly throughout this time. Many campaigns have been launched to extend the entitlement to means-tested free school meals to all children whose parents receive universal credit. Sadly, the government does not seem to be listening and it was not included in the chancellor's financial statement on 17th November.

While this extension, of some 800,000 extra free meals a day, would be welcomed by the industry, there are some huge challenges to overcome currently in order to achieve it. Food costs continue to rise at an alarming rate, recruitment and retention is difficult with high levels of staff on sick leave, and there is limited capacity and equipment in many kitchens.

However, arguably the biggest problem of all is the Department for Education (DfE)'s funding of school meals, and the fact that very few caterers get the full allowance – £2.41 for universal free meals for key stage one and £2.47 for a benefitted free school meal.

The allowance for a free school meal in Scotland is £3.33, and I understand that providers are already asking for an increase to

£3.85, £4.00 for rural schools. A minimum of £3.50 is needed in England.

The Local Authority Caterers Association continues to lobby government on a regular basis

The school catering service is in the worst crisis I have seen

and its national chair, Brad Pearce, has frequent meetings with the DfE. On these occasions, the civil servants are left in no doubt about the seriousness of the current situation.

It is a dreadful reflection on our society that

in the 21st century, millions of children are going hungry. In my opinion, there is no doubt that the school catering service is in the worst crisis I have seen in the last 50 years.

So, what can be done to protect this vital provision? I don't have the answer, except to continue to put pressure on the government to increase the funding and to ringfence it to be delegated to the school caterers.

I regret having to write such a negative message at this supposedly festive time of the year, so I am going to finish on a positive note! The dedicated staff in school kitchens across the country face difficulties and challenges every day. Despite this, they continue to offer high quality hot lunches to their pupils and students. For me, they are the heroes who turn up and get on with their important jobs. Without them, we can achieve nothing. A toast with my Diet Coke, and a huge thank you for everything that you do.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and, hopefully, a better new year. ☺





A clean slate?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE KATE NICHOLLS INTRODUCES UKHOSPITALITY'S NEW HYGIENE STANDARDS GUIDE, AND REACTS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT CHANGE OF DIRECTION

When we're not fighting the sector's corner in the face of unprecedented and mounting problems, UKHospitality is getting on with what I suppose you could call its bread-and-butter work – the day-to-day stuff that might go unnoticed at the moment, but which is no less important. A perfect example of this behind-the-scenes effort is the updated version of the industry-recognised hygiene standards guide for all caterers that we've just launched in partnership with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

Sponsored by Food Alert, the new guide is the only recognised document for hygiene standards for the catering sector, and it is used by both industry and enforcement. It sets out advice and guidance for caterers on how to comply with their legal obligations and continues to be applicable throughout the UK, meaning a consistent and simple approach for companies operating across nations and environmental health officers. And it makes it quite clear that despite the welter of pressing issues threatening

Food safety and hygiene is the top priority for all hospitality venues

hospitality businesses right now, food safety and hygiene remains a top priority – probably the top priority – for all hospitality venues.

Yes, in spite of everything, this issue must remain top of the agenda, and the updated guide is the gold standard from which the industry should get its advice and guidance on complying with legislation. This is particularly true as rules and regulations continue to change, which is why we felt the guide required updating.

Making the guide work for all four UK

nations was important, so I'm pleased we were able to work with the FSA and FSS to achieve a consistent approach to make complying with legislation easier. It's worth noting, too, that UKHospitality, in partnership with government agencies, is the only industry body providing this kind of expertise.

That's the good news, then. And while it's tempting to end on that positive note, it would be remiss not to consider the implications for the hospitality industry of the recent autumn statement. While it was undoubtedly a pragmatic response that delivered stability in a turbulent market, it was missing one very important element: a long-term economic plan for growth.

UKHospitality and the wider sector is confident that ours is the industry best placed to lead the UK's economic revival, and the role that hospitality businesses can play in driving growth mustn't be ignored. But while the chancellor recognised that, nothing of any significance was forthcoming.

Nothing on the labour market or how businesses might recruit desperately-needed staff; little on skills, training existing staff or developing new people through; zilch on reform of the apprenticeship levy, which would have been music to the sector's ears.

So, while the autumn statement was indeed a crucial intervention, providing some certainty for businesses over the next 12 months, contract catering firms now need further government support if they're to be able to recruit at the levels necessary to return to viability and profitability, and to develop their operations. If not, this vital link in the hospitality sector chain could well break, inflicting yet more damage on the wider industry. 



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