

Garden Centre & Farm Shop **CATERING**

November 2013

Winning dishes

Optimise your café menu

Driving sales

Integrate your catering offer

Café design

The impact of trends

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The **shape** of things to **come**

Philip Howard, managing director of Catering Design Group looks ahead to the eating out trends likely to influence front and back of house design in 2014

In this difficult economic climate, getting ahead of the competition has to be a key focus for garden centres and farm shops. Knowing what's shaping consumer eating out habits and then ensuring your catering space has the right design to fit your food offer is vital to staying head and shoulders ahead of the pack.

GIVE ME CHOICE

Let's start with choice. Customers want choice and by choice we're not talking about a menu that features a dish from every country around the world. They want to have the choice to ask their server to replace the chicken in their salad with beef, add lamb's lettuce instead of rocket, or put their dressing in a jug instead of over their leaves.

The current perception is that restaurants and cafés are simply not set up to handle this growing trend for customer choice. Wise operators will quickly correct their way of thinking and positively embrace this new trend in consumer thinking.

SHARING AND CASUAL EATING

The concept of personal space is changing as we get more



and more used to the feeling of being European. Gone are tables of crisp, white linen and in its place is casual dining with huge communal tables. This is perfect for menus that invite sharing and grazing.

Casual dining has gained pace thanks to a growing number of younger, more affluent diners who eat out numerous times a week and place a strong emphasis on informality. This trend is backed by research conducted by hospitality consultancy Horizons

in June of this year, where they identified that the eating out sector is being bolstered by under 34 year olds, the most frequent users of eating out establishments. The survey of 2,000 consumers revealed that 75% of 18-24 year olds and 76% of 25-34 year olds had eaten out in the past two weeks, compared to an average of 67% of adults. This is great news for clever garden centres wishing to attract the next generation of garden centre visitors.

Diners are now much happier sharing their experience with other guests. This satisfies their need for community, friendship and gaining stronger engagement with the whole eating out experience.



THE CHANGING FACE OF VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money is being redefined. It's no longer about portion size versus price paid. Customers are now asking "Where is it from?", "How does it fit with my lifestyle?" and "Is it sustainable?". What they want is complete transparency from operators. They like open kitchens so that they can immerse themselves in the theatre of their food being prepared. They want to know your hygiene ratings and where you source your produce. Food with meaning is more important than price. Wellness is trending. We'll be seeing plenty of 100-calorie snacks, great salads, low-carb options, healthy snacking, heart health, gluten-free, energy, diabetes and more importantly, healthy meals for kids.

THE CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE

As informality rises, so does the blurring

of occasions. Consumers are no longer segregating their experiences. Forward thinking operators are pouncing on opportunities as the lines become blurred between eating out in supermarkets, garden centres, cafés and restaurants. Garden centres and farm shops are extremely well-placed to capitalise on this trend, as they offer customers an abundance of retail opportunities. Couple this with a sound food offering and you're well on your way to creating a memorable experience for customers.

THE FOOD SHAPING 2014

Further research from Horizons has revealed that hot dogs have nudged scampi and chips from their top 20 ranking of the most popular dishes in eating out establishments, as the nation's love of all things

American continues to influence British menus.

The new research reveals that hot dogs, albeit with a gourmet twist, are now featured on 85% more menus than they were last year. Pulled pork dishes, chicken wings and ribs have also seen significant growth on menus, as has the use of American descriptions such as 'black and blue steak', 'cobb salad' and 'slaw'.

The most frequently listed main course on British menus remains beef burgers, with an impressive 13% growth this year. In London, a wave of new burger operators are delighting the capital with higher fat and better provenance. At the forefront is Meatliquor, closely followed by its second establishment, MeatMarket in Covent Garden. Down in Brixton Market, Honest



Burger is using only 35-day Ginger Pig meat. The key to this trend is the provenance of the meat and increase in fat content.

Chicken restaurants are currently hatching all over the country. As with the burger, the trend started in America but is also driven by global meat price issues and the simple fact that consumers love it. The key to this trend is British free-range, with plenty of noise about provenance.

Steak is also becoming more popular, with rib eye, rump and sirloin steak all showing year-on-year growth. However, traditional favourites such as mixed grills, beef lasagne, Sunday lunch and chicken curry show the greatest decline.

At last we are seeing the emergence of genuine Mexican food, which champions simple regional cooking. In London, Mexican restaurants are springing up everywhere. The burrito is king and celebrated through restaurants like Wahaca, founded by MasterChef winner, Thomasina Miers. Daddy Donkey is another - an upmarket fast food van in Clerkenwell, but the trendiest has to be La Bodega Negra in Soho, owned by the people behind New York's La Esquina.

The rise in South American cuisine will continue, influenced by the World Cup in 2014 and 2016 Olympics in Brazil. Ceviche arrived in London to rave reviews in February 2012. Fast forward nearly two years and they've launched a much loved cook book, record label, cookery school and event catering business - not bad in two years! Lima followed shortly after in May 2012 and is now the proud owner of its first Michelin star and the only Peruvian restaurant in the UK to do so.

An appreciation of trends in consumer eating out habits is absolutely key to garden centres and farm shops getting their food offering right for customers. The next step is to ensure that the design of your restaurant or café has been well thought out across front and back of house to ensure it can deliver your menu. The right menu delivered within a well-designed environment has the power to increase margins, drive loyalty and make your establishment a destination in the eyes of your customers.

For further information visit www.cateringdesign.co.uk or call 01327 314 860