

A world of inspiration

Operators wanting to tap into the opportunities presented by an on-site catering operation found plenty of advice on offer in the Food & Catering Zone at Glee

Visitors to this year's Glee, held at the NEC Birmingham in September, were able to reap the benefits of the wealth of knowledge available in the Food & Catering Zone, in partnership with sponsors Vision Commercial Kitchens.

There were plenty of specialists on hand with extensive experience in creating impressive foodservice environments ready to present case studies, impart advice and answer questions.

The focal point of the Vision Commercial Kitchens stand was a bespoke shop-fit counter set against an 'artisan bakery' themed backdrop complete with distressed brick walls, rustic picture frames, glazed buns and ambient sandwiches. There was also equipment from Rational, Winterhalter and Falcon.

"We wanted to pack in all aspects of the latest high street retail thinking," explained Vision CK marketing manager Siobhan Teader, who also compiled a list of some insights that were shared in this year's Food & Catering Zone, which the company sponsored:

- Consider the use of social media as a way to engage with your coffee shop or restaurant customers.
- Provenance of food is important, so communicate this information.
- Consider the use of decorative dividers in your coffee shop to create zones.
- Signage can be a design feature in your coffee shop as well as a way to communicate with your customers.
- The types of furniture you choose can affect the dwell time of your customers.
- Simple and focused menus are popular with customers so don't over complicate things, just offer high quality.
- Cross sales can be achieved by displaying products in your coffee shop that are on sale elsewhere on site.

www.visionck.co.uk



Catering Design Group provided a range of solutions, hints and tips around the theme "Have you thought about...", covering solutions to problems with queuing, acoustics, sustainability and creating synergy between front and back of house. For instance, have you thought about acoustics? It's an area often overlooked when designing a café or restaurant space and yet critical to achieving the right ambience for your customers - particularly in large, airy spaces with high ceilings. Here's some advice:

- Divide the space with ceiling rafts or screens.
- Introduce soft surfaces such as upholstery, flooring and planting - a building with lots of hard surfaces (particularly glass) will amplify noise.
- Carefully position clearing stations and open passes - there's nothing worse than the clatter of crockery, pots and pans to drown out the pleasant 'buzz' of happy customers.

Consider specialist acoustic materials, which come in all shapes and sizes from lighting drums to wall graphics. www.cateringdesign.co.uk



Space Catering advised operators looking for guidance to help them create foodservice facilities that drive up footfall and boost their profits, and how to make their ideas for a new café, restaurant or food hall a reality. The company showcased recent prestigious projects including Ruxley Manor in Sidcup, Kent and Fosseway Garden Centre in Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire (see case study on page 36) and its advice to visitors included:

- Today's garden centre customers want to see all the menu choices on offer quickly and are not interested in processional queuing along a lengthy service counter.
- Customers are used to high street restaurants with open kitchens and a sense of theatre and like to see these features reflected in the garden centre restaurants they visit.
- Building in good flows to the scheme is essential, as is good signage, to enable customers to 'pin-ball' their way around the operation, visiting the areas that appeal specifically to them and to avoid bottlenecks.

www.spacecatering.co.uk



Next year's Glee will take place at the NEC, Birmingham from 14 - 16 September 2014. Visit www.gleebirmingham.com for more information.