



casual

Garden centres can pick up some valuable interior tips from casual dining, the fastest growing sector in the eating out market, says Hannah Somers, design consultant at Catering Design Group

Garden centres can learn a lot from what is currently happening in casual dining as the sector enjoys a renaissance, which is set to continue at pace in 2015 as consumers opt for more hand-held, easy-to-eat foods, rather than a more formal dining experience.

Recent statistics from global information specialists, the NPD Group, show that casual dining restaurants have attracted an extra 47 million visits each year compared with five years ago, making it the fastest growing sector in the eating out market. Why? Because it's informal, offers good quality food, good value and high levels of service – all attributes garden centres can turn their hands to.

Here, we share with you the valuable interior design hints and tips which are helping to drive the casual dining renaissance, showing you how to replicate the key trends

and values shaping this sector's rapid growth, for you to capitalise on within your own garden centre catering space.

When it comes to design, casual dining operators are really having to stand out in what is becoming an increasingly crowded marketplace – something garden centres know a great deal about. There is an extremely small window of time for operators to capture the imagination of consumers. Even before they've walked through the door, any exterior branding and design needs to shout "this is our offering", "this is our personality" and "these are our values". The very trendy and of casual dining is extremely good at this – think street food operators coming indoors. Unlike garden centres, they don't want to be all-inclusive, quite the opposite, they know their target audience and are very clever about how to reach them.



The look is super raw, edgy and industrial, with a hint of the seedy! It's big, bold and in your face - there really are no boundaries. It is about creating layers and layers of complex textures across such materials as ceramics, brick, concrete and steel mesh to create visual interest and amusement for the eye.

Garden centres can easily replicate the look, minus the seedy of course, but bringing a much warmer feel to the design for customers. Create focal points and eye-catching statement pieces which showcase your personality with light fittings, dividing screens and artwork in ceramics. Be brave and shout about your values to your customers; so, if your food offering is steeped in provenance, let your customers know about it, perhaps by way of a statement mural wall, along the lines of "From farm to fork" to illustrate your provenance story.

Display your retail offering with the clever use of steel mesh shelving units strategically placed around your catering space and at till points. Remove polished table surfaces and replace with matt finishes in minimalist whites and natural earthy shades, complemented by vibrant mismatched chairs in rich shades, such as orange, turquoise, navy and mustard. Bring the look to life with an array of plants and merchandise.

Worldwide colour specialist, Pantone, has announced its colour for 2015 as Marsala, 'a naturally robust and earthy wine red which enriches our minds, bodies and souls'.

Much like the fortified wine that gives Marsala its name, the colour aims to embody the satisfying richness of a fulfilling meal, while its grounding red-brown roots emanate a sophisticated, natural earthiness.

Garden centres can take advantage of the trend by utilising its warmth and richness to create feature blocks of vibrant colour across the catering space. The colour combines dramatically with neutrals, including warmer taupes and greys. Its burnished undertones are highly compatible with amber, golden yellows, greens in both turquoise and teal, together with vibrant blues.

If you're looking to add elegance to your catering space, use the colour as accent pieces across soft furnishings and to create a statement wall. Marsala's plush characteristics can be applied to textured surfaces, making it an ideal choice for feature floor walkways to divide your retail and catering space, or as a splash of colour across furnishings.

The casual dining renaissance has meant that consumers are now bored of sharing tables and want their own space, plus a choice of seating options – think banquette, cosy corners and high-dining tables. We'll still be seeing a simple, stripped-back style to replicate the food; however, within these spaces we'll be experiencing warmth with the use of vibrant colourways.

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

