

Food provenance gaining importance on British menus, says Horizons? Menurama research

Britain's high street restaurants are working hard to give diners a choice of innovative new dishes with bold flavour combinations, as well as offering an increasing amount of information on their menus about the ingredients they are using.

These are the key trends evident in the UK's high street restaurants revealed by the latest Menurama survey from foodservice analyst **Horizons**.

‘Our chain restaurants are becoming much more innovative in terms of dishes and ingredients, partly to keep people interested, but also because consumers expect them as they now have more exposure to unusual foods through the supermarkets and TV cookery programmes,’ commented Horizons’ director of services Paul Backman.

However, although the research, which surveys the menus of 115 high street operators across the UK, reveals a growing number of new dishes on menus, the top 10 most commonly listed dishes remains largely unchanged, with burger, pizza, and fish and chips once again filling the top three slots.

‘While consumers like to think they will try something new when they eat out, often they opt for their old favourites, so the top 10 most commonly listed dishes don’t change much from year to year. However, the descriptions of them do - a burger, for instance, is more likely to be listed by weight and provenance and fish and chips are often described as being from a sustainable source. Some 39% of establishments now include calorie information on their menus or websites,’ added Paul Backman.

Some of the most innovative dishes found on high street menus include:

- ‘ Cheese and jalapeno popcorn (EAT)
- ‘ Rhubarb & blueberry ‘buried treasure’ jelly (Pret)
- ‘ Vegetarian ‘fish’ and chips with halloumi (City Pubs)
- ‘ Herefordshire snail, chicken and smoked bacon pie (gastro pub)
- ‘ Wild boar and chorizo burger (Vintage Inns)
- ‘ Raspberry granola cranachan (Chef & Brewer)

The Menurama survey also shows that regional price disparities, which have traditionally meant that eating out tends to be more expensive in the south and cheaper in the north, are narrowing.

‘These price disparities are disappearing, largely because many of the chain restaurants now operate a single pricing structure across their whole estate. Operational costs are also levelling out across the country,’ added Paul Backman.

Overall, the average price of a dish has risen nearly 3% year-on-year from £6.19 to £6.41, with the cost of a main course rising fastest in quick service and restaurant establishments.

The average price for a three-course meal in a restaurant has risen 7.1% to £20.90, up from £19.52 last year, while a three-course meal in a pub now costs £16.15, up 4.2% from £15.50.

In a quick service outlet ‘ those offering takeaway or eat-in, or both, and where the customer generally pays on ordering - an average meal has risen by 17.4% to £9.59, up from £8.17 in 2010.

Details of food provenance and local sourcing is also becoming more evident on menus. For example, Wayside Inns list Croxton Manor Cheddar & Ruddles Ale Tart, Smith & Jones has a Tuxford & Tebbutt stilton burger, Little Chef has a 'rich steak and Abbot's ale pie' on its menu, as well as 'outdoor reared British pork sausage', while one independent gastro pub lists a 'Herefordshire snail, chicken and smoked bacon pie'.

Other notable trends include 'posh' food and artisan food ' with 'posh chicken kiev' on the menu at Ember Inns, 'beer & posh burger with chips' at Scream, 'artisan alfonso mango sorbet' at Las Iguanas and 'artisan sorbetti' at ASK.

However, the nation's most regularly listed dishes remain surprisingly predictable, indicating that while customers like to try new dishes, many of them are happy ordering their old favourites (see below).

Top 10 Main Course Dishes and Average Prices

- 1 Beefburger 8.72
- 2 Pizza (whole) 10.07
- 3 Fish & chips 8.69
- 4 Chicken burger 7.53
- 5 Rump steak 10.01
- 6 Chicken curry 8.93
- 7 Sirloin steak 15.00
- 8 Grilled chicken 9.58
- 9 Roast chicken 10.43
- 10 Beef lasagne 7.27 / Sausage & mash 7.58

Source: Horizons' Menurama

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Editor's Note

Horizons helps its clients make better business decisions by providing accurate and detailed information about the foodservice market, its trend, and opportunities. The company provides consultancy services, workshops and statistical information based on its model of the sector and database of key accounts across Europe.

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