

QuickBite reveals diner's growing dietary concerns

Horizons latest QuickBite consumer eating out survey, conducted online by YouGov, shows that signs of recovery in Britain's eating out market are being accompanied by concerns over food quality, the sourcing and provenance of ingredients and health and lifestyle factors. These issues are influencing where consumers choose to eat out.

When asked about their choice of venue or choice of menu item, 41% of respondents to the biannual QuickBite survey who eat out said they were influenced by at least one of the health eating factors listed such as the availability of vegetarian options (15%), calorie information (14%), reduced fat choices (9%) and the availability of low-carb dishes (4%). The 35-44 year olds and 18-24 year olds were the most likely to seek these lifestyle choices (44%), with women (47%) more concerned with health and lifestyle factors than men (43%).

Knowing the origin and provenance of main ingredients was found to be important to 56% of respondents, compared with 42% who didn't think food provenance was important.

Over half of respondents (54%) welcomed changes to allergen legislation coming in at the end of 2014, which will see restaurants and other eating out establishments required to provide consumers with more detailed information about ingredients used in the dishes they serve.

'We were surprised that so many respondents cited these lifestyle factors as influencing their choice of venue, particularly as our research shows that restaurants tend to only have one or two vegetarian choices,' said Horizons' director of services Nicola Knight.

'Our last Menurama survey [Summer 2013], which analyses menu trends in restaurants, pubs, hotels and quick service sectors, showed that typically only 12% of main course dishes on menus are vegetarian, with only 2% being gluten-free.

'We will track this trend in forthcoming surveys, but we have to ask whether eating out establishments are currently doing enough to cater for these lifestyle concerns, particularly the apparent demand for vegetarian dishes and free-from dishes. Our survey indicates that these issues are likely to become more important, rather than less, as the eating out market improves,' added Knight.

The survey confirms that Britain's eating out market is stabilising in terms of frequency of eating out, with the percentage of people eating out on the increase, and currently at the same level as it was in 2010.

Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents had eaten out in the previous two weeks with those that had eaten out doing so an average of 1.8 times. The number of people eating out has risen from 68% to 69% year-on-year.

'This is good news for the UK's foodservice sector,' commented Knight. 'We should now start to see an increase in the frequency with which consumers are eating out as the economy picks up, along with a gradual increase in average spend. Real growth will be slow, but is likely to be steady over the next 18 months.'

When it comes to people's choice of venue the survey showed that pub restaurants continue to be the type of establishment visited by most respondents, with 22% of those who had eaten out in the previous two weeks eating in a pub restaurant most recently, an increase of 2% year-on-year, up 4% since July 2013.

While the use of takeaways and delivery outlets remains relatively static, pizza and pasta outlets have fallen back slightly year-on-year (9% vs 10%) as have eat-in fast food outlets (5% vs 8%). Cafés (including coffee shops) have grown in popularity as eating out destinations, with 6% of respondents eating out in a café or coffee shop, compared with 4% in December 2012.

Average spend across all outlets (including drinks) now stands at £14.41, up from £13.30 in July, but less than last year's average spend of £14.55.

?Consumers are still being very careful about how often they eat out, although spend remains relatively high. Unusually there has been a slight year-on-year decrease in average spend, which perhaps reflects how cautious consumers are,? said Knight.

(ends)

The QuickBite surveys were conducted online by YouGov

2014 January survey: Total sample size was 2,058 adults. Fieldwork was conducted 3-6 January 2014.

2013 June survey: Total sample size was 2,003 adults. Fieldwork was conducted 21-23 June 2013.

2013 January survey: Total sample size was 2,032 adults. Fieldwork was conducted 4-7 January 2013.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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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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