



With figures from HGEM stating that 50% of people are likely to look for Christmas venues three months in advance, now is the time to get organised for the busiest time of the year. Here is Take Stock's checklist to help you on your merry way!

Promotion

- All your Christmas menus, party nights, children's parties or discounts/offers should be clearly displayed, and given prominence in-house and on your social media sites and website. Make sure all your contact details are correct, easy to find and all information is updated regularly – there is nothing more annoying than trying to book something that's no longer available.>
- Use blackboards inside and outside your premises in key positions (next to the bar, toilets, main door) outlining your festive activities – again, with all contact details visible.
- Contact last year's customers to see if they are interested in booking again – they will be impressed by the personal touch and may be glad of the call! For big groups, offer them a discount – especially if they are willing to come at a quieter time.
- Use last year's imagery and testimonials to visualise and promote this year's offering. Customers seeing other people having a good time makes it more likely they'll make a booking.

Menus

- Put menus on the bar or close to the till so they are visible and accessible. Brief staff to ask customers if they'd like to see a Christmas menu. Have online versions too.
- If you are still prepping your menus then keep them simple and offer a set menu – a choice of three starters, mains and desserts only – at a fixed price.
- Hand out party menus to local businesses and offices in your area – not everyone is organised with booking their office party so you may just be what they are looking for!
- If certain times or days are not proving popular, then why not offer an early bird menu or better value menus for these times?

Recruitment

- Now is the time to hire any staff you need – temporary or permanent. Speak to a local agency or recruit via your website, in-house or on your social media pages. If you leave it any later you won't get the best of the bunch – or anyone at all.
- Make sure all new staff have an induction and know which senior member of staff to approach – this is especially important during busy times. For example, the head chef doesn't want to be bothered during service by a trivial matter that can be easily dealt with.
- >• Train all front of house staff (whatever their position) to be polite, friendly and attentive. If they are asked a question by a customer that they can't answer, make sure they don't ignore it but find another member of staff to help.
- Make sure staff have a suitable phone manner. Again, if they are unable to deal with a query make sure they speak politely and either find another member of staff or take their name, phone number and email address (in case they write the number down wrong).
- When enlisting temporary staff make sure they know where to check for the rota.

Bookings

- Make sure your booking system is up to date and accurate – whether it is online or manual. Appoint a member or members of staff to do this.
- Make sure your online system is simple and easy to follow – anything too complicated will put a potential customer off.
- Brief all staff on how to take phone bookings – make sure they speak clearly, polite and friendly. If they struggle to hear the customer tell them to take their name, phone number and email and a senior staff member will call them back.
- If a booking isn't available brief staff to offer the customer an alternative time or date – don't just let them hang up!
- For further advice on your online booking system visit takestockmagazine.com/get-it-booked