

## Get ready for Christmas bookings hospitality businesses told

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Christmas may be three months away but 59 per cent of people who will be booking festive work events are doing so this month

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**Restaurant, hotel and pub operators should arm their staff with details of Christmas packages, offers and menus and get them to 'show excitement' when taking bookings for the festive season as research reveals the majority will be made this month.**

According to the results of a survey by HospitalityGEM, 59 per cent of work Christmas parties and 50 per cent of festive dinners for friends will be made three months ahead of the festive season.

Restaurants are the most popular type of venue (68 per cent) for office Christmas parties according to the survey of 723 people on HospitalityGEM's database with all venues offering unique menus and unusual experiences most likely to capture the interests of early-bookers.

All staff taking Christmas bookings now should be a informed properly of details such as offers and deposit information and crucially, 'show excitement' and encouragement said HospitalityGEM with 34 per cent of diners saying an unfriendly tone of voice on the phone would put them off booking.

"Make sure teams are properly trained, and have availability, to deal with these professionally. Teams should be trained months in advance, so it is even worth planning now for Christmas 2016, taking account of learnings in the next few months while they are fresh in the mind," said HospitalityGEM managing director Steven Pike.

## Be upfront

For restaurant, hotel and pub operators aiming to maximise Christmas sales and ensure customers are happy when celebrating at your venue, Katy Doherty, sales & marketing manager Sodexo Prestige, Knebworth House, advises being upfront in the booking process and manage expectations before customers put down their deposit.

"It's important to encourage clients to be open about their budget and what the key aspects of the event are for them," she said. "Armed with this information, we can work to make sure their priorities are met and discuss the best options.

"Encouraging bookers to be open minded can also be very beneficial for both venue managers and event bookers alike. We're able to offer bookers the best deal if they can be relatively flexible."

When it came to Christmas bookings, HospitalityGEM's survey also found that:

- **Spend:** 70 per cent choosing the pub would spend between £15 and £45 per head, while 47 per cent of diners opting to hold a Christmas do in a restaurant would be willing to spend between £30 and £45.
- **Time:** 98 per cent of respondents expect to have their table at a festive gathering for a minimum of two hours. Only 2 per cent said they would be happy with a table for an hour.
- **Bookings:** The means of making bookings for Christmas meals was mostly split between over the phone and online (42 per cent for both). Seventy-two per cent of people expected the process to take between one and five minutes and 38 per cent will make the call between 12pm and 3pm.
- **Ordering:** When it comes to ordering off special menus 33 per cent of bookings for 10 or more people opting to pre-order their food while 23 per cent preferring to choose from a festive menu at the event. itself.