

Independent restaurants seen as 'most welcoming'

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Front-of-house staff at independent restaurants are better at making diners feel welcome than their counterparts at chain restaurants and gastro pubs according to research by HospitalityGEM.

Research by the company, which measures guest experience levels, found that 60 per cent of diners feel that the welcome given by staff at independent restaurants was the most effective, compared to 13 per cent at chain restaurants and 11 per cent at gastro pubs.

When it comes defining what makes a 'great host' 57 per cent said it was down to the staff member having 'ongoing (but appropriate) engagement' throughout a visit while 19 per cent said it was 'down to staff awareness of their environment and of guests' moods and needs'.

Having just one person responsible for serving a table is also not seen as necessary to provide top service, according to 87 per cent of people who see hosting as a team-wide responsibility. Only 11 per cent feel the role of a singular host is necessary for the perfect experience.

When there's an issue, however, more than two thirds of diners (69 per cent) said they would rather speak to the person who served them than to a manager.

HospitalityGEM managing director Steven Pike said: "These results are reflective of the trend towards less formal situations for eating out, particularly among younger generations, but they also highlight the importance of really effective teamwork and attentiveness throughout a

guest's experience. This means recruiting people with the ability to interact well with their colleagues as well as with diners. But it also requires a very clear set of operational processes so that the service appears fluid."

Areas of service which contribute to making guests feel welcome (in order of preference)

1. Meeting and greeting
2. Check backs throughout the meal and ensuring satisfaction
3. Efficient provision of bill and processing of payment
4. Offer of second drinks
5. Being guided through the menu once sat
6. Communication on departure