

RESTAURANTS ARE TOP OF THE TREE FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY BOOKINGS



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Over two thirds (68%) of consumers plan to book a restaurant for their office Christmas party over celebrations at pubs, bars and hotels, according to new research by HospitalityGEM.

The research also found that two thirds of respondents intend to try out a new restaurant or pub which offered a unique menu and different experience for the festive season.

Half of consumers (50%) opting to dine out with friends and 59% of work colleagues looking to reserve their party booking, would choose to do so three months prior to Christmas.

At least half of consumers will book their Christmas party three months in advance

According to the research, this makes Monday 14th September a real focus date for operators, most of whose Christmas sales drives got underway in July.

For almost half of respondents (48%) the chose date for their festive party will be the w/c 14th December. Only 6% would choose to book their Christmas party in January, as they feel it would be less busy.

The survey also revealed how much respondents would be willing to pay for their Christmas meal in certain environments. 70% choosing to dine in a pub with friends stated between they would spend between £15 and £45 per head, whilst 47% of diners choosing a restaurant environment would be willing to spend between £30 and £45.

Looking at the length of time diners want to spend enjoying their festive meal with friends, a resounding 98% of respondents would expect to have their table for a minimum of two hours but also expect to stay as long as their group wanted. Only 2% of respondents would be happy with a table for just one hour.

When booking a Christmas meal with friends' 42% would choose to book by phone (with roughly the same proportion choosing online). 72% expect the process to take between one and five minutes and 38% would choose to make the call between noon and 3pm.

With reference to food and drink options for a work Christmas party with 10 or more colleagues, a third of respondents prefer to pre-order by phone or email for everyone in the party across the set Christmas menu, but still want to retain the option of choosing for a standard menu. Whereas 23% of respondents would not want to pre-order, but prefer to choose from a festive menu on the evening.

Steven Pike, Managing Director of HospitalityGEM commented: "Christmas is a make or break time for operators as guests are expecting one of the most memorable and amazing hospitality experiences of the year. With two thirds of guests looking to try somewhere new, it is even more important that operators get the offering for each party spot on every time, as it could turn into the first visit of many for a new diner."

"But securing the bookings in the first place is essential – remember that the most common time for people to make booking enquiries is during the busy lunch period. So 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. You can bring these learnings into sharper focus by conducting mystery calls to test the process."

Written by [Nathan Pearce](#)