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Hospitality Management Solutions - *by design*

## Diners tending to veer away from traditional food and drink pairing recommendations, more choosing soft drinks



Diners are tending to veer away from traditional food and drink pairing recommendations, according to new research by guest experience management experts HospitalityGEM.

Its survey into consumers' food and drink habits produced some unconventional results. For example, the majority of diners would opt for a glass of red wine with their pork belly and the uptake of soft drinks was much larger than it anticipated.

As expected, food and drink pairings do differ based on both age and gender. Age was the most influential factor on whether diners chose soft drinks, with 29% of 18 to 25-year-olds picking this option at some point in the survey.

This figure decreased with age to only 16%. However, the popularity of soft drinks becomes popular again with those aged 66 and over, with nearly 45% choosing this most often. Somewhat more traditionally, men were found to be significantly more likely to pair ale with food and women more likely to select white wine. 12% of men selected ale at some point in the survey, compared with only 3% of women. Women selected white wine 27% of the time, compared with 20% of men.

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HospitalityGEM managing director Steven Pike said: "The results highlight the importance of a front-of-house team's interaction with guests. Training can indicate what drinks the operator would recommend with a meal, but interaction can indicate where staff can add something to what the guest is already looking for. This also provides front-of-house staff with an opportunity to upsell. It also draws our attention to the importance of a quality and varied soft drink offering. With alcohol losing popularity among millennials and Generation Z, an attractive soft drink offering, paired with the passion of team members, could mean the difference between a good and great guest experience."