

Salad days for healthy eaters

New research by HospitalityGEM has found that the availability of healthy choices at lunchtime is up by 62%

A new survey into the UK's eating out market by guest experience management experts HospitalityGEM has found that 62% of respondents think healthy food choices are more readily available at lunchtime than they were a year ago. Furthermore, 54% believe this is also the case at dinner, and 47% at breakfast.

Healthy choices when eating out are seen as a priority for two-thirds of those questioned, and the industry seems to be picking up on this trend and reflecting it in its offering. HospitalityGEM's research shows almost half of respondents believe that supermarkets offer the best variety of healthy choice at lunchtime, perhaps not surprisingly, but counter services outlets are closing the gap and are closely followed by restaurants.

With taste, price and nutritional value coming out as the three top factors customers look for when purchasing a grab and go item at lunchtime, Pret a Manger and Tossed were the clear favourites within this sector, offering quick and easy healthy food for a reasonable price. Over half of those questioned believe grab and go operators are leading the way in providing healthy choices.

In comparison, HospitalityGEM's survey found almost two-thirds of respondents believe that pubs aren't doing enough to provide healthy food options on their menu, with only 4% stating that they had the best variety.

Steve Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM, commented: "The survey tells us a lot about people's attitudes to eating healthily when out and about, and also provides a great insight into the success of the sector's efforts to meet this

trend. It's fantastic that so many people believe the availability of healthy options has significantly improved in the last 12 months for all day parts of the sector, although this is slightly less so for breakfast.

"It's great to see that over half of customers are satisfied that grab and go chains are doing enough to provide healthy options, but it looks like pubs could be doing more. There is an obvious link to accessibility and the time it takes to sit down and eat at a pub, as opposed to the increasing grab and go culture, particularly at lunchtime when we tend to be a bit more virtuous. But this also presents an opportunity for landlords and other operators to evaluate their offering of healthy food to check if's the best it can be for their target audience, possibly through greater menu differentiation for various day parts.

"Additionally, our survey found that 43% of people like to see calorie counts on the menu, but not when having a nice meal out. It seems that calorie counts on our lunch items help make healthy choices easier, but seeing calories when you are ordering a special meal can take the edge of a treat!"

"Pret a Manger and Tossed were the clear favourites"

