

Beating the winter blues

Contrary to the popular view, the first few weeks of the new year can present plenty of opportunities to draw in extra business. HospitalityGEM dispels the myth of the January depression

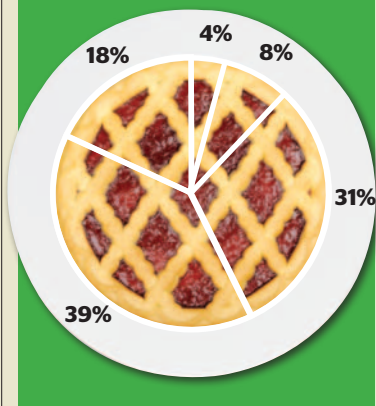
By the time January comes around, everyone is feeling the financial (and physical) hangover from over-indulgence at Christmas – or so we're told. A recent survey conducted by HospitalityGEM (HGEM) suggests that the new year isn't a time when your customers will necessarily be cutting back.

The detox myth

We often hear the word 'detox' banded around, particularly towards the end of the Christmas party season. However, it appears to be something of a myth. Of 281 mystery diners surveyed, 70% said they would be unlikely to detox in the new year, suggesting that publicans should make sure the bar is well-stocked

If you will be dieting or detoxing, which of the following would be likely to tempt you out?

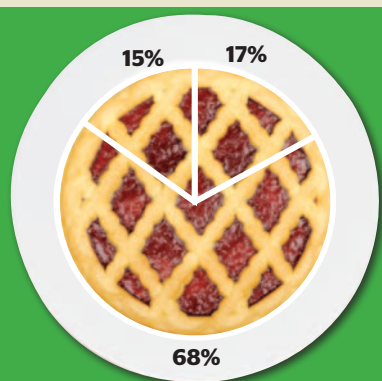
Soft drinks offers	4%
Non-alcoholic cocktails	8%
Resolution/ diet-friendly meals	31%
Entertainment	39%
Other, please specify	18%
Total respondents	212



Will you be less likely to go out during January due to your diet/detox/new year's resolution?

Yes	17%
No	68%
Not Sure	15%

Total respondents 281



and ready for business as usual come 1 January.

Additionally, 68% of respondents said that they would not be less likely to go out in January due to detoxing, dieting or any other new year's resolution.

Drinks promotions could help to entice more customers in, ready to spend Christmas cash.

Healthy eating and healthy profits

Resolutions kick in as soon as the clock strikes midnight on 31 December and 36% of respondents valiantly plan to undo the over-indulgence of the festive period through dieting or a fitness regime. This means that pubs should be ready to cater for

those wanting to lose a bit of that Christmas excess.

Well-publicised, healthy menu options, light lunch dishes and low-calorie desserts could all help to encourage a little extra spending, while helping customers to lose pounds.

Cash and vouchers

With only 50% of respondents stating that financial restraints wouldn't have an impact on their decision to dine out in the new year, money clearly is an important factor for many during those first few weeks in January, so meal deals could be a savvy offering.

There is still time to sell meal vouchers as gifts before Christmas



arrives, which could help to ensure steady footfall to kick off 2013.

Almost half (46%) of respondents said that they would be going out for a belated Christmas get-together in the new year, so be ready to take January bookings over the next few weeks. For many, the first pay day of 2013 will be cause for a minor celebration, so be ready to start and end January on a high.

And don't forget to take the decorations down on 6 January.

“For many, the first pay day of 2013 will be cause for a minor celebration so be ready to start January on a high





Get prepared for the post-Xmas period

Steven Pike
Director
HospitalityGEM



This survey clearly helps to bury some of the misconceptions surrounding the new year. While some people will look to make small lifestyle changes, the idea that everyone will start jogging, eating salads, staying in and 'detoxing' is not a realistic one.

Publicans should be ready for business as usual, although a few fresh ideas and special offers could help to entice a few more customers out of the cold and into the warmth of a friendly pub.

Adding some low-fat, healthy options to your menu will reassure those that have decided on a health kick for the month, and you could perhaps think about some soft-drinks deals.

These days people also tend to view January as a somewhat dismal month – enjoying some well-earned time off and seeing

friends and family contrasts starkly with the reality of that first day back in the office. Some entertainment could help to alleviate the January blues for many, so don't rule out some uplifting live music, a comedy night or a simple pub quiz as an enticement.

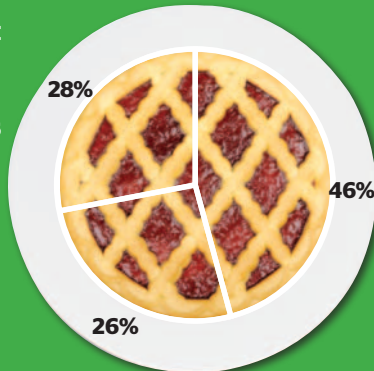
January also has an often overlooked market for group bookings. For some it may be a chance to get together with friends in a more relaxed atmosphere than that of a Christmas party. For those who are really busy in December, they may even prefer a January get-together.

So make a resolution this new year to be creative from the start and don't wait for the usual calendar milestones to drum up business.

Are you planning to go out for a belated Christmas get-together (or any other social occasion), for drinks or a meal, with friends or family in the new year?

Yes 46%
 No 26%
 Not sure 28%

Total respondents 281



January in a nutshell

- 70% are unlikely to 'detox' in the new year.
- Over a third of people are likely to make changes towards a healthier lifestyle in the new year.
- 46% of respondents are planning a Christmas get-together in January.
- Selling meal vouchers in the run up to Christmas could help your new year get off to a flying start.



■ Entice customers in with some new year's entertainment to help beat the January blues.



Food for thought: some customers will be seeking healthy fare

About us: HospitalityGEM is the new business-to-business trading name for The Mystery Dining Company. HospitalityGEM helps restaurant, pub, hotel and catering businesses to grow sales, build brand reputation, analyse performance and develop people through a range of Guest Experience Management services and software. www.hospitalityGEM.com

