

CHRISTMAS

Pub should embrace restaurant status to steal back Christmas party bookings

By Daniel Woolfson , 16-Sep-2015

Last updated on 16-Sep-2015 at 11:19 GMT



Pike: "I think pubs could make more of their restaurants and not be embarrassed about it"

Related tags: Bookings, Christmas, Restaurants, Pubs

Pubs need to embrace marketing themselves as restaurants to steal Christmas party bookings back from the traditional restaurant sector, according to Steven Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM.

This comes as recent research by HospitalityGEM reports that almost 70% of consumers plan to book a restaurant for their office Christmas party rather than a pub.

Pike said: "The problem seems to boil down to the fact that restaurants have a more defined experience – you know what to expect, the steps that you'll be taken through and you can picture how you'll be seated as a group.

"The lines between restaurants and pubs are becoming increasingly blurred and perhaps it's an opportunity at this time of year for pubs to make more use of their restaurant tag – so instead of being a pub with food they actually have a restaurant and can show [customers] the kind of package to expect."

Selective

But, Pike advised pubs to be selective in when to play up the restaurant side of their business.

“There are clearly times when it's advantageous when it's best to say 'we are a pub and a place that people come together to socialise and have a good time' but there are times when that approach needs to be tweaked.

“If you're really going after capturing dining bookings then the fact that you've got a restaurant makes people feel safer in booking that. It's just how that's presented,” he said.

Expanding

Despite fears over mass pub closures, Pike said the rise of food in pubs was contributing to the expansion of parts of the sector.

“I spoke to someone recently who'd picked up some statistics on the decline of the pubs industry in Britain and how many pubs are closing every week – but [a decline] is not the case,” he said.

“Certain pubs are closing of course, in certain parts of the market. But there are other parts of the market expanding quite rapidly – and when you look at what those have in common, it's very often there's food involved.”

He added: “I think pubs could make more of their restaurants and not be embarrassed about it – it's a very positive direction that the industry's been going in.”