



## HospitalityGEM: Operators should be transparent with local produce

Local ingredients are an important factor in influencing diners where to eat.

Research from guest experience management experts HospitalityGEM revealed that almost three quarters (72%) of diners state local ingredients as the most important factor when choosing where to dine out.

This figure rose to 81% when diners from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were asked if the use of local ingredients would make them more likely to visit a restaurant. Furthermore, the reason for choosing a dish with locally sourced ingredients was cited as 'to support the local economy' by more than half (57%) of diners.

The survey identified, however that diners are looking for operators to be more transparent when defining terminology such as 'provenance', 'local' and 'artisan' when stated on their menus.

Steven Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM, said, "The data we've collected illustrates the psyche of diners in relation to local produce and what influences their decision when choosing where to eat. There are many 'buzzwords' for diners when reading your menu, with various recent pieces of research highlighting the importance. However, don't be too haphazard in the use of these terms, or diners may begin to question the transparency of your business and the true value of what's on their plate."

Pike further highlighted his points:

1. Highlight how local 'local' is

Respondents defined a local ingredient by distance, rather than heritage or association for example. Suggestions ranged from 100 miles to as close as 20 miles. When opting for local ingredients on the menu, ensure that these are highlighted and explained in terms of proximity to the restaurant to encourage uptake and to provide a conversation starter to connect with guests.

2. Shout about your local offering

Those surveyed suggested specific notices or advertising in a restaurant would help to explain terminology and improve their understanding of what local really means. Using eye catching chalkboards and POS notices combined with online content can help to educate diners and add value to their experience.

3. Emphasise the quality

Only 18-25 year olds were willing to pay a premium for locally sourced produce. Other age groups should be reassured that local ingredients offer a higher quality in order to justify an increased spend, as many may perceive that lower distribution costs are associated with food that's on your doorstep. By telling the story behind product through menu design and personal interaction, guests can be encouraged to opt for higher margin dishes.

4. Start the story online

74% of consumers use social media to influence a purchasing decision – that extends to where they eat and drink as well. Forming strong relationships with local suppliers and sharing your story on social media platforms will show transparency and authenticity, and encourage diners to choose your restaurant over competitors.

5. Ensure staff are in the know

Diners are looking for genuine claims when opting for local produce. Well-trained team members who are both knowledgeable and confident when explaining the origins of each dish can be reassuring to guests and make a difference to the overall experience.

To find out more information, visit HospitalityGEM's website at [www.hgem.com](http://www.hgem.com).