

Ethnic Restaurants and Takeaways - UK - August 2010

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What is this report about?

Since 2001, the ethnic restaurant sector has been driven by growth at the top (there are now 11 Michelin-starred ethnic restaurants in the UK) and at the bottom in the fast casual sector (Chilango, Wahaca, The Japanese Canteen). However, the mid-market sector remains staid and tired.

This report investigates consumers' use of varying types of ethnic outlets and gauges their opinion on this area of the eating out market. It also highlights what consumers feel is currently missing from the market and what they would like to see on menus going forward.

What have we found out?

- Nearly half of ethnic restaurant/takeaway users like to try dishes they haven't had before, which should prompt operators in this market to ensure that they are offering diners regularly changing specials menus.
- Younger consumers have the time, freedom and desire to eat out of home at ethnic restaurants more often compared to older consumers (eg aged 35-44) who are more likely to order ethnic takeaways/home deliveries due to family commitments.
- Venues should focus on offering free tasters, particularly to young women who tend to say that they would like to try something different but don't in case they don't like it. This would encourage wider menu usage and prompt upselling.
- The "curryless Indian restaurant" and takeaway Dim Dum also provide market opportunities for ethnic restaurants as nearly a third of consumers want a range of healthy options and around a quarter are looking for smaller/tapas-like dishes.
- Operators could do more to breed familiarity with ethnic dishes by showing photos of products online. This would satisfy the 30% of ethnic restaurant diners who would like to see more photos of dishes on ethnic restaurant menus going forward, without dumbing down the hardcopy menus in the restaurant itself.
- Caribbean food represents a significant opportunity for the market as the Levi Roots phenomenon has grown in recent years, increasing consumers expose to this type of cuisine. This also ties into the fact that over a quarter of consumers would try alternative ethnic restaurants if there were more in their area.

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