

Consumer Attitudes to Fine Dining - UK - November 2009

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What is this report about?

The latest recession has changed the face of the eating out market to some extent in terms of both consumer spending habits and operators' responses to changing market conditions. For example, from a consumer perspective, gone are the days of making purchases without thinking and ostentatious spending, instead bargain hunting and value seeking are the order of the day. Operators have also made previously unheard of moves, not least in the fine dining arena with various establishments now offering value-led set menu deals at lunchtime.

This report aims to investigate the question: "Has the recession made fine dining redundant?"

Consumer research for this report looks at issues such as what attracts diners to particular dishes whilst also finding out what UK consumers think about 'fine dining'.

What have we found out?

- Time and space are of greatest importance to many diners. More than 20m consumers say that basic factors such as being able to take as much time over a meal as you want and spacious seating/ generous space between tables would improve the dining out experience.
- Although 41% of diners are drawn to traditional dishes made from UK ingredients, 36% of diners believe that something different and interesting draws them to certain dishes.
- Four in ten consumers think that fine dining is too expensive compared to one in five who think that it's exciting or memorable.
- Almost 4m consumers have eaten in a celebrity chef-owned restaurant. Despite the trials and tribulations of various celebrity chefs in recent months, it is clear that they continue to represent a significant selling point.
- Online review guides now include 'celeb spotting' as a search criterion on their sites indicates the demand these restaurants can create if they manage to cultivate a celebrity following. But keeping this in perspective, only 2.7m consumers tend to use reviews by food critics or restaurant guides to help them choose where to eat out.
- The shift towards more casual dining formats in recent decades is highlighted by the fact that only 1.2m consumers would like to see a more formal dining experience (eg black tie).

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