

Menu Trends - UK - January 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on eating out, with a focus on menu trends
- Consumers' preferences when eating out or ordering takeaway
- How COVID-19 has forced menu creators to adapt the 4Ps of marketing
- Consumers' perceptions of popular menu phrases.

Despite restaurants using the term 'plant-based' to describe dishes that feature highly processed 'fake' meats, 76% of vegetarians/vegans associate the term 'plant-based' with being natural, compared to 48% of all consumers.

Underlying consumer demand for out-of-home leisure experiences such as eating out remains strong. However, COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on the foodservice industry, with 48% of Britons spending less on dining out as of 8-16 December 2020 compared to before the pandemic. The latest national lockdown that was announced on 4 January 2021 adds greater uncertainty for operators and will undoubtedly result in more closures.

As consumers become increasingly frugal, promotions will be much needed to drive usage. However, restaurants will need to achieve the right balance, as operators adopting a heavy discounting approach will suffer the consequences of a squeezed margin and brand value erosion.

However, COVID-19 has accelerated inevitable menu trends and there are clear opportunities for operators to benefit from changes brought on by the pandemic that will become new ways of eating out. For example, with so many people's travel plans for the most part of 2020 being curtailed in response to the pandemic, 45% of consumers have expressed an interest in foods featuring flavours from around the world. Traditional/mainstream restaurants should develop more ethnic-inspired dishes to appeal to consumers' evolving tastebuds.



"With so many people's travel plans being curtailed as a result of the pandemic, consumers now seek to experience global flavours that give them a sense of being away."

- Trish Caddy, Senior Foodservice Analyst – 18 January 2021

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