

APRIL 2023 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 13

INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRY TRENDS



BLOOMING PLANTS?

The rise and rise of plant-based restaurants!

Time Out (Dec 2022) tells us that vegan consumption is not just for January, but there is an on-going boom in plant-based restaurants. That, along with an increasing number of plant-based options, or plant-based menus, points to increased consumer interest. So how is the plant-based scene developing and what is driving this?

Plant-based options range from fast-food operators providing their standard offers in plant-based form (e.g. McDonalds McPlant, or Burger King's Plant-based Whopper), to high end operators offering dishes where vegetables are the hero ingredient prepared in innovative and creative ways (e.g. The Ritz offering a vegan/vegetarian menu and Pied a terre a vegan tasting menu). But these are offer extensions, in this weeks Industry Digest, Anita Eves asks what of the plant-based restaurants?



THE RISE AND RISE OF PLANT-BASED RESTAURANTS!

Anita Eves

Time Out (Dec 2022) listed the [21 best vegan restaurants in London](#), which vary in style from Chinese (e.g., Tofu Pilgrim; Time Out's number one pick), to Middle Eastern (including Naifs and Comptoir V (an off shoot of Comptoir Mezze)), to Mexican (Club Mexicana) to, perhaps surprisingly, French (Gauthier Soho). Also included are restaurants not defined by a particular culture, for instance [Mallow](#) in Borough Market, part of the [Mildred's](#) Group (currently comprising 6 outlets around London).

So, what is driving this? Consumer interest in reducing meat intake must be part of the equation. Mintel (2022) reported that 61% of consumers were limiting their meat intake, interested in doing so, or didn't eat meat, compared to 54% in the previous year. The main reason given for reducing meat intake was environmental concerns, although saving money increased in importance in 2022. Having said that 76% of consumers said there were better ways to reduce their environmental footprint than limiting meat (Mintel, 2022) and only 14% found 'contains less or no animal derived products' appealing as a claim. However, the flexitarian diet is becoming entrenched in British lifestyle, and interest is expected to continue (Mintel, 2023).

But are there other drivers for businesses? In a recent webinar (2023) from The Caterer, inclusivity was a

recurring theme – ensuring everyone in a group can be satisfied, noting that one vegan in a group can determine an eating venue (the sway factor).

In addition, catering for vegans means that vegetarians are also addressed, leading to operational efficiencies. One issue was that consumers expected vegetable-based meals to be cheaper, not recognising that better quality ingredients and much more time were sometimes needed to create plant-based dishes. Also noted was a lack of instruction in plant-based dishes in catering colleges – something that should be addressed.

Lastly, language. This piece has moved between vegan and plant-based with gay abandon. Vegan may still be perceived as boring and flavourless, reflecting the days when vegans definitely drew the short straw. Now, many use plant-based as a term less linked to a lifestyle and indeed most retail products use this in brand names. Or do we need to highlight the lack of meat at all? Plant-based foods can be delicious in their own right – let's just celebrate that!

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