

British fall hook, line and sinker for fish and chips

Contributed by MINTEL
Thursday, 11 November 2004
Last Updated Thursday, 13 April 2006

Latest research from MINTEL finds that a truly British institution - the local fish and chip shop - ranks as Britain's favourite place to eat. Indeed, in three months alone, as many as half of Britons visited one. This traditional fayre is closely followed by a meal down the local pub, another time-honoured British establishment, which attracts 46% of diners.

British fall hook, line and sinker for fish and chips

Latest research from MINTEL finds that a truly British institution - the local fish and chip shop - ranks as Britain's favourite place to eat. Indeed, in three months alone, as many as half of Britons visited one. This traditional fayre is closely followed by a meal down the local pub, another time-honoured British establishment, which attracts 46% of diners.

Chinese, sushi and noodle bar, restaurants and takeaways rank a close third at 45%, followed by pizza restaurants and takeaways, which entice some 35% of British diners. Surprisingly, this leaves the now almost ubiquitous Indian curry house languishing in fifth place, with only around three in ten (31%) having visited an Indian restaurant or takeaway during this time.

"Although the British are renowned for their penchant for Indian and Chinese takeaways, it is in fact the good old British chippy, which is considered a firm favourite amongst British diners today. The popularity of pubs and fish and chip shops just shows that there is still a real desire to eat British food. Pubs have been at the forefront of reviving and rejuvenating interest in British cuisine. Gastropubs, chain pubs and dedicated pub restaurants, which serve reasonably priced meals, have inherently transformed how the public view pub food today," comments Linda Haden, Senior Catering Analyst at MINTEL.

Despite the trend towards more traditional British eateries, it appears that the British palate is still the most diverse in Europe. Indeed, when it comes to trying ethnic dishes, the British are considerably more adventurous than their continental counterparts with as many as seven in ten (68%) Britons agreeing that they "like foreign food". This compares to just 29% of Spaniards. The French (at 59%) and Germans (at 64%) fail to match British interest.

Who needs an expert?

When it comes to choosing where to eat, British diners reject the food critics, in favour of word of mouth from family and friends. As many as 35% of adults feel the best restaurants they have ever eaten in were recommended by friends and family. Meanwhile, just 8% "trust" food guides and critics, these experts, seemingly, having little influence on Britain's dining decisions.

"It is clear that customer recommendations are the lifeblood of a restaurant. It is fair to say that most people will know the standards their friends and family expect, together with the kind of food and ambience they like, making recommendations from family and friends more relevant. While in many cases it is likely that consumers will have similar tastes to friends and family, it may be that diners feel that their tastes are far removed those of the critics," comments Linda Haden.

A £25 billion pound market and growing

By the end of this year Britain will have spent a staggering £25 billion on eating out, the vast majority of which (£21.9 billion) will be spent in budget and mid-market establishments. The remaining £3.1 billion will have been spent in premium restaurants.

There is little doubt that the trend towards eating out of home continues to boom. Although the share of spend on food for the home (accounting for almost 70% of the total food market) exceeds that spent on eating out, growth in the eating out market continues to rise faster than in-home dining.

"Eating out now plays a major part in British life and is no longer reserved for special occasions. The introduction of widespread quick-service and casual dining brands over the last 20 years has radically altered how Britons eat. Generally, eating out on the spur of the moment, without the need to dress formally, is now a widely accepted norm, particularly amongst younger people. Budget and mid-market operators are certainly well placed to satisfy the current need for informality, and this will undoubtedly continue to boost their trading prospects within an overcrowded eating out market," comments Linda Haden.

Money is no limit for Britain's romancers

On average the British spend over £1250 each on eating out a year, the majority of which (£820) is spent in restaurants, with considerably less (£365) being shelled out in fast food joints. Coffee shops, sandwich bar chains and

other caf  s account for the remainder of the spend.

The average diner spends around Â 10 a head on an everyday meal, while those splashing out on special occasions spend around Â 22. Those opting for a European restaurant are the biggest spenders.

When it comes to treats or celebrations, Britons are willing to spend considerably more than average between Â 10-29 a head. A substantial number, some 27%, are willing to overstep the Â 30 mark, with a small proportion (7%) forking out more than Â 50 a head.

It seems, that when romance is high on the agenda, people are even less concerned about cost, and more than willing to edge over the Â 20 mark. Some two in five diners (38%) who had romance on their mind opted to pay more than Â 30 per head on special occasions.

Future feasts

Despite the intense competition, overcapacity and downward price pressures within the eating out industry, both the budget and mid-market sectors are anticipated to remain buoyant. A host of economic and demographic factors will continue to contribute to their prosperity. First and foremost, eating out spend is predicted to rise in the immediate future, with the market poised to touch Â 31 billion by 2009. As the UK eating habits evolve to emulate those in the US and parts of Europe, an ever greater proportion of income will be spent on eating out and takeaway meals as opposed to in-home dining.  

  

About Mintel

Mintel is a worldwide leader of competitive media, product and consumer intelligence. For more than 35 years, Mintel has provided key insight into leading global trends. With offices in Chicago, London, Belfast and Sydney, Mintel's innovative product line provides unique data that has a direct impact on client success. For more information on Mintel, please visit their Web site at www.mintel.com.