

# trend set

*Innovation in the presentation of food and drink*

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## FLAVOURS, FINANCIALS AND FIGURES OF THE FESTIVE SEASON - CHRISTMAS PARTY FOOD AND DRINK TRENDS

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In the words of Johnny Mathis, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. It's one of the most profitable times of year for the **hospitality** sector - a vital money-spinner for hotels, restaurants and pubs alike.

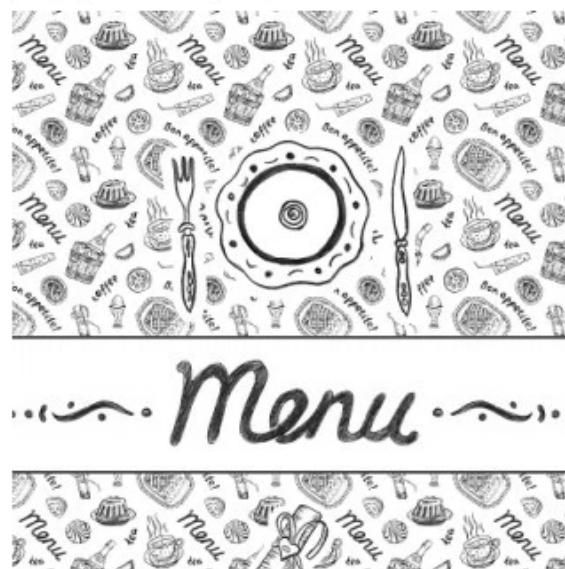


So for all of us involved in it, our minds – and bodies – are now fully focussed on the imminent festive party season and the food and drink trends we'll see. And as almost half of those questioned in a [recent survey](#) by guest experience management company [HospitalityGEM](#) will be enjoying their festive party week commencing 14 December – that's just four weeks from now...



### Staying financially focussed this festive season

The Christmas party season provides the perfect opportunity to make some serious cash, but it's important that operators keep their eyes on the ball as mistakes made during this period can be costly in both the short and long term. To make the most of seasonal sales it's important to plan ahead. As says [Steven Pike](#), managing director HospitalityGEM: "Christmas is a make or break time for operators as guests are expecting one of the most memorable and amazing hospitality experiences of the year. With two thirds of guests looking to try somewhere new, it is even more important that operators get the offering for each party spot on every time, as it could turn into the first visit of many for a new diner."



### Your customers' Christmas key considerations

According to the same HospitalityGEM research, over [two thirds \(68%\) of consumers plan to book a group meal at restaurant for their office Christmas party – rather than celebrating in a pub, bar or hotel](#). It also found that two thirds of those questioned intend to try out a new restaurant or pub which offered a unique menu and different experience for the festive season.

And as some two-thirds of guests want to try out a new venue, it's even more important that operators get their 'party sales patter' right every time, as it could turn into the first of many visits for the festive diners it welcomes through its doors.

It's also important that operators are equipped to meet customers booking preferences. And when it comes to food and drink options for a work Christmas 'do' for ten or more colleagues, [a third of respondents prefer to pre-order by phone or email for everyone in the party across the set Christmas menu, but still want to retain the option of choosing for a standard menu](#). 23% of respondents said they would not want to pre-order, but prefer to choose from a festive menu on the evening.



### Feeling festive for how long?

And when considering table booking times, the survey also shows that an unsurprising 98% of respondents would expect to have their table for a minimum of two hours – but also expect to stay as long as their group wanted.

### Service standards

As guests expect Christmas parties to be one of the most memorable and amazing hospitality experiences of the year, it's important that service levels remain high.

**Findings** show that manager presence on the restaurant floor dropped by 22% over Christmas, while the number of diners who were wished goodbye dropped by 27% – suggesting that some restaurants will take their eye off the ball when it comes to managing individual experiences.

It's a lack of such finishing touches that can also lead to a significant loss of revenue opportunity – with a guest's likelihood to return or recommend also falling by 10% over the festive period.



### Spend

And when it comes to splashing the cash for their Christmas bash, 27% of Brits are planning on spending more on this Christmas than last year, that's according to Greene King's Leisure Spend Tracker. What's more, almost 60% have also indicated that they have no plans to cut spending this year – which is music to the ears of operators.

Fiona Gunn, Greene King's marketing director, said: "Further growth on last year's spending would mean a great boost for the UK economy. Beyond showing how much Brits enjoy the festive period, these findings indicate that consumers are much more confident in their personal finances than in recent years. Interest rates are expected to stay low, supermarket price wars are driving household costs down and online orders are making the Christmas shopping much easier."

In fact, the HospitalityGEM survey also reveals how much respondents would be willing to pay for their Christmas meal. When dining in a pub with friends, 70% said they'd be happy to spend between £15 and £45 per head. For those opting to celebrate in a restaurant, 47% said they'd be willing to spend between £30 and £45 per person.

