

# Allergen improvement

*Customers are pleased with the increased availability of free-from foods, a new HospitalityGEM survey has found*

**Twelve months on from the introduction of the EU Food Information for Consumers legislation, a new HospitalityGEM survey has found that 89% of consumers feel that the availability of free-from foods when eating out has improved. HospitalityGEM is a UK expert in Guest Experience Management (GEM).**

Restaurants are the clear leader in providing the best choice of dishes, with 72% of respondents recognising this. When it comes to eating out, 23% of people said they had special dietary requirements, with vegetarianism the number one need, and shellfish the most avoided food, receiving 44% of the poll. Women are twice as likely to identify as having special food requirements, with just 14% of men saying they do. Those aged 36 to 45 years old are also most likely to have dietary needs.

The HospitalityGEM survey also found that 58% of people feel that, while the ingredients in dishes are clearly communicated by eating operators, there is room for improvement. A similar representation also felt that staff could be better trained in this area, with a significant 30% of people saying that team members were not well trained on the ingredients in dishes.

While restaurants were highlighted as having the best choice of free-from dishes, it is clear that takeaways need to improve – 0% of respondents identified these establishments as having the best range, with fast food outlets not far behind at just 2%. This lack of choice of suitable dishes is the greatest concern for those who have special dietary requirements, with 40% saying that this is what they worry about the most when they eat out.

Interestingly, for grab and go outlets, M&S Foodhall was seen as the best caterer for those with special dietary requirements, at 43%. This was a significant lead on any of the other brands identified, with Pret a Manger coming in second at 18%.

Steven Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM, said: "One year on from the introduction of the EU allergen legislation and it's clear many operators are doing what they can to make consumers more confident when eating out, through clearer communication about ingredients and a greater range of free-from dishes.

"However, the identification of staff training as an area in need of improvement should encourage the operators to look hard at their sites and how team members are briefed on this important aspect of foodservice. It should be part of any induction and also revisited regularly as menus and teams change."

For more information on HospitalityGEM, visit [www.hospitalitygem.com](http://www.hospitalitygem.com). *Oh.*



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