

What's on the 2022 F&B menu?

By Adam Branson | Thu 9 December 2021

As we approach the end of a tumultuous year, we ask food and beverage (F&B) experts what they think will be the major trends in the sector in the year ahead – assuming, that is, that the Omicron variant doesn't land the country back in lockdown.



Source: Shutterstock / Eddie Jordan Photos

Plant power: Wagamama has joined the vegan and vegetarian F&B trend by making 50% of its menu plant-based

The message is: look out for the new, whether twists on the tried and tested or largely untried (in the UK anyway) cuisines.



Ted Schama, joint managing partner, Shelley Sandzer

There are so many new F&B concepts coming to the fore, and even though pizza and burgers are not necessarily new, there are fresh styles and variations that are energising the hospitality scene. Slice by Pizza Pilgrims, Detroit-style pizzas from Party Store Pizza and Four Corners, The Hoxton Holborn's new pop-up space in central London, are great examples of innovation in a tried and tested market.

Aside from the favourites that will always be a staple within the UK, the industry is seeing growing recognition and awareness of Japanese cuisine, particularly through concepts that blend its flavours and techniques with those from another part of the world. We've had the pleasure of working alongside Sushisamba, which infuses elements of Japanese, Brazilian and Peruvian cuisines, as well as the Japanese and Italian focused restaurant Jiji, now taking centre stage in Islington.

There has also been an increased drive from international brands looking to enter the UK, particularly using London as a test-bed and flagship for national and then European expansion.

Take Japanese concept Marugame Udon. It has had huge success in Asia and is now expanding across London. It has taken a popular fast-food concept, which we know works well, and integrated it with a lively, open-kitchen atmosphere. This not only gives the diner a quick and easy experience but also offers that element of cultural theatre.

Korean food has also made its way into the spotlight. We brought Wing Wing, a Korean chicken idea that encapsulates Korean food and culture, to London's Chinatown not long ago. Korean favourite Pelicana has also continued to expand in the capital after major success around the globe. Like any new cuisine, Korean food has taken its time to establish a presence in the UK, but through great advocates like Wing Wing and Pelicana, it is becoming increasingly accessible.

Alison Clegg, managing director, asset management, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland

Consumers want to be entertained when they go out to eat, drink and socialise, whether that is part of a day spent in the office, a weekend city break, an evening with friends and family, or a day out Christmas shopping.

That means creating an offer that engages, is varied and evolves over time, providing something new on every visit. Perhaps the biggest thing of all, though, is blending local and independent operators, often with a cult following, with well-known national or international brands, an approach that is working very successfully at Liverpool ONE.



Local operator Maggie Fu, for example, has opened its second site in the city on Liverpool ONE's Hanover Street, bringing thousands of loyal customers while also building a new base from our established footfall. They join the likes of Lunya and Bean Coffee in providing a very Liverpool-derived, authentic element to our offer.



Local hero: Maggie Fu is among the independent operators that have joined bigger chains at Liverpool ONE

To provide balance, we have recently signed Gordon Ramsay's Bread Street Kitchen on Paradise Street for the brand's first restaurant in England outside London. They join established names such as Côte, Five Guys and Wagamama in creating a critical mass of F&B variety in Liverpool ONE that is unavailable elsewhere in the city.



Alex Mann, head of F&B, Hanover Green Retail

The rise of the plant-based diet has been widely reported and we have seen a huge influx of operators not only creating new vegetarian and vegan brands to enter the market, but also existing concepts adding these offerings to their menus.

We expect this trend to carry on and become more and more essential to consumers. Wagamama making 50% of its menu plant-based demonstrates this, and brands like Bubala, Club Mexicana and Wulf & Lamb are opening more sites.

Following on from this, consumers, operators and landlords are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of sustainability. Brands that source their produce ethically, promote reduction of plastic waste and use sustainable cooking techniques are increasingly prevalent. Examples include Blacklock looking to become a B Corp-certified restaurant group and Shaftesbury partnering with Project Zero and launching the Blue Turtle initiative to reduce single-use plastics and waste.

With people stuck inside for long periods during the pandemic, there has also been a shift to dining at higher-quality restaurants with experiential decor, fine dining and exciting new food. Langan's Brasserie has reopened in Mayfair under new ownership and restaurants such as Amazonico, Sexy Fish, Dishoom and Big Mamma Group all report being close to fully booked well into 2022.

Lottie Newman, director and head of F&B, Nash Bond

Delivering something people cannot replicate at home will be vital. Expect to see the rise of restaurants specialising in very specific cuisines likely to be less well known. We have already seen an influx of Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine to London in the past five years and some of these restaurants remain on London's favourite lists, for example Kiln, which specialises in Thai BBQ, and Palomar, which serves up food from the Levant region.



The experience comes from benefiting from the staff's knowledge of ingredients. I think we will continue to see growth in new international cuisine styles – remembering people are still afraid to travel – while consumers continue to be more adventurous, educated and keen for new experiences.

Many of these international cuisines also incorporate another trend I suspect will grow: the rise of plant-based eating. The main driver of this is a heightened awareness of sustainability.

As well as increasing our interest in new experiences, lockdown has taught us the importance of being more mindful of both waste and the environment. It will become more vital that this is reflected in new operations. Expanding plant-based menus, as well as understanding the sourcing of produce, will become more important. After all, local sourcing reduces emissions from supply chains for operators.



Maggie Milosavljevic, commercial director, LabTech

When it comes to the growing influence of different cuisines in the UK, there is a huge geographical area running from the eastern Mediterranean through the Levant and into central Asia that has massive potential over the coming years.

The likes of Greek, Turkish and Iranian food are reasonably prevalent, but countries such as Egypt, Israel, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan are still under-represented, even in London.

We know there is an appetite for the relatively unknown, with Afghan street food specialists 2 Lads Kitchen and Middle Eastern grill The Black Cow leading lights at Camden Market Hawley Wharf since its launch a few months ago. These concepts don't exist anywhere else in the UK, and their popularity speaks for itself.

Food trends are being driven by an increasingly gastro-curious population that wants to try everything and tick more cuisines off their list. It also stems from a desire to find authenticity – with travel restricted over the past couple of years, people want to eat food here that truly reflects what you would have abroad.

Even for cuisines that are tried and tested in the UK, regionality is coming to the fore, as customers feel it gives them a more authentic look into a specific place. People want to know if that Italian recipe is Roman, Neapolitan or Puglian; if noodles have Cantonese, Sichuan or Shanghaiese inspiration.

Georgia Egan, associate at Savills and currently on secondment as senior restaurant portfolio manager at Shaftesbury

One word will play a massive role in determining how and where we eat and drink in the future: sustainability. For many, in the context of F&B, sustainability relates directly to being vegetarian, vegan or plant-based. Several meat-based operators have pivoted to incorporate plant-based options and we are witnessing a rise in vegetarian and vegan outlets.



For example, Shaftesbury recently let a former steakhouse to a growing vegan restaurant group in the West End, something that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago.

There is ample opportunity now to make menu offers more sustainable. Reducing waste is just as important – expect to see more steaks from ex-dairy cattle and an effort to make offal more appealing. Also, as we eat more plant-based food at home, people may turn to restaurants to get their meat and fish intake, with more confidence in its provenance.

Sustainability will drift into bar and drinking culture too. Brands are leading with carbon offsetting in their advertising, wanting to be seen as eco-conscious. Alcohol production is a wasteful process and scrutiny is high. Zero-waste bar concepts are being mooted, working with ingredients normally discarded; think cocktails made from banana peel rum or pomace (grape waste from wine-making) vodka.

The reduction in alcohol consumption among young people will also determine how our pubs and bars operate. The atmosphere is something we all still crave, but the emergence of more inventive and expansive selections of zero alcohol drinks at wet-led venues is definitely on the way.

Looking specifically at trends in cuisine, there are so many ripe for growth. Shaftesbury has introduced a number of new Filipino cafés, restaurants and dessert parlours, for example, and demand from Korean establishments for space in our villages is growing in popularity by the day.

These will become more prominent and already have a burgeoning presence in Chinatown, Carnaby and Seven Dials.

We have huge culinary diversity in the UK, but one regional cuisine that is harder to find in central London is West African food. Some high-end restaurants have come through, but food from countries like Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal will soon be more accessible in the mid-market, too.