

Catering

In this second article Turpin Smale Catering Consultants' Charles Manners looks at what has changed on food and menus

Food for thought 2. Food and menus

The world of food has changed over the past few years driven by a better informed consumer. Themes that have influenced this shifting landscape include sustainability, food festivals, consumers' interest in food from TV programmes, and an enormous growth in eating out both in cafés and casual restaurants – the museum market is capturing this with improved food offers.

The sustainability and provenance agenda has focused menus on using high quality food which is locally sourced (as far as possible) and using these products to provide interest. This trend has provided opportunities for local producers,

farmers and small companies to produce a range of locally made products which taste great and have interesting and innovative packaging, transforming the choice available for chefs and operators. We are also seeing venues with gardens using their produce to great effect – hotels and garden centres are leading the way.

Whether a museum contracts its catering to a third party or operates in-house we would recommend the following process when reviewing your food offer as the compilation of menus is such an important part of the visitor experience to a café:

- Review sales over a representative period i.e. a month, highlighting those products which are out of season, low sellers and those not being delivered consistently
- Source ideas from other venues and competitors, attend one of our café tours, and read our café blog at <http://greatcafes.blogspot.co.uk/> to gain inspiration and ideas, and involve the team that will deliver and cook the menu
- Create new products, take time to ensure they are deliverable in volume, and achieve the balance on the menu; mention local producers
- Be careful not to allow the menu to grow, always remove as many items as you add!
- Plan menu print and re-design, either on paper or menu boards, to ensure all menu communications are clear; well-lit and easy to read. Key messages on the café's unique qualities and local suppliers should be highlighted.

Finally each menu product requires its own product back-of-house costings, photographs and production sheets which includes an analysis of the allergens.

When launching a new menu and changes to your food offer remember to use all the marketing devices at your disposal including Twitter, Instagram and blogs. Use your hero products, those that look amazing, and other areas that differentiate your venue from others. In today's market consumers want to share their experiences and photos with others, and this should be encouraged! www.turpinsmale.co.uk

In the next issue we will look at the use of outsourcing and volunteers.



Museums and Welsh reforms

AIM has called on the Welsh Government to include museums in its plans for local government reform.

In its response to the consultation on the country's Reforming Local Government white paper, AIM says it is "very important" that museums are included in the plans in order to pursue the Welsh Government's aim to create regional bodies to deliver museum services more effectively and efficiently.

The main idea in the white paper is a requirement for Welsh local authorities to work together to deliver some of their services. But museums are not mentioned, despite the recommendation of the Expert Review of Local Museums in Wales (2015) that three regional bodies should take forward their support and development.

The Expert Review had also recommended a transformation fund, and AIM calls for this to also be implemented.

"Independent museums deliver much of the museum service within Wales and are a key part of the sector," AIM says, "with expertise to contribute, particularly in areas such as volunteering, income generation and fundraising. Given that reductions in local authority funding for museums have direct and indirect impacts on many of these museums, their future ability to care for and make available Wales' heritage needs to be fully considered within any regional services or collaborations, so that independent museums are supported by and can contribute to the regional bodies."

AIM has also been contributing to discussions about developing the new strategy for museums in Wales, and has written to Ken Skates, the minister with responsibility for museums, asking him to consider how the Welsh Government can help museums with business rates bills increases.

In Brief

Bodelwyddan Castle hit by council cutbacks

Bodelwyddan Castle, near Rhyl in North Wales, has been forced to make staff redundant and end a long-term loan agreement with the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) following a 40% funding cut by the local authority. The castle, a former Museum of the Year Award winner (1989), has included 19th century works from the NPG's collection since 1988 as well as several NPG touring exhibitions. The arrangement will come to an end as the castle trust would have to raise £224,000 a year to pay for the costs of providing appropriate environmental conditions for the paintings. Kevin Mason, the castle's director, and AIM Council's representative in Wales, will be made redundant, along with seven of the 13 employees. He says he was initially expecting the funding to be reduced gradually over three years; now he sees his task as ensuring the trust has a sufficiently robust foundation to move forward to a sustainable future. "At Bodelwyddan we have always embraced change and see it as a natural way forward. This is rather a dramatic change but we have tried to embrace it in the same way as we have other developments. We are determined as an organisation not to let the changes imposed on us alter our wish to see a continued public service here. I regret that I will not be part of the future development of Bodelwyddan Castle but I will be watching with keen interest."

New accounting templates for charitable companies

The Charity Commission has launched new templates to help charitable companies with income below £500,000 to prepare their accounts. They have been produced in partnership with Companies House and reflect the regulatory requirements, current guidance and best practice. The templates should help charities comply with their accounting obligations while making it easier for the public and donors to view charities' accounting information. Charities of this size make up around 77% of the charitable companies on the Commission's register. Recent research showed that when charities used templates provided by the Commission they were much more likely (71%) to have followed the accounting standards. These templates join two other sets of accounts templates for charities provided by the Commission: templates for non-company charities with income of less than £500,000 and trustees' annual report templates. Find out more at <http://tinyurl.com/l8ztnaz>