

# MARKET INSIGHT



CONTRACT CATERING

## PAN ASIAN FOOD AND DRINK

Questions by Contract Catering Magazine, answers by Jon Walker, MD, BGL Rieber



### How big is the market for Pan Asian food and drink in the UK?

Industry research by Globalnewswire reported a decline in sales over 2020-25 of 1.7% for restaurants, which is not surprising given the downturn in spend in this sector. However, in our experience, this downturn does not include the contract catering sector, which is now seeing a surge of interest and exposure for pan-Asian cooking.

Importantly for contract caterers, Pan Asian sits nicely in the broad centre of taste, appealing to a very wide audience that is getting wider as the boundaries of Pan Asian expand to include more menu diversity.

Take the new KFC for example – Korean Fried Chicken! It is lighter and crispier than the other one which makes it an ideal

menu extension for contractors because it adds something new in presentation but is mostly conventional in ingredients.

### What dishes and products are most popular?

Underpinning pan Asian food is fresh ingredients and freshly cooked dishes.

Key to the future for pan-Asian cuisine in the UK, for contracting environments, is a freshly cooked chef-led approach; the more visible the chefs, the better!

### How authentic is the Asian food and drink that we consume in this country?

British Asian food has always adapted to UK tastes. Queries

over the origin or authenticity of the Chinese or Asian food served in UK restaurants are only happening because there is more interest in eating this kind of food, and that is only good for the contracting market. Customers want Pan Asian, but they are shunning eating out to save money, so contractors are best placed to benefit from the increased interest.

### What Asian food trends are emerging?

Check out the US trend to Korean/Mexican – why not serve French fries with kimchi, or put Korean bbq chicken in a taco or burrito! These dishes are all ‘new’ but use trusted ingredients.

For contractors, the emerging Asian trends revolve as much

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Front cooking can be tailored to suit the audience, from street style to more formal.

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around the cooking style as the food itself. To reinforce the messages of authenticity, spicy, tangy, fresh, and provenance, cooking and presenting food in front of the customer has become a priority.

Cooking in front of customers has been greatly facilitated by the new generation of theatre-style mobile front cooking equipment, which can be dressed up or down and moved around to suit all circumstances, from formal straight-line buffets to informal pop-ups and street-style markets.

Where front cooking can't be carried out in front of the customer, one approach is to create highly visual food that conveys the messages associated with freshly prepared food. The use of sustainable packaging, such as see-thru domed lids and reusable stainless steel containers, further reinforces messages about sustainability.

### **What one tip would you offer on getting your Pan Asian provision right?**

Think outside the box and get some new ideas about food presentation and cooking in front of the customer under your belt..



See-thru domed lids and reusable containers emphasise freshness and fairness to the planet.

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