

ISSUE 51

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: CHUKU'S

Taking Up Space and Putting Down Roots

A heaping plate of food is the epitome of Nigerian hospitality. A core part of any social function, making food, serving food and eating food is indicative of the Nigerian community spirit. Now with a population of over 200 million and 371 different ethnic groups, that heaping plate of food is an undeniable smorgasbord of salivating snacks. Broad in its variety, rich in its heritage, Nigerian cuisine speaks to a culture of sharing, a culture of breadth and a culture of community and that is everything that sibling duo Emeka and Ifeyinwa embody with their restaurant Chuku's. What began as a passing suggestion before uni, has become a cultural hub of Tottenham, showcasing the beauty of Nigerian cuisine and culture. They might have started small, grateful for when those likes crept past 10 so that it switched to 'and others' rather than showing individual names, but there is no denying that they have soared high. From their successful #SixWeekCharge campaign to secure the future of the business, to winning a grant from the BeyGOOD foundation; from innovative supperclubs, to providing platforms for Nigerian authors, Emeka and Ifeyinwa have created a space where their culture can be enjoyed, celebrated and appreciated.



Chuku's is not just about the food, it's also about the culture. Whilst the two are inextricably connected, the chance to showcase their culture through food was something that Emeka and Ifeyinwa felt was seriously lacking growing up. *'We had a diverse group of friends growing up and there was always the opportunity to go to their parties at various restaurants and enjoy their culture and their food. Yet it never really felt like we had the opportunity to do the same. It wasn't that there weren't Nigerian restaurants in London but it's not just about the food it's about the culture.'* It was this desire to showcase the culture beyond the Nigerian diaspora that



fuelled the creation of Chuku's. As Emeka notes, it's not that Nigerian restaurants were missing, but many of those restaurants were in predominantly Nigerian communities. This inward facing model inadvertently limited the accessibility of Nigerian food to the wider community and for Emeka and Ifeyinwa, this needed to change. *'The Nigerian restaurants in London are in pockets where there's a really large Nigerian diaspora and they're pretty inward looking in terms of 'this is the food to serve the diaspora' rather than 'this is also an option in areas of the city where people flock to eat or shop.'*

The key word here is 'option.' Whilst Nigerian restaurants may not have been far and few between, their image as viable options was undeniably limited due to their somewhat insular positioning. *'It wasn't that it wasn't available before, it's that it wasn't easily accessible and accessibility is about the prevalence and the number of establishments. If you compare it to Thai or Indian food, then yes it was definitely low, but it's also about proximity to where someone lives or frequents and that in particular was not where it needed to be. Even with the number of Nigerian restaurants that there were, they weren't in areas where people are stumbling out of a club and deciding to get some food after a night out.'* This astute observation ensured that Emeka and Ifeyinwa's focus was that of inside out, not the outside in. Their reverence and respect for Nigerian cuisine fuels their dedication to show it to the world and through their determination to challenge this notion of insolation, the dynamic sibling duo have made Chuku's a beacon for Nigerian food; an innovative hub in Tottenham, inviting the world in to experience and explore Nigerian cuisine and culture.

This invitational spirit is also embodied in the way in which they serve food. Nigerian tapas is not a phrase that one hears often, but at the heart of these small plates is the notion of sharing. *'It's really about the sharing, not about the size but the fact that the food is to share. It also comes back to accessibility. If you don't know something, maybe you don't want to choose just one dish, especially when you don't really know anything about the cuisine. But when you have a better variety of flavours on the plate or on the table, then you're more than likely going to like a couple of things there. But I think importantly for ourselves, and I say that as custodians of Nigerian cuisine and culture, we wanted to ensure that people didn't write it off. If you go to a restaurant and have one dish which you hate, that's it. You can say 'I've tried Nigerian food and I don't like that.' With small plates, when people have the option to try seven dishes and they like five, they don't then go away saying they don't like Nigerian food. They go away educated and able to say 'I like these five flavours of Nigerian food' which I think is common for a lot of cuisines.'* Moreover, small plates allows the freedom to show the diversity of Nigerian culture. *'This is a country of 200 odd million, over 300 different ethnic groups and 500 different languages. Whilst we can't pay due respect to all of those in our short, 15/16 plate menu. What we can try to offer is a demonstration of the different regions and different culinary options that there are in the country.'*

This innovative approach to not just showcasing, but sharing their culture is not surprising from a pair who embody innovation. In 2022 Chuku's, like so many within the industry, was struggling. But from that struggle came the determination to fight and that fight created their #SixWeekCharge. What began with a refreshingly candid video on



Instagram, soon exploded across the world. Turning to their community, Emeka and Ifeyinwa sought to achieve 600 bookings in six weeks to help keep their doors open for 2023. Within mere days, news of their campaign had spread from Nigeria to Sierra Leone, from Australia to Bermuda and within those six weeks they achieved an undeniably impressive 801 bookings. Whilst this stands as a testament to their creativity, their originality and their willingness to adapt to survive, it also speaks to the strength of the community that they had built; a community that would not let them down.

'In February 2020 we opened our restaurant to lots of fanfare as we'd built up a good customer base. We were open for four and a half weeks then lockdown hit. Lockdown was one element of the difficulty, but the industry post-lockdown was so different and the challenges were crazy. We really struggled, we didn't have the momentum like when we first opened, we didn't have the foundation of a customer base or savings that would have built up had we been open 18 months before going into lockdown. We had been sapped energy wise and we were trying to build a team, build the business and keep ourselves afloat. It was a crazy time and we were struggling to the point where, through no fault of our own, we weren't going to make it into 2023. We'd put in a lot of effort but the winds weren't in our favour, so we tried to turn them back. It was a last ditch attempt to get something together and we thought, we've had the support of the community before, in terms of their patronage, that's all we're asking for now. We had a target of 600 that we didn't necessarily think we would hit but even if we only got 450 that would still have been a big jump from where we were. We thought we would have run dry by week six but the response was mind blowing.'

This last ditch attempt proved to be a massive success and much needed recharge to catapult Chuku's into 2023 with a bang. And that bang didn't end there. In 2023, Chuku's won a \$10,000 grant from Beyonce's charity, the BeyGOOD Foundation. *'The foundation, were supporting black businesses in the cities in which she was doing her world tour and providing a grant of \$100k for 10 businesses. We made an application which highlighted what we were doing, why we were doing it and how we were doing it. The culture, the community, the cuisines and also the challenges and what we had had to do in terms of the #SixWeekCharge to keep us open. My sister went to the luncheon as only one founder was allowed to go. She was sitting there in the room with all these other amazing, well-deserving black-owned businesses from all different sectors just enjoying the occasions. And then she heard her name. She didn't think it was her name at first because it was said in an American accent so she just continued clapping for whoever she thought had won before realising it was us!'*

Chuku's is an invitation. A warm, genuine smile at the door that guides you to your seat, asks you about your day and shares something heartfelt and in so doing, it embodies Nigerian hospitality. Emeka and Ifeyinwa have done something truly remarkable, they've taken up space and put down roots and with hopes to soon open a second location, those roots are stretching to pastures new. Roots from which new ideas, new interactions and new appreciation for Nigeria can grow.



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INDEPENDENT HOSPITALITY WEEK



There are tens of thousands of independent hospitality businesses who work hard in a challenging economy to open their doors, hatch and hearts to customers every day and who bring their brand of hospitality to events, festivals and highstreets across the country.

Here at NCASS, we champion independents and want to bring the country together to celebrate and support them, so we are launching Independent Hospitality Week (IHW) which will take place from the 6th - 12th May 2024.

This is a week for everyone to back independents, share food and drink experiences and back the businesses that make our cities, towns and villages

what they are. We're asking businesses to join IHW and for their customers to shout about how much their local bars, cafes, restaurants, pubs, street food traders, and event and festival traders mean to them. Collectively we want to make as much noise as possible about how important these wonderful food and drinks businesses are. Let's raise the profile of independents and make IHW something to talk about.

We would love as many members as possible to celebrate Independent Hospitality Week and spread the word far and wide. To get a campaign pack with information on how to get involved and assets you can share, please contact roxy@ncass.org.uk.



6TH - 12TH MAY 2024



INDEPENDENT HOSPITALITY WEEK

6TH - 12TH MAY 2024



The Nationwide Caterers Association



Please cut out this poster and display it. Thank you!

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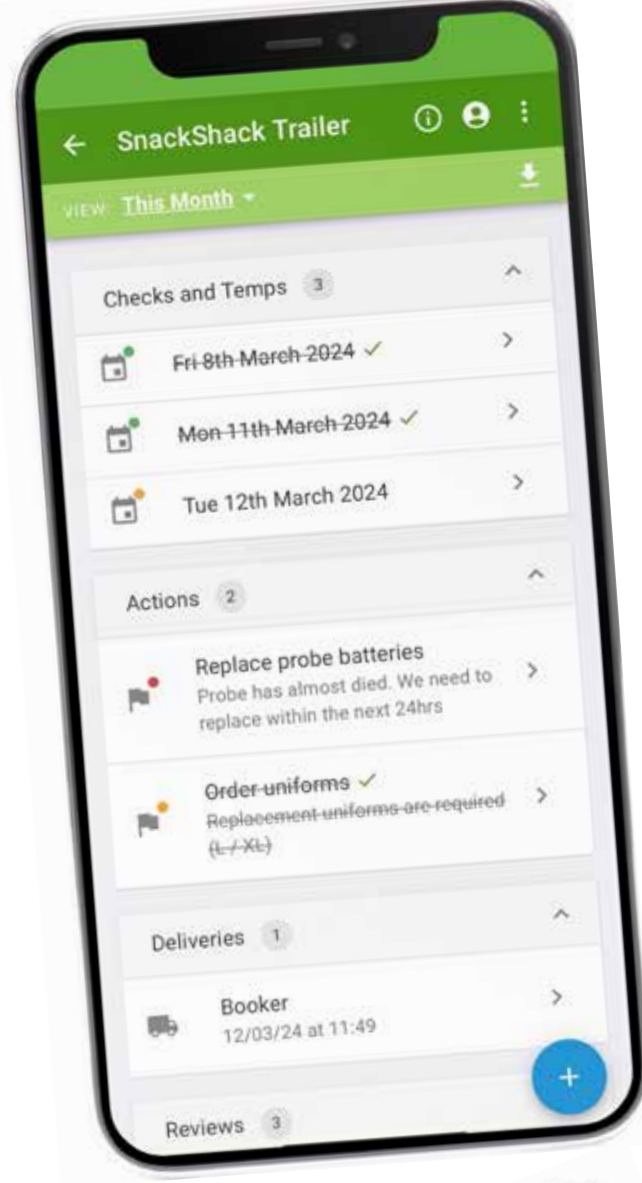
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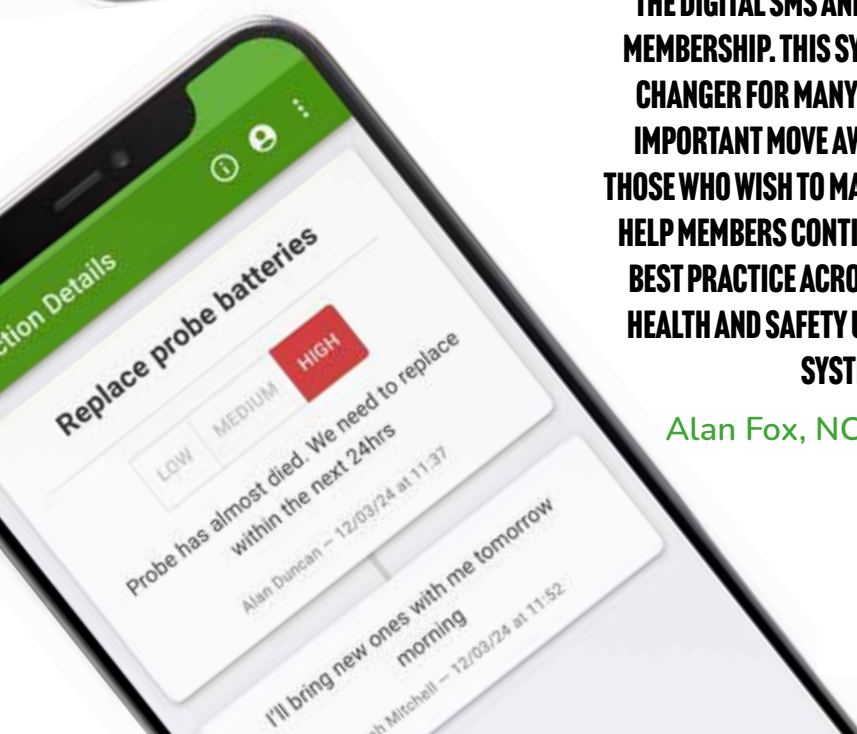
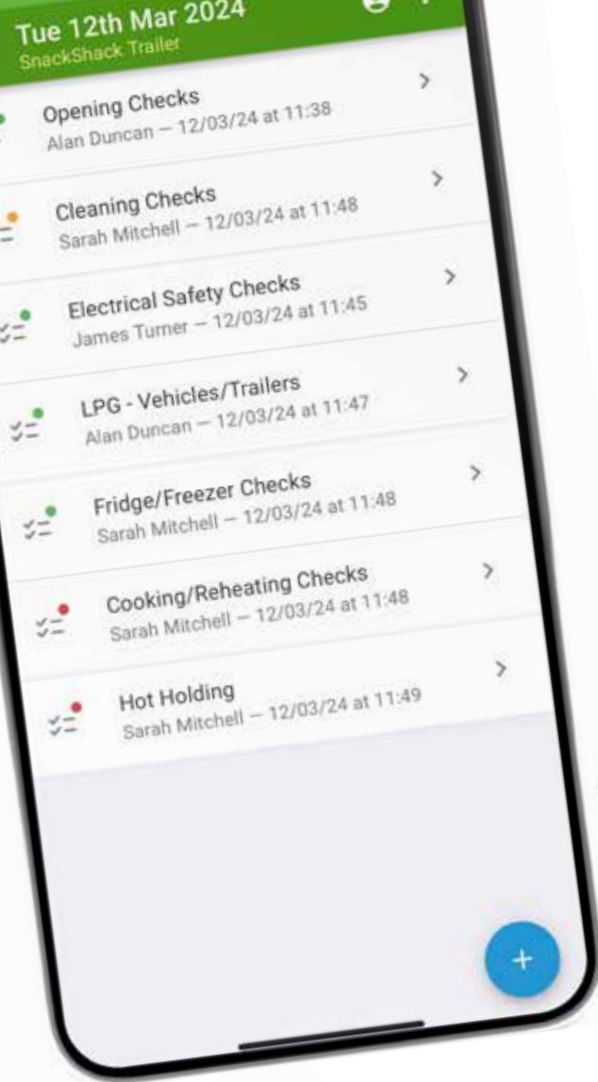




The Digital Safety Management System (DSMS) has been created with small independent businesses in mind and has been built so you can manage safety collaboratively. It makes your daily safety checks simple. From temperature monitoring to cleaning lists, team task allocation to delivery management and much more, it makes safety management easy and you can do it all on your phone or tablet.

Unlike other systems, where once you input your data, it's locked in, the NCASS system allows you to edit your information so you can rest assured that you are in control. It has also been designed to work when mobile signal data drops out so you can be confident that nothing will get lost when you're trading in greenfield sites.





“WE’RE DELIGHTED TO BE ABLE TO RELEASE THE DIGITAL SMS AND TO INCLUDE IT WITH MEMBERSHIP. THIS SYSTEM WILL BE A GAME CHANGER FOR MANY MEMBERS AND IS AN IMPORTANT MOVE AWAY FROM PAPER FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE THE SWITCH. IT WILL HELP MEMBERS CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE BEST PRACTICE ACROSS FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH AND SAFETY USING NCASS’ EXPERT SYSTEMS.”

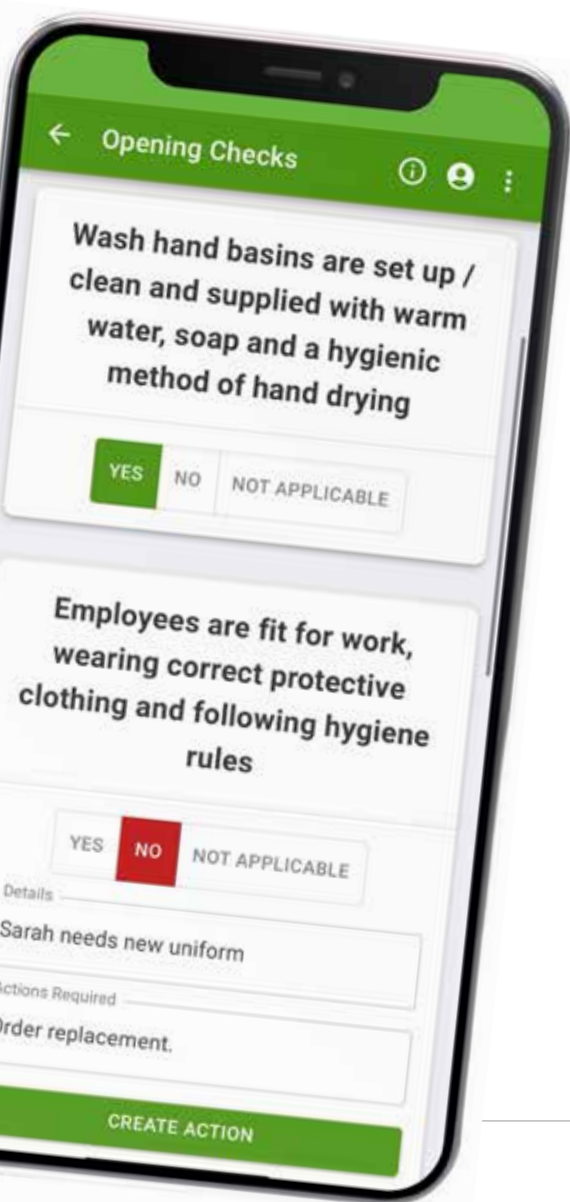
Alan Fox, NCASS CEO

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We need 100 members to take part in phase one of the launch. Would you like to be one of the first to see the NCASS Digital Safety Management System before it's released to all members? Get in touch with us via info@ncass.org.uk



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FUTURE FOCUS

To call 2023 a challenging year would be something of an understatement. We often refer to the incredible resilience the independent hospitality sector shows, and 2023 tested this to the limit.

Unfortunately, the nature of the beast with any business is that you're going to be vulnerable to external circumstances that are beyond your control and it is important to recognise these factors.

Just the same, with any business there is always room to reevaluate, learn and grow from what has come before. We believe in the value of looking

back in order to move forward and calendar years provide convenient opportunities to look at a prolonged period of your business in operation and reflect on what you feel you need to do in the future.

So what has been learnt from 2023 and helped to overcome the seemingly endless raft of challenges it provided? NCASS members Burger &

Beyond navigated a tireless year that saw them open two new fixed site premises, and touted the importance of *'patience and perseverance'* as being key factors in getting through challenging circumstances. They also state *'the building of a great team will always be paramount'* – it's clear to see how these aspects go hand-in-hand, and can help to provide solid foundations and building blocks





for any independent hospitality venture to bloom from.

This echoes the statement that *'a business is only as good as the people that make it'* – the importance of investing in and assembling a proficient team who you trust and who represent the business positively should never be underestimated. When faced with uncertain circumstances, the best you can do is focus on what you can control and try to mediate the impact of external factors – having a strong team unit will go a long way to this end. Can-do attitudes, a source of determination, innovative ideas and pivoting to adapt in pressing situations, are invaluable tools that a successful team will provide.

Street Food Warehouse organise and operate street food events and festivals across the UK and are responsible for booking and working with caterers while facilitating events that will attract hungry customers and

leave them satisfied. They *'knew it was going to be a challenging year for all involved, with prices increasing from an organiser's perspective; councils demanding higher venue hire fees and increased infrastructure and transportation costs.'* What have they learnt from the year? *'To really value our relationship with councils, landowners, traders and suppliers and understanding that we work through any adversity together. Building our professional relationships really helped in persevering with the year.'*

Undoubtedly last year, like the previous few, was tough for all in the industry. NCASS Director Mark Laurie has seen this first hand and, ever the optimist, he urges everyone to see that *'there is light at the end of the tunnel ahead, as things are now starting to move in the right direction – there is going to be real opportunity for innovation – something the industry is renowned for.'*

Widening the scope further, we also spoke with independent festivals organisation Association of Festival Organisers (AFO), who had hoped that 2023 *'would be a bounce back year'* having paused activities for two years during Covid. However, things didn't quite materialise like that as the *'economic climate and costs of infrastructure for building festivals was outstripping budgets.'*

Readjusting from early hopes, they came to view 2023 as a *'just about get by'* year. Does that sound familiar?

The consistency across the spate of organisers and caterers, is increased costs squeezing an operation and the importance of collaboration to tap further into and boost pre-existing strengths.

For all of its negatives, the challenges that 2023 presented in and of themselves provided a wealth of opportunities to learn and overcome. In many ways, this is what business



– and particularly successful business – is all about; finding and making the most from learning opportunities. As mentioned at the outset of this article, the path forward can always benefit from the hindsight of what has been, and we made some noise suggesting using the downtime that winter months can provide in hospitality, to reflect and reevaluate.

Looking forward then with the intention of putting what has been learnt into practice, what are some hopes for 2024?

Both AFO and Street Food Warehouse mention how *'we're all at the mercy of the great British weather'* and how beneficial a long and nourishing visit from the sun would be during summer months, which I don't think anyone would disagree with!

The industry is built by the people that make it incredible, and any success 2024 is to bring will be due to their brilliance, as the National Outdoor Events Association (NOEA) know: *'This is an industry full of very passionate people, who care about what they do, who are inherently creative and imaginative and who get things done.'*

Furthermore, Street Food Warehouse are excited to be opening their eleventh site this year in Exeter

and to *'continue growing organically,'* as well as focusing on contributing further to achieving their sustainability targets. Another site is a positive step, particularly for NCASS members, as it opens up further trading opportunities, so keep an eye out for that.

There are always innovations, tweaks and adaptations that you can implement within your business offering, which is exactly what Burger & Beyond intend to do, as they are *'going to be focusing on bringing some exciting collaborations for 2024.'*

A business pivot was a natural trend that grew throughout last year, as we saw many members look to adapt and overcome by thinking about how their offering could potentially be repositioned. Sometimes you need to know when to stick and when to twist. Collaborations have proved popular, and can be a great way to try something new, engage with different audiences and help out fellow independent businesses.

Being agile, having to adjust to circumstances and finding new opportunities has always been of pivotal importance to hospitality businesses. Mark Laurie points to the North East regeneration project NCASS has been working on, aimed at regenerating high streets through hospitality that *'can provide a workable, prosperous blueprint that can be replicated across the UK, creating ample*

opportunities for the sector.' We will be sure to communicate more about this as soon as possible, so keep an eye peeled for updates.

With the summer season fast approaching, the whole nation will be united in hoping for some positive weather! With cost-of-living pressures on consumers gradually fading, the public will be looking to spend more and indulge in the endless array of goodness our members provide, which would indeed make for a good summer and go a long way towards making 2024 a much more positive outing than 2023 proved to be.

According to the CGA, *'the festival industry is set to thrive, with a third of festival goers planning to visit more festivals in 2024. Operators agree with this optimism and expect ticket sales to increase by £10pp, taking total sales to 82%.'* With this being the case, there will be plenty of trading possibilities on offer – but it is important to exercise some caution when it comes to the events you pick.

In terms of advice to make the most of 2024, Steve Heap from the AFO states: *'Be wary of huge percentages and pitch fees and if it sounds too good to be true it probably is. It's a trying time for us all and only through working together can we face the weird and the wonderful that the event industry throws at us.'*

Mark Laurie agrees – stating that *'caterers might have to ask themselves hard questions and really consider if that event is worth trading at. It's imperative to stick to your guns, know your worth and what works for you. Make sure you're crystal clear on any agreements with festivals or events.'*

Diligence is key when it comes to trading applications. Don't just get drawn in by the fancy

lights and perceived prestige that comes with trading at the 'Hollywood' festivals – often traders can enjoy a more lucrative spell at a local or indie festival.

NOEA hopes that *'event organisers realise how valuable caterers are to their overall package, and that they work collaboratively with their caterers. People don't just eat at festivals and major events to stave off hunger, they want it to be a part of the experience.'*

Steve Heap goes on further to mention the importance of *'really caring for your staff,'* as *'happy staff serve customers well'* – we cannot underline enough the importance of getting your staffing right. Think of the reverse – the potential ramifications of employing disengaged, disinterested staff can include losing your customers and prove to be incredibly damaging.

Finally, Craig from Burger & Beyond keeps things simple, urging you to *'believe in the goal and work hard!'* These are wise words, and whatever your aim or focus is for 2024, the most important driver to achieving that success is having belief in yourself and putting the work in.



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BRINGING BRAAI TO THE UK: BIG 5 CATERING

Directly channelling his South African heritage, Darren Andrews has cooked up quite a storm with his hospitality venture Big 5 Catering. After relocating to the UK in 2001, circumstances led Darren into hospitality where he initially ran a business selling sandwiches before graduating into a café operation.

As often happens, a foray into the sector reveals wider possibilities and new paths to explore, and Darren found himself helping out with a friend's pub. Around this time, he'd been asked to cater for a wedding where he put on a lamb spit roast, similar to what would be commonly done back home. It was a *'great experience and really sparked my excitement for cooking like that.'*

The seeds were sewn and not much later a request was mooted for Darren to prepare a South African style menu for the pub to cater a 70th birthday party of a lady who'd been an anti-apartheid activist back in the 1980s. The results convinced Darren of the possibilities of bringing the live-fire barbecuing he'd grown up with to hungry mouths in the UK, and Big 5 Catering was born.

Big 5 is an old hunting term used to describe the five most dangerous animals to hunt in southern Africa (lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo) and they are now the most sought after animals to see while on safari. Significantly, the name *'also evokes memories of warm evenings spent around the BBQ, or braai as it is organically known back home'* and this was exactly the experience he wanted to replicate.

A braai is an essential part of South African culture – traditionally it is cooked on local wood, or more modernly with charcoal; but no gas cooking.



FIND OUT MORE:

www.big5catering.co.uk
[@big5catering](https://www.instagram.com/big5catering)

The word 'braai' is Afrikaans, originating from the Dutch word 'braden' which means 'to roast.'

It is significant symbolically as the braai is not specific to any particular group or culture in South Africa, meaning it transcends the turbulent past and has the pure ability to bring everyone together.

There are specificities to how the fire is created – this is considered something of an art form, the fire itself is symbolic and everyone will gather around it. A braai is typically a casual, social affair, populated with well-cooked meats.

Naturally, the climate in South Africa caters for outdoor, open fire cooking just a bit better than our perpetually dour skies can. For Darren, *'growing up in South Africa, it's just such a common part of life, most people barbecue most weekends.'*

There is a tangible focus on authenticity with the business: *'I create the flavours and marinades I was used to when growing up in South Africa and try to make the culinary experience for my customers as South African as possible. We also use hard woods (sourced from Namibia) that are used across South Africa for braai'ing, to add to that experience.'*

Barbecuing continues to be popular in the UK, and Big 5 Catering has been well-placed to capitalise on the ever-growing interest in sampling



exceptional food experiences, as well as embracing new cultures.

Darren has scooped up some awards while carving out a prestigious reputation with Big 5 Catering, he has also launched and sells a successful range of flavoured barbecue sauces known as Big 5 Sauces - which simultaneously allows folks to sample the delectable Big 5 experience from the comfort of home and adds an extra dimension of profitability to the business.

The Big 5 Catering website features a strong excerpt to the tune of *'just because someone owns a BBQ, doesn't mean they know how to barbecue.'* When asked to elaborate on this, Darren does so with the apt analogy that *'you could buy yourself a McLaren, but if you don't know how to drive it, you're gonna end up in a crash.'* Particularly in the UK, we've probably all experienced the dangers of our family's self-appointed 'grill master' getting it wrong with questionable barbecuing attempts and rightly so there is no shortcut to the skill involved when it comes to creating the desired effect – especially over a live fire where there can be a lot of variables to contend with.

Over the last decade that Big 5 Catering has been trading, Darren has seen first-hand a lot more people turn their hand to barbecuing which in turn has acted to raise the standards.

Having initially cut his teeth and spread the word trading at markets and for friends, Darren focuses now primarily on corporate, private events and weddings, as he *'loves cooking for big groups of people. Also just to be part of someone's big day, to contribute to something special like that is a privilege. I always hope the food is memorable, as a day like that should be.'*

Darren takes real pride in the experience he offers and wants to make sure that every time someone samples his services, they are getting the absolute best: *'I've always been conscious that if someone books me, they get the A-team, not the B or C team.'* Reputation counts for a lot in catering and this quality over quantity approach has served the business well, putting them in a position where they currently have bookings as far ahead as 2026.

Darren isn't stressed about filling the calendar, and takes things one event at a time. In quite a humble and telling quote, he reminds his staff that *'we are literally only as good as our last event.'* Wise words indeed!

Further sage advice is touted when talking of how longevity is achieved in hospitality, as Darren mentions how important it is to keep things simple when it comes to a catering venture – certainly for yourself as much as for the business. He realises that *'it takes time to build that confidence in yourself and in the business, but the more simple you keep things the less there is to worry about.'*

And the less you worry, the chances are the better you will perform with the business and importantly, the more you will actually enjoy the venture, which should not be overlooked.

As well as providing an organic opportunity to channel his heritage and bring South African cuisine to audiences in the UK, as we often see with independent hospitality ventures, this vehicle has provided him other life affirming opportunities. Success in Darren's words is *'all about having a balance between work and your private life. It's important to me to be able to have time off, to spend time with the family.'*

Also enjoying the freedom of being one's own boss, Darren appreciates the chance to explore his burgeoning hobby of sailing, which he readily admits he needs more practice at but is enjoying nonetheless.







YOUR SMS FAQs ANSWERED

○ Online

The NCASS Safety Management System (SMS) and risk assessments (RAs) have been developed by industry experts to support all members, both mobile and bricks and mortar, to trade safely and legally. The SMS collates all policies, procedures, guidelines and important documentation in one handy place. Moreover, once you have read through and tailored the contents of the SMS to the unique activities of your business, you will be able to streamline the system, focusing on the sections that work for you. NCASS provides all members with the necessary tools to comply with and exceed general Fire Safety, Health & Safety and Food Safety regulations, however, we understand that the world of compliance and the role of this documentation can feel overwhelming and confusing. As such, we thought it would be useful to highlight and answer the 10 most frequently asked questions around the SMS and your risk assessments.

Do I have to fill out the whole SMS and how much is relevant to me and my business?

No, you do not have to fill out the whole SMS. You only have to fill out the sections that are relevant to you and your business' activities. We would recommend that you take the time to read through the whole folder so that you can identify which sections are relevant to you and your business. We would also advise that all staff read through the relevant sections of the SMS so that the whole business understands and embodies the practices included.

Can I use the SMS instead of the SFBB pack?

Yes you can! Unlike the SFBB pack, the NCASS SMS provides comprehensive information on Fire Safety, Health & Safety and Food Safety, has been designed for mobile and bricks and mortar premises, and is constantly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in regulations. If you are using an NCASS SMS you do not need to fill out the SFBB pack.



Write a message...



Does having the SMS make me compliant?

The SMS provides you with all the necessary information, processes and policies that, when followed properly, will make your business compliant. As well as outlining the correct procedures that should be followed, the SMS also includes a Daily Dairy and useful Additional Resources to record important checks and evidence that key controls have been implemented. Simply having the folder on site will not make you compliant, but the correct implementation of the SMS will reflect positively in the food hygiene rating awarded to your business.

Do I need an SMS for every site I operate?

Yes. Whilst you can move your SMS between units, we advise that you have a separate SMS for each site that you operate as there will be separate processes for each unit. Moreover, you will need a Daily Diary, as included in the SMS, for each individual unit. Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) will be looking to ensure that the SMS has been made applicable and specific to your business processes. Failure to adapt it to the business could impact compliance and the subsequent food hygiene rating you are awarded.

Do I need to have RAs?

Yes. Risk assessments are a legal requirement and an important aspect of running a compliant, legal and safe business. A visiting EHO will expect to see your risk assessments and that the practices listed within are being applied in real life. Risk assessments don't just highlight risks within your business, they also help your staff know what to do in potentially dangerous situations. Moreover, documented risk assessments will support the business with training staff on in-house procedures.

How long do RAs take to fill out?

This will vary depending on your business activities but on average it takes between 1 to 2 hours to complete your Health & Safety, Fire Safety and Food Safety risk assessments. Although this may seem like a long task, it typically only needs to be done once a year (unless something in the business changes) and it is a very important part of your compliance. Our advice is to take it seriously and not to rush it. It is important that you get it right and that you are familiar and comfortable with both the process and the contents of the documents.



Write a message...



I've created my own RAs why should I use NCASS's RAs?

NCASS risk assessments have been designed to make creating these highly important documents as simple as possible. They are amongst the most robust in the industry and have been assured through our Primary Authority partnership with Monmouthshire Council, the Royal Borough of Greenwich and East Sussex Fire Service. This ensures that they are fully comprehensive and as long as they are being properly implemented, the written content is unlikely to be challenged by your EHO. In line with the Primary Authority Partnership scheme, EHOs are required to contact our Primary Authority Partners to discuss any aspects of the SMS. They should not be directing you to use other compliance systems such as SFBB. If this happens to you then please do let us know.

How often do I need to update the RAs and do I need to review them if nothing has changed?

Risk assessments will need to be updated when processes change within the business to reflect those changes and any new potential risks they may create. Even if nothing has changed, it is good practice to regularly review risk assessments and we would recommend that this is done at least annually to update and reflect any changes in regulations, reconfirm that your risk assessments are still relevant and reflect unexpected changes such as new members of staff who may present different risks to previous members of staff etc. It is also a useful exercise to help check through your processes in the business and train everyone in how things should be done and when.

Why can't NCASS do my RAs for me?

Simply put, because you know your business best! NCASS provides you with all of the necessary tools to complete risk assessments however, you know your business inside and out, so you are best suited to fill out any risk assessments. An inspecting EHO may well question you on the contents of your risk assessments and a lack of understanding of the contents will cause you to score poorly in Confidence in Management. The best way to ensure both a thorough understanding of your risk assessments and that you and everyone within your business can answer any and all questions on them, is to complete them yourself.

Where can I find RAs on the Member Dashboard and where are they in the SMS?

All risk assessments can be found on the Member Dashboard under NCASS Dashboard and then Risk Assessments. All the information that you need to fill out a risk assessment is included on the page so take the time to read through it carefully before proceeding. You should also complete your Health & Safety Policy and your COSHH Risk Assessment which can be found in the Company Documents area of your NCASS Member Dashboard. If you complete the documents within 5 working days of joining or renewing your membership with us, then they will be printed and included in your SMS before it is sent to you. If you are not able to complete the documents within 5 working days, your SMS will be sent to you without them included and you should complete, download and insert them into the relevant section of your SMS yourself.

End of chat



Write a message...





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UTTER WAFFLE

The smell of coffee, brand new tennis balls and the scent that hits you when you get off the plane in a hot country, are not the usual topics of conversation when talking about new hires, but “tell me your three favourite smells” is exactly what James Timmins asks of all potential candidates. Utter Waffle is his passion and his hunt to find unique individuals that colour outside the box are what keep the fires burning and the success story flourishing.



We caught up with James a couple of days after he picked up the keys for his second bricks and mortar site in Balham. He was on his way to Wimbledon to chat trading contracts for the summer season, to which he already has Ascott, Hampton Court, London Coffee Show and Cambridge Mabels lined up. 2024 will be Utter Waffle's "biggest year yet," he says, which is quite the statement given that he and business partner Jules flew a 20 strong team over to Rome last year to trade at the Ryder Cup - a job which he describes as "symbolic of the huge amount of growth" that the company has undertaken in the past two years.

"I didn't want anyone to miss out. Logistically it was a beast to arrange but what an achievement. It's absolutely essential when making new hires that we promote a good working environment. A ceiling at a company is a huge red flag for me which is why I try and manage people in a way that inspires them to grow. I'm passionate about what I do and when someone believes in that then it's contagious amongst the staff."

"We hire based on personality; we want them to feel like a member of the family, whereby they treat work as a chance to unleash their creativity amongst mates. We have an open kitchen with no door and I strongly believe that the chemistry we have amongst the team contributes to the rapport we've built with our customers."



That journey between the team and customer is super important and I've always maintained that we should treat customers as old pals from uni who we haven't caught up with in 10 years – warm welcome, enquire about how they are, have some good banter – I believe that contributes massively to people returning."

It could be said that the honesty and inclusiveness amongst the Utter Waffle team has contributed heavily to their rising success. James and Jules' constant presence on site allows them to operate a literal open door policy when it comes to new ideas. A typical working week for James consists of around three admin days from the restaurant with a kitchen shift or two thrown in, a day or two of looking after business strategy and the seventh day is spent sitting with the Head Chef and events team to ensure they have everything they need for the week ahead in order to do their job well. The regular communication between the team allows for more creativity and in turn, more profit as the business ventures into new areas.

"One of my favourite things about the independent hospitality sector is that there's a short distance between idea and execution. If a staff member comes to me with a good idea then we get the wheels rolling right away. I'd really struggle to work in a company where you didn't feel like you were making a difference and that's a big reason behind launching our Supper Clubs."

"There's no question that cheffing is hard work, it takes a lot of stamina to keep delivering the same high quality dishes day after day and in many instances, the creativity is lost. I wanted to retain good chefs and to do that I wanted to make sure they had



other areas in which to express their creativity. Our Supper Club is the waffle equivalent of Glastonbury in that tickets sell out in a matter of minutes. It's not a deal breaker when taking on new hires if they aren't interested in dish creation on this level; some chefs find fine dining really overwhelming and monotonous, but the fact they have that opportunity to come up with a dish and serve it to a full restaurant of people is a definite selling point."

James is clearly getting something right when it comes to standing out in the hospitality sector, as he and Jules have featured on James Martin's Saturday Morning, Sunday Brunch, been a guest judge on Junior MasterChef and achieved coverage on most major news channels in the UK. Although he's no stranger to the small screen, the fact that he mentions the growth amongst his staff as one of his career highlights is testament to his success in retaining both loyal staff and customers.

"How you treat your staff can wholly determine whether they carry on in the hospitality sector or leave to do something else entirely. Working in a kitchen isn't always a nice experience; I have one staff member who joined my team from a very toxic work environment who was a shell of the person she was. It's been incredible to watch her grow in confidence and she's one of my favourite and one of the most talented people I've ever worked with. The fact that the industry nearly lost someone like that is a real reflection on how wrong some businesses are getting it when it comes to creating a safe and inclusive work environment."

The transition from street food to bricks and mortar was a sign of relief for James when it came to hiring new starters. "There's only so much passion someone can have for a business that they're working at temporarily during summer. Opening up our first restaurant gave me the opportunity to finally take on some full timers and encourage them to grow."

"When it's your own concept, it's so important to you, it's your baby and it's hard to let go of some aspects of that. The branding is just one way in which the switch between street food and bricks and mortar was difficult to navigate. When we were designing the restaurant setup, it was a real challenge to maintain that original street food element and brand voice while offering a different level of service and of course charging a little bit more."

"I currently do all of our social media myself which can be overwhelming at times, so we're looking at taking on a Content Manager this year. One business I have a soft spot for is Bababoom in Clapham. They do posh kebabs that the chefs

cook in front of you and I absolutely love their branding (and food obviously) so I look to them for inspiration. Another favourite establishment to visit on the rare chance I have a free evening is Zapoi in Peckham. The owner is really talented and has designed what I can only describe as a bar that combines a garden centre with grandma's front room. Their vintage drinks are insane and it's such a vibe, I absolutely love it!"

It's that 'vibe' that James continues to bring to his own business by creating a family of like-minded people who want to deliver delicious food in an inclusive setting. The fact that James and Jules can claim four British Street Food Award wins is testament to how utterly divine their waffles are, but his passion for creating a business with a loyal legion of followers and a happy workforce is just as much of a success. For him and his team, there really is no better industry to be working in than independent hospitality.





GETTING SET FOR THE SUMMER- APPLYING FOR EVENTS

Applying for events and festivals, no matter how formal or informal the process, is a fundamental exercise for a successful show and event caterer. Effectively navigating what can often seem like a daunting and overwhelming process, whether you are considering participating in a village fête or a large-scale music food festival, is critical, and the process remains the same each time. Doing your research, gathering comprehensive information, and establishing clear communication with organisers is vital.

This article highlights the key points you should consider when applying for events and the key steps you should follow so that you can be as confident as possible that an event is a suitable fit for your business and will be a success, before you even set foot on site.

LEARN TO WALK BEFORE YOU RUN

If you're new to the industry, we know it may be tempting to jump in at the deep end and apply to trade at the biggest and most well-known events in the industry. However, we strongly advise against this if you're just starting out. As with anything, it takes time to improve or build up to something and it's a case of learning to walk before you can run. **A huge amount of planning and hard work goes into managing an event successfully, so it is always better to start off small and learn the ropes.**

If you do things on a smaller scale to begin with and you succeed, then you are laying the foundations for sustainable growth. Remember, bigger does not always mean better. You are likely far better off doing a one-day local show and making £500 profit, than doing a 5-day music festival (with all the costs, work and stress that goes into it) for the same or similar return.

The fact is, few caterers can go to a major event in their first year or two of business and make it work. It's crucial to consider that for large events or festivals, after factoring in all expenses, you might need to generate more than 10-15k revenue just to break-even. This requires a serious volume of sales, which requires tried and tested, streamlined operations and systems which take time to build and implement in a business. Not to mention, it is a huge amount of pressure which most new businesses are simply not ready for.

So how do you know if an event is too big for you? This is a tough one for businesses to decide as essentially every event where you are not guaranteed a number of sales or portions (such as wedding) is a risk. There are no guarantees and there are many factors that can influence sales positively or negatively. One golden rule is that if a pitch fee (in addition to your estimated costs) is too much for you to lose, i.e., losing that money would put your business in jeopardy, then that pitch fee is too high for you and a risk you cannot afford to take. Put simply, do not gamble what you can't afford, there are no guarantees in events and festivals and every event is a risk, so bear in mind that just because the stakes are higher, it does not necessarily mean that the rewards are.

SUBMIT A KILLER APPLICATION

The first step in securing an event is typically the application. You can rarely get the information and details you need to make decisions before you apply, so when it comes

to applying for an event, how are you going to ensure you are selected?

Generally, events get more applications than they have pitches to let and typically there are other traders out there applying to sell the same or similar food/drink as you are so, think about what makes you stand out. What makes you better than the other traders out there? What makes you a better business to work with? Often, organisers look for experience as one of the deciding factors, therefore, if you are new to the game, you will be up against it. So you must use every ounce of your USPs to ensure you are selected. Make your unit, setup, menu and everything you offer appealing and exciting.

It is important to put yourself in an event organiser's shoes and ask yourself what is going



to make this organiser pick your business over anyone else to trade at their event? How will your catering business improve the event experience for the attendees?

Remember, you are critical to an event or festival experience; food and drink traders are one of the biggest spend points at shows and you are customer facing, which means you will have more contact with the audience than probably anyone else.

Hospitality is fundamental to the customer experience and you are at the helm of this so the value you bring to a live show is more significant than you might think. You're not just providing food and/or drinks, you are providing an experience that is individual to your business and that enhances an attendees experience, so you must provide the best version of hospitality possible. If you can help an organiser see that having you at their event will add value to the event experience and make their audience happy you've nailed it.

This may sound obvious, but be nice. You are much more likely to establish strong relationships and great communication with good event organisers if you are nice and easy to work with. Be courteous and professional and always look to give a good impression of your business. Remain transparent and treat people how you wish to be treated; make things easy for

them and they'll do the same for you.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Research is paramount in choosing the right event for you and your business. Quite simply, the more you know about an event the better. Some of the key pieces of information you need to know before agreeing to an event include:

- How many people are expected to attend?
- Is the event free or ticketed and if ticketed, has it sold out? If not, how many tickets have been sold?
- Has the event previously been a sell-out? Event organisers typically work to 'maximum' numbers, but what if the day is a total washout and not as many people attend?
- How many days trade might you have?
- Are people camping or staying on site?
- How long will people likely be on site and therefore how many times might people eat throughout the day?
- Can people leave the site to eat and drink elsewhere and come back on site?
- Will the event attendees be allowed to bring food/drink on site?
- How many other caterers will be working at the event?
- How many (if any) other caterers will be serving similar food or drink to yours?
- What type of event is it and what are the event timings? People are less likely to buy food at a one-day rave compared to a weekend family festival.
- What is the target audience for the event and is your food or drink well suited to that audience?



- What can you find out about the organiser(s)? Have they put on events before and were they successful? How long have their events been running? Have they got a good reputation with other traders?

This is all vital information that will not only help you understand an event and its' audience but also help you estimate potential sales, your costs and therefore your potential profit. These are just some of the questions you should be asking before signing on the dotted line as without knowing this you can't possibly know what to expect. Other things you can do include speaking to a council to check if the event is licensed and for how many people. If an organiser has told you the expected footfall is 10,000 (remember event organisers tend to talk in 'maximum' numbers) but the council say the event is only licensed for 5,000, you'll know that you are dealing with someone that is exaggerating or lying to you about expected numbers, so think about what else they could not be telling you. Can you find photos of the event from previous years, if so, does it look busy? Visitor numbers are something to be particularly cautious about and as such, the information is best acquired from a variety of sources including fellow traders who may have traded at the event previously.

As a general rule you need to be more cautious with new events as they are less likely to be sell outs since it takes time to build an audience. However, be very wary if an established event is looking for new caterers every year, i.e., no caterers are going back year after year. If this is the case, then you must ask yourself why as this can be a major red flag.

Deciding on which events are right for your business can be quite an unsettling and tricky process. It takes practice and you will make mistakes. However, getting as much information as you can so that you are able to make an informed decision both on the organiser and the event is critical. You will potentially be paying hundreds if not thousands of pounds up front, you must be as confident as possible that it is the right investment for your business.

DEAL OR NO DEAL?

We know that it does not come naturally to most, but do not be afraid to try and negotiate a pitch fee or percentage. If you do not ask or try, you'll never know. **Traders generally prefer a percentage rather than a set fee because it shares the risk between caterer and the organiser** and, when arranged fairly and if the percentage is not too high, (i.e., not 30% plus), this approach can lead to higher revenues for both parties.



If after negotiating, you still feel the pitch fee is too high then we advise you walk away. If an organiser is withholding information from you and not giving you the answers you need, we also advise you walk away. As is so often the case, trust your gut – if something doesn't feel right, it most likely isn't. If something looks too good to be true, it likely is.

Finally, always make sure you get a signed contract from the organiser. Not having a contract means very little comeback if something goes wrong or if things were not as they were stipulated. If an organiser refuses to provide a contract outlining what has been agreed, then alarm bells should be ringing and, unsurprisingly, we would advise you walk away from this type of situation as well.



ASK FOR A SITE PLAN

Your location on a site should be outlined, agreed and documented before you have paid your pitch fee, and you should be provided with a site plan by the event organiser to enable you to plan for the event.

Ask yourself the following:

- Is the plan or sitemap clearly marked out with the pitch you are applying for?
- Is it right at the heart of the event or hidden round the corner by the toilets?
- Are you in the arena or the campsite?
- Does your food match your pitch location? For example, breakfast traders would be better suited to campsites rather than late night arenas.
- How busy will your location likely be? If you are in the wrong location, you might spend the whole event watching people walk past who have already eaten.

You must use the sitemap to plan how you will transport your mobile business across the site, and to help you estimate how many visitors will see you and potentially buy your food. You should check where the onsite facilities are located such as trader toilets and find (if applicable) where power is provided. You should also find out where the water access is located and how many and where the other food/drink vendors are on site – specifically the distance from their unit to yours on the plan.

The location of your pitch can be the difference between a successful event and a completely disastrous one, so make sure these details are

outlined and that you are happy before agreeing to a pitch, signing any contract and paying any fee.

EVIDENCE YOUR COMPLIANCE

As part of the application process, you will need to provide all of your documentation to an organiser to demonstrate your compliance. Make sure all of your documents, including risk assessments, certification, allergen management processes and training, are up to date and uploaded to your NCASS Member Dashboard so that you can easily share them.

It is vital that you carry out your risk assessments and method statements carefully and that they accurately reflect what you do and how you operate as a business. **Remember: when you are trading you must ensure that you are following what is set out in your risk assessments in your business activities.**

If an event organiser has asked you for additional paperwork that you don't normally complete then ask for an example or a template. Don't be afraid to ask a question if you don't know, this will save you time and ensure that you are working with what the event organiser needs.

When you are trading at the event, make sure you have a safety management system on every unit that you operate and that you are carrying out all essential checks and temperature recordings.

Your paperwork is more than just a paper exercise, it is a legal requirement and when used correctly acts as evidence that you are doing everything you can to ensure the safety of you, your staff, and customers.

FAIL TO PREPARE, PREPARE TO FAIL

Safety and the law are non-negotiable and if you have not got the right systems, processes and documentation in place, then events can be tough going and you will be putting yourself and your business at risk.

Being prepared for anything to go wrong means things are less likely to take you by surprise. Try and reduce the risk of things going wrong by being as prepared for an event as you can be and asking yourself the following questions:

- Can you serve your product quickly and maximise potential?



- Have you tested all your equipment and is it all certified? This includes your cooking equipment, fridges, freezers, tills/card machines, firefighting equipment, first aid etc.
- Do you have a nearby supplier should something turn out to be faulty?
- Have you got enough LPG?
- Will you be able to cope with difficult weather conditions such as heavy rain and high winds?
- Have you estimated your portion/sales (based upon the research you did earlier) and stocked up ingredients and supplies accordingly?
- Have you got another local supplier available should you run low on stock or will you be able to source stock elsewhere?
- Are your staff all trained up? Do you have copies of their certificates?
- Is everyone comfortable with your menu, processes and your systems?
- If staff are absent, can you source help, or adapt your working procedures to cover the shortfall?
- Are all your insurances and certifications in date and to hand?

Remember things do and will go wrong. It is all part of the game. You will learn to react and adapt: after all, this is one of the things that our industry does best!

If you have any questions or would like to talk through anything outlined in this article, remember that the NCASS team is happy to advise you on how to trade safely and legally all year round. **If you are thinking of getting into events and want more help or advice or if you simply want to discuss anything, please contact our team by emailing info@ncass.org.uk or calling 0300 124 6866.**



For more information on tendering and doing the sums, scan this QR code to view the Resources area of our website.





RAISING THE BAR WITH GREEDY GORDONS

Greedy Gordons has established itself as a prominent independent chain of pubs around the Kettering, Northampton area. Running The Snooty Fox, The Red Lion and The Pig and Waffle, as well as their own farm shop and in-house café, the business has bloomed into a busy enterprise.

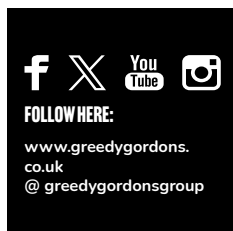
Richard Gordon's career in hospitality began at the ripe old age of 16, and has seen him clock up a lifetime of experience in hospitality that he has wisely poured into and harnessed to make Greedy Gordons the venture it is today.

Unsurprisingly, as he reveals he 'always had a passion for food' which has seen Richard travel and work, notably setting up and running a restaurant in the South of France. As well as this, he found himself working in Spain in hospitality for a few years, before coming back to his home turf of Northamptonshire.

Candidly he states that he's 'had some flops, and had some successes, which are important

as I think everyone learns from their mistakes.' This is an age-old adage that rings true in no end of industries and work applications, and is particularly prevalent in hospitality. With a wealth of experience behind him and finding himself in a position able to do so, Richard set his sights on owning his own establishment and in 2018 took on the lease at The Red Lion in Cranford.

As he puts it, the pub had been 'on its knees for a little while before we took it over. Going back 10-15 years it had been through multiple owners who hadn't really given it the stability it needed. And that's exactly what we did – gave it what it needed to thrive within the community again.'



Since then, The Red Lion has gone from strength to strength and been firmly established as a favourite fixture in Kettering, winning multiple awards including placing as a Great British Pub Awards Finalist in 2022.

They say fortune favours the bold, and so far that has proven true for Greedy Gordons, who following righting the ship and setting things on a prosperous course with The Red Lion, pressed ahead with what Richard jovially terms 'aggressive expansion.' In January 2020, they took on The Snooty Fox in Lowick with big plans, however the all too familiar pest of Covid quickly interrupted this and shut everything down. This meant it took the team two years to actually get the premises up and running. However, it didn't derail

expansion plans too much, and mid-Covid Richard and co made the audacious decision to take on another site.

The third site acquired by Greedy Gordons was The Pig and Waffle, in Grafton Underwood. Richard states that at the time, *'naturally, everyone thought we were mad!'* There is of course no reward with no risk, and today the risk taken has more than matured into reward. Each three are doing well and have built up a *'base of regular clientele and good customers'* who enjoy the staple of quality that Greedy Gordons strives to provide.

Richard sees the value in keeping things simple – he says the mantra is to *'offer great service and great style. We offer value for money – we're not cheap, but the experience, the food, the atmosphere is worth the money'*

and this clearly translates. The Snooty Fox and The Pig and Waffle have both won awards in their own right too, and between the three sites Greedy Gordons are able to offer a distinct variety to cater for all tastes.

The Red Lion is a gastro pub staying true to the traditional 'country pub' style of the building, with an inviting modern outdoor conservatory, separate restaurant and bar area. The Snooty Fox deals with the more upmarket offerings, serving high-end foods like lobster and wagyu steak and in Richard's words *'is not your average pub.'* The Pig and Waffle declares itself 'the place for brunch and tapas in Northamptonshire,' rounding up quite a distinct trio.

A lot of money, time and effort has gone into making the sites what they are today. 'We



invested a huge sum to complete the conversion at The Snooty Fox, to open it up as it looks now.' The kitchen also features a live lobster tank so they can keep up to 70kg of live lobster at any time, which allows at once for fresher quality lobster being served each time and also for the business to keep costs lower as they can buy in bulk.

That investment has served, and continues to serve, the pubs well, when speaking with Richard in early February he mentioned that *'all of our pubs are flying at the minute, absolutely flying. We're doing numbers currently which we've never seen – Valentine's week has been just as strong as Christmas week.'*

Central to the external success, is a prioritisation of running things properly internally. Greedy Gordons employ 100 people, which gives an indication as to the scale of the operation.

'We want to be the best. I'm not saying we are the best, but we really try and we're very passionate about what we do. And we really love what we do.' Having a hundred staff is no small thing for anybody to organise, and Richard recognises that *'without all those great team members, we wouldn't be able to do what we offer. It just wouldn't work. We take our duty of care seriously, we want to take care of everybody and make sure that they do enjoy what they're doing.'* This is a simple approach, but a very effective

one – happy employees make for a happy workplace, and with a dedicated team pulling in the right direction, it's little wonder Greedy Gordons are having a good go of it.

Richard understands the stress that can come with working in hospitality more than anyone, having run each of the kitchens they've opened, setting the bar and precedent so when they bring staff in, *'we train them and they know from day one exactly what's expected of them. I believe that if you're going to tell someone what to do, you've got to be able to do it either as well or better than they can.'*

Furthermore, they strive to provide a positive work-life balance, with chefs working four



day weeks and being paid overtime for any extra hours they do. This goes a long way to encouraging the kind of loyalty that has seen 60% of employees stay with the company for five years or longer, and fostering the positive experience customers enjoy.

Of course, there are challenges that come with running any hospitality business, and those multiply with a staple such as GGs. Bills have risen massively over the past few years which is tough for any business to contend with. Particularly for the uniqueness of the experience Greedy Gordons deliver, keeping on top of compliance matters can be quite demanding. *'We serve many high risk foods, compliance has changed a lot over the past two years, and to keep on top of this means a lot of changes for us.'* Richard states they've spent a lot of money streamlining their operational processes, as well as working collaboratively with their local EHO to ensure they are running things correctly and ensuring a safe experience for everyone.

Sustainability is also a big part of the Greedy Gordons operation, they are a proud member of the Made in Northamptonshire (MIN) brand which is a stamp of quality for locally made produce. Another dimension to the GG group is GG Express in Woodford, where you can find a farmshop selling goods they produce themselves in-house, as well as The Buttery café, and they also facilitate custom orders for *'fish, fowl or anything else!'*

If that isn't enough, they also run an online cigar shop which does a lot of trade, as they *'send out cigars every day across the country,'* and this manifests an extra feature differentiating their premises, as each one is housed with a humidor.

Underlying the rounded mission, is Richard's desire to raise the bar of his hometown area, as he puts it *'I think it's important for us to be able to enhance the local villages, enhance the community and give them something to be proud of and that's our ethos really.'*





AN UPDATE ON OUR #EMPOWERINDEPENDENTS CAMPAIGN



Advocacy lies at the heart of our mission and it has become a key benefit and reason for members to be a part of and support NCASS. For over three decades, NCASS has stood by small businesses, advocating for our sector's interests. We've continuously pushed for policy and legislative changes, sought to elevate our sector's standing within the hospitality industry and urged the government to provide better support when and where required.

Our members need a voice and we will continue to shout as loud as we can. We will continue to collaborate with government bodies, MPs, and various organisations, lobbying for change whilst always looking to raise the profile of the independent hospitality sector and amplify the voices of our members.

The onset of the pandemic spurred the inception of our **#empowerindependents** campaign. Since the initial lockdown, we've persistently campaigned to enhance and bolster support for the challenging landscape small and micro independent hospitality businesses face.

From the pandemic, to the current cost-of-operating challenges, now, more than ever, we must continue to fight for change and this campaign is geared towards bringing about positive changes that the independent hospitality sector so desperately needs.

Primarily through this campaign we are calling for a reduction in VAT, which we believe would make a real difference in lessening the pressures on the sector and significantly increase profitability and viability for micro businesses in independent hospitality.

We have been busy pushing this since we launched the campaign, trying to spread awareness among the sector and the general public alike, drawing attention to the issues affecting independent hospitality, bringing the community together and lobbying government representatives at every possible opportunity.

In January, ahead of the March Budget, we submitted an official representation to HM Treasury, declaring what measures we feel are needed in order to support independent hospitality and prevent further damaging business closures.

Over the past few months, we ran a survey asking members and non-members to tell us about their current trading situation, and how much they have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and current VAT stipulations. We have also provided a variety of template letters for businesses and customers to write and send to local MPs, to spread awareness and increase the pressure on government listening and acting.

A huge thank you to everyone who participated in this survey and used the template letters. We had an amazing response and have used this information as evidence to highlight to government the present issues that are limiting the sector.

75% of businesses told us that a VAT cut would be vital to their business and 82% were not satisfied with the government's support for the hospitality sector.

Survey respondents also told us that:

- Gross profit has dropped from between 10% and 45% on average in the last 18 months
- Staffing costs, energy, stock, supplies, rent and VAT payments have all increased
- They have been forced to raise prices and 80% have been forced to reduce overheads by cutting staff numbers

We were all disappointed with the measures announced in the Autumn Budget, where over £4bn worth of support was announced for 'small businesses and the hospitality sector,' consisting mainly of 75% business rate relief and freezing alcohol duty rates. However, this only really acted to benefit large corporate hospitality businesses, ignoring the needs of the independent sector.

Alongside associations in the wider hospitality sector including the night-time industries, festivals and events, we have urged government to provide a VAT cut for small and micro hospitality businesses, bringing VAT in line with EU and G7 partners.



We know that more needs to be done to assist the small independent businesses that make our high streets, towns and cities what they are today – every single one forms the heart of its own community, has families to support, employees to pay and ambitions to achieve.

We continue to argue that a greater understanding of and engagement with micro and small businesses will enable better legislation and more appropriate taxation, leading in turn to growth and increased productivity.

Independent hospitality businesses are critical to the economy and continue to make a significant contribution to the UK. We need the government to recognise how valuable the sector is and treat it accordingly. This is our mission with **#empowerindependents** and we will continue to keep you updated with our progress.

OUR COMMENT ON THE MARCH BUDGET:

"We are deeply disappointed that the Chancellor has not listened to the tens of thousands of people across the country who have contributed to the overall campaign to lower VAT for the hospitality industry. The omission of this measure from the Spring Budget represents a missed opportunity to support the thousands of businesses and millions of workers who rely on the hospitality sector for their livelihoods. We will continue to campaign and engage with the government, advising them to reassess their stance on the solutions we have put forward time and time again."

- Nick Summers, MD

ADHERING TO FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS IN HOT WEATHER

In the “summer time when the weather is fine” people go flocking to events to enjoy a cold beer and scrumptious scan. It's hard to put a downer on people enjoying a sunny day in the UK. After enduring another seemingly endless winter season and with the prospect of hitting a beer garden or foodie festival with mates nearing, the thought of food safety is often the last thing on our minds. However, another ‘sun worshipper’ that we should be aware of is pathogenic microorganisms (e.g. harmful bacteria).

Warm weather is the perfect environment for bacteria to grow, and with outbreaks of E.coli, Salmonella and Listeria particularly prevalent in summer, it's especially important that you keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until they are ready to be eaten. It's easy to become complacent when working at a busy summer event, but the consequences of not adhering to temperature guidelines can be dire. According to the Food Standards Agency, a staggering 2.4 million cases of food poisoning are reported each year in the UK.

We've put together some quick refresher points for you as the temperatures begin to rise. Make sure your staff are also aware of the dangers of rapid bacterial growth and contamination from insects during the summer.

THE NEED TO KNOWS:

Once adequately cooked or reheated, hot food must be kept above 63°C (145°F) and chilled food must be kept at or below 8°C (46°F) and preferably below 5°C.

In the event of a heatwave at a busy festival or event, you'll know that it's not always easy to maintain these temperatures. In this instance and for a limited time only, you are allowed to keep food at the following temperatures:

For a single period only:

Hot food can be kept below 63°C (145°F) for a maximum of 2 hours.

Chilled food can be kept above 8°C (46°F) for a maximum of 4 hours.

Under no circumstances should these limitations be exceeded and any food that goes beyond this point should be disposed of.

Whenever you use a temperature probe to check the temperature of the foods you're chilling or keeping hot, be sure to:

- Clean and disinfect the probe thoroughly before each use.
- Use food grade anti-bacterial wipes when cleaning your temperature probe.

What happens in the event of no electricity?

Cool boxes are the next best thing for keeping food chilled during transportation and when on site. If you use cool boxes you need to use adequate icepacks so that the temperature of the food remains below 8°C, or you'll have to dispose of the food after 4 hours. Replace ice packs two or three times throughout the working day to keep the temperature inside the cool box as low as possible. Invest in a good quality insulated cool box that has a tight-fitting lid. Ensure cool boxes are stored away from cooking heat sources and direct sunlight.

To ensure the food remains at a safe temperature, it's important you use a thermometer to regularly check the food inside the cool boxes. Aim to minimise the frequency/length of time that the cool box is opened. For best practice consider setting up a wired fridge thermometer so the digital display can be monitored from the outside of the cool box and includes an audible alarm that will alert you when the temperature rises above 8°C.

Food Safety Management

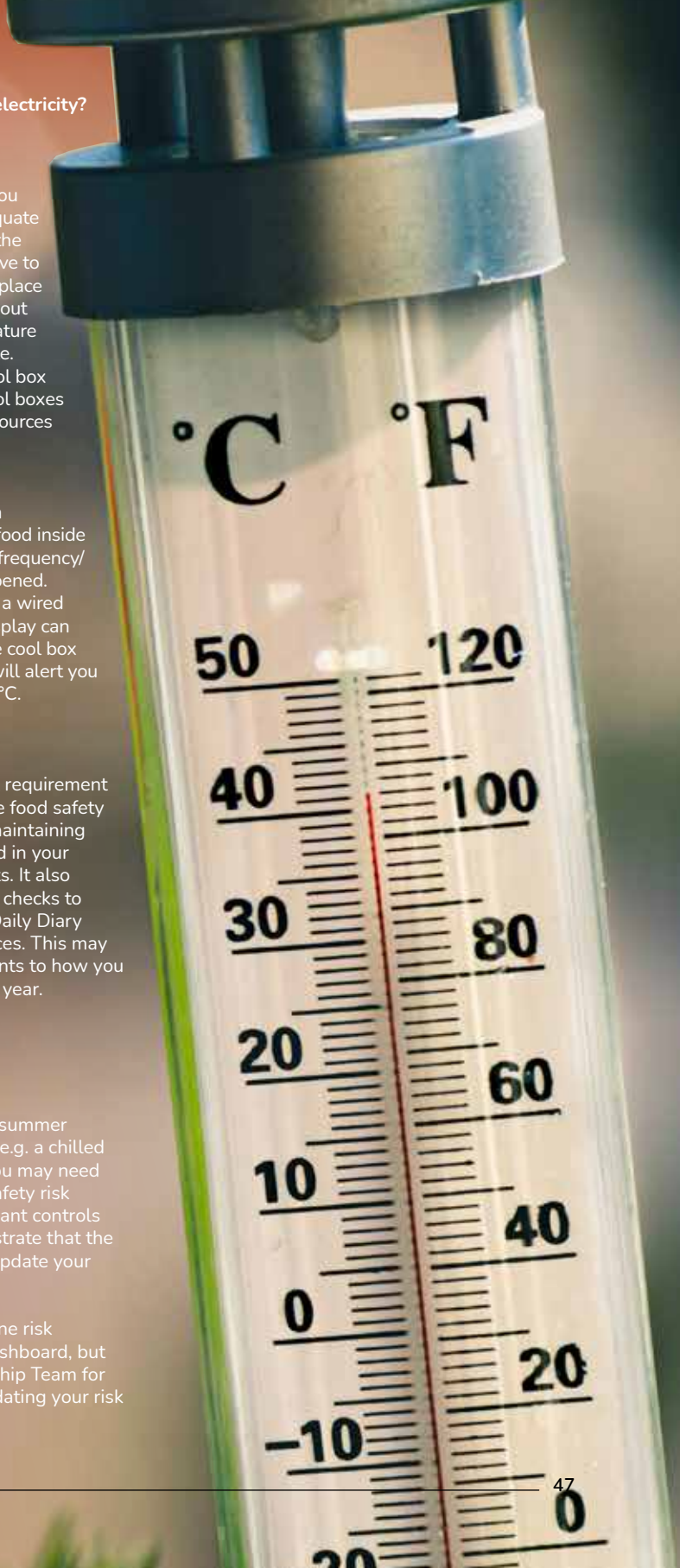
Even in the summertime it is a legal requirement to properly implement an applicable food safety management system. This means maintaining the key food safety controls outlined in your NCASS food safety risk assessments. It also means implementing the necessary checks to complete the Daily Records in the Daily Diary and the relevant Additional Resources. This may mean making some slight adjustments to how you operate compared to the rest of the year.

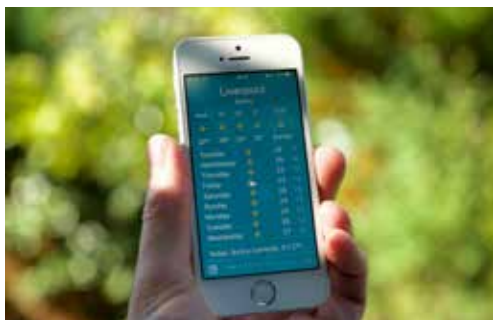
For example:

Food Preparation and Storage

If you change up your menu for the summer season or introduce new processes e.g. a chilled display unit or a hot holding unit, you may need to carry out a review of your food safety risk assessments to make sure the relevant controls still apply and to be able to demonstrate that the food is safe. You may also need to update your food allergen matrix as necessary.

You should be familiar with the online risk assessment tool on the Member Dashboard, but if not, you can contact our Membership Team for further help with reviewing and updating your risk assessments.





When preparing food at outdoor events it is important to be aware that the risk of food contamination can increase, not only as a result of site change and the trading unit being open to the elements, but also because of the presence of flying insects. In summer the natural UV levels from the sun can be high and this can render UV fly killers of little use, so it can be worth looking into fly screening as an alternative. Good waste control (especially the use of lidded bins) will help to reduce the presence of flying insects. Make sure you have adequate food storage facilities and avoid leaving food uncovered e.g. ensure Bain Marie lids are used for covering prepared foods.

Temperature Controls

It's worth increasing the frequency of temperature checks to ensure food remains safe. If refrigerators and freezers are found to be exceeding the critical temperature limits then check settings/thermostats as they may need adjusting to account for higher external temperatures. Consider moving refrigerators and freezers to a cooler area of the trading unit where there is good air circulation/ventilation. Temperature control is essential, therefore, only good quality and suitably maintained appliances should be in use. Ensure refrigerators and freezers are not overloaded and are instead clean and well organised with good separation of raw and cooked foods.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Even if surfaces look clean, there may still be harmful bacteria present. It goes without saying that even when you're busy, adhering to cleaning rules is crucial. After all, what customer wouldn't wait a few more minutes for food if it meant it being prepared on a clean work surface.

Make sure you have a readily available supply of detergents, disinfectants and clean cloths on hand. Hot water is key and must not be overlooked. Check you have a reliable supply of hot water for cleaning and hand washing. There must be designated hand washing facilities in place.



Proper Food Hygiene Training

It's a legal requirement for you and all staff to be trained in food hygiene training before you start preparing food for customers. NCASS hygiene and safety training courses are created and accredited by industry experts as well as our Primary Authority Partner, the Royal Borough of Greenwich. You should ensure you have all the knowledge you need to trade safely. Find out more about our training courses by visiting www.ncass.org.uk/ training.

Risk Assessments and Record Keeping

You must carry out risk assessments and ensure you are following them in your business activities, Environmental Health Officers from the local authority as well as event organisers and their teams will likely carry out spot checks throughout the season. Make sure you have your compliance documents on hand to support with these checks and demonstrate your business diligence. Be sure to add your risk assessments and training certificates to your safety management system folder.



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- ✓ Fresh, tasty and well presented food
- ✓ A well decorated truck, trailer or gazebo

We are committed to keeping the quality of food and service high within our community of caterers by working alongside caterers who also share this passion.

Like with any relationship, it has to work for both sides. Therefore, we take every caterer through the Catering Excellence Benchmark[®] verification process to ensure that we stand up to this promise with both our caterers and customers and ensure we are the perfect match for each other. This includes meeting up face-to-face to get to know one another and try your food. We look forward to hearing from you!


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CONVERTING CUSTOMERS TO GUESTS: HOW TO BUILD UP LOYALTY

In any customer based business, loyalty is a priceless commodity.

One of the most advantageous aspects of operating in independent hospitality, is that there is no particular set way to achieve success. It is an industry that champions innovation and we see all the time businesses achieve this success because they have developed and used models that are uniquely applicable to them. Instilling a sense of loyalty within your customers is key to achieving any degree of success in hospitality. Most chain businesses go about this with offering a copy and paste operation, meaning that customers know exactly what they're in for. They also broadcast minor discounts, saving options, two for ones; the standard spread of incentives to bring someone back.

But to an independent hospitality business, loyalty within customers means a lot more. It can frankly be the difference between success and failure. Therefore it should be at the forefront of your approach and factored in to all aspects of your operation. So how exactly do you go about creating this palpable sense of loyalty, instilling a defiance within your customers that you are their go to?

We spoke to a variety of NCASS members to gain an informed picture as to fundamentals in building up customer loyalty.

In order to do that, you've got to start at the beginning and make sure that first and foremost, you are offering something of real quality. In Ed Baker's wise words, *'delivering premium quality goods, consistently, that meet or exceed customers' expectations is the main factor behind creating a loyal customer base.'* It goes without saying, that as well as a good experience, premium quality goods will attract customers over and over again, and go



a long way to building that bridge of loyalty for others to walk across.

Proprietor of Patty Freaks, Peter Hargreaves underlines a simple but very effective motto; *'we don't have customers, we have guests.'* Straight away, a statement like that provides an insight into how the business views and values those who come and invest with them. Drilling that approach into the mentality of the business ripples through all aspects of the experience a customer gets when dining with you, and ultimately creates the feeling they have of being treated as a guest.

Jess from Fink's builds on this notion, stating that *'it's all about the staff/customer relationship being genuine.'* You know when you walk into a chain establishment and the staff that greet you reel off a script they are clearly apathetic towards and the whole thing feels forced? It's all about authenticity - people can often detect an artificial air straightaway and it can set a negative precedent for the rest of the experience.

Being genuine acts to cut through any sense of tension and disarms a customer so to speak.

Sometimes people can be a little 'on edge' when trying somewhere new, so if you can detract from this and make them feel comfortable as soon as possible, it only bodes well. You cannot underestimate the value of *'assuring customers that the relationship with the business is not transactional,'* in the words of Ed Baker.

Cut the pretence. Allow staff to be themselves, to feel comfortable at work and this will naturally translate to customers feeling comfortable, to feel more like a guest. Your staff should always be an asset to the business – of course you want people to come and engage with you for the food and/or drink you offer, but if customers come back because they get on really well with staff that is only a positive. You must look inwards to grow outwards as Jess from Fink's accurately surmises: *'when the team is made up of great people who feel empowered to be themselves they form real relationships with customers who then feel genuinely welcome, rather than processed.'*

This is a point Ed Baker reiterates, as *'customers will return for both the food and the chat, and more importantly they will be happy to become*



ambassadors of the business. Experience as a word is synonymous with memories, and memories are precious to all of us. Humans are emotional creatures at our core. If you can generate the potential to give your customers positive, endearing memories, they will be keen to repeat them and encourage others to also collate these memories.

Giving people a reason to come back is imperative to encouraging loyalty within a customer base. Incentives are a great way to do this – when done right. Gurt Wings buy into this philosophy, as James Mitchell explains, by *'giving something back to customers who visit us regularly.'* To this end, they employ a literal loyalty scheme that carries a tangible and worthwhile reward when someone purchases from them numerous times. For example, *'once they visit us 10 times they get a free large meal.'* James elaborates that their customers love this, and that *'it has been one of the most successful loyalty schemes we have used in all our years of trading.'* Having been operating for almost a decade, that is a powerful statement.

This approach is borne out of the same core ethos each member touts here – providing real value from the customer's point of view.

When you offer that and are able to foster the desired loyalty in your customer base, you are well on the way to creating ambassadors for the business, as Ed Baker states above. Ambassador status brings with it an organic growth that cannot be forced or otherwise manufactured, which is what makes it so fruitful. A fan of a band may listen to their albums on repeat, but a disciple wears their merchandise like a uniform, and is then at all times acting to spread their message and potentially introduce the band to no end of new people who will become potential fans and ambassadors themselves. It is a powerful ripple effect that every independent hospitality business can benefit from and should therefore try to instigate.





ICE CREAM FOR SMILES WITH PICCADILLY WHIP

Boasting an expansive fleet of fourteen vehicles, Piccadilly Whip have long been established as a premier ice cream business in the UK.

Based in Essex, the business has a history of serving up much-loved ice cream across the nation for over 6 decades. Its humble beginnings trace back to 1963, when the business was started with one ice-cream van bought for a mere £30. John's nan who is Spanish helped to paint, clean and renovate the van until it was roadworthy to enable his uncles, Eddie and Billy, to earn a living, selling ice-cream from it.





The following year, a second van was bought and the Piccadilly Bar company was established. It wasn't until later with the purchasing of soft vans that the outfit became Piccadilly Whip, so as to incorporate whipped ice cream. Having been members of MOCA before it became NCASS, we are proud to have supported Piccadilly Whip on their journey for many years.

Business owner John Bonar was born into the business and grew up in ice cream – which is surely every child's dream – working for the family, until he inherited the business himself and he continues to put smiles on faces with ice cream today.

In his own words, he 'used to work for my uncle on an ice cream van when I was a kid on the weekends and summer holidays. So that gave me a taste of it and I liked earning money, but my friends were out getting up to no good and I didn't want to feel like that. I just wanted to go work and make a living for myself, so that's what I did.'

Hard work is a key pillar of making any business work, particularly in hospitality. A forthright work ethic had been impressed on John from these formative experiences, and has benefitted the business as Piccadilly Whip has grown into the prominent fixture it is today.

Running and managing a fleet of their size isn't always easy, as John states: 'Some seasons are better than others. There are lots of variables to contend with, like what staff you have – some people stay with us year in year out, some only work for the summer season. It can be hard when you've got really good staff that you'd like to stay but maybe they want to go on and do something different on their own – that's just life, you have to accept that and keep moving forward.'

Staff are the heartbeat of the business, and you can't operate effectively or deliver the experience the business strives to offer without adequate staffing. John highlights this issue as one of the biggest challenges that comes with managing the operation: 'When staff don't turn up that can present a real challenge – say you've got a big show on in the morning and then all of a sudden someone's not there, you've got to try and make do with that. When you're a small business, everybody counts. With one cog out of the engine, it just doesn't run right.'

Long days are synonymous with working in hospitality, and that is no exception with the Piccadilly Whip operation – when asked to illustrate how a typical day can take shape for the business, John revealed, 'we're based in Essex, if for example we've got a job in Manchester, we'll get up at 4 in the morning so we can be in a position to be up and trading all day, and typically won't get home until 11 or 12 in the evening. That sort of day is quite often the case in the summer.'

To achieve the level of success that you need in order to keep the business viable, you need to capitalise on trade and opportunities however they present themselves. There is an inherent sacrifice underpinning work commitments, which for John usually translates to working at weekends: 'People like to have their weekends off, whereas for us we have to work a lot of them.' Simply put, 'you've got to make hay while the sun shines' and typically the target market of customers for ice cream are going to want to enjoy an ice cream at the weekend.

On those long summer days, John says that people might be surprised to learn that 'it's not cool inside the ice cream van at all – especially on a hot day!' At least John and his team are in the right place to enjoy the nation's favourite summer day refreshment in this circumstance. And to be in a position to share a cone of joy with anyone is a lovely thing, even more so when you can do that with your family.

For John, one of the most rewarding aspects of running his own business is being 'able to employ your own family, to be able to bring your kids in to the business. It's important to show them the work

ethic. To be able to offer that opportunity is great, it puts a smile on their faces and is important to show them a positive work ethic.' Family is at the core of Piccadilly Whip's history, just as is an unfaltering work ethic: 'My children work with us, their partners work with us and our grandchildren are always pestering me to start working with us (they are not quite big enough to work with us yet).'

John goes on further to elaborate that 'I like to think the harder you work, the better the rewards are and I like to instil that within the family as well.' Presenting the business positively is a key priority, and efforts are made to ensure the vans are always spotless, so they appear professional and clean whenever a Piccadilly Whip vehicle is spotted. It is important to make a positive first impression, and having a spotless vehicle turn up and delivering great customer service goes a long way towards this.

Ice creams are a cone of nostalgia, a symbol of carefree summer days covering great grass distances, smiling as you enjoy the cool refreshment. They have the potential to light up everyone's day, no matter how old or young, and it





is a lovely experience to be able to supply for this business who are effectively dealing in the industry of smiles. John and his team are still enthusiastic about what they do and recognise the privilege in they are able to bring all across the UK, making the British summer what it is.

While unsurprisingly the summer months can be a very busy period for the team, how does the business cope with cold winters when by and large demand for a cold scoop or two is down? Typically for Piccadilly Whip, they've 'got the permanent pitch at the Tower of London where we sell coffee and ice cream. We also do the Christmas markets. From the middle of November through January, we're hammer and tongues at it like we are in the summer at the Christmas market.'

Finally, after Christmas as the changing winds of a new year begin to blow, it is time for a well-deserved break: 'So then it stops in January and then we have a bit of a break to go on holiday. We've just come back from holiday now, and we're getting in gear, starting to get the vans tinkering out and we're starting to go out slowly at different places that we work and it's not great trade at the moment but it gets the vans out there, and gets the cogs turning.'

John's drive has seen Piccadilly Whip go from strength to strength and establishes it as the well-respected and profitable business it is today. When asked what success looks like to him, John immediately mentions family. 'To be able to help

your own. In my mum's later years I was having to look after her a lot, I got her a mobile home, a chalet so she could spend time with and watch the grandkids grow up before she passed away. Without money of course you can't do things like that.'

As we inch ever closer to warmer skies and living less under the constant threat of rain, it won't be too long until you may see a Piccadilly Whip van in action yourself, and be able to enjoy a cool cone of the finest dairy.





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THE PITFALLS OF BUYING INSURANCE ONLINE

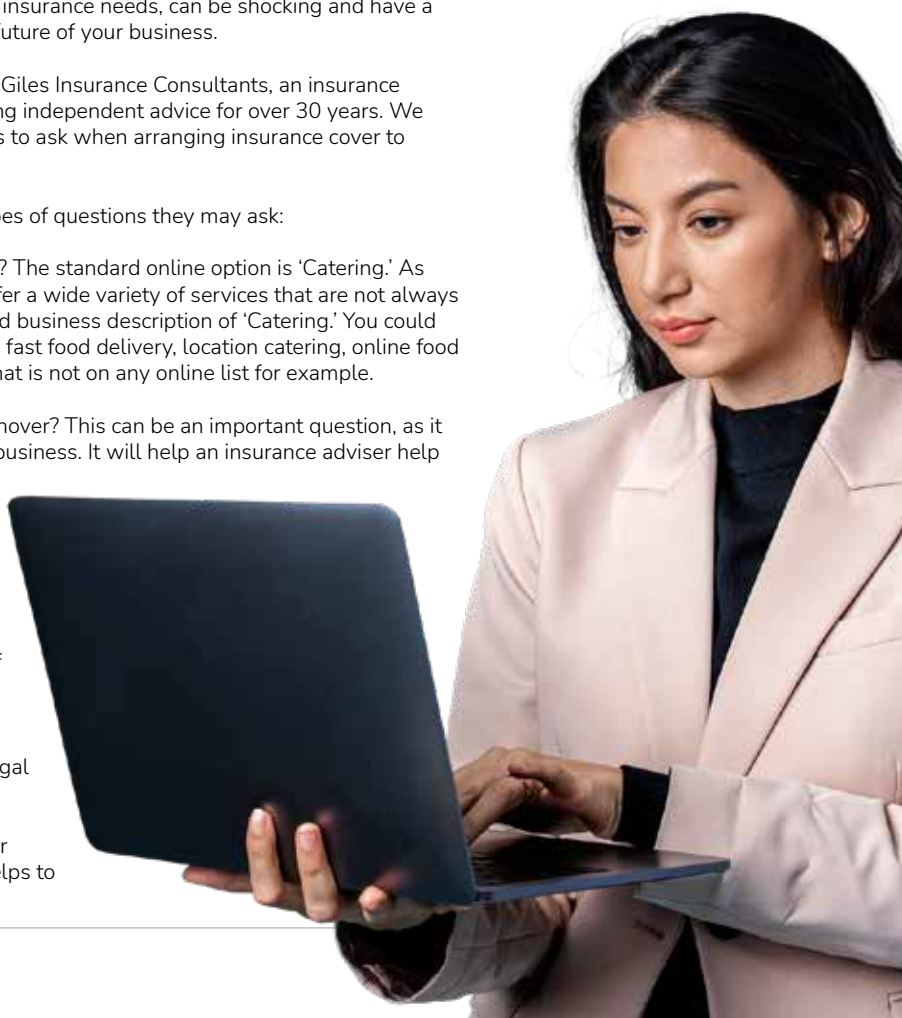
As consumers we are inundated with advertising, in the moment it can seem quick and easy to buy online, however, when it comes to insuring your business, online is not necessarily the right way.

Are you 100% confident that the insurance you have purchased online fulfils your business insurance needs? The consequences of not taking out the correct insurance policy could be devastating for your business. To realise that the information you inputted online does not match with your business insurance needs, can be shocking and have a detrimental effect on the future of your business.

We spoke to Neil Giles of Giles Insurance Consultants, an insurance broker who has been giving independent advice for over 30 years. We asked Neil what questions to ask when arranging insurance cover to protect your business.

These are some of the types of questions they may ask:

- What exactly do you do? The standard online option is 'Catering.' As we know, a caterer can offer a wide variety of services that are not always insured under the standard business description of 'Catering.' You could be mobile, manufacturing, fast food delivery, location catering, online food sales or something else that is not on any online list for example.
- What is your annual turnover? This can be an important question, as it indicates the size of your business. It will help an insurance adviser help you choose the right type of insurance policy for you.
- How many employees do you have? In the catering trade we understand the number of employees can fluctuate e.g. seasonal, volunteers, temps. Having the correct Employers' Liability is a legal requirement.
- Where do you store your business equipment? It helps to



know where you store your business equipment e.g. mobile catering equipment, trailer or stock. The storage of your business equipment needs to meet minimum-security requirements – not just stored in your wooden shed at bottom of the garden. This does not normally meet with the standard minimum-security requirement if stolen.

These types of questions are to make you think and even question your insurance needs; checking that you are purchasing the right product, for the cover you need and at a fair price.

“We want you to be secure in the knowledge that you’re correctly insured” says Neil.

“A customer recently asked me to review their restaurant insurance renewal that they had bought online the previous year. They thought they had purchased the correct policy and were fully covered, until I started asking some pertinent questions. Do you really operate the restaurant just by yourself? And the answer I got was ‘Of course not’. As you would expect. We know it would be highly unusual for a restaurant to be operated by one person. I then asked how many employees do you have? Three was the reply. I then referred them back to their existing insurance policy, showing the section that clearly stated Employers’ Liability was not included. A legal requirement if you have employees. Naturally, the customer was shocked and concerned, as they thought they had bought the right cover online.”

When you are faced with online options, often your choices are limited or you do not have a full

understanding of the importance of the questions that are being asked. By not having a two-way conversation, to understand your own insurance, there is a potential risk, that you could miss something. The responsibility lies with you, the customer, to input the information correctly online.

Neil added that “you may wonder why we ask so many questions. Providing the correct information not only ensures that the policy is valid but in the unfortunate event of having to make a claim you are confident with the accuracy of the information you provided.”

Not all insurance policies are equal: Giles Insurance Consultants have new customers share their current policy documents with them on a regular basis, when they are looking to find an alternative quotation. In reference to an NCASS member’s Café Insurance renewal, Neil told us “one individual who came to me had paid over £500 for what they thought was a package insurance policy insuring; tenants improvements, contents, stock, money, business interruption and liability. On reviewing the online renewal quotation, the only cover provided was liability. All the other cover options clearly stated ‘Not Insured’. The customer did not realise.” This is why it is so important to check and read your insurance documents before you buy.

In comparison, Giles Insurance Consultants offered the same NCASS member the correct Café Insurance package policy, with all the required levels of cover for almost the same price as their original wrong policy.





Many clients change from being mobile traders move to a bricks and mortar premises and fall into the trap of thinking that both mobile trading and fixed sites are automatically insured with the same policy.

A package insurance policy for e.g. Restaurant, Café, Takeaway etc. does not always extend your business liability for 'work away from the premises.' A few package policies will allow up to 10% of your annual revenue for work away e.g. mobile catering, subject to the insurer understanding exactly what work away you are going to be doing.

Example questions that you could be asked include:

- How many times a year will you be trading away from your premises?
- Will you be frying away from the premises?
- How many staff will be working away?
- What level of liability will you be needing?

Giles Insurance Consultants have access to insurers that can often accommodate your work away in a package insurance policy. Having a quick chat with an adviser can ensure you understand what you are insured to do and what you are not.

Remember:

- Read all your insurance documents including the small print before you commit to it.

- Make sure you give accurate details about your business and how you operate.
- Tell your insurer about the types of events and where you trade.
- Do not underestimate your annual turnover.
- Stop and think. If your policy is too cheap, you should be asking yourself why? As we all know cheap is not always right.
- You cannot always get an accurate online quotation in 5 minutes. Take the time to speak to someone about your needs.
- Double check the details and make sure your insurer understands how your business works.
- Peace of mind and protection for your business is what you are buying with your insurance policy, do not assume anything. If it is not written down, it never happened.
- Look for insurance brokers or companies that specialise and have experience in your type of business or trade.

Giles Insurance Consultants offer an exclusive insurance product named 'Cater Protect' which is underwritten by Aviva Insurance. The Cater Protect policy was originally developed as a specialist insurance policy for mobile traders and mobile catering trailers. Due to the rapidly changing diversity of the catering industry the product has expanded over the years to offer insurance cover for a much wider selection of trades that are not available online or drop-down options.

We are pleased to announce that Giles Insurance Consultants have kept their exclusive Cater Protect Insurance premiums unchanged for yet another year (subject to no claims or policy adjustments). If you are an NCASS member and the Cater Protect policy is right for you, Giles Insurance Consultants are confident that they won't be beaten on price. If you receive a lower quotation elsewhere and you can evidence the premium and the cover offer matches the Cater Protect policy, the team are authorised to price match or better the premium (subject to it being an acceptable risk).

We would encourage members to speak to the experts and that is why we work with Giles Insurance Consultants; they know our members, they know our industry and they know insurance.

"We pride ourselves on being contactable," says Neil. "We are a knowledgeable team of insurance advisors. We do not want you buy an insurance policy that is not fit for purpose. If you are unfortunate and have to use your insurance policy for a claim, we want you to be safe in the knowledge that you are insured correctly. Whether you are a new or established business, need an insurance adjustment or just want advice, we are here to help."



To speak to the team at Giles Insurance Consultants, call 01628 667707 or visit www.gilesinsurance.net for a quote.

Here's what members say:

"I am amazed at the remarkable service we get from Giles. Smart intelligent and using that 'banned substance' Common Sense, while still delivering high quality commercial solutions to dreaded insurance. Only people I'd trust with our business insurance and make NCASS membership worthwhile for unearthing a gem, give Neil and his team a call, sleep better."

"Jordan Kreser - Insurance Advisor at Giles Insurance Consultants went above and beyond to help with my public liability and vehicle insurance. Would highly recommend."

"Have been using them since we started the business 6 years ago. Always simple and easy to renew. Giles Insurance also offer a payment in 3 parts with no additional cost which is really helpful!"

"Neil and Giles Insurance made this entire process incredibly smooth. They went above and beyond by providing in-depth explanations for everything, and they were always quick to respond to any questions I had. I can't express enough how much easier they made things for me. Exceptional service!"

"I had a positive experience with NCASS Insurance. Consultant Neil Giles was very helpful in getting quotes from the insurance company. He was professional, friendly and understanding. I was pleased with the regular correspondence, calls and quick resolution."



THE SPUDMAN

We all love a good jacket potato, it's a cornerstone of British cuisine. Many a fond childhood memory has been precipitated by the scoffing of a piping hot spud loaded with beans and cheese (the only correct filling in this writer's humble opinion). Jacket potato vendors are town staples, integral parts of the landscape serving as reminders of winters gone by, lunch breaks in a hurry and 'oh go on then' treats you didn't think your Mum would actually say yes to. And yet, despite their visibility, there is a certain level of inconspicuousness to the local potato van. We know they're there, they always have been, but in a post-covid world where high streets and town centres are no longer the bustling marketplaces of old, how does the humble potato van recement itself as a staple?

#SPUDARMY

The answer; a pink mohawk, dynamic personality and a generous dose of that special secret sauce, TikTok. Ben Newman, or The Spud Man as he is affectionately known by his 3 million TikTok followers, has managed to bring the humble spud into the 21st century, modernising the image of the jacket potato vendor and growing a massive following as he does so. To paraphrase a classic Marks & Spencer's advert, this is no ordinary potato. And yet, it is and therein lies the charm. Ben has done the seemingly impossible and got 3 million people going crazy for his spuds; but it's not just about the potatoes. Ben himself will be the first to admit his surprise at his TikTok fame, but his infectious personality, hard-driven community values and seemingly heat-proof hands are a charismatic recipe for a viral whirlwind.

An NCASS member since 2003, Ben's journey to TikTok fame and the formation of his Spud Army all began with his son. 'My eldest lad was on [TikTok] and we made a couple of silly videos together. I think it was my third video that got half a million views and it just opened my eyes to the possibilities.' And those possibilities are seemingly endless! From radio interviews with the BBC, to collaborations with Drayton Manor; from raising over £10,000 for Kidney Research, to having people fly from all over the world to see him, Ben has reintroduced the potato to the world of social media. Many may look at this seemingly overnight sensation and easily miss Ben's 20 years' experience in the industry, but this experience has no doubt served him well. Not only does it mean that he can easily serve customers en masse, he knows how to spot and implement innovation.

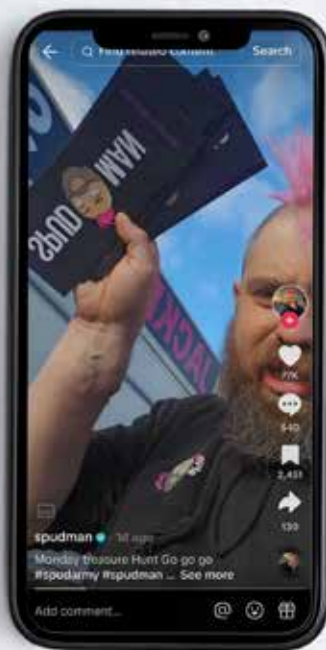
“THIS IS NO SPUDULIKE”





Tradition can often become a double-edged sword and staying true to one's roots shouldn't always mean refusing to change with the times. Ben has found a way to create something new on TikTok, completely infusing the spud shaped staple at the core of what he does. 'The whole jacket potato industry has been stuck in its ways for a few years now, there's not been much innovation with it. It's a classic, we don't want to change it just for the sake of it, but town centres aren't what they used to be.' TikTok may be a fickle mistress, but it still takes a certain charm to woo her and that charm lies with Ben. He's elevated perceptions, but he's managed to do so without overcomplicating that simple carbohydrate. 'It's a jacket potato at the end of the day, it's cheap food, it's not meant to be some £15 gourmet smashed burger that you treat yourself to once a month. This is everyday food, for the masses, it shouldn't be too out there.' This is no SpudULike á la James Martin where the jacket potato is modernised beyond recognition, this is a refreshing humility that has not once wavered as the millions of followers grew.

Known for using his platform to shout about other potato vendors and local businesses in Tamworth, The Spud Man is very much a man of the people. 'You can get a good jacket potato anywhere and I say this to people all the time, go and support your local jacket potato van.' It's not often that one treks to try the latest TikTok favoured scan to be told to support your local business back home. 'I love Tamworth to pieces, but the council are really poor at marketing it as a touristy place so I've kind of taken it upon myself to show it off. I want my van to still be where it is in 10 years' time and if Tamworth town centre isn't there, neither am I.' So what advice would Ben give to those looking to emulate his success on TikTok? 'TikTok is all about consistency and persistency, it's that stupid. It's not necessarily quality so don't worry about having the perfect polished post, just post a lot! Something will stick and then you will find your niche. You'll find what works and then just post, post, post. You don't have to have thousands of thousands of followers to get views, that's the good thing about it. If your content is engaging TikTok will push it out to people.'



There is something deliciously paradoxical about Ben's success on TikTok. Whilst it has played a monumental role in his popularity, it hasn't seen him outprice his customer base. Though it has led to offers to franchise across the country, he's happy where he is, championing Tamworth and local businesses so they can share in his success. This paradox applies to TikTok's role in Ben's life as well. With kidney failure and weekly dialysis impacting his ability to travel, Ben had already made the choice to downsize his business. Downsizing and focusing on social media provides him a surprising respite that he has rarely seen in his 20 years trading. TikTok might have bought the world to Ben's pink mohawk shaped doorstep, but it's his love for his community and determination to share something positive that keeps his spuds roasting.



@spudman

#SPUDARMY

“YOU CAN GET A GOOD JACKET POTATO ANYWHERE AND I SAY THIS TO PEOPLE ALL THE TIME, GO AND SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL JACKET POTATO VAN.”

Don't miss out on your cashback!

All NCASS members can earn up to 6% cashback on purchases of 13kg (excluding patio gas), 19kg or 47kg propane bottles*

It's simple – the more you spend on gas within a qualifying period*, the more cashback you'll receive.

£300-499.99 - 3% cashback

£500-799.99 - 5% cashback

£800+ - 6% cashback



Visit **www.NCASS.co.uk/Calor** for details on how to sign up and start earning cashback.

Already signed up?

The current cashback period ends at midnight on the **31st December 2024**, so if you buy your Calor gas bottles from a retailer other than Calor directly e.g. garden centre, hardware store, then you need to upload your receipts via the Member Dashboard by the deadline.

If you have an account with Calor Gas directly and receive a Calor invoice when you purchase your gas, you will not be required to do anything as your spend will be automatically recorded.

For more details on the cashback scheme please visit
www.ncass.org.uk/rewards



Would you like to showcase your business?

If you've earned cashback and you'd like to feature in a Calor case study, get in touch. We'd love to hear how you're spending your cashback and this is a great opportunity for you to promote your business!

We're keen to learn:

- How the cashback is helping your business
- What you use LPG for
- What you've spent your cashback on
- Your feedback on the cashback scheme
- The future of your business

If you would like to take part, get in touch with the Calor team by emailing NCASS@calor.co.uk

*Terms and conditions: Offer is only available for members of The Nationwide Caterers Association. Cashback is available on any 13kg (excludes Patio gas), 19kg or 47kg Calor Propane gas bottles purchased directly from Calor or via a Calor authorised independent retailer/dealer. All purchases must be made during the qualifying periods, with members eligible to claim their cashback in two separate periods from 1st January – 30th June and from 1st July – 31st December.

UNDERSTANDING VAT

VAT (Valued Added Tax) is a tax on the supply of goods and services. It is charged at varying rates which, especially for caterers, often leads to errors, fines and penalties imposed by HMRC. In this article, James, Stanley and Co. and The Catering Accounting Co. has provided information, useful hints and tips to be aware of when tackling VAT as a food business.

5 COMMON MISTAKES

When to register for VAT

Currently HMRC has a total VAT taxable turnover threshold of £90,000 for the last 12 months. Should your turnover exceed this limit over a 12-month period you are required to register for VAT. Please refer to the HMRC website <https://www.gov.uk/register-for-vat> as these thresholds do change.

Not checking your 12-month turnover

You must review your historic 12-month turnover on a daily basis. One common mistake is that business owners only check their turnover when it comes to the financial year end, realising at that point the business should have registered for VAT months ago and then having to make a retrospective VAT registration, incurring fines and penalties.

Failing to register because you supply zero rated products/services

There is an important distinction between exempt and zero-rated supplies, with one of the main differences being that zero rated products/services are still classified as VAT taxable supplies, it's just that a 0% rate has been applied. You must therefore include zero-rated sales when ascertaining if your business has met the annual VAT threshold for VAT registration.

Incorrect VAT reclaims on costs/expenses

VAT is not charged on all costs and expenses you pay for. Make sure you account for each cost individually, by reviewing the supplier receipt or bill to see if VAT is listed and can actually be reclaimed by your business. <https://www.gov.uk/charge-reclaim-record-vat/reclaim-vat-business-expenses>.



Not keeping paperwork

Even if you know a particular cost or expense you paid included VAT, you can only reclaim that VAT if you keep the bill or receipt to support your claim.

WHAT VAT % DO I USE?

Applying the correct VAT rate(s) to your particular supplies has to be worked out on a case-by-case basis. Every business is different and therefore you should not make conclusions based on what other businesses have done. Here is a step-by-step approach to follow as a guide:

(1) Are your supplies “in the ordinary course of catering”?

Usually this involves a significant element of service as well; supplies made in restaurants/cafes, contract events, re-heating pre-cooked food etc.

If YES – then charge VAT @ 20%. If NO go onto the next step.

(2) Is it “eat in” (on your premises)

This includes tables and chairs you have provided adjacent to the premises.

If YES – then charge VAT @ 20%. If NO go onto the next step.

(3) Is it hot takeaway food?

If YES – then charge VAT @ 20%. If NO go onto the next step.

(4) Is it 20% VAT rate by default?

Examples of some items that fall into this category are; confectionary, alcohol, crisps etc.

If YES – then charge VAT @ 20%. If NO then go onto final step.

(5) Is it 0% (zero-rated) VAT rate by default?

Examples of some items include; cold takeaway food, cakes etc.

If YES – likely to be zero rated for VAT.

TIPS AND HINTS

VAT health check

For many businesses, every VAT return completed encompasses 99% of the same recurring income and costs. With that said, it is vital to get it right from the start otherwise any errors will just recur each VAT return completed. Asking your accountant to complete a VAT health check on that first VAT return gives you that reassurance looking forward that everything will be correct.



Claiming VAT on pre-registration costs

In certain cases, it is possible for businesses to reclaim input VAT on costs incurred pre-VAT registration, such as: stock (if still held at VAT registration date), certain services, fixed assets. There are time limits with regards to how far back you can claim for these items, for further information HMRC provide the following guidance <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/vat-input-tax/vit32000>.

Be aware of HMRC fines and penalties

HMRC impose strict penalties on both late submission of VAT returns and late payment. HMRC recently employed a "penalty points" structure of which multiple failings increase penalties levied on the business on each occasion. For further information please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/penalty-points-and-penalties-if-you-submit-your-vat-return-late>.

You can voluntarily register for VAT

For businesses with a high level of capital expenditure to get started, often these bills include VAT. For this reason, some businesses take the decision to voluntarily register for VAT in order to reclaim that VAT.

SUMMARY

Referring to one article online it is claimed that during the 2021-22 tax year HMRC issued over 66,000 penalty notices to businesses for VAT inaccuracies resulting in over £159 million. For caterers, the specific complexities surrounding VAT, often having to determine your VAT position on a case-by-case basis makes it an incredibly difficult process to get right. Key tip, get it right from the start by getting advice from an accountant pre-VAT registration to provide you with that knowledge and reassurance that you have got it right.

About The Catering Accounting Company

'At The Catering Accounting Company, we know your business means more to you than simply numbers. Our commitment is to provide the recipe to maximise your business's potential, whether it is improving cash-flow, increasing profits or implementing effective tax planning. Whether you are food producer, distributor or retailer our team is dedicated to take away all the stress and hassle of your finances and enable the numbers to add real value for you and your catering business.

We offer a fixed transparent pricing policy, so you know exactly what to budget each month for our costs and most importantly what you get for your money. As an award-winning firm we are proud to be recommended by the Nationwide Caterers Association.'

To find out about how The Catering Accounting Company could support you, get in touch by email info@catering-accounting.co.uk or call 0121 706 8585





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TWO HOSPITALITY ACTION FUNDRAISING EVENTS RETURN THIS SUMMER BY POPULAR DEMAND



Hospitality Action was established in 1837 and has since offered vital assistance to all who work or have worked within hospitality in the UK.

Hospitality Action is there to give people who work in or run hospitality businesses help, advice and support with the challenges they face, this is why we chose them as our charity partner.

From physical illness or mental health issues to financial difficulty, family problems to addiction - Hospitality Action is there to get you back on your feet again.

The surge in demand for their help which started in March 2020 continues to intensify as thousands of hospitality business and their employees struggle to cope with the ongoing cost of living crisis. The rising costs of accommodation, food and fuel are placing more hospitality families in danger of homelessness, and many businesses are at risk of failure, putting thousands of jobs in jeopardy. Hospitality Action has consistently innovated to deliver financial and mental health support alongside advice and signposting to people facing poverty, homelessness, and deteriorating mental health.

Since March 2020, Hospitality Action has answered tens of thousands of calls to their 24-hour free helplines and assisted over 12,000 hospitality households by awarding in excess of £4,000,000 in grants.

They pride themselves on offering highly personalised and empathetic service to beneficiaries, who are often dealing with unimaginable hardship.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SUPPORT THE CHARITY?

Hospitality Action has launched two 2024 epic challenge events, as they task the hospitality workforce to come together and do their bit to support colleagues in need.

Returning after a five-year hiatus, the celebrated Cotswold Cycle Challenge is back by popular demand. Taking place on Monday 13th May and kindly hosted by the charming Calcot & Spa in Tetbury, this much-loved industry event will host 125 like-minded cyclists who will journey across the picturesque Cotswold countryside, but not before indulging in a delicious mighty pasta Supper Party the night before at Calcot & Spa to fuel bodies and minds in preparation for the big ride.

To cater for cyclists of all abilities, participants are invited to join one of four stunning cycle routes, each starting and ending at Calcot & Spa: 20, 40, 60 or 100 miles.

Hospitality is at the core of this event with sumptuous feeding stations enroute at some of the most spectacular hotels in the region including Whatley Manor, The Castle at Castle Combe, and the Village Hall in Barnsley. Upon reaching the finish line, cyclists will be welcomed with a glass of Champagne Taittinger donated by Hatch Mansfield, and the day will conclude with a congratulatory BBQ at Calcot & Spa.

Funds raised from this challenge will go directly towards helping people from the hospitality industry, working and retired, who have fallen on hard times.

THE SUMMER CHALLENGE

The Summer Challenge returns in 2024 for its 5th year, challenging colleagues and teams from across the industry to collectively travel 40,000 miles whether that be by walking, running, cycling, wheeling or swimming - every mile counts.

Taking place between 7th - 17th June and sponsored by CH&CO, this inclusive event invites everyone to show off their sporting prowess in whatever form that may take. From swimming 10 lengths, cycling to work every day for a week or going on an epic dog walk, to running a marathon or scaling Ben Nevis, this morale-boosting annual fundraising event will help resolve the age-old question of whether front-of-house or back-of-house has the greatest stamina and decipher whether housekeeping can achieve more steps in a day than the restaurant floor team. Most importantly, it will make a noticeable positive difference to those in crisis within the hospitality industry.

Last year, 905 participants from a range of hospitality businesses participated in the Summer Challenge, raising over £85,000 for the charity, including Adam Skrzypczak, General Manager of Aviator who said: *"Being part of Hospitality Action's Summer Challenge was an extraordinary experience for Team Aviator. It was a rewarding week that not only surpassed our fundraising goal but also energised everyone involved. We were proud to be a part of such a meaningful cause."*

Chief Executive of Hospitality Action, Mark Lewis, said: *"We know recent years rank amongst the toughest we've ever seen, with a record number of people calling upon us for help and support, and 2024 is no exception. Since the start of the pandemic, we have awarded 12,000 grants, totalling £4,000,000 and answered tens of thousands of calls via our helplines."*



"Summer 2024 promises a prestigious lineup of sporting events including the Euros, Wimbledon, the Olympic Games, Hospitality Action's Summer Challenge and Cotswold Cycle Challenge. We urge as many individuals and businesses as possible to be part of the sporting action this summer and go the distance in aid of Hospitality Action."

To find out more about each event and to register, email: fundraising@hospitalityaction.org.uk or visit Summer Challenge / Cotswold Cycle Challenge. Please note: Cotswold Cycle Challenge can accommodate a maximum of 125 participants.

A SUSTAINABLE

SUMMER



It's unsurprising that food production is a key driver of climate change, which is something increasingly difficult to ignore for event and festival traders - especially when the shows they work at are looking to minimise their environmental impact.

Moving towards a more sustainable food system is a global imperative, but how can events and traders highlight, support, and deliver more climate friendly solutions to customers together?

There are some quick wins available. Diverting edible food surplus to local charities instead of landfill, for example, can be managed in-house and is often popular with food businesses - it simply takes a bit of co-ordination. As you will know, NCASS have worked with A Greener Festival for many years on the food waste initiative 8th Plate (the how-to instructions behind the 8th Plate are available to everyone free of charge). Traders are the best people to manage food waste initiatives at events as they don't want food waste. In addition to this, having a good network of wholesalers and suppliers that are located nearby festival or event sites and setting up a collection at the end of the event can really help eliminate food waste.

Better management of resources onsite, especially power and water, can offer efficiencies that should reduce, if not cover, overall costs. Most events sell connections rather than amounts of power. This crude approach means that not only do traders buy more power than they need, but events could also then build a margin on top. Therefore, better power management could offer savings to both food businesses and events while reducing impact.

Packaging suppliers are exploring composting food waste onsite at festivals and events, creating the possibility of a more circular approach with waste food returning to the earth as nutrients rather than rotting at landfill. However, when it comes to packaging, there is often a need for commercial composting and recycling is linked to local authority's policies and processes.

The Single Use Plastic ban has placed the focus on packaging, so working with suppliers directly to make the best solutions available to ensure consistency is even more important than ever.

The elephant, or in this case the cows in the room, are ruminators. Animals that graze on grass and generate greenhouse gases while they process their food. There are also issues around how the beef or dairy is produced, with varying production methods resulting in different outcomes. Beef from a regenerative farm for example, has a very different impact compared to animals bred and raised on former rain forests halfway around the world and fed on soya grown on cleared forests.

As the Green Event Code of Practice outlines (led by the Vision: 2025 group, the code is intended to establish best practice, provide clear and robust minimum standards, and shared targets for sustainability, understood and adopted by all stakeholders across the outdoor festival and events industry), there should be minimum standards, practices, and targets for food & drink at events and festivals and recycling, food waste, reducing meat and dairy and greener sources of energy are some of the fundamentals that should underpin an organisers' approach. Some events, like Shambala, have taken a proactive approach to delivering more sustainable food on site, by working with their caterers to switch out meat and dairy. However, this process has taken time, meaningful interactions with business owners - and relies on the good will of the 'Shambalans' - but they are arguably the exception, not the rule.

The festival catering sector is made up of thousands of micro businesses who tend to specialise in specific cuisines or dishes, usually selling one or two products with optional variations. With around 15% of the UK population and a similar number stating a desire to become so, the market and desire for vegetarian food has never been greater, especially amongst younger people; an increasing number of the population are eating less meat, but higher quality food (namely as 'flexitarians'). But that still leaves the majority of the population being meat eaters.

As meat alternatives become more affordable and more convincing it's likely more people will switch from animal protein in the future. The shift towards less meat will continue without the need to persuade punters to choose pulses over meaty flavours.

“THE ELEPHANT, OR IN THIS CASE THE COWS IN THE ROOM, ARE RUMINATORS.”

One option to reduce the impact of meat being sold at the event may be to reduce the amount of animal protein on the plate. Most burgers weigh 180g, reducing them to 150g would shave 20% off the meat consumed but may not really be noticed by the consumer. Another way forward could be to reduce the amount of meat in a dish by 40% and replace this with vegetables (think 60-40% bolognese) When the confectionary companies reduced the size of chocolate bars to accommodate sugar restrictions, people barely noticed.

There has been huge growth in vegetarian and vegan food popularity at festivals and there are a lot of amazing traders specialising in meat-free cuisine who do some of the best food in the business, but there are also countless traders who have an ethical approach to meat and dairy and who have excellent relationships with their suppliers, and this is often part of their USP. More measurable and responsible sourcing will likely mean working together with suppliers to find solutions that make sense for traders without creating a negative impact on the end users when it comes to menu prices or choice.

While food businesses will adapt to accommodate the events they want to work at, their wriggle room for making changes may be limited. It may be that the bold, proactive, and arguably top-down approach of Shambala is the way to genuinely ensure food businesses do not bring high impact products to sell on site. A number of festivals in Europe have taken to managing the sourcing of the food for the events on behalf of the caterers, thus making it easier to measure the impact of the food and manage what comes on site. But this may not be possible for events with more limited resources.

However, every event or festival is different and has different criteria and focus – sustainability isn't simple; there are often barriers to achieving an ideal outlined in a policy or procurement process and some of these barriers have become more prominent due to supply chain challenges.

The best place to start for you if you are a trader is by working collaboratively with events and festivals, asking them for support in working with more complex elements such as labelling CO2 emissions and calculating power requirements in advance. Once confidence has been established in delivering these measurements, you will be equipped to weave them successfully into their work across all events as part of sustainability indicators and targets.

As with all aspects of event production, communication is key to getting the best out of the events you work with – use the experience, knowledge, and expertise of the trader management teams and other traders to create the best possible working relationships and you won't go wrong.

With rising costs across all aspects of running a food business impacting small independents across the UK, how can we create a pragmatic approach when it comes to sustainability & catering?

We want to make this work across the board and so would love to hear from you about the changes you are making so that we can support by sharing information and create tools for our members that make sustainable practices accessible and successful in their implementation. Please get involved with this by sharing your thoughts and examples of what you are doing by emailing: roxy@ncass.org.uk.



PRIORITISING YOUR PEOPLE

A strong team plays a pivotal role in shaping the success of your business. Your employees represent your values and embody your ethos, making them integral moving parts that keep your business ticking over. We spoke to Conrad Burton of Tonic Talent, Patricia Colden of Colden HR and Greg Gabriel of The Mixing Jug to gain their insight into why prioritising your people is so important to the success of your business.

ATTAINING TOP TALENT

Though it might seem obvious, in order to prioritise the people within your business you first need to have people. Vacancies within the industry have begun to fall, however, serious staffing shortages remain and it is vital that businesses not only retain, but firstly attain strong staff who can add value. For Conrad Burton, a strong workplace culture and knowing when to try a new approach is integral to attaining top talent:

“Create a fantastic culture within your business, that way if a vacancy occurs people are talking to their friends, their family and former work colleagues recommending you as a place to work. A great culture helps to retain people in the long run. Utilise job boards and put ads up, but don’t be afraid to hire a recruiter like Tonic Talent who can get to really understand your business needs, especially if it’s a key hire. Finding the right person isn’t an easy thing to do when running a business and people may look at the cost of hiring a recruiter and think that it isn’t worth it, but it’s a good investment. Don’t be short-sighted, the cost of hiring the wrong person can end up being much more than hiring a good recruiter who will get you someone who will last. A recruiter can get to the bottom of who will be a good fit and find those passionate people who will stay overtime, add value and make the best of your business.”

FEATURING:



Conrad Burton, Tonic Talent



Patricia Colden, Colden HR



Greg Gabriel, The Mixing Jug

For Greg Gabriel, doing the groundwork and managing expectations are important parts of attaining and retaining staff:

"Take your time when hiring and always check references. We have turned down several potential hires due to inaccurate information given on CVs. Find a good HR consultant at the start and they will help to build the correct documents and processes to find the right person. It can be costly, but it is important to ensure your business is legally compliant, ethical and that you are doing right by your people. One of our biggest learning curves was our expectations of our more inexperienced team. We thought they'd know what we did at their age, however we quickly learned that not everyone has used a mop or chopped a tomato before. Although initially this was a frustrating experience, we eventually learned that this is simply not their fault and that it was now our job to teach core workplace skills that they may not have learned elsewhere."

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Workplace culture goes beyond a friendly hello in the morning and a positive culture creates the perfect environment for your business to flourish. A supportive culture fuels creativity, reduces the risk of employee burnout thereby improving retention and fosters innovation. A positive workplace culture can be fostered via many different means but the reward is an environment in which staff feel listened to, valued and respected.

For Greg, both recognition and open communication are key to creating a positive workplace culture:

"The small things can mean a lot; recognise and appreciate when your team do great work and especially when they go above and beyond. Carrying out 1-2-1 meetings, regularly structured reviews and being proactive with pay reviews is also important. We review pay at 6 months and 12 months minimum and ideally aim to give pay rises before they are expected. It's also important to give your team different platforms and different chances to be heard, whether it be an ad-hoc informal chat, a direct message or a planned 1-2-1. Often people need encouragement to discuss things they care about, especially when it comes to more difficult topics. Inform them up front of the confidentiality so they can talk freely and respect their courage in bringing up challenging topics."

For Patricia Colden, effective communication from managers and team leaders is also an important factor in creating a positive workplace environment:



"The effective communication of each employee's value is one of the most important factors when fostering a positive business culture. Celebrating achievement and contribution to the organisation is essential for boosting morale and motivation and overall job satisfaction and employee engagement. While they may not always be viewed with enthusiasm, the use of appraisals or regular performance reviews can also support in this area. Continuous feedback is a powerful tool for reinforcing the value of employee contributions and they allow employees to be recognised for their own hard work. Managers should engage in regular performance evaluations, highlighting specific accomplishments and areas for growth. Constructive feedback not only communicates value but also demonstrates a commitment to individual development."

ADVICE

So how can one create a strong team and positive workplace culture within their own business?

Greg advises:

"Be transparent. Giving trust early to your team is important, but set clear expectations of the desired outcomes. This can be especially challenging to a new business as things are being 'built as you go' so show them that you are learning too and don't pretend to have all the answers. Be flexible to your team's needs, one thing we do when hiring is find out their preferred working times and shift pattern to try and find the right fit in the business from the start."

Conrad advises:

"Treat people how you want to be treated. Listen to the voice of your employees and make their job and therefore their lives as enjoyable as possible since they add value to your business. Find out what their long-term goals are and how you can help to facilitate that."

Patricia advises:

"When recruiting, look at the incentives offered by competitors and see how they compare to those offered by your organisation. Is there a gap in the market that your organisation can fill? Once an employee has been attracted to your organisation, the challenge then switches to retaining them and keeping them engaged and committed to the business. An organisation's pay and benefits package will have a crucial part to play here. Be as competitive and innovative as you can but importantly regularly review and adjust your offering to make sure you are keeping pace with the external marketplace. Providing development opportunities is another key element in retaining staff.

Ensure there is room for learning and development and provide continuous opportunities for development. You may not have many options for promotion, but are you finding as many opportunities for staff to learn and grow with you rather than confining them to one job with no real prospect of change? Make sure you keep roles as challenging as you can to avoid people feeling they are in a rut. Finally, ensuring that there is adequate communication between management and employees is crucial."



umi

SAT NAV FOR BUSINESS

Wherever you are on your business journey, by taking the hard work out of finding and using the best information, expertise and finance, **UMi Sat Nav** can get you there quicker and in better shape.

We're offering all NCASS members' FREE access to:



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INDEPENDENT HOSPITALITY ALLIANCE



The Independent Hospitality Alliance (IHA) is a group of eight trade associations who have banded together to represent small and micro sized businesses (SMBs) within the independent hospitality sector. Specifically representing independent businesses, no big chains or corporate groups, the IHA was formed after discussions between NCASS, the National Federation of Fish Fryers (NFFF) and others to ensure effective representation of SMBs at government level. The IHA is made up of NCASS, the NFFF, the Kebab Alliance, Pizza, Pasta and Italian Food Association, Curry Life, Caribbean Food Collective and the Food Service Packaging Association. Membership with any of these trade associations includes membership of the IHA, ensuring that the unique needs of all SMBs within the independent hospitality industry are represented.

After extensive work with the former Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) during covid, it became clear – as many NCASS members will attest – that smaller businesses within the sector were not being adequately supported by government. Whilst large chains have the extensive finances and resources to represent themselves at government level, SMBs do not have comparable representation. As such, the IHA seeks to represent the independent hospitality sector, demonstrating that it is a unique sector with idiosyncratic strengths, motivations and challenges compared to corporate hospitality. The problems faced by independent hospitality businesses are not the same as those faced by corporate businesses yet the two are often grouped together. Therefore, through effective representation at government level, the IHA aims to highlight the challenges that are unique to the sector and that need addressing in order for SMBs to survive the current challenges and grow.



One key way in which the IHA seeks to do this is by creating a more direct route to communicate with government for small businesses. By building these connections, the IHA will be able to create strong working relationships with civil servants and government ministers such as MP Kevin Hollinrake, the minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business, in order to make the case for NCASS members directly. Small businesses can be unfairly viewed as expendable or even replaceable whilst bigger businesses are viewed as a 'safer' bet and easier to communicate with. The IHA seeks to change this narrative, reaffirming that SMBs within the independent hospitality sector are innovative enterprises with the potential to revitalise and reignite local economies and communities. In doing so, the IHA will provide the government with the necessary resources, such as key data and case studies, to make informed decisions that reflect the needs of SMBs. This will help the industry to access the support it needs and to ensure that future regulations and taxations are fit for purpose.

The independent hospitality industry faces a multitude of difficulties which need to be brought to government attention in order to enact effective change. These challenges, such as the cost-of-operating and staffing shortages amongst many others, are often only enhanced by blanket legislation that only considers the capacity of large chains, thereby disproportionately impacting smaller businesses. Subsequently, the IHA seeks to introduce 'breathing space' in which any new legislation that may impact members is first implemented on corporate businesses. After a one to two year grace period, during which time the efficacy and plausibility of this legislation will have been thoroughly tested, the legislation would then be implemented on SMBs. Through this approach, the IHA seeks to avoid bombarding small independent businesses with legislation that may prove excessively costly for them.

Independent hospitality businesses across the country provide great value for their communities and local economies. They bring vitality to high streets and town centres, create jobs and invest in the community. Independent businesses are wealth creators and generators, and they drive the industry forward through measured risk-taking and innovation. These businesses not only shape the economy, they bolster local communities and it is vital that their voices are heard and their needs met.

'The IHA is about raising the profile and recognition of small independent businesses and what they can bring to the table. When people spend money at a small local business it supports the area and adds to the character of that area. These businesses enervise the high streets and other local businesses. Independent hospitality is a destination in and of itself, not just a pit stop half an hour before your film starts like some chains. These are the businesses that people travel to and make memories with; they need to be supported.'

Mark Laurie, NCASS Stakeholder Director



Visit the Independent Hospitality Alliance website:
www.independenthospitalityalliance.co.uk

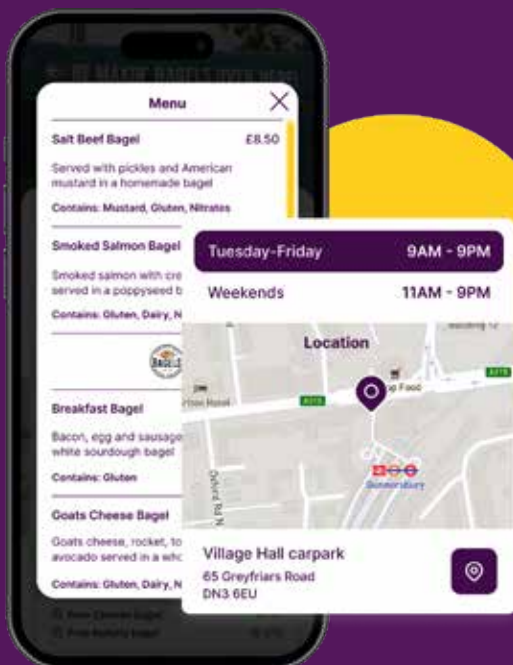
NEW PARTNERSHIP:



Miles was fresh out of university with a degree in Sports Science when he launched his own company – Bark 'n' Render – specialising in slow-cooked Texas BBQ meats. After working in a sales career that he wasn't passionate about, fond memories of growing up helping his Mum with her catering business led him to purchase a smoker and teach himself the art of smoking a mouth-watering brisket for 12 hours a night. Miles hit local farmers markets in Hampshire to sell to hungry visitors before moving on to pop-ups and events, building up a loyal following in the local area. His homemade food stand eventually turned into a specially built trailer that he could pitch up at breweries, festivals and pub gardens.

While the perks of free social media advertising helped to an extent for businesses, Miles would find that posting about events he would be trading at didn't always garner up the interest he expected. "I would speak to my mates on a Saturday morning and they would have forgotten that I was trading local to them on the Friday night. I'd post about my locations on Facebook during the week, but many people my age are trying to steer away from the traditional social media sites and so wouldn't always know to come along. I knew something had to change. That's where the concept for My Streets came from."





CONNECTING VENDORS WITH CUSTOMERS

My Streets is a brand-new app, created by a caterer, for caterers. The app features live trading notifications, menus, and schedules all in one place. Featuring an interactive map, users can list their preferences for street food in an area and find the perfect match for them, while also boosting customer numbers and accelerating business growth. Live trading alerts and discount notifications are just some of the ways in which traders can access more customers than ever before.

Miles explains: "I wanted a way to contact people who love our food and tell them where and when we were trading. I often found myself on page 8 of Google looking for independents to eat at in a new area. People know how to find the chains, but they had no way of locating the independents – especially when it came to street food joints."

My Streets can access traders by cuisine type, hygiene ratings, reviews and pictures and send you their location with live menus so you know exactly what to expect before you arrive."

REDUCING FOOD WASTE

Eliminating food waste is another major benefit of the My Streets app, as push notifications allow businesses to advertise discounts if dishes don't sell out by a certain point in the day. "I was calling my mates and offering them really high quality pulled pork for free just to prevent it going in the bin at the end of a trading day," says Miles. "I couldn't pass it on to a food bank due to handling and so I decided to do something whereby I could at least make a turnover and improve profit margins rather than just throwing good food in the bin. It's a win-win for businesses and customers."



SIX MONTHS FREE TRIAL FOR NCASS MEMBERS

Street food has had a major impact on the rejuvenation of many high streets up and down the UK, which is why an app that collates all current traders at certain times in specific locations will only help to boost visitor numbers. Gone are the days of scrawling Facebook to find out where your favourite traders are located; with My Streats, everything is listed free of charge for users. Not only that, NCASS members can benefit from a generous six-month free trial.

“We’re here to help the street food industry, not to make it more costly,” Miles explains. “A six-month free trial for NCASS members will help them to build their profile and start noticing a real upsurge in customer base. If you continue with the app after the six months, then it costs just £1 a day.”

“I’ll be your main account manager for the foreseeable future which purely comes down to the fact that I want to build an open, honest community amongst vendors. We’re already a really supportive bunch of people and the more we continue to work together, the better our industry is going to be.”

Quote from Nick Summers, NCASS Managing Director:

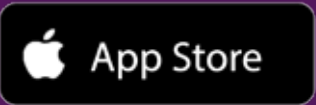
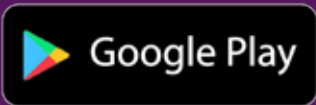
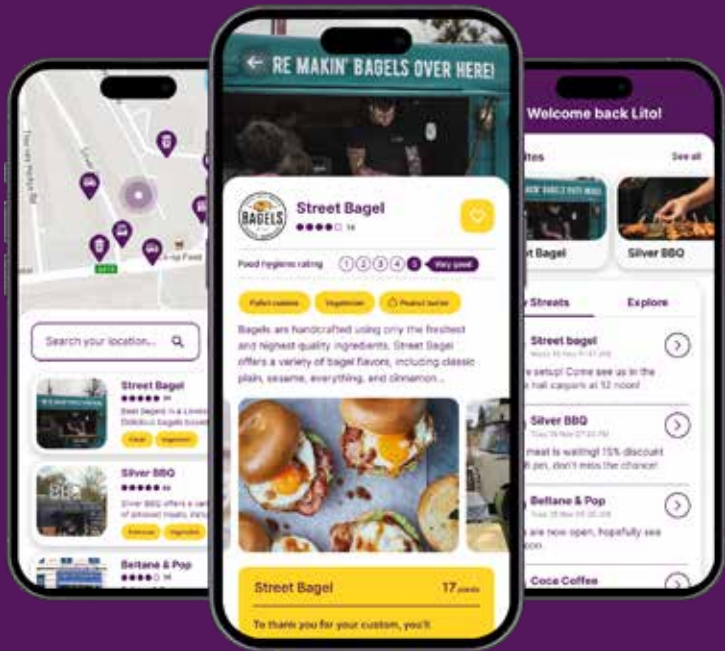
“We’re delighted to be working alongside My Streats to showcase the diverse range of street food options across the UK and to be introducing a brand-new customer base to our existing members.

“In signing up for the free 6-month trial of the app, members can be assured that food waste will decrease while profit margins increase. We hope that you will take full advantage of this new partnership to see how it benefits your business.”

HOW CAN NCASS MEMBERS GET INVOLVED?

The My Streats app is open to all street food businesses nationwide. Listings on the app will require businesses to demonstrate a good food hygiene rating and reviews.

For more information on the app, visit www.mystreats.co.uk or email Miles at hello@mystreats.co.uk.



MEET THE TEAM:



OFFICE MANAGER

HI SARAH! HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT NCASS AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

I've been with NCASS since March 2018 and my role is Office Manager. I like to call myself the 'Mother of the office' because I try to look after everybody and make sure they have everything that they need to do their job. So that's plenty of tea bags, coffee, squash, paper and a nice smile when you walk in at reception! I deal with any post that comes in from members and send out work opportunities to members across the country. I also organise any events such as the Christmas and Summer parties, sorting out the location and caterer for those events (so look out for some work opps from me!).

HOW DO YOU INTERACT WITH MEMBERS?

I manage the Administration team and we make sure that members receive their Safety Management Systems (SMS) with all the correct documentation. That includes their risk assessments, Health and Safety policies, COSHH documents, 'I'm a Member' certificate and their Booker vouchers. I also email members to ensure that deliveries suit them and the needs of their business.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

First things first, I come in with a cheery smile and say good morning to everybody! Then I print off and laminate all the training certificates for members and non-members who have completed training with us, ready to be sent out. Next I look at sending out SMSs for members who have joined or renewed in the last five days. So that involves getting them all boxed up, with the correct individual documentation, ready to be collected by DPD. I'll then get started on printing off the following day's SMS details that need to be sent to members. It can

range from 45 to over 100 packs that need sending out on a daily basis, so the printer gets a lot of use from me! I then liaise with our Account Managers about any members who have got in touch and prepare any documentation that they need. I'm also responsible for gathering training feedback which involves calling someone who has completed one of our courses, asking them questions about the course and gathering feedback on their experience so that we continuously improve our training.

WHAT ABOUT OUR MEMBERS INSPIRES YOU?

I love their passion and drive. They've obviously found something that they love and wanted to make a business out of and that's inspiring. Throughout Covid especially it was great to see how a lot of businesses adapted to such hard times. Some bricks and mortar businesses moved to delivery and because of that they were able to keep the business going and that resilience is amazing. I also love seeing our members on social media, I'm like Miss Marple when I spot one! If I see a member on social media and they're local, my son and I will always try to go. My son Josh loves The Spud Man at the moment and since he's seen him on TikTok he's been desperate to go see him! We've also been to Cleopatra's Kitchen after seeing their socials and he loved the chicken shawarma!

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU THINK PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT YOU?

I am incredibly flexible and I can still do the splits at 42!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CUISINE?

I love all food to be honest! I'm not afraid to try anything (apart from insects) and I love variety so with anything I cook at home I try to include all colours of the rainbow. But if I had to pick it would be between Mexican or Italian cuisine. I'm quite partial to pizza (everyone is though to be honest!) but I love the spices of Mexican food – and the tequila!

IF YOU WERE TO OPEN YOUR OWN FOOD BUSINESS WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I'd open a Greasy Spoon. I'm chirpy all the time and if I could help people be chirpy at 7am I'd love that. I'd call it Moss's Munches and I'd offer breakfast, cold sandwiches and lunchtime snacks. I'd want to be in a central location with a good team of people but I wouldn't want to do evenings. There'd be bacon and sausage sarnies, your full English, lots of toast and some healthier options as well. And if I could afford to do it, I'd do a breakfast club as well to help out families and single parents by making sure the kids have the best start to the day.

THE ULTIMATE KITCHEN GUIDE

Getting your kitchen layout right cannot be underestimated when setting up or moving into a bricks and mortar premises.

Our partners Nisbets have helpfully provided their expert insight on essential regulations when it comes to your kitchen, and how you can set yourself up for success.

We offer exclusive discounts and cashback for all NCASS members with Nisbets – you can get up to **6% cashback** on any purchases you make with them, plus an upfront order discount – meaning you can save a lot on top quality equipment. Visit the [Member Savings & Rewards](#) on our website to find out more and access the deal.

A well designed kitchen equates to efficiency. And an efficient kitchen has the potential to produce better results and earn you more profit. Factors that should be central to the design and layout of your kitchen include:

Goods delivery

A clear entry space is essential for deliveries causing minimal disruption to the flow of your kitchen.

Goods Storage

Ideally you want storage areas conveniently close to your delivery space to promote efficiency – don't compromise on storage space.

Food Prep

This should be between your storage and cooking area. Be mindful of having clear spaces and adequate work surfaces for different types of food prep, such as designating areas for preparing raw meats and vegetables and specific allergen free food orders.

Cooking

This space should easily flow between prep and the pass, with a focus on streamlining staff traffic. There should be sufficient space for staff to work safely to reduce the risk of them making contact with hot surfaces, knocking into each other and spilling hot liquids etc. Like the preparation area the cooking area should be organised to minimise cross contamination.

Food Service

If food is not served straight from the kitchen then you will need a service counter or bar area with suitable appliances to keep foods hot (e.g. Bain Marie) or refrigerated (e.g. cold display) unit. If foods and drinks are served by staff from the counter then there will need to be readily accessible hand washing facilities.



Washing Up and Cleaning Facilities

Washing up should not disrupt the flow of service, and should ideally be out of the customer's view and away from areas where open food is prepared. Aim to have separate sinks for washing up and food preparation with a reliable supply of hot and cold potable running water and adequate drainage. Washing up areas must be designed so that they are easy to keep clean and in good repair. Ensure they are fitted with adequate draining boards and work surfaces to safely stack crockery, utensils etc.

Plan a designated space for storing cleaning chemicals in an area away from food products, to prevent chemical contamination. This could be a designated cupboard, store room or on a low level shelf, below the washing up sink and away from food prep surfaces.

VENTILATION

Depending on the processes and appliances in use you will need a suitable means of natural and/or mechanical extract ventilation to remove combustion products, heat and grease. Without adequate ventilation the kitchen environment could quickly become harmful to health or will require additional regular cleaning and maintenance. Filters, ducting and other parts of the ventilation system, must be designed so that they can be easily cleaned, replaced and repaired. If using gas appliances then an extract ventilation canopy that covers all appliances and is interlocked with the gas supply will need to be designed into the layout.

There are lots of aspects to consider when considering the layout of your kitchen, such as:



WASTE MANAGEMENT

As a business you have a legal responsibility to ensure your waste is stored and disposed of correctly.

The law states that:

- Food waste and rubbish must not accumulate in areas where food is prepared or stored, so ensure bins are emptied regularly and at the end of service (closing checks).
- Where ever possible, food waste must go into lidded bins to prevent access to pests and flying insects and minimise the risk of food contamination.
- Waste bins must be of a suitable construction and kept clean at all times – they also must be pest proofed e.g. lidded, free of holes/access points, with minimal surrounding vegetation.
- All waste must be disposed of correctly – catering trade waste must be disposed of by a commercial trade waste contactor who is registered with the Environment Agency. This could be the local authority or private waste contractor. Trade waste must NOT be disposed of via domestic

waste collection services
e.g. the wheely bin at home.

- You are advised to check the credentials of your waste contractor and have the contract details readily available to support with routine food safety inspections as you will be asked to demonstrate how your waste is managed.
- Make sure the frequency of your waste collections is sufficient – if the bin starts to overflow and waste starts to accumulate around the bin area then you could be subject to enforcement action by the local authority for failing to adequately manage your waste and because this will attract pests.

CORRECT DISPOSAL OF FATS, OILS AND GREASE

Failure to comply with the law can result in a fine or imprisonment.

- Consider installing a grease trap or enzyme dosing system (e.g. Greasepak) at your sinks to stop grease from clogging pipes or blocking drains and sewers. It could save you a lot of money and hassle in the long term.

- Waste oil from fryers etc. must be collected into suitable containers and collected by a trade waste contractor who is registered with the Environmental Agency.
- You are advised to keep waste transfer notes for two years to demonstrate your due diligence.
- Aim to minimise the amount of food waste and grease that enters the drainage system - always scrape and remove food waste from plates and saucepans into a bin before washing them in the sink.

WHAT TYPE OF BINS SHOULD I USE?

The types of waste you produce, the venue size and the amount of covers you are expecting will determine what kind of waste disposal your restaurant requires.

Kitchen Bins

Lidded easy to clean bins that fit into the space available. For hygiene reasons it is best to select a bin with a foot operated lid.

External Bins

You will need a suitably sized external wheely bin or skip to store your food waste outside. Waste contractors can supply a

range of wheely bins from 240 to 1100 litres in capacity, make sure these bins are fitted with lids (that can be locked) and any large drainage holes inside the bins are fitted with bungs to prevent access to pests.

Recycling Bins

Keep kitchen recycling simple with colour coded lids and labels for bins. They are available in a range of sizes from 60 to 121 litres, and with Slim Jim designs to fit kitchens with limited space. Then ensure you have the appropriate recycling wheelie bin outside to transfer the recycling waste into.

Waste Compactors

To save space and time spent taking rubbish bags to outdoor bins, waste compactors can be highly beneficial for busy venues, with an average compaction ratio of 85%.

Bin Stores

Keep your bins looking smart, in an area that will keep pests out with bin stores. They can be built in timber, stainless steel or plastic with roofs or controlled access. Purpose built bin stores can help to separate and secure bin storage areas from public view.

APPLIANCES THAT WILL RAPIDLY AND SAFELY COOL FOOD

Hot food which is to be cooled before storage or service must be cooled as quickly as possible so it can be refrigerated, wrapped, or covered. The NCASS Risk Assessment stipulates that food should be cooled within the target time of 90-120 minutes. It can be a challenge to meet the required food safety procedure for cooling foods. Cooling food at room temperature takes a long time and provides the ideal conditions for food poisoning bacteria to grow (the danger zone) as well as increasing the risk of uncovered food being contaminated.

One of the most effective and safest ways of cooling foods is using a blast chiller. This appliance blasts cold clean air over the food enabling large quantities of cooked food to be cooled quickly and within the target time.

Blast chilling is perfect for setting delicate desserts, and even fondant mash can be brought back from frozen to the same texture as when it was first cooked. Some blast chillers can also cook food, meaning that the whole process, from cooking to chilling, can be done in one unit, saving space and time.



If batch cooking or preparing food in advance of service, a blast chiller can be invaluable, providing quick and convenient food preparation.

APPLIANCES THAT WILL KEEP FOOD HOT FOR SAFE SERVICE

Food which is being cooked or reheated and is intended to be sold hot, must be held at or above 63°C.

For large-scale events or canteens, Banqueting Trolleys can be used to keep food in Gastronorm pans ready to serve. With castor wheels these are easy to transport for convenience.

Hot Cupboards are a static option for storing plates to keep them warm or storing plated meals. These can double up as a work bench for prep work and make good use of space. Heated Trolleys are similar but have the added bonus of being transportable.

Once your food is ready to be served and plated up, heat lamps can be sited over service canopies, to help keep dishes piping hot until front of house can get them to the table.

GAS SAFETY

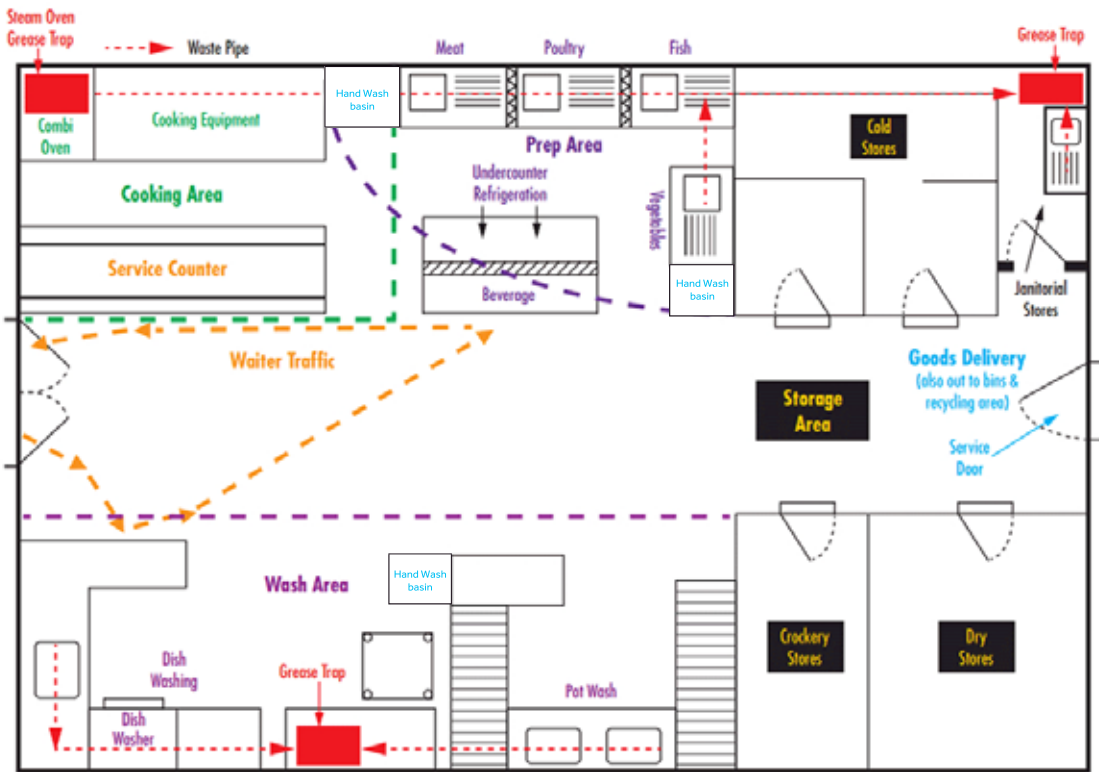
Any gas appliances in the kitchen must adhere to safety regulations during installation and use and be well maintained. Annual gas safety checks must be carried out and failure to comply with gas safety regulations can result in fines or imprisonment.

All gas appliances for commercial catering must have CE or UKCA/UKNI conformity marking to show that they have been safety certificated for use in the UK. Individuals who carry out installations or repairs on gas appliances must be Gas Safe registered. It is important that you check an engineer's Gas Safe registration details to ensure they have the correct competency to work on the

type of appliances that you use (e.g., mains gas or LPG supplied appliances).

Gas Safe regulations state that all commercial kitchens are required by law to have an extraction ventilation system that is interlocked with the gas supply and emergency control points. This means that if ventilation systems fail, the interlock system will restrict the gas flow to appliances until the ventilation is back in working order. It will also allow for the gas supply to be isolated in an emergency situation. Regular checks should be carried out on the ventilation system to ensure that grease deposits are not compromising the extraction.

This diagram below, provided by Nisbets, shows the blueprint for an ideal kitchen layout, that you can use as a reference tool.



COOKING UP SAFER MOBILE LPG STANDARDS FOR ALL

For many mobile and outdoor event caterers, LPG remains the primary source of power for cooking, heating, and powering generators. We all have a responsibility to safeguard the industry as well as to protect the public from harm and ensuring the highest standards of LPG storage and usage are adopted across the entire sector is imperative to that. The potential ramifications of poor LPG usage can result in fatal accidents and consequences.

As an industry, it is vital that we strive to uphold the highest standards when it comes to LPG. We all have a vested interest and it is a collective responsibility that includes not just catering businesses but also event organisers, Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and gas engineers.

In the last issue of the NCASS Members' Magazine, we touched on the need to raise standards and introduced the Mobile LPG Gas Safety Initiative. We anticipate that this will be a five-year plan that we have broken down into a six-part roadmap, covering the areas we've identified as essential to standardising gas safety within our industry.

The aim is to work with relevant associations and bring as many people onboard with this mission as possible. We have begun and continue discussions with the Gas Safe Register and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as well as industry bodies. Currently, there are too many inconsistencies in the standards that people work to, and greater education is needed in order to implement higher and consistent standards for all.

We believe it's unfair for engineers to follow varying standards or have different interpretations. This can result in different scenarios where an engineer approves something that another engineer doesn't. This makes it impossible for traders to take responsibility and work to best practice. As an industry we have to do more and be better.



As part of this push, we recently submitted a Freedom of Information request to local authorities across the UK. This revealed that only 31% of local authorities have undertaken mobile LPG training in the last five years.

EHOs are tasked with conducting general Health & Safety checks, as such they are facing increasing pressure to understand the difference between safe and unsafe practices and standards when it comes to LPG usage. Stemming from this, we have found more and more local authorities reaching out to us for assistance and training.

We mentioned rolling out a series of gas safety workshops in the last magazine which we have now started to deliver. So far, we have trained officers from across Hampshire at Winchester City Council, and have plans to carry out training in Portsmouth and Chesterfield in the coming months. We have had a lot of interest from local authorities in the UK who are considering the workshops, and early feedback has been overtly positive.

These workshops are tailored for local authorities and event organisers, they provide practical insights, outline real-life scenarios, address common challenges and help to identify unsafe or dangerous LPG setups. Facilitated by an NCASS Gas Safety Consultant and a qualified LPG engineer with extensive industry experience, these workshops offer invaluable firsthand knowledge on the many nuances of mobile LPG usage.

The workshops can be organised for groups consisting of environmental health professionals or event organisers, providing face-to-face training and held at a venue of your choice within the local authority. The workshop curriculum comprises of five comprehensive and interactive sessions.

In our LPG article from the previous magazine we referenced the training course we were working on which we have since launched and is now available for you to take. The course enables businesses and employees to effectively undertake day-to-day LPG related tasks safely with confidence.

This course is essential for anyone working with or assessing the suitability of mobile LPG setups. It outlines the key safety rules for using LPG appliances and provides an understanding of handling LPG cylinders in any scenario or environment. It is an imperative qualification for any of your team (where applicable) who works with LPG or helps to setup, as such we would highly recommend you give staff this training.

Fiona West, NCASS Environmental Health Specialist, said:

"The 'Safe Use of LPG in Mobile and Outdoor Catering' course and the dedicated workshops aim to fill the knowledge gap and enhance awareness about the safe utilisation of LPG in mobile and outside catering operations. Safety is our top priority and education is key, which is why we're dedicated to empowering individuals within the industry and providing them with the necessary skills to ensure a secure working environment and improve standards with the overall use of LPG."

The LPG training course can be accessed through our online training portal and a significant discount is available for all members. Completion of the course will reward you with an accredited certificate, acknowledging your commitment to improving LPG safety standards and protocols.

For more information on either the online course or to book places on the workshop, call 0300 124 6866 or email info@ncass.org.uk.

Ensuring Safety and Efficiency: The Importance of Flame Failure Devices in Mobile Catering Appliances

With the growth in popularity of mobile catering over the past decade and the delicious street food being now readily available at all major public events there has never been more focus on the importance of safety in the industry. Ensuring the safety of mobile catering appliance set up is paramount and one crucial aspect of this safety check is ensuring that all appliances are equipped with Flame Failure Devices (FFDs), also known as Flame Supervision Devices (FSD).

Flame Failure Devices are designed to automatically shut off the gas supply to an appliance if the flame has been extinguished. Functionally, they work by detecting the presence of a flame through a sensor. If the flame is not detected within a specified timeframe, the FFD activates and cuts off the gas flow to the appliance. This is significantly important in the prevention of potential gas leaks and fire hazards.

The importance of Flame Failure Devices in mobile catering:

- **Fire Prevention** – The presence of an FFD reduces the likelihood of fires caused by unattended or malfunctioning appliances. This not only protects the catering staff but also ensures the safety of customers and the general public.
- **Regulatory Standards** – Appliances supplied with Flame Failure Devices are compliant with Liquid Gas Codes of Practice 24 Part 3 which specifies that appliances shall have burners protected by flame supervision devices.
- **Enhanced Reliability** – Appliances fitted with FFDs offer peace of mind, allowing caterers to focus on delivery quality food and service



ADAM, TECHNICAL SPECIALIST, AT
HAMILTON GAS PRODUCTS

without worrying about safety issues.

- **Customer Confidence** – Demonstrating a commitment to safety and using the appropriate equipment enhances the reputation of the mobile catering business. Customers value safety-conscious vendors which leads to better trust and more loyal on-going trade.

Hamilton Gas Products, long standing NCASS partners, offer a full range of gas catering appliances equipped with flame failure devices including cast iron and wire boiling rings from Foker. These gas boiling rings with FFD are available in single, double and even triple gas burners to satisfy any requirement. On the website, you will also find a wide range of gas cooker burners suited to building your own chinese cooker, Indian stock pot or tandoori oven. With kilowatt ratings from 12kW to 18kW, brands include Duoflam, Vortex and Gas Centre Fire. These products will guarantee high performance, safety, and peace of mind.

As well as high quality, compliant and efficient products, Hamilton Gas Products also have a highly rated customer service team and dedicated Catering Industry Product Specialist, Adam. Both are on hand to answer any questions that a mobile caterer might have regarding their appliances and set up. Our team can be contacted by emailing help@gasproducts.co.uk or on any of our social channels.

To speak directly with Adam, simply give him a call or WhatsApp on 07939046246 and he can provide guidance on the safest possible gas setup for your catering business.



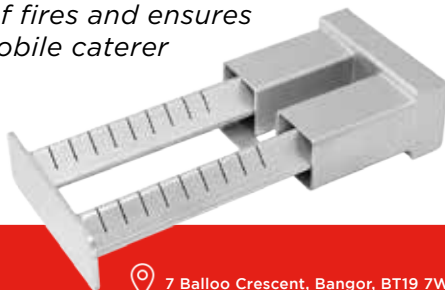
TM
NCASS
NATIONWIDE
CATERERS
ASSOCIATION

PARTNER



THE IMPORTANCE OF FLAME FAILURE DEVICES

- *Boiling rings with FFD in 2, 3 or 4 burners options*
- *2 & 3 Bar Chinese Commercial Cooker Burners Available for LPG & Natural Gas**
- *Flame Failure Devices designed for the mobile catering industry*
- *Designed to automatically cut off gas supply if the flame has been extinguished*
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