

'We're looking at suburbs and towns with a buzz about them. We want locations with good footfall but we're not scared about being at the end of the high street or slightly off it - we're not too precious' *Graham Hall, p30*

Rain dampens eating-out enthusiasm

Pubs prove most resilient as the first quarter of soggy weather takes its toll on the sector

The wet weather affected consumers' enthusiasm for eating out in the first quarter of this year, but pubs continued to enjoy growth, according to the latest report from Allegra Foodservice.

Allegra Foodservice's *UK EatingOut Panel*, which tracks the eating out activity of 6,000 consumers' each month, reveals that - overall - eating-out participation and frequency was down year-on-year in Q1 of 2014.

However, eating-out frequency at pubs and supermarkets-to-go channels has increased,

with lunch - in particular - driving growth.

Additionally, overall spend continues to grow faster than the rate of inflation - suggesting that consumers are opting for premium dishes when they do dine out.

Allegra suggests that the fall in overall eating-out frequency is a result of the wettest winter on record, as well as low consumer confidence and the fact that Easter fell outside of March this year.

"Some 42% of consumers still do not feel confident about their future income levels and

60% don't agree that their money is going further now than it did six months ago," says Allegra Foodservice director Simon Stenning.

"Dampened consumer confidence has also impacted frequency, which has decreased, except at lunch where frequency has increased marginally. This rise in frequency at lunch has been driven by growth in the supermarkets-to-go channel and branded chains."

Looking forward to the rest of 2014, Allegra Foodservice predicts that a rise in consumer confidence should result in an increase in participation and frequency across all segments, with the World Cup generating an extra lift for pubs.

"Spend is expected to remain high with the new era of premiumised informality driven by food pleasure seekers," it says, adding

Some consumers still do not feel confident about their future income levels

that operators are 'very optimistic' about the year ahead.

Last month, Allegra Foodservice predicted that the UK restaurant market would reach £48.2bn in value in 2014 and £52bn by 2017, with new and traditional fast food set to be the strongest-growing segment.

"The UK restaurant scene is undergoing a period of significant change, with a renaissance of pubs, strong emergence of new fast food, and a plethora of street-food markets nationwide," says Allegra Foodservice projects director Steve Gotham. "These concepts enable consumers to enjoy premium food in an informal setting."



Eau dear: the wet weather impacted on dining-out frequency in Q1

Estrella Damm launches Gastronomy Congress

World-renowned chef Ferran Adrià will head up the Estrella Damm Gastronomy Congress, in association with *Restaurant* magazine, being held on 30 June at The Hurlingham Club in Fulham, south-west London.

Adrià, who was head chef at elBulli in Roses, north-east Spain, which was named the World's Best Restaurant on numerous occasions when it was open, will be joined by top Spanish and British chefs at the half-day gathering. These include Tom Kerridge, chef-patron of two Michelin-starred The Hand & Flowers in Marlow, Bucks; and David Gil and Fran Agudo, from the acclaimed Tickets restaurant in Barcelona, which was founded by Adrià's brother Albert.

As well as giving a keynote address on the

progressive nature of Spanish food, Adrià will take part in an informal Q&A session.

Kerridge, meanwhile, will showcase his interpretation of modern British tapas at the congress, while Gil and Agudo will be providing an insight into the food at Tickets and demonstrating why the restaurant has taken the Catalan capital by storm.

Also appearing will be Spanish chef José Pizarro, who runs the José and Pizarro restaurants in London's Bermondsey, who will give a

talk and demonstrate some tapas dishes.

The congress will start at 2pm on 30 June at The Hurlingham Club and will be followed in the evening by The National Restaurant Awards, *Restaurant* magazine's annual countdown of the Top 100 places to eat in the UK.

➔ **To book your place at the congress email estrelladamm.congress@wrbm.com, and for a space at The National Restaurant Awards 2014, send an email to joanne.horton@wrbm.com or call 01293 610403.**





Pizza the action: Italian food is being given the gluten-free treatment

Industry waking up to 'free-from' food's potential

Gluten-free dishes on the rise as brands tap into £100m market

Restaurants are responding to the growing number of consumers looking to avoid gluten, whether for health or lifestyle reasons, with increased numbers of 'free-from' dishes on menus, new research has shown.

According to Horizons' Menurama survey, 23% of eating-out brands now list a gluten-free option on their menus, an increase of 37% year-on-year. More menus are also describing dishes as 'healthy', up 13% since summer 2013, it found, in line with growing consumer concerns over health issues.

Free-from foods are moving into the mainstream, with people now opting to avoid

23% of eating-out brands now list a gluten-free option, an increase of 37%

gluten and dairy for lifestyle reasons as well as food intolerances and allergies. The latest data from Mintel reveals the UK free-from market grew by 10% year-on-year to £347m in 2013, and is due to hit £519m by 2016. Gluten-free products account for 45% of total retail free-from sales.

While only 5% of the population are coeliac and have a severe gluten reaction, research indicates that a further 10% of the population is gluten-intolerant and suffer unpleasant effects when

eating gluten, and another 5% avoid gluten for lifestyle reasons. Coeliac UK says that around one in 100 people have coeliac disease but only 24% of these are diagnosed. It estimates there are nearly half a million people with the disease who aren't yet diagnosed.

Hamish Renton, of Renton Associates – a founding partner of the newly-launched European Free From Expo dedicated to the dissemination of information about free-from foods – says the rapid growth of the retail free-from market has encouraged restaurants to expand their offers. "The people eating in restaurants are the same people that are buying gluten-free products in supermarkets," he says.

According to research from Coeliac UK, people with the condition and the family and friends they dine out with are worth a potential £100m to the eating-out industry.

"There is a big market for restaurants to tap into because someone who is gluten-intolerant will often dictate where a group of people eat," said Anne Maloney, corporate partnerships officer at Coeliac UK, speaking at *Restaurant's* recent Development Chef Summit.

The industry was responding to this, Maloney said, with many working with the charity to get Coeliac UK accreditation. These include restaurant brands ASK Italian, Pizza Express and Pizza Hut as well as La Tasca, which has an extensive gluten-free offer that encompasses many dishes.

Open & shut

▲ New Zealand-born chef Anna Hansen has signed a lease for a second Modern Pantry restaurant in the City of London. The restaurant is expected to open next spring.

▲ Early this month will see the launch of **Caterina55** in Moorgate. The restaurant will focus on the cooking of Liguria in north-west Italy and offer a take-away and delivery service pitched at busy City workers.

▲ Sports bar brand Bar Sport is to open its first site in London under a 'mini franchise' with the operator of K10 Japanese restaurant, near London's Liverpool Street.

▲ All-day Creole bar and kitchen Bayou has opened on Inverness Street in London's Camden serving a mix of Southern American cuisine with French, Spanish, Italian and African influences.

▲ Pop-up rum bar PortSide Parlour has taken up permanent residence on Rivington Street in London's Shoreditch. Food such as stuffed courgette flowers with honey and goats' cheese will complement the bar's extensive drinks offer.

▲ Italian café bar and deli **La Bottega** has opened the first of its revamped concepts on Monmouth Street in London's Seven Dials.

▲ Jenius Social deli, which is described as a 'food and drink hub', has opened its doors in Islington, north London. It will host supper clubs, cooking demos and team-building events centred on food.

▲ **The City Barge** in Chiswick, west London, has reopened following an extensive refurbishment.