

# THE WHOLE PICTURE

With B&I being such a huge business, there are, of course, many benefits of buying in bulk for contract caterers. Having products delivered en masse to your door is cheap, convenient and provides consistency. "Caterers have many demands on their time and expertise," says Tom Styman-Heighton, development chef for Funnybones Foodservice. "The responsibilities of employing staff; running establishments; researching and

developing recipes; stock control; health; safety and hygiene – the list is practically endless.

"Finding a wholesaler who you can trust to provide the quality and style of product that you want to serve in your restaurant, canteen or café can help take some of the strain away from the food ordering and procuring process."

So what are the key things to consider when you're handling a wholesaler?



## SPECIALIST SERVICE

**Christina Veal, director of New Forest Ice Cream:**

"Using a wholesaler is extremely beneficial and ensures the logistics of ordering food to be delivered within a set time frame is a smooth and easy process. Rather than relying on multiple timings for deliveries from a number of different suppliers, or adding to the workload of the kitchen team by making frequent trips to cash and carry businesses or local shops, operators can be reassured that their product can be safely delivered at one chosen time.

"Operators should also consider what particular wholesaler they choose because many are specialists in different areas of foodservice. For example, there are wholesalers that specialise in fresh food, frozen products, beverages and so on. Each wholesaler should have extensive knowledge and experience regarding their area to provide the best service possible for their customers. Companies should pick the right wholesaler for them based on what suits their needs best."

## BUYING IN BULK

**Chris Beckley, managing director, kff:**

"Bulk buying is a huge advantage for caterers, especially when ordering for multiple sites, as it will drastically reduce costs, which can then be passed on to the customer."

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## **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

*Mike Hardman, online manager, Alliance:*

“Location should be an important consideration. Many national wholesale distributors will operate and deliver across the country, but may not necessarily offer the most personal service due to a focus on large organisations. Smaller local distributors will have a more personal approach but are less likely to be able to support your company’s growth outside of its current region.

“By utilising a distributor with national, local and online capabilities, a customer is able to gain a personal and appropriately customised offering and service, while also being ensured of capability to deliver, both literally and metaphorically.”

## **ADDED VALUE**

*Jennie Fisher, brand director, Brakes:*

“When it comes to adding value, we have to understand what the customer actually needs from us. For example, when it became a legal requirement for establishments serving food to be able to respond to customer allergen queries it was, understandably, a daunting prospect for many of our customers.

“We launched an online tool called BRAN [Brakes Recipe, Allergen and Nutrition tool], which allows our customers to create recipe cards using our product range and then instantly shows them a list of allergens present in those recipes. This makes a potentially complex task very simple and provides an easy way for customers to comply with the regulations.”

## **THE PERSONAL TOUCH**

*Rob Owen, executive development chef, Creed Foodservice:*

“Rather than choosing a supplier based on price, caterers should consider the wholesaler’s operational strengths and capabilities, service levels and customer-focused approach.

“Understandably price-per-item is a huge factor when businesses select a food wholesaler, but the overall added value proposition will always benefit a business and shouldn’t be underestimated. Choosing a wholesaler that takes the time to understand you, and gets to know your business and concepts that fit your needs, will be priceless in terms of the service you receive.”

