

HOT DIGGITY DOG!

Move over burgers – when it comes to gourmet on the go, the wiener takes it all, writes Esther Anyakwo

The good news? Members of Gen Z 'grab and go' more than any other generation, as they prefer to eat when and where they want. The challenge? They have incredibly refined tastes, so even when it comes to hot snacks, a soggy sausage roll simply won't do. Premiumisation may seem to be the buzzword of the moment, but it's particularly important to students.

"According to the Insights on Food Report 2017, students have an increasing expectation for premiumisation and expect a range of quality options wherever they are," confirms Kate Sykes, marketing manager for Lantmännen Unibake UK.

Sykes cites the craft beer movement as a perfect example of this and the same applies to food on the move – street food has opened consumers up to a world of handheld possibilities, so expectations on diverse flavours and textures are extremely high.

THE NEW CLASSICS

Pizzas, pasties, pies and burgers especially are beloved favourites – in fact, Rebecca Middleton, marketing manager for foodservice at Country Choice, says handheld snacks are forecast to grow at 6%



BUNANZA

"According to Burger Lad Research, on average 69% of a burger is bun, making it an integral part of every burger," says Kate Sykes, marketing manager for Lantmännen Unibake UK. "Trading up from a standard seeded bun to a brioche or grill-marked burger bun costs very little, but it can have a huge impact on how students receive the burger offering."



"Today's consumers like to purchase from brands they trust"

per year over the next five years. So it's all about incorporating current and growing trends to ensure you're still keeping your customers interested. Just look at the future Greggs' vegan sausage roll created!

"Concepts can be adjusted in keeping with other developing trends," states Jess Lyons, PR and marketing coordinator at Planglow.com. "For example, offer nut and pulse alternatives to meat and wheat-based carriers."

Burgers continue to be one of the most popular hot foods to go, so to incorporate key trends such as health, vegetarianism and veganism, Rhian Hawkins, marketing controller at Creed Foodservice, proffers some alternatives to beef in a bun:

Jackfruit – it makes a great alternative to pulled pork in a brioche bun; chicken –

THE SPICE OF LIFE

"As luck would have it the demands being placed upon the food industry to reduce the salt content in recipes has coincided with increased consumer demand for spicier products containing ingredients such as chillies and peppers," says Nigel Parkes, purchasing and marketing director at Creative Foods. "As any chef will tell you, reducing salt can make a dish taste very bland but fortunately we have been able to compensate for this by returning that flavour and seasoning via the use of spicier ingredients, to create products with a flavour profile that also happens to be exactly in tune with what consumers are currently looking for."

BRANDING BENEFITS

Though reports consistently claim that Gen Z is less brand loyal than millennials, this doesn't mean that the cohort is averse to brands entirely. Quite the opposite: this generation craves transparency – members of this generation want to know not only where their food has come from, but who's behind the brand and if its ethos aligns with theirs.

"Branding on a grab and go menu is essential," agrees Chris Pauling, managing director of Proper Cornish Ltd. "Today's consumers like to purchase from brands they trust, especially brands with heritage and brands they can connect with."

Malcolm Harling, sales and marketing director for Williams Refrigeration, adds that prominent placement is also a must, advising: "Ensure you have eye-catching units situated in prominent positions, either placed to be visible from outside or near where customers queue to spur impulse purchases."

Additionally, it's vital that branding is clear and easy to understand, as consumers of grab and go items are often time poor. With the right offering and message, you'll have students eating out of the palm of your hand.

grilled chicken breast seasoned with Cajun spices and then served in a bun loaded with spinach, avocado, bacon and cheese makes a delicious alternative to red meat; and halloumi – combine with Middle Eastern spices or sauces and a flat portobello mushroom to make a great vegetarian-friendly burger."

When it comes to premiumisation, pizzas get couped in truffle oil, burgers are dripping in raclette – and now it's the turn of the hot dog to have its day.

And while soup might not immediately conjure up thoughts of eating on the go, it totally can be and is perfect for this time of year. Brands like The Real Soup Co have tapped into this by offering 380g microwaveable, single-serve grab and go pots for five of its most popular flavours. They're great for lunch and also ideal for out-of-hours services via a vending machine.

RELISH IT

The 18-24 demographic is the biggest group of customers pushing the Americana trend, with US-themed outlets among some of the fastest growing brands over the last three years (Horizons Ones to Watch Report 2017 via Lantrännan Unibake UK). While burgers seem to have peaked when it comes to innovation, hot dogs are having a renaissance.

"Originating in Germany and popularising in America, the hot dog is a must-have on any food to go menu," says Jessie McCarthy, brand manager for Big Al's Foodservice. "The global hot dog

79%

Over 79% of the UK's Generation Z snack more than once a day, making it the largest age group for demanding immediate snacking food, according Sun Branding Solutions research

£23.5bn

The food-to-go sector could be worth £23.5bn by 2022 (IGD via KeCo Foodservice Packaging Ltd)

£3.3bn

The UK burger market is currently worth more than £3.3bn (UK Burger and Chicken Restaurants Industry Report 2017 via Lantrännan Unibake UK)

\$80.4bn

The global hot dog market is expected to reach \$80.4bn by 2021 (Transparency Market Research via Big Al's Foodservice)