

Pick of the puddings

JOHN PORTER PICKS UP THE HOTTEST TRENDS ON DESSERT MENUS



It's not hard to work out the benefits of dessert sales to pubs. Persuading customers to part with another £5 can make a big difference to the cash in the till at the end of the day.

However, it's not always easy. Angus McKean, licensee of Fuller's pub The Red Lion in Barnes, south-west London, says: "The thing about classic British pub food is that it's mainly all about big main courses that fill you up. Once a customer has enjoyed their meal, they may simply not have room for a dessert."

Having worked hard to grow dessert sales at The Red Lion, Angus believes Menurama's Top Ten (see table) reflects the initiative operators need to show in driving dessert sales. "Sticky toffee pudding and chocolate fudge cake are both very popular, and they're desserts that customers typically won't make for themselves," he says. "The problem is that pubs have always got the likes of Waitrose and M&S chasing customers with versions of classic desserts to eat at home, so we need to stay one step ahead of them."

Exclusive ice creams, including one flavoured with Fuller's London Porter, are offered at the pub from time to time, while ice cream sundaes are a great way to make your dessert menu stand out, says Angus. "It's more of the popular man v food thing – you can fill up a tall sundae dish with loads of different flavours, make it look really special, and customers will take it as a challenge."

At the perceived healthier end of the dessert spectrum, frozen yoghurt and sorbet are new entries to the 2013 Menurama chart. Joseph Lanham, desserts category manager at Nestlé Professional, says: "Consumers want to have the best of both worlds: they want to lead a healthier lifestyle yet still indulge occasionally. As a

result, we are witnessing operators making healthier swaps in dessert ingredients, replacing double cream with crème fraiche for example, or adding fresh fruit to a jelly.

"Today's diners also want to see fresh, natural ingredients on menus. This doesn't necessarily mean having to completely rethink your menu – simple tactics include finishing the plate with locally sourced seasonal fruit and ensuring they take centre stage on menu descriptions."

Menurama's comparison of the most popular desserts on managed pub and restaurant menus shows the nation's favourites have remained fairly constant over the past four years, with ice cream on top in summer 2010 and summer 2013, and ice cream sundae and cheesecake swapping places at number two and three.

However, the differences highlight some interesting trends. Industry analyst Horizons, which conducts the Menurama survey twice a year, has identified a shift towards Americanisation in the use of menu terms over the past year, and this seems to be reflected in the rise in the rankings for the chocolate brownie – up to fourth this year from seventh in 2010 – as well as the appearance of frozen yoghurt.

Both frozen yoghurt and sorbet, also a new entry on the 2013 list, are perceived as being healthier choices, which reflects another menu trend identified by Horizons.

The absence of apple pie from the 2013 listing may reflect that this is a snapshot of summer menus, with pies more likely to be served in winter, although the appearance of apple crumble shows this particular winter favourite now appears year-round.

On many menus, pubs are definitely adding more variety to their crumble recipes, with apple & raspberry and apple & banana crumbles among those recently spotted by *Inapub*. ▣



Average pub dessert prices

Winter	2009	£3.36
Summer	2010	£3.73
Winter	2010	£3.59
Summer	2011	£3.66
Winter	2011	£3.74
Summer	2012	£3.91
Winter	2012	£4.10
Summer	2013	£4.21

On managed pub menus, the average pub dessert price has risen by around 25 per cent in the past four years

That increase is ahead of the official Consumer Price Index measure of inflation published by the Office for National Statistics, which suggests that a £3.36 dessert in 2009 should cost £3.73 today. However, with the rate of food inflation having outstripped the general rate over the past two years in particular, operators seem to have done no more than pass on cost increases to customers.

Top 10 most popular pub desserts

2010	2013
1. Ice cream	1. Ice cream
2. Cheesecake	2. Ice cream sundae
3. Ice cream sundae	3. Cheesecake
4. Cheeseboard	4. Chocolate brownie
5. Waffle	5. Cheeseboard
6. Chocolate fudge cake	6. Sorbet
7. Chocolate brownie	7. Sticky toffee pudding
8. Sticky toffee pudding	8. Frozen yoghurt
9. Apple pie	9. Chocolate fudge cake
10. Profiteroles	10. Apple crumble



£1.23

Cost of ingredients to achieve a 65 per cent gross margin on a dessert sold at the average price of £4.21 including VAT