

Business

Focus on what matters 'a brilliant offer and warm welcome'

Oisín Rogers, Co-Founder of The Devonshire in Soho, London, the first pub in the UK to sell Guinness 0.0 on draught, says the industry is guilty of over-measuring every operational aspect – from happiness to footfall. Instead, he said, pubs should focus on delivering the best customer experience to the widest range of customers.

Speaking to Ann Elliot at the Casual Dining Show in London in September, Oisín questioned why the big chains tended to market their venues and brands at certain demographics, rather than being inclusive and welcoming of every section of the population.

"The really good pubs have a massive mix of people... it's something I learnt early on," he said, adding that he believed that targeting a very specific demographic was a mistake. "The classically brilliant pub is all encompassing and targets everyone."

Talking about the tendency to measure and metric every part of the business these days, he said: "We have an adage, that says you can't play tennis by looking at the score board. There is over-measurement of every element, from happiness to footfall, when what's important is that you focus on making people feel great – and that comes with your management of the team. If they don't feel great and positive in their roles, customers feel that."

He continued that to have a great team, you must understand what motivates them. "What is it that they want, in terms of responsibility? And what they don't want? You might have someone on the team who isn't good with reading and writing, but they are great at talking to the customers, so don't ask them to write your menus."

Welfare and pay matter too, he said, adding that pay in hospitality was too low. "It's much better to have lower head count and pay higher." This drives efficiency and creates a more productive team, he said, one where there was a happy feeling and a sense of feeling important in their roles.

"The truth is, if you pay your staff 10% more than the best in the market, it's unlikely that they are going to leave. My really top guys stay a long time. It's up to the senior management to look after them, make sure they work the days they need, take into consideration their

childcare, university needs on the rota and so on. This works well for retention."

Oisín commented that it was often the very small, unmeasurable things that affected a guest's attitude the most. "If a guest isn't treated well, even if the food is perfect, it can create a complaint. I think that often the complaints about the food are more to do with something else, a sticky table or something they overheard or saw. It's those intangible, emotional things," he said.

"Standards are so important. We like to say, make sure the horses aren't chipped." It's a story that goes, when Walt Disney was a child, his favourite ride was the carousel. But on a visit to an amusement park one day, the

horse he'd selected didn't jump like all the rest and then glancing around he saw that most of the paint had faded and was chipped – the ride worked, but it had lost its magic.

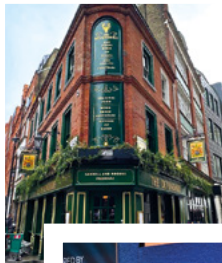
"When a guest walks into your business, they have made a huge

investment by stepping over the threshold and making a decision to spend their hard-earned time with you. When they come in, they will spend two hours of [their valuable] time with us and we need to deliver and give them something to remember. They will communicate that memory, in terms of stories, 'it was amazing...' 'I can't believe how well we were treated...' 'you'll never guess what happened to me.' These stories are what build our business. It's cat-nip to sales and profit," he said. ■



THE DEVONSHIRE, WHICH IS CELEBRATED FOR SERVING THE BEST PINT OF GUINNESS IN LONDON, IS THE FIRST PUB IN THE UK TO SELL GUINNESS 0.0 ON DRAUGHT.

Guinness sells in huge volumes at The Devonshire, with around one pint in every 20 sold being a 0.0 version. "Last week we sold 10 kegs of 0.0. We are delighted with it," said Oisín.



Oisín Rogers and Ann Elliot



FAMILY DINING OFFER NEEDS IMPROVING, SAYS RESEARCH

New research into family dining reveals that almost half of parents think children's menus are uninspiring and 28% find dining out with kids stressful. This presents a huge opportunity to improve your family offer, says Jo Lynch, Account Director at insight firm KAM.

KAM's latest Family Dining research, conducted among 1,000 parents of children under the age of 12 years, showed that the average annual spend per household on eating out (across the entire hospitality sector) was £4,015, with 8m+ households in the UK with children.

When it comes to what needs improving on kids' menus, the research reported:

- 53% want smaller and larger options (to satisfy the needs of parents with younger and older children)
- 51% want the option to have half-sized and smaller portions of adult meals
- 41% want more nutritional food
- 37% want less fried food
- 22% want more sustainable ingredients
- 18% want vegetarian options ■

Trade shows offer free business insight

The chance to listen to trade experts and top operators is an opportunity not to be missed, according to Michael Thurlby, owner of Knead, with three venues in Stamford, Lincolnshire.

Michael likes to attend the key trade shows for the seminars and speakers. "You get the opportunity to hear directly from some fantastic operators, and that gives you lots of ideas. Attending these shows is free, so why wouldn't you go along?"



Trade shows coming up include: Northern Restaurant & Bar Show, March 11-23, Manchester Central; The Pub Show, March 17-19 at London ExCel; and Food & Drink Expo, April 7-9, NEC Birmingham. ■