

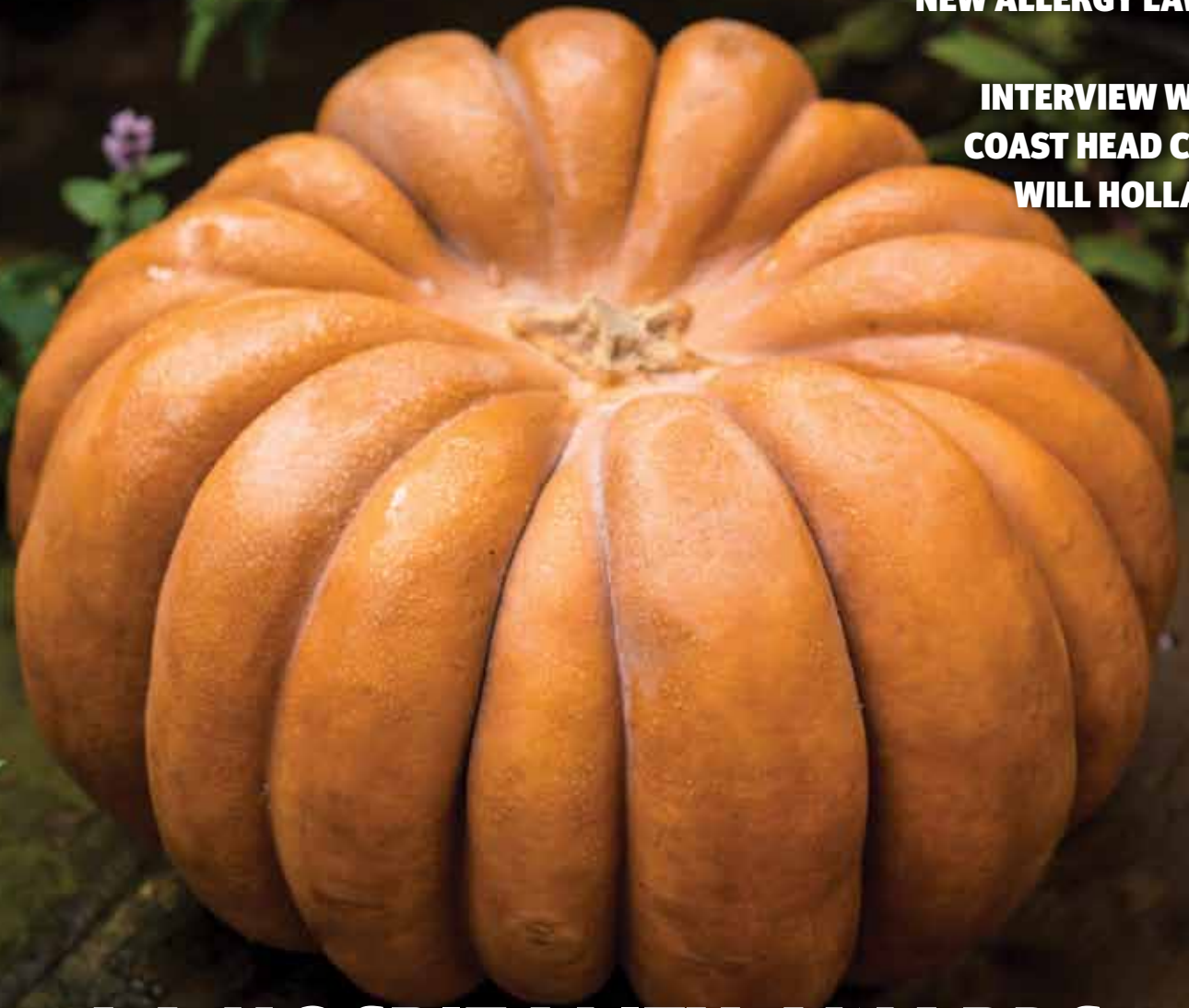
intouch

SUPPORTING YOUR BUSINESS

PLUS...

**IS YOUR BUSINESS
READY FOR THE
NEW ALLERGY LAWS?**

**INTERVIEW WITH
COAST HEAD CHEF
WILL HOLLAND**

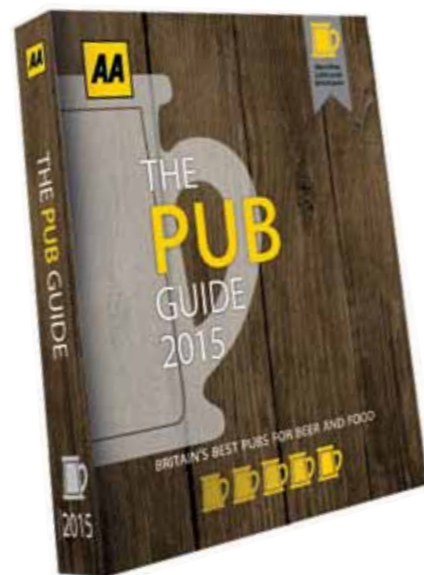


AA HOSPITALITY AWARDS

ALL THE PHOTOS FROM THE NIGHT

Informed...

Great new design for the 2015 AA Lifestyle guides



The brand new editions of the AA Lifestyle guides are now more reader friendly than ever before, following changes to the look and feel of the books.

The great new covers bring a textured appearance to each book – for example, a wallpaper effect for *The Hotel Guide* and *The B&B Guide* portrays a brightly painted and welcoming front door.

Inside the books, the move from a three-column to a two-column page layout allows much larger images for establishments who choose to enhance their entry with a photograph. This, alongside an increased type size for descriptions, means entries also have more space than ever before.

Every guide also includes an enhanced magazine section with a welcome page highlighting what's new. Specially commissioned stories highlight key trends in each industry. For example, *The Restaurant Guide* features an interview with top chef Michael Caines and also looks at the rise in prominence of new city eateries in Manchester, Birmingham and Edinburgh. Meanwhile, *The B&B Guide* presents an overview of the Cotswolds as a tourist destination and also takes a lighthearted look at the types of beds you might encounter on a typical guesthouse stay.

The 2015 editions of the *The B&B Guide*, *The Hotel Guide*, *The Restaurant Guide* and *The Pub Guide* are now available from all good bookshops and online retailers, including theAA.com/shop.

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Welcome notes

It's been a busy start to autumn with the Automobile Association having become a public listed company for the first time in its 109-year history. As the summer weather continues to linger, it is pleasing to hear that trading levels in general have been good for most of our hospitality businesses and this positive view looks set to continue into 2015.

We were honoured and delighted with the massive industry support of the AA Hospitality Awards held just a few weeks ago with 1,100 guests in attendance. Observing the fantastic atmosphere and goodwill in the Great Room at Grosvenor House, I am always impressed and amazed with the level of support and friendship that exists in our hospitality industry.

It is an absolute pleasure for us to

recognise the hard work and commitment of all the hotels, guest accommodation, restaurant and pubs in delivering high quality standards to the consumer. My congratulations to all of those who have achieved an AA award this year and who are featured in our new-look range of AA Lifestyle guides.

The range of articles in this edition are aimed at helping and informing you and your business. In December this year new food allergy regulations will come in force and these will affect most of you. Our partners at the British Hospitality Association have written a great feature on page 12 summarising the changes, and they have also created an incredibly helpful toolkit so businesses can be well-prepared and minimise the cost and impact of the regulations.



Simon Numphud
Head of AA Hotel Services

As we were compiling this edition of *InTouch*, Scottish citizens voted on whether their country should stay in the UK or become an independent nation.

Amid all the claims, counter-claims, kilts and saltires, hoteliers, restaurateurs and chefs on both sides of the border cracked on with business as usual. That's the thing about hospitality: it never stops.

The autumn edition of *InTouch* carries tips, pointers and advice galore aimed at helping you to continue the ongoing

challenge of running a better business.

You'll find guidance on creating effective PR and providing fully accessible services; on preparing for the new allergen laws and constructing a responsive website. You'll also find – hot off the press – details of the winners of the 2014 AA Hospitality Awards, allowing you to take inspiration from the greatest operators between Land's End and John O'Groats.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners.



Mark Lewis
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Follow us on Twitter

See @TheAA_Lifestyle and @AAHospitality for updates to the scheme, hospitality news, stories from our establishments, updates on awards events and much more.



Content from the AA

THE CATERER Content from *The Caterer*

WWW.THECATERER.COM
HAVE YOU SIGNED UP YET?

TOP HOSPITALITY STORIES

Each week, *The Caterer* and www.thecaterer.com bring you the most important news from around the hospitality industry. Here's a selection of stories about AA members from the past three months

BELMOND TO MANAGE LONDON'S CADOGAN HOTEL



Belmond – formerly Orient-Express Hotels – is to take over the management of the family-owned Cadogan hotel in Knightsbridge, London, following an extensive refreshment of the property.

It will be the second hotel in the UK for Belmond, alongside Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxfordshire.

The 64-bedroom hotel, which was built in 1887, will close at the end of this month for a £28m renovation, reopening in 2016 as the 54-bedroom Belmond Cadogan.

JUDY MURRAY AND COLIN MONTGOMERIE HEAD SPORTS DEVELOPMENT WITH HOTEL

A 150-bedroom hotel is at the centre of plans to develop a grassroots tennis and golf academy near Stirling, headed by Judy Murray and Colin Montgomerie.

Alongside the four-to-five-star hotel, the Park of Keir project is set to feature six indoor and six outdoor tennis courts, a six-hole golf course, a 3G multi-sport, all-weather pitch, a café-restaurant and the Andy Murray tennis museum. There will also be a development of 100 houses.

The sporting facilities, which will be located between Dunblane and the Bridge of Allen, will be aimed at beginners and children.

Partners in the Park of Keir – Murray, Montgomerie and construction firm the King Group –



Padstow Townhouse

are currently holding informal discussions with potential operators for the proposed hotel.

Stirling Council will consider the planning application for the Park of Keir following a consultation period, which runs until 13 November. If permission is granted, it will open in the summer of 2016.

UK SEES RECORD-BREAKING INBOUND TOURISM FOR FIRST HALF OF 2014

Inbound tourism to the UK for the period from January to June 2014 has broken all previous records,

according to new figures from the Office for National Statistics.

The number of inbound visits to the country increased 8% year-on-year to 16.4 million.

June also broke the record for the number of visits from overseas at 3.18 million, up 10% from the same month in 2013. Spending for the month was also up 4%, setting a new record of £1.97b.

The majority of visitors come from within the EU, but visits from the rest of the world (Asia Pacific, Middle East, Latin America and Africa) were also up 2%.

MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF PAUL AINSWORTH TO OPEN HOTEL

Michelin-starred chef Paul Ainsworth and his wife Emma are set to open their first hotel, the Padstow Townhouse, in spring 2015.

The six-bedroom property, which is being transformed from the 18th-century Tregea hotel, will join the Ainsworths' two existing restaurants, the Michelin-starred Paul Ainsworth at Number 6 and Rojano's in the Square in Padstow, Cornwall.

Ainsworth said: "We want to take what we do at Number 6, the level of service and attention to detail, and extend that out to our rooms."

FLOOD-HIT HOTEL REOPENS AFTER REFURBISHMENT



Mercure Box Hill Burford Bridge

A Surrey hotel that has been closed for nine months after being flooded on Christmas Eve has re-opened.

Located at the foot of the hill that enjoyed a global audience during the London 2012 Olympics road cycle race, the 57-bedroom Mercure Box Hill Burford Bridge hotel now has a locally inspired interior.

Owned by the Moorfield Group, the hotel is operated by hotel group Accor under its mid-market, non-standardised brand, Mercure.

New design touches include bespoke chairs with fabric featuring the poetry of John Keats, a one-time guest; an over-sized quote on the restaurant wall referring to a picnic on Box Hill, which appeared in Jane Austen's *Emma*, and a bronze statue of the Olympic cyclists.



The planned Park of Keir

CREATE EFFECTIVE PR

If you want to get the correct brand message across to journalists, you've got to learn to think like one. *Lysbeth Fox* has the scoop

Good public relations really come down to one thing and one thing only: effective communication. You are building a relationship with the press in a way that turns your own brand message into a news asset for the writer.

The focus should always be on how to get your message across in a way that the journalist will feel compelled to report on. It's not about taking journalists out to expensive dinners or schmoozing at cocktail parties, which is what typically comes to mind when thinking of the role of the PR.

Good PR is about understanding the publication, the journalist and the reader, and tailoring your words accordingly – it's an informed, thoughtful conversation.

It begins with understanding your own brand and, if you are using an agency, ensuring they listen to you as the client to gain an insight into your goals, both short- and long-term, and a better conception of the product you are offering.

Try to identify the stand-out selling point of what you are offering, but ensure you don't brush over something that would also make a great story and is a feature of your offer. Pull out the parts that are attention-worthy; in essence, find the story.

The second part is equally vital: targeting your audience. A common mistake is to believe your audience are journalists, whereas in reality, the audience is, always and forever, the consumer – and the consumer always wins. The journalist is thinking of one thing only: what the consumer is interested in. If you can tailor your approach with that at the forefront of your mind, you will find



“The journalist is thinking of one thing only: what the consumer is interested in”

you are one step ahead of the competition – and far more likely to get the news coverage you are aiming for.

Lysbeth Fox is the owner of Fox PR and business partner at the Buell Group www.buellconsult.co.uk

HOW TO GET THE RIGHT COVERAGE AT THE RIGHT TIME

1 The press release is dead
Send the relevant information via email to the journalist you are targeting. Your tone should be casual, but ensure your message gets straight to the point.

2 Know your audience
Don't pitch something that would suit a *Sun* reader to the *Daily Telegraph*.

3 Know your demographic
Change your message to suit the journalist's audience.

4 Don't send attachments if you expect them to be read
In-demand journalists and editors can get more than 2,000 emails a day. Put all the relevant information in a few sentences in a compelling way that will leave them wanting more. You can follow up with high-res images when you are asked for more information.

5 The freelancer is your best friend
While staff journalists can pitch to one editor, the freelancer might pitch to seven or eight. You get far more bang for

your buck with the journalist who works in several places at the same time.

6 Understand that the future is online
Although there remains a prejudice for print, numbers show that the vast majority of consumers are reading their news online. A print publication like *Hello!* has a readership of 250,000 a week, but being in the *Mail Online's* Femail section will get your brand seen by 10 times that amount – minimum. It is important to be aware of where you can get the most value when promoting your business.

WINNERS OF THE AA HOSPITALITY AWARDS 2014



AA HOTEL OF THE YEAR



England Dormy House, Broadway



London Rosewood London



Ireland The Bushmills Inn, Bushmills



Wales Ynyshir Hall, Eglwysfach



Scotland Meldrum House Country Hotel, Aberdeen

AA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Ruth Rogers MBE

AA PUB OF THE YEAR



England The Pheasant, Gestingthorpe



Scotland The Bridge Inn, Ratho



Wales Bunch of Grapes, Pontypridd

AA WINE AWARD



England and overall
The Queensberry Hotel, Bath



Scotland The Peat Inn, St Andrews



Wales The Grove, Narberth

AA RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR



England Sticky Walnut, Chester



Scotland Timberyard, Edinburgh

AA SPIRIT AWARD



The Merchant Hotel Belfast

AA HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR



QHotels

AA HOUSEKEEPER OF THE YEAR



Geraldine Maursy The Landmark, London



London Berners Tavern



Wales Bully's, Cardiff

AA FOOD SERVICE AWARD



Galvin at Windows London

AA SMALL HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR



Eden Hotel Collection

AA CHEFS' CHEF OF THE YEAR



Nathan Outlaw

AA ECO HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR



Red Carnation Hotels

AA ECO HOTEL OF THE YEAR



Waterton Park Hotel, Wakefield



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS AND FINALISTS OF THE AA HOSPITALITY AWARDS



The UK's hospitality industry came together on Monday 22 September to recognise the best of the best at the AA Hospitality Awards 2014.

The awards, hosted by Fiona Bruce at Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane, saw 24 establishments and individuals receiving recognition for outstanding excellence in their field, including a Lifetime Achievement award for Ruth Rogers MBE and the AA's Chefs' Chef Award for Nathan Outlaw.

The awards bring together some of

the most influential people in hospitality to recognise the outstanding accomplishments of high-achieving AA establishments and individuals.

Guests were treated to a sensational three-course gourmet meal, created by four-AA-Rosette-awarded chef Tom Kerridge in conjunction with the Grosvenor House kitchen team, as well as a breathtaking display from *Britain's Got Talent* semi-finalists Light Balance.

Thank you to all our sponsors, who helped make the event a huge success.

AA HOUSEKEEPER OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY NORTHMACE & HENDON
Geraldine Maursy The Landmark, London



AA HOTEL OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY TEMPLE SPA
England Dormy House, Broadway
Scotland Meldrum House Country Hotel, Aberdeen
Wales Ynyshir Hall, Eglwysfach
Ireland The Bushmills Inn, Bushmills



SPONSORED BY BRIEF YOUR MARKET
London Rosewood London



AA RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR

England Sticky Walnut, Chester
Scotland Timberyard, Edinburgh
Wales Bully's, Cardiff

SPONSORED BY FOOD & TRAVEL MAGAZINE
London Berners Tavern



AA SPIRIT AWARD

SPONSORED BY THE BALVENIE
The Merchant Hotel Belfast



AA PUB OF THE YEAR

England The Pheasant, Gestingthorpe
Scotland The Bridge Inn, Ratho
Wales Bunch of Grapes, Pontypridd

AA WINE AWARD

SPONSORED BY MATTHEW CLARK
England and overall The Queensberry Hotel, Bath
Scotland The Peat Inn, St Andrews
Wales The Grove, Narberth



AA HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR

QHotels

AA SMALL HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY BEACON
Eden Hotel Collection



AA CHEFS' CHEF OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY CATERER.COM
Nathan Outlaw



AA ECO HOTEL OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY D-ENERGI
Waterton Park Hotel, Wakefield



AA ECO HOTEL GROUP OF THE YEAR

Red Carnation Hotels

AA FOOD SERVICE AWARD

Galvin at Windows, London

AA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ruth Rogers MBE

ACCESSIBILITY: IMPROVING SERVICE FOR EVERYBODY

AccessChamp will train staff to meet the needs of disabled people

The AA has partnered with AccessChamp to create a new online training resource to educate hotel staff on accessibility and help hoteliers understand the opportunities in the disability market.

Up to 25% of the UK population is either a person with a disability or a carer and there are more than 150 million disabled people in Europe and the USA. This market is set to expand as the population lives longer and one in three of us will have a disability in our lifetime.

AA inspectors have developed a new set of accessible criteria with AccessChamp and these are now being used across the country. These criteria will be trialled for a three-month period and then reviewed and revised.

Simon Numphud, head of hotel services at the AA, said: "This is a really exciting development for the AA as it enables us to enhance the inspection process and provide our clients with ways of improving the service they provide. We have many enquiries about accessibility every month and now we can direct hoteliers to a valuable and well-respected source of information."

Arnold Fewell, managing director of AccessChamp, said: "I am a former hotel general manager with Trusthouse Forte and I have stayed in many hotels since I was disabled after an accident 14 years ago. I know hotel staff need more confidence when helping a person with a disability and training using the AccessChamp resources will achieve that."

"I hope hotels will create an AccessChamp for their property and that they will be part of the senior management team. This will go a long way to putting accessibility on the sales and marketing agenda and so increase



"Now we can direct hoteliers to a valuable and well-respected source of information"

occupancy and profitability. The partnership will develop over time, but it represents two organisations that are committed to great customer service."

AccessChamp will cost just £570 to AA members for the first 250 hotels to join. This will include two years' access to the coffee-time training chats, two e-learning module registrations to train your AccessChamp and their assistant, a generic induction video and much more.

www.accesschamp.co.uk





SPOTLIGHT ON...

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AT THE SHARD *London*

A hotel housed in the tallest building with the largest rooms in London offers unrivalled luxury for guests

The Shangri-La hotel at the Shard, London, located on floors 34 to 52 in the tallest building in Western Europe, is the city's first high-rise hotel.

It offers unrivalled views in every direction, overlooking landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament, the Tower of London and St Paul's Cathedral. The hotel is also the first luxury property to open on the south side of the Thames and is conveniently positioned just minutes from the City.

Every one of the hotel's 202 rooms and suites has a view of London, and the rooms are among the largest in the city, averaging more than 42 sq m (452 sq ft). The walls feature Chinese artworks reinterpreted in a modern, abstract style, alongside a soothing colour scheme and mood lighting.

All the rooms have the exclusive "Shangri-La bed", featuring body-contouring technology, as well as marble-clad bathrooms with heated floors and Acqua di Parma toiletries.

Complimentary internet access, one of Shangri-La's signature offerings worldwide, is available throughout the hotel, and butler service is offered in all suites.

The hotel's Asian touches extend to its three dining destinations. Ting (derived from the Chinese word for 'living room') serves locally

sourced cuisine with a hint of Asian flavours in the restaurant and Asian specialities and unique afternoon teas in the lounge.

Láng (the Chinese word for 'pathway') is a patisserie and artisan deli on the ground floor, showcasing a selection of Shangri-La signature cakes and savouries to eat in or take away, along with seasonal hampers.

And Gōng, London's highest champagne and cocktail bar, takes its name from 'dougong', an ancient Chinese structural element of interlocking wooden brackets that is a component of the bar's interior. Gōng is located on level 52, which is home to the 24-hour gym and London's highest infinity pool.

For intimate celebrations, private cocktail gatherings and luxury product launches, the hotel's three river-facing event spaces offer an experience of London like no other. Located on level 34, they are connected to the sky lobby by a grand staircase with a vista of St Paul's Cathedral and beyond.

"We are thrilled to open our doors in this exciting part of London. We look forward to welcoming guests from all over the world and to delivering Shangri-La's legendary hospitality from the heart to each and every one of them," said Darren Gearing, executive vice-president and the hotel's general manager.

"Every one of the hotel's 202 rooms and suites has a view of London, and the rooms are among the largest in the city"

Name: Will Holland
Name of restaurant: Coast, Saundersfoot
Position: Head chef

How did you get where you are now?
Hard work, dedication, determination and being selfish.

Who is your greatest inspiration?
As a kid, I was inspired by watching Keith Floyd on television. In my working career the biggest inspiration has come from chef Gary Jones, executive chef of Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons.

What are your top tips for an aspiring chef?
Be a sponge and absorb everything and anything you can every day, and don't try and fast-track the junior levels of a kitchen.

If you weren't a chef, what career would you have chosen?
A professional boxer, rally driver or fireman.

What has been your greatest career achievement to date?
Being awarded three AA rosettes six months after taking on my first head chef position [at La Bécasse in Ludlow] and having them presented to me at the AA centenary awards.

What is your favourite ingredient?
Ras el hanout or mushroom ketchup – they are my secret weapons.

What would be your 'last supper'?
A whole forerib of beef, roasted rare, just to myself.

Where do you eat on your night off?
I've recently found an amazing pizza restaurant in Tenby called Top Joe's.

INTERVIEW WITH...

WILL HOLLAND



Crab and mango salad with wasabi yogurt

Serves 4

This is a simple little starter that's really fresh and clean. The sweetness of the mango helps to bring out the natural sweetness of the crab. We use extra-large cock crabs from Little Haven, which is a short distance from the restaurant.

For the dressed crab

340g freshly picked white crab meat
1 lime

Season the crab meat with fresh lime juice and salt to taste. Store in the fridge until required.

For the wasabi yogurt

225g natural yogurt
4g wasabi paste

Mix the yoghurt with the wasabi and store in the fridge until required.

For the mango fluid gel

250g mango purée
35g sugar
17g powdered vegetable gelatine



Place all the ingredients in a saucepan, place over a medium heat and bring to the boil, whisking continuously. Remove from the heat and allow to cool completely before transferring into a liquidiser and blending until smooth. Store in the fridge until required.

To garnish

1 mango, finely diced
2 spring onions, finely sliced
1 red chilli, finely diced

1 lime
1 handful coriander cress

Place a large spoonful of the dressed crab on each plate with a good dollop of the mango fluid gel. Spoon the wasabi yogurt around the crab. Sprinkle over the mango, spring onion and chili, finely grate the zest of the lime over each plate and finish with sprigs of coriander cress.

For more information on Coast, visit www.coastsaundersfoot.co.uk



ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEW ALLERGY LAWS?



The new allergy regulations will affect all foodservice providers, from fine-dining restaurants to service station sandwich-makers – so, asks the *British Hospitality Association*, do you know what you need to do to comply?



If NHS estimates are correct, 1%-2% of adults in the UK have a food allergy, and 5%-8% of children are allergic to certain ingredients. What's more, experts predict that the number of people in industrialised countries suffering from food allergies is on the increase due to a combination of environmental and diet-related factors.

But some countries are now making it mandatory that allergens are outlined on menus so as customers can make informed choices. In the UK the focus is on training and awareness. New regulations will come into force in December 2014, just in time for Christmas dinner menus, and these will make it easier for consumers to understand where allergens are present.

The biggest impact of the regulations will be on foodservice providers, including motorway service stations, pubs, festival caterers, hotels and restaurants. The British Hospitality Association (BHA) has estimated that the cost to industry of introducing and enforcing the new regulations will be between £90m-£200m a year.

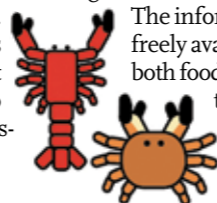
Intouch talked to the BHA to find out more about the new regulations, as well as the BHA's new guidance toolkit and regional workshops.



What are the new allergen regulations about?
From 13 December 2014, a new set of regulations will change the way allergen information appears on labels for food and drink that is pre-packed, sold loose or served out of home.

Let's get technical... who has introduced this legislation and why?

It relates to Article 9 of the Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC), which was introduced by the EU and is a binding regulation on all member states. The law states that food businesses must inform their customers about food allergens so they are able to make informed choices when choosing which food to consume.



“The British Hospitality Association has estimated that the cost to industry will be between £90m-£200m a year”

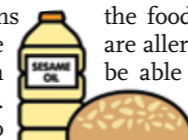
What does this mean for places like motorway service stations?

The information will be required, by law, to be freely available at the point of sale. It relates to both food and drink products, and the implications for establishments which serve pre-packed food – for example, sandwiches made off-site in places



like motorway service stations – are pretty straightforward. The allergenic ingredients need to be emphasised in a way that clearly distinguishes them from the rest of the ingredients; for example, by the use of a different font, style or colour. Food businesses can choose what method they want to use to emphasise the 14 allergens on their product label (see box).

However, for those selling non-pre-packed food, such as restaurants, it is less straightforward. All staff serving customers, for example, need to understand the regulations and should be made aware of the potential risks to customers' health if they advise them incorrectly. A process must be in place to



ensure that allergen information can be easily obtained and that it is accurate and consistent.

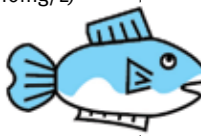
Customers are strongly advised to speak to staff regarding their allergy requirements. If a member of staff is unsure of the answer to a customer's question, they must ask somebody who knows.

Are foodservice providers legally required to offer advice to customers on allergens and what to eat?

It is the customer's responsibility to tell the food business which ingredients they are allergic to, and the food business must be able to provide information on which food being served contains that allergenic ingredient.

WHAT INGREDIENTS DO THE NEW REGULATIONS COVER?

- Cereals containing gluten, such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt or khorasan
- Crustaceans, for example, prawns, crabs, lobster and crayfish
- Eggs
- Fish
- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- Milk (including lactose)
- Nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia (or Queensland) nuts
- Celery (including celeriac)
- Mustard
- Sesame seeds
- Sulphur dioxide (>10mg/kg or 10mg/L)
- Lupin
- Molluscs, for example, clams, mussels, whelks, oysters, snails and squid



Once the new regulations are in place, what should a customer expect from a foodservice provider?

Any team member should be able to provide information on which foods for sale contain the allergenic ingredients and this information must be accurate and verifiable.

How does this affect takeaway food?

It is the foodservice providers' responsibility to ensure that allergen information is available for all dishes. This could be on either on-pack labelling or in a booklet which the customer can see.

Are foodservice providers legally required to respond to the question “what items on your menu do not contain an allergen?”

No. They are only required on request by the customer to say which dishes have allergenic ingredients in them.

Does the legislation include beverages?

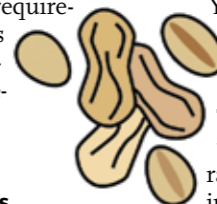
Yes.

How is the BHA supporting foodservice providers?

The BHA has launched a guidance toolkit, designed to help hotels, restaurants and caterers understand and implement the new regulations.

The toolkit will be supported by a series of regional workshops and roadshows. The aim is to minimise the cost and impact of the regulations for foodservice providers and offer guidance and support. The toolkit is free to all BHA members.

Go to www.bha.org.uk/allergen-toolkit/



HOW TO RUN ONLINE PROMOTIONS

A well thought-out deal can fill an empty establishment and maximise customer spend, says *Heather Rogers*



Over the past few years the number of different media platforms available to promote your hotel or restaurant has increased dramatically, and the market is now saturated with daily deal providers.

It is important to have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve from these deals; from how they are run to the overall cost, the volume the deal will drive and how they will maximise spend when guests come through the door.

It is important the deal is structured in a way that allows you to maximise the upsell spend, yet ensures you don't displace full-paying customers.

The deal can be crafted specifically to highlight a new offering, such as an afternoon tea, or to increase lunchtime trade when you would otherwise be less than full.

This is your opportunity to show new customers what your venue has to offer, which might generate repeat visits and even event bookings such as weddings.

Heather Rogers is UK general manager of local deals and entertainment at Travelzoo

“It is important that the deal is structured in a way that allows you to maximise the upsell spend at your venue and ensures you don't displace full-paying customers”

HOW TO PITCH A DEAL FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

WINTER IN SCOTLAND

Focus on your quietest months, when it makes the most fiscal sense to offer a more aggressive price point. Once you've got people through the door with a really attractive room rate, you can then encourage them to spend on extras in-house. Also, look for attractions in the local area that would appeal to your guests. If your Scottish property is barren in the winter months, find a local whisky-tasting experience with cosy log fires to entice people to come for a December stay.

MANAGE AVAILABILITY

If you're creating an offer, look for a window of around three to six months. This will ensure good availability, especially if your hotel has few rooms. You can then cap the deal at just a few rooms a night to get some base business on the books without having all the guests on the deal package.

CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION

When considering what to include as part of the deal, try to inspire potential customers. If you're in a remote spot, a five-course (or more) tasting menu will always work well and is likely to serve you some wine sales. If you're concerned about managing food margins, this helps the chef to know exactly which ingredients to order and creates a real sense of occasion for the customer.

LOW-COST EXTRAS

You don't need to throw in everything when creating an attractive package. However, it is nice to offer a special deal where customers feel there are plenty of perks. Opt for items that have a low cost, such as complimentary upgrades or house wine, as these have

a significant perceived added value by the guest and will enhance the savings message without breaking the bank.

CRAFTY EXTRAS

When adding in extras, consider what will lead to more spend. Give someone a complimentary glass of fizz on arrival or before dinner and the chances of them buying the rest of the bottle will shoot up.

INCENTIVISE A LONGER STAY

When putting a package together for rooms, it is always good to lead in with a one-night rate. This gives people maximum flexibility and also ensures that the lead-in price will be as low as possible. Beyond the overnight package, incentivise longer stays by offering strong rates for extra nights on a B&B basis. If it's only a little more to add an extra night, many people will treat themselves to a two- or three-night stay, and you'll also reap the benefits of the additional food and beverage spend.

ENCOURAGE GROUPS

Larger groups tend to spend more money on drinks. It really works to lead in with a great deal for two people, but to then offer a deal for groups of four or even 10 with a very small further savings message. These group bookings can really make a difference to the incremental revenue you can get as a business.

BIG UP YOUR AWARDS AND PRESS COVERAGE

It is astounding how many venues are harbouring awards they do not mention. A little bit of self-promotion goes a long way, so be sure you highlight any awards or accolades on your website.

SAVE ON INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Make sure you're paying for the right sort of insurance cover for your business, says *Martin Camp*

With ongoing price rises for hospitality operators on essential commodities, such as food and energy, it has never been more important to ensure you are securing the best deals for your business.

Insurance premiums tend to be one of the first expenses that are identified for a review, especially as it can be hard to see the value of your insurance if you have not made a claim.

It can naturally be tempting to select the most competitive premium, but it is crucial to remember that having the right cover is just as important – if not more so. If you're insured on the wrong basis, you run the risk of your insurer not paying out when you need it most, such as after critical business interruptions like the recent storms and subsequent flooding that affected many parts of the UK.

The best way to find a good insurance deal is to work in partnership with an insurance broker. Look for a broker who works with you to form a genuine partnership, offering honest, expert advice and investing the necessary time in understanding your business to ensure your money is being well spent.

Martin Camp, Lark Insurance.
Lark Insurance is a Business Partner of the Buell Group (www.buellconsult.co.uk)

FOUR WAYS TO GET INSURANCE COVER AT COMPETITIVE RATES

RISK MANAGEMENT

The better your operational procedures, the more comfortable you insurers will feel. If you are able to demonstrate you have procedures that help to control business risk, this will be taken into account by insurers in the premium they apply.

Select an insurance broker with an in-house risk management division. They will be able to offer assistance, either with reviewing your current arrangements or in developing bespoke risk management procedures.

CLAIMS MANAGEMENT

Your premium will be affected if you make an insurance claim. However, there are ways to manage these claims to ensure premiums are not increased unnecessarily and that insurers don't have a knee-jerk reaction when assessing your business.

Choose an insurance broker with an in-house claims team who will work with you to produce claims reports and advise on how to introduce remedial measures. This will help the insurer understand what has happened as well as the likelihood of such incidents reoccurring.

GET THE RIGHT COVER

All too often, there could be sections of your policy that are not being insured on the right basis. Make sure your insurance broker carries out regular reviews to ensure you are buying the right cover and that they truly understand your business and any areas where you might be over-exposed to risk.

“There are ways to manage these claims to ensure premiums are not increased unnecessarily and that insurers don't have a knee-jerk reaction when assessing your business”

Business interruption can be a key area where many clients are either hugely under- or over-insured or not insured on the right basis. The best brokers will offer guidance to help you understand what you should be buying. This can not only reduce premiums, but also ensure the cover is sufficient in the event of a claim.

CHECK YOUR CONDITIONS

Across the market insurers are trying to find new ways to further reduce premiums. All too often this takes the form of embedding lots of onerous conditions and warranties within the policy wording. Ideally, your broker should work with insurers who don't include such conditions, or at the least make you aware of them and negotiate with the insurer as required.

MEASURES OF PERFECTION

With a bewildering range of metrics available for evaluating how well a hotel is performing, *Elly Earls* investigates which work best

Hotels come in many shapes and sizes and when it comes to measuring their performance, there is no one-fits-all solution. If your business is almost totally accommodation-focused, for example, then the revenue per available room (revpar) metric will be important; but if much of your earnings come from the golf course, the spa or the food and beverage facilities, then trevpar – which takes into account the hotel's total revenue, rather than just the revenue from the rooms – is likely to be much more suitable.

Average daily rate (ADR), occupancy and gross operating profit per available room (goppar) are also commonly used by hoteliers, but it's not always the most popular metrics that are the most useful. Sometimes making up your own, depending on the factors that mean something to your business, can be much more valuable.

REVPAR: HOW WELL ARE YOU SWEATING YOUR ASSETS?

In recent years, revpar (revenue per available room) has become a particularly popular metric for hoteliers, but according to Carl Weldon, chief executive of hospitality finance, revenue and IT professionals association HOSPA, even revpar can be misleading.

"For instance," he points out, "what measure of 'revenue per available room'? There can be room revenue and of course total revenue – hence trevpar and revpar. Your choice will depend on the nature of the business; for example, your hotel could be purely accommodation-based and you would choose the former. But if you have a more food and beverage [F&B] or a conference and banqueting-based operation, then total revenue [trevpar] will be particularly important."

Tony Oliveira, business development manager at hospitality intelligence provider HotStats, agrees. "Revpar doesn't show the full revenue picture as it only accounts for rooms' revenue and doesn't take into consideration

the rooms' cost of sales [travel agents' commissions]," he notes. "Full service hotels with restaurant and bar operations, for example, need to monitor trevpar to understand the ability of the hotel to generate revenue."

Either way, a par (per available room) metric is an 'asset' measure. "It is dividing the revenues by how many rooms you have in the hotel overall – in other words, it is telling you how well you are 'sweating the asset'," Weldon explains, adding that revpar is particularly valuable for reviewing your hotel against its competitive set.

James Byrne, manager and co-owner of London boutique property Eccleston Square hotel, agrees that revpar has its uses. "Revpar is very useful for comparing your performance against other properties," he says. "However, revpar doesn't really give you a full picture of what the business is doing and it's not something that's critical in the day-to-day running of the business. What is critical day to day is your average daily rate and your occupancy, and it's important to know how each affects the other."

For Weldon, too, the por (per occupied room) measurement is crucial – in room



Eccleston Square hotel



terms, the ADR. Yet, he actually prefers the total revenue per occupied room statistic to ADR. "It will tell you what each room sold is generating over and above its accommodation element. This is particularly useful for very quick forecasting."

GOPPAR: GREAT FOR COMPARISONS, BUT DOESN'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Of course, revenue measurements are unable to tell a hotelier how profitable their business is, and therefore how healthy it is, as Oliveira is keen to emphasise. "Goppar is the only

metric which truly highlights the health of the business and the ability of the hotel to generate profits," he says.

Yet according to Weldon, goppar doesn't tell the whole story. "You need to recognise that gop is a profit line drawn after all the direct operating costs of the hotel – payroll, F&B, administration, sales and marketing, utilities and maintenance – but before the property costs of rates, insurance and rents," he explains.

"This is a particularly good line for comparing different businesses operationally against each other, as it can highlight operational efficiencies between operations. However, you do need to be aware that there is much going on between the top sales line and the gop line. Large hotels can be complex businesses, and that this can hide a multitude of sins."

The HOSPA chief executive advises operators to think accordingly about devising their own metrics as well as using the common measurements that fit their business best.

"Putting it simply," says Weldon, "there is something to be said for picking out key cost lines and creating averages at this granular level which mean something to you and your operation. A key line here may be for travel agents' commission or online travel agent [OTA] costs – preferably at por level as you will normally only pay commission for bookings actually taken.

"Even creating a measurement that takes in your room revpor and deducting online travel agent costs, por will give you a good idea of room profitability. Utility costs par and por are also very interesting."

Whatever the other key statistics are for you and your business, Weldon's top tip is to combine them into a dashboard, something that 'sits above' your normal profit and loss report.

"Ask your finance department or accountant to keep a track of these numbers in graphs," he suggests. "This can be very enlightening, enabling you to see the change in the numbers over a period of time in a picture – for example, using revenues weekly and costs monthly. Any spike or serious change can be seen straight away and acted on, which of course is the point of any useful piece of information."

PICK OF THE METRICS

According to HotStats business development manager Tony Oliveira, the five most commonly used metrics for hoteliers are:

Occupancy

The proportion of bedrooms available to customers that were actually occupied during the selected time period. The figure is for rooms charged for, not complimentary rooms.

Average room rate

The average price charged for each bedroom during the selected period. This price is quoted net of any sales taxes and package allocations.

Room revpar

The average revenue earned for each bedroom available to guests in the selected period

(calculated as total rooms revenue divided by rooms available). This bedroom revenue is quoted net of any sales taxes and package allocations (those parts of an inclusive package that are not bedroom revenue, such as an inclusive breakfast).

Trevpar

Total revpar is the total hotel revenue for the period divided by the total bedrooms available for occupancy during the period.

Goppar

Gross operating profit per available room represents total departmental operating profit less all undistributed operating expenses divided by the total bedrooms available for occupancy during the period.

SMOOTH THE GUEST JOURNEY WITH A RESPONSIVE WEBSITE

Make it easy on guests when they visit your website by ensuring it has all the tools they need to book quickly and easily, says *Andy Shaw*

A good website is an essential component of a hotel, pub or restaurant. It is very often the first glimpse potential guests will have of your business and can lead to instant decisions and online bookings.

So your website needs to have an instant impact that reflects your brand. Your customer's journey will start on your website, so it's vital it is designed to facilitate a brand experience, from browsing and booking to arriving and experiencing your offering.

If your website does not cater for people who use smartphones, it will severely impact your ability to engage your customers. Your website needs to be built in such a way that the content is optimised for whichever device the site is being viewed on, known as responsive design. Google research has shown that 53% of UK mobile users in 2013 used their smartphone to search and find information and then went on to follow-up on another device.

The impact of your website is critical to the engagement and conversion of website visitors into table or room bookers and should include:

- Images of your venue
- Customer reviews
- A simple booking process, whether online or by phone
- Easy access to price information, including room types or menus
- Calls to action with links to key information and booking functions anywhere on the site.

Andy Shaw is from Wisetiger, a business partner of the Buell Group www.buellconsult.co.uk



WAYS TO ENGAGE CUSTOMERS WITH YOUR WEBSITE

1 Go mobile and be responsive

Mobile phone use is on the rise, with 39% of UK mobile users in 2013 using their phone to make a purchase. You should take into account that smartphone visitors want more actionable information, quicker than desktop or tablet visitors, such as:

- Your address or, better still, an intelligent link to Google Maps for directions
- Your booking function or a phone number with an intelligent link to make a call
- Images of your venue
- Customer reviews

- Room type descriptions and menus.

Responsive design is not just about the website looking good on a smartphone – it's also about it being more useful. If you make your smartphone website stand out in these ways, you'll find people will use you more often when they are mobile.

2 Encourage loyalty

The customer experience at your venue is the key influencer on whether guests will book again. But, assuming the

experience they've had has been good, there are things you can do online to encourage loyalty and repeat booking.

Make sure you collect email addresses by promoting 'special offer' emails from your website. Commonly referred to as data capture, gathering your customers' permission and contact details, such as email and phone numbers, is critical.

This also increases word-of-mouth marketing as people are more likely to tell their friends about you if you are running a good deal.

3 Make it easy to spread the word

Allow your customers to engage with you and do some marketing for you.

Ensure your reviews, news and special offers on your website can also be shared through social media, including Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn (depending on what social environments you feel are relevant to your brand).

Your website should be developed to encourage and enable people to do this easily and simply.

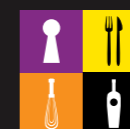


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MAGNOLIA PARK ENLISTS THE HELP OF BEACON'S DESIGN SERVICE

Beacon
Your purchasing partner

Magnolia Park Golf and Country Club called on Beacon to manage the design and purchasing for its new 30-bedroom hotel, which is being built on its existing site in Buckinghamshire.

Beacon, which helps businesses in the hospitality sector improve their profitability, has worked closely with the team at Magnolia Park to compile a comprehensive product specification and will act as the hotel's purchasing partner.

The new facility, which will be

branded a Best Western Plus hotel and is due to open later this year, will offer its guests breathtaking views over the golf course.

The team at Beacon worked closely with its syndicate of design suppliers and Magnolia Park to put together a product specification that was able to satisfy the hotel's budget and offer quality procured items.

Magnolia Park took advantage of Beacon's unique offering of creating a bespoke sample bedroom to see exactly how it would look with the products that Beacon had specified. The sample room will be reviewed by the Best Western Plus quality assessment team to ensure that the design and the products meet the

standard required for the brand, and it also offers the hotel a great opportunity to make amends to the design at an early stage.

ALAN PITHER, OWNER OF THE MAGNOLIA PARK HOTEL

"The service from Beacon has been second to none, ever since we started working with the company in May.

"By working closely with the Beacon team, we have been able to benefit from its years of industry experience, as there were an abundance of items required which we didn't initially think of.

"That's what makes Beacon a true partner when it comes to procurement – the team is always thinking about the whole project."

CHRIS JOHNSON, DESIGN SERVICES MANAGER, BEACON

"By working closely with the team, we have been able to truly understand the business objectives and handpick products that will give guests the best experience. We are looking forward to continuing to work with Magnolia Park and supporting the group with its design needs during this exciting time for the business."

For more information about Beacon, visit www.beaconpurchasing.co.uk. To follow Beacon on Twitter, visit https://twitter.com/Beacon_YPP. For more information about Magnolia Park hotel, visit www.magnoliapark.co.uk