

June 2018

Delegate expectations driving changes in event catering ICC Wales / ABPCO new report

Delegate expectations are at the forefront of seismic changes taking place in event catering, according to a new report published by the International Convention Centre Wales (ICC Wales) and the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO).

Earlier this year an ABPCO roundtable of event organisers met to discuss trends in catering at the Celtic Manor Resort - site of the forthcoming ICC Wales – in Newport, South Wales.

A recurring theme was the increasing influence of delegate expectations on event catering across five key areas.

Environmental impact

Event organisers, clients and delegates are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of large meetings. Topics such as food waste and reducing the use of plastic are now routinely discussed at the planning stage.

Local cuisine

Delegates are interested not just in experiencing local cuisine from a cultural point of view, but also in the sourcing and provenance of food products that are served during an event.

Eating on the go

Younger delegates in particular are keen on shorter, engaging and experiential conference sessions with an emphasis on networking and opportunities to share ideas. This means food that is served “on the go”, standing or festival-style is increasingly more favoured than formal, sit-down dinners.

Increasing dietary expectations

Last year’s IACC survey on **Trends in Nutrition and Delegate Wellbeing** – painted a picture of “an unprecedented increase” in health-orientated foods. ABPCO members agreed that

delegates have increasingly high expectations that their own individual dietary needs and preferences can be met whilst away from home.

Social media drives culinary scrutiny

Social media provides an opportunity to give instant feedback on the quality, style and presentation of conference catering – there is nowhere for low standard food to hide. The rise of food bloggers, vloggers and niche foodie websites is also driving a renewed interest in what's on our plates, particularly among younger people.

The report – “Leading the Way - Food for Thought” - paints a picture of a period of transition as event organisers and venues face the challenges of growing expectations, new trends and budget constraints. At the same time, an increasing number of local suppliers, sustainable food chains and artisan businesses in destinations like Wales are poised to help venues promote an exciting new brand of catering that looks and feels less “mass produced”.

Against this background, ICC Wales is looking to raise the benchmark with its own “Mind, Body and Soul” food philosophy.

Welcoming the report, ICC Wales Venue Director, Nancy Mollett said:

“We think that feeding a delegate’s mind, body and soul with goodness is crucial to heightening attentiveness, concentration and ultimately upping productivity. Combining a warm Welsh welcome with world class quality cuisine, we select the finest local ingredients and superfoods which not only taste delicious but also boost alertness and energy levels, general wellbeing and overall good health.”

Highlighting the advantages of purpose-built venues in catering for large scale events, Nancy continued:

“We’re incredibly lucky to have 1,250sqm of state-of-the-art, flexible kitchen space in our new venue when it opens next year. This will allow us to cater for all kinds of events with all sorts of demands involved in feeding up to 5,000 delegates at a time. We are getting fully prepared for the rising expectations of event organisers and delegates and we know how important the seamless delivery of great food can be to a successful meeting. Fortunately, Wales has a burgeoning reputation for culinary excellence and more people associate Wales with natural sources of food and drink than anywhere else in the UK.”

ABPCO Association Director, Heather Lishman, said:

“ABPCO members are booking events that could be taking place in five years’ time. So it’s so important for them to have a finger on the pulse of food trends and to work with venues that understand that food provision isn’t just about production and logistics, it’s about offering a tailored, personal and memorable approach. As the expectations of conference delegates continue to grow higher, the standards and benchmarks in event catering will also continue to rise. This is a great opportunity – as well as a challenge - for both event organisers and venues alike.”

“Leading the Way - Food for Thought” is available to download at http://www.iccwales.com/media/1359/foodreport_web.pdf

ICC Wales and ABPCO will be leading a campfire session on the subject of catering at events during the Meetings Show 2018 at London’s Olympia. The event will take place at the Learning Carousel on Thursday 28 June from 12.40-13.00.

- Ends -

For all media enquiries, photos, additional comment and request for interview please contact: Ken Kelling, Nancy Cremore or Evie Kennedy at davies tanner Tel: +44 (0)1892 619100 / +44 (0)7941 218915 Ken.kelling@daviestanner.com

Notes to editors

An £83.7m joint venture between Celtic Manor and Welsh Government, when it opens in 2019 ICC Wales will accommodate 5,000 delegates and includes a 4,000sqm pillar-free main hall, a 1,500-seated auditorium, 15 flexible meeting rooms, a double-height glass atrium and a 2,500sqm outdoor plaza.

ICC Wales is managed by Celtic Manor’s expert leadership team responsible for the successful delivery of the 2014 Nato Summit and the 2010 Ryder Cup. Opening in 2019, the ICC Wales is located within the grounds of the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport just two minutes from the M4.