



Casual Dining 2016 reports significant 22% increase in attendees

Multi-award winning Casual Dining show welcomes over 4,400 attendees for 2016

170 exhibitors, 20 Keynote speakers and 4,402 attendees – that’s the top line figures from this year’s Casual Dining show, which won rave reviews from across the casual dining sector last week.

Called an “essential forum for sharing new ideas, innovations and insights” by Carluccio’s co-founder and chairman Simon Kossoff, the multi-award winning two day show took place at the Business Design Centre in London on 24-25 February.

Its third edition enjoyed a 22% increase in unique attendees for 2016, with top buyers and decision makers from many of UK’s biggest restaurant, pub and bar groups packing the aisles. Notably, nearly one in three visitors cited a corporate spend of over £500k. Among the attendees were Azzurri Group, Casual Dining Group, Ed’s Easy Diner, Giraffe, GBK, Hilton, JD Wetherspoon, La Tasca, Le Pain Quotidien, Living Ventures, Mitchells & Butlers, Marston’s, MEATliquor, Metropolitan Pub Company, Nando’s, Oakman Inns, Pho, Pizza Hut, Prezzo, Revolution Bars, TGI Friday’s, The Breakfast Club, The Restaurant Group, Wagamama, Wahaca, Whitbread, Yo! Sushi, and Young’s.

Nearly 1,500 independent outlets (operators with between 1-5 sites) were also represented this year (up from 1,200 in 2015).

“A fantastic trade show with tons of interesting seminars, innovations and networking opportunities, which gave me insight and ideas for the future,” says Martin Morales, founder of Ceviche and Andina Restaurants.

“I thoroughly enjoyed Casual Dining. It’s the perfect place to meet our existing partners, and to keep up-to-speed with their latest developments. It also opens our eyes to new suppliers in the market – some I haven’t even heard of before. I would definitely recommend it,” says Sophie Jennings, food & menu developer at JD Wetherspoon.

“This is a great place to come if you’ve got anything to do with the restaurant business. There are so many great ideas here. So good, maybe it’s a show that should be twice a year!” says celebrity chef and restaurateur Aldo Zilli, who was attending with Sacla’ Professionale.

“A visit to Casual Dining gives a unique opportunity to discover products and trends completely relevant to our sector. It’s a great show!” says Alexander Salussolia, managing director of Glendola Leisure Group.

200 exhibitors forecast for 2017

The significant surge in visitor numbers has led many exhibiting companies to hail the 2016 show – as not just its biggest but also its most successful to date. As a result, a record 72% of exhibitors rebooked for the next edition before the show had even closed. To accommodate this strong uptake, and meet growing demand from a raft of new suppliers looking to reach this important market, there will be a 20% increase in stands for 2017. This will expand the show into a new area on its Upper Feature Level and take the exhibitor total over 200.

“Once again, the high demand for stand space at the show reflects the ever growing popularity of the casual dining sector,” says group event director Chris Brazier. “Even with the addition of a new area, it’s already on track to be sold out within months. It’s a testament to the show’s continuing success – and demonstrates just how important and essential Casual Dining has become to suppliers and buyers looking to do business here.”

“We’ve had a great show. It’s been very positive and we’ve met a real variety and high level of visitors. We don’t do a lot of shows, so Casual Dining for us has been a really important opportunity to reach the fast growing casual dining market. It’s been a pleasure to be a part of it,” says Matt Robinson, national and key accounts (licensed), Coca-Cola Enterprises.

“Once again Casual Dining has been thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile. We have been here every year and the show continues to gather pace with serious visitors and a great range of products. See you next year!” says Robert Marciano, director at DiSotto Foods.

“It’s been an astonishing show – the people I’ve seen have been incredible. I’ve been approached by multiples and a couple of wholesalers, one of whom is actually going to start selling my products on Monday (29 February). So, I think we’re going to be very busy and this is going to be a very profitable show. I’ve already booked my stand for next year,” says David Richards, co-founder of Capreolus Fine Foods.

Big name Keynotes

Alongside the show’s bustling exhibition, the Casual Dining Keynote Theatre was a hive of activity throughout. Powerful Keynotes and exclusive interviews – featuring a stellar line-up of industry big hitters, including Steve Richards (Casual Dining Group), Simon Kossoff (Carluccio’s), David Campbell (Wagamama), Luke Johnson (Risk Capital Partners), Martin Morales (Ceviche), Peter Martin (CGA Peach), and Paul Charity (Propel Info) – enjoyed standing room only crowds.

“It’s fantastic that we finally have a big, vibrant show for our sector – I think it’s a real coming of age,” said Kate Nicholls, CEO of The Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (ALMR), during her Keynote session.

Casual Dining Innovation Challenge Awards 2016

Brewfitt's Future of Dispense, The Oval Eco Street Bowl from Tri-Star Packaging, and Coconut LOVO vodka drink by LOVO were the winners of Gold awards in this year's Innovation Challenge.

"We're thrilled to receive the Gold award. We have seen some excellent innovation from food and drink products and equipment at this year's event and the award is testament to the hard work of our staff. It's fantastic to see the industry focusing on innovation and providing customers and consumers with forward thinking products and services, ultimately helping to improve the overall customer experience," says Curtis Paxman, managing director at Brewfitt.

"This was our first year at Casual Dining and it proved to be the perfect platform to showcase our latest packaging innovations to key buyers in the industry. We were impressed with the quality of the visitors to the show and the icing on the cake was winning Gold in the Innovation Challenge – it was a great honour and a fantastic end to two very successful days," says Kevin Curran, managing director at Tri-Star Packaging.

"Casual Dining certainly exceeded our expectations! There was a really high calibre of visitors and we were thrilled to win Gold in the Innovation Challenge 2016," says Jessica Titchumb, CEO & Founder at LOVO Drinks.

Designed to promote and celebrate new ideas in the market place, the 11 short-listed finalists (chosen from 22 entrants) were decided by popular vote at the Innovation Challenge Gallery on opening day. They were then invited to live pitch their new innovations to a trio of expert judges, and a theatre audience full of visiting buyers.

The judges – leading pub and restaurant entrepreneur Peter Borg-Neal, chief executive at Oakman Inns & Restaurants; Brian Whiting, owner of Whiting & Hammond; and Keith Bird, chief operating officer at Gourmet Burger Kitchen – applauded the high standard of entries, commenting on the "incredible range of innovations" for 2016.

Gluten Free Pastry Cases from Pidy, Bee Me (natural frozen yogurt and ice creams in eco-friendly pods) from rexmartins, Dairy Free Coconut & Mango Ice Cream from DiSotto Foods, and the Just Add flavour range (concentrated seasonings) from JDM Food Group were awarded Commended.

Finalists included Bar Foods (Gentleman's Platter), Coolicious Frozen Yogurt (Fat Free Frozen Yogurt Smoothie Base), Twinings (Twinings Chocolate Cookie Tea Shake), and The FoodFellas (Frozen Individual Avocado Halves).

King of Craft

Other show highlights included the announcement of the winner of Casual Dining's prestigious King of Craft award; as voted for by visitors to the show. That honour went to Black Isle Brewing Company's Goldeneye organic Pale Ale.

Save the date for 2017

Summing up her Casual Dining experience, Rebecca Egan, head of brand marketing at PizzaExpress Restaurants, concludes: "Casual Dining was a fantastic forum for hearing from some of the industry's leaders, as well as learning about some of the latest innovations and product development ideas. It's a really insightful, interesting and worthwhile event for anyone working in the casual dining industry."

Casual Dining returns to the Business Design Centre, in Islington, London, on 22-23 February 2017. For more information, please visit www.casualdiningshow.co.uk.

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Notes:

Casual Dining was the first launch show (UK and international) in over five years to win 'Best Tradeshow Exhibition under 2,000sq.m' at the Association of Event Organisers' Excellence Awards 2014. In 2015, it won the same award for the second consecutive year. It was also named a finalist in the 'Show Rising Star' category at the Exhibition News Awards in 2015.

High res images from Casual Dining 2015 are available upon request:

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