

Every month, our panel of experts discuss
the biggest issues in B&I.

This time we ask...

How do you compete with the high street?



JACQUI MEE

*Director of food,
Olive Catering Services*

With new express supermarkets, fast-casual restaurants and independent sandwich shops appearing on the high street all the time, there are more lunchtime options now than there ever have been... yet we ask customers to eat at our restaurants every day.

That's why it's so important for workplace caterers to make sure they are always providing customers with the variety they need. At Olive, we work extremely hard to keep our food interesting, vibrant and seasonal, and we're constantly looking for new and exciting ways to take our offering to the next level.

Cook to order

Years ago, midday was the point when everybody stopped what they were doing to head to the canteen. Modern workplaces are much more fluid — be that simply the time that people stop for lunch, or a grazing culture where staff opt for quick and easy options throughout the day.

We recognise the need to listen to each individual client to deliver the best food we can at the best value possible. If their focus is on healthy food for an active staff base, then we'll deliver luxury porridge and ready-made granola pots at breakfast and protein-packed lunch pots; if a sit-down dining experience is what's required, we'll bring the theatre into the restaurant with fast and fierce theatre cooking.

Play to your strengths

Whatever dishes the food innovation team develop, it is in full knowledge of the various restrictions that come with contract catering. The considerations we make with regard to how our food will be cooked and served practically in our restaurants are all vital to

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knowing what will work best for us, and allow our pricing to remain competitive enough to keep customers coming back day after day.

Be inspired

One of the reasons why the high street is such a draw is that food trends are constantly shifting, and it's our challenge to stay ahead of the curve. Our food innovation team is dedicated to doing just that. By experimenting with the latest flavours and techniques from across the world, we are able to bring global influences into our restaurants, creating competitive menus that appeal to a range of different needs.

For example, over the past year we've seen the demand for street food increase even further, with dishes inspired by the cuisine from everywhere from South America to South East Asia. In keeping with this trend, we have developed our induction-based, street food cooking concept, the Kerb. It's still hugely popular in our restaurants and we will shortly be launching a range of Vietnamese dishes that will push our boundaries even further.