

“Classics can be made to feel less ‘breakfast’ and more ‘brunch’ by changing one or two items”



THE MARKETEEER
CHRIS HOLDEN

The lady who did brunch

The Marketeer asks if some operators are missing an opportunity by not tapping into the growing demand for brunch

It's fair to say that breakfast is probably my favourite meal of the day. Whether that's a full English, Eggs Benedict or something slightly more American such as pancakes, streaky bacon and scrambled eggs. That said, like many people, I often find that during the week business appointments and train timetables don't always provide sufficient time in a morning for me to be able to enjoy the experience as often as I would like.

Quite often the weekends also seem to get away from me. Either I am working or I have perhaps enjoyed a beer or glass of wine too many, so that by the time I wake up the time for breakfast seems long gone. Not wanting to lose out, I have found myself joining the growing band of people who now regularly 'do brunch'.

BREAKFAST MEETS LUNCH

It's generally accepted that the concept of brunch originated in the late 19th century. However, who came up with the idea is a matter of some debate.

Google the term and undoubtedly you will be presented with Guy Beringer. An English writer who, after being inspired by a weekend hangover, is credited by

many for proposing the idea in his 1895 essay 'Brunch: A Plea'. Breakfast back then, certainly for the better off, often consisted of some quite substantial items and not something one would wish to embark on after a heavy night of drinking. Beringer also believed that by eating later, friends could share their debauched tales of the previous evening. "Brunch is cheerful, sociable and inciting. It is talk-compelling," he wrote. "It makes you satisfied with yourself and your fellow beings." All worthy sentiments I am sure you will agree.

Less well known, however, is a Bavarian lady who emigrated to America in the early 1860s – one Elizabeth Kettenring Dutreil Begue. Frau Begue ran her coffee house during the Civil War in New Orleans. There she offered the local dockworkers, butchers and market vendors from the French Market 'Zweites Fruhstuck' or 'second breakfast'. This hybrid meal served from 11am helped supplement their earlier coffee and bread taken when they started work around dawn. Although her brunch menu was rooted in German cooking, with some Creole and Cajun influences, her meals were anchored around omelettes, as good brunches often are.



After holding a series of senior marketing positions within industry-leading organisations, Chris Holden set up Ashdale Business Consulting Ltd in 2012. Ashdale provides bespoke consultancy to the licensed trade and hospitality sectors, as well offering business and marketing training. **For more information, email chris@ashdale-consulting.com**

BRUNCH TIME

Earlier this year I was reading a report that suggested that the number of people now eating out of home between 11am and midday has doubled since 1974, to 2.6m. The report also suggested that over a third of respondents interviewed saw this time of day as a very viable alternative to lunch or dinner business meetings, a figure which rose to nearly 45% for those in London. So how do operators tap into this growing trend?

It may seem obvious, but the first thing you need to establish is what time is right to offer brunch from both your own and your customer's perspective. Frau Begue started serving at 11am, as that was when her customers finished work. Depending on your location, a 10am start may be more appropriate – don't forget there is a breakfast element to this as well as lunch. As to when you stop serving, again there are no hard or fast rules... when are there ever? Generally speaking, a 2pm finish time is a good place to start, although I have been told there are places in New York which go on serving until 4pm. To be honest, that seems somewhat late from my perspective.

One word of caution – I have no problem with outlets offering 'all day' breakfasts or other meals which cut across different traditional time slots. However, if you do this, please don't think you will appeal to those seeking out a 'brunch' experience. McDonald's stop serving breakfast at 10.30am for a reason.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

This will be down to individual outlet style and location, and as with any other meals you serve, it should be in keeping with your overall offer. Some variations are acceptable, but try not to stray too far away from what your regular customers would expect to see on your menu. That said, there is nothing wrong with taking existing menu items and giving them a twist. Pancakes are particularly versatile, as they are equally at home served sweet or savoury. Even the classics can be made to feel less 'breakfast' and more 'brunch' by changing one or two items. Streaky bacon or an Italian ham, different mushrooms and tomatoes on the vine can transform a traditional English breakfast into something more cosmopolitan without losing too much of its familiarity.

BOTTOMLESS BRUNCHES

Although not for everyone, as the competition around brunch has increased so have the promotions which operators now offer. One trend to keep an eye on is that of the bottomless brunch. Originally this began with just including teas and coffees, but has now evolved in so much as some operators are now offering unlimited Prosecco, Bloody Marys, etc. as part of their all-inclusive brunch meal deals.

Having spoken to a couple of operators who have run similar promotions, all I can advise is that if you think about going down this route, make sure you get your costings and margins worked out properly beforehand. Failure to do this may result in you eroding your profits, not enhancing them.

Finally, whether you are already offering brunch to your customers or it's something you now think is worth considering, please can I ask that you don't forget Frau Begue, the first lady who did brunch. ☺