



THE  
**FUTURE** OF  
**CONFERENCE**  
*+ Event Food*



## THE BIG CONFERENCE & EVENTS FOOD SURVEY

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**Back in 2010 Lime Venue Portfolio undertook on a piece of research to understand the importance of food at events. The research created one of the most repeated statistics in the event food sector; that 40% of all event feedback was 'food related'.**

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It showed that food was something delegates felt empowered to talk about, that it was something they could feedback on freely, constructively, positively or negatively, but that it also impacted their overall opinion and experience of the event.

As part of this chapter of the report, Lime Venue Portfolio felt that the 40% statistic was due a check-in, but also that, as this is a future food chapter, that we should look into the future of event catering and find out what organisers and delegates see coming down the road.

The survey was conducted amongst event organisers including in-house, third-party agencies and freelancers. Here is what it found.

### Food Tops Delegate Feedback

**45% of all event feedback is now based on food and beverage**, indicating a 5% rise since that first piece of research conducted over 10 years ago. This is a slight but significant growth, more so when set in the context that it was ahead of crucial aspects such as 'content', which equated to 27% of event comment, and 'location of the venue' which accounted for 18% of feedback.

The importance of food was further compounded as the research looked to the average percentage of spend that goes into event food. In a pre-covid year, **the majority (56%) of events would spend between 30% - 40% of the entire event budget on food**, with some (3%) of events spending in excess of 70%. Again, this sets into context both the financial importance of food, and its effect on delegate satisfaction of the event.

However, Lime Venue Portfolio believe we should not be jumping to two, perhaps easy, assumptions; the first is that all of this feedback is either positive or negative, it's about delegates' comfort in talking about food in general; secondly, and more importantly, that this is just about people becoming more interested in food. The research shows that food is part of a much bigger and more crucial trend in the world of conference and events.





### The Rise in 'Green Eating' (1)

The research explored a number of other key trends around the decision-making process of choosing event food. Here the survey showed that, while 'Taste' and 'Price' remain the key motivators, **a new kind of agenda is emerging.** 'Healthiness', 'Environmental Sustainability' and 'Ethical Sourcing' all came close behind, with 'The Food Chain' next on the priority list.

However, when asked to predict how these priorities would change in the future, the majority of event organisers identified 'Healthier Food' and 'Enhanced Dietary Requirements' as the top two considerations. This only adds further credibility to Lime Venue Portfolio's belief that the ethical sourcing and **sustainability of food will significantly rise up the agenda for event planners as they continue to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of events;** and more specifically event food.

### Dietary Requirements: 'Green Eating' (2)

This move towards sustainable food remained a constant throughout the survey and was further underlined when respondents were asked about dietary requirements. At present, the majority of event organisers suggested that **the average amount of dietary requests was 20%, however they predicted that this number would grow to 40% by 2030**. Similarly, when asked about how delegates identify themselves, respondents suggested major growth in those that see themselves as plant-based, plant-first, vegan or vegetarian.

The opinion of those at Lime Venue Portfolio, is that this increase in 'plant-based' eating should be seen as separate from historic vegan and vegetarian requirements, but as a statement on environment and sustainability. The brand has been a long supporter of a move towards more plant-based diets and the carbon savings that can be made by cutting out some meats; most specifically beef. These messages are now very much in the public domain and **a new breed of 'green eaters' are entering events every day**.

This green agenda was further supported later in the study as event organisers were asked to assess the importance of food waste. Waste is a subject covered substantially in chapter one of Beyond Food, however the conversation has since moved on as event organisers, venues and delegates have looked to form a bond around defeating food waste together. Most event organisers are taking this approach, and Lime Venue Portfolio are hoping to see the trajectory of #FORO (fear of running out) continue to rise, albeit to minimise this fear.





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### Leadership

Finally, the survey showed a small but significant change in the leadership involvement around events. In the past the, somewhat clichéd, view of event food was that the menu was geared around the individual taste of one key individual. However, only 11% of respondents confessed that the MD / CEO's palette was most important in the decision making around menu choice. Pleasingly, the majority (60%) left the choice to the delegate. Interestingly, **19% said that it was the values of the company that was most important when making decisions around food.** This is a trend that Lime Venue Portfolio will continue to watch, as it shows that more and more company values are dictating the strategy and direction of event programmes.

Equally, companies are more and more committed to putting budget behind ethical acts within the event programme. In terms of the financial conviction around sustainable menus, the survey showed **72% of respondents would be willing to pay more for a demonstrably more sustainable menu,** with 48% suggesting they would be willing to pay up to 10% extra and 19% willing to pay up to 20%.

Not all sustainable menus need to be more expensive, many are cheaper. However, the significance of this part of the report is that businesses and brands are committing to sustainable food with finance as well as values. An important move which could super charge the move towards greener events.

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## SUPPORTING DATA

### 1. How would you categorise your job role/ company?

Event Organiser (corporate)	45%
Event Organiser (agency)	33%
Event Organiser (freelance)	7%
Venue	3%
Caterer	3%
AV / Tech supplier	4%
Other (event supplier)	5%

### 2. In a pre-covid year, what percentage of the event budget would be spent on food?

10% of Budget	4%
20% of Budget	14%
30% of Budget	28%
40% of Budget	28%
50% of Budget	12%
60% of Budget	9%
70+% of Budget	4%

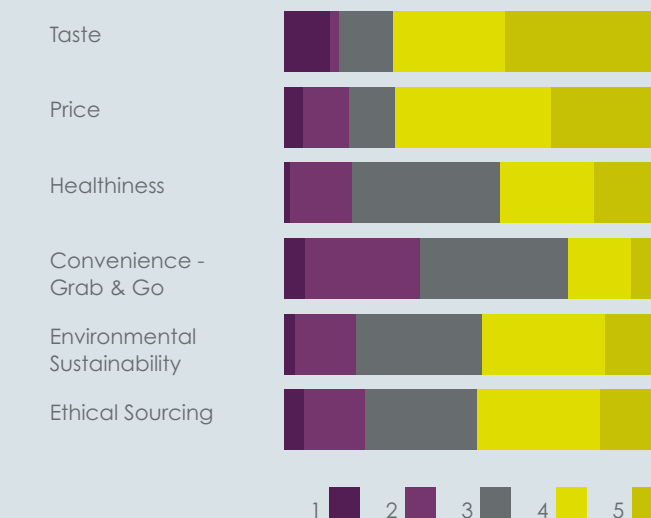
### 3. When choosing the event menu, whose palate is most important?

Mine	5%
The CEO/MD's	11%
The guest/delegation	60%
The company's*	19%
Not important	5%

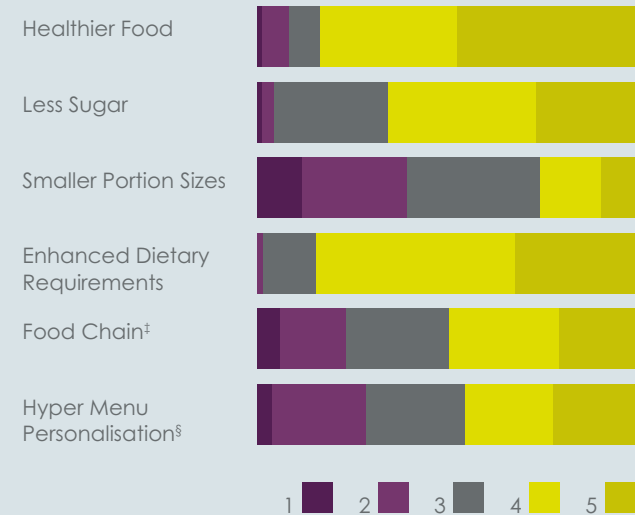
### 4. In a pre-covid year, which of the following represents the most common form of feedback you receive about the event from delegates?

Event Content	27%
Location of the venue	18%
Food & beverage	45%
Venue Facilities	7%
Technology	3%

### 5. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most how much of an impact do the following have on your or your client's decision to book food and beverages?



### 6. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most, What do you think will be the biggest trend that will effect guest food requirements in the next 10 years (2031)?



### 7. Whose responsibility do you think it is to manage food waste at events?

Guest/Delegate	1%
Organiser	15%
Venue	31%
Caterer	12%
All of the above	40%

\* Science Focus Magazine, 2018

† On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most

‡ Science Focus Magazine, 2018

§ Science Focus Magazine, 2018

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## SUPPORTING DATA

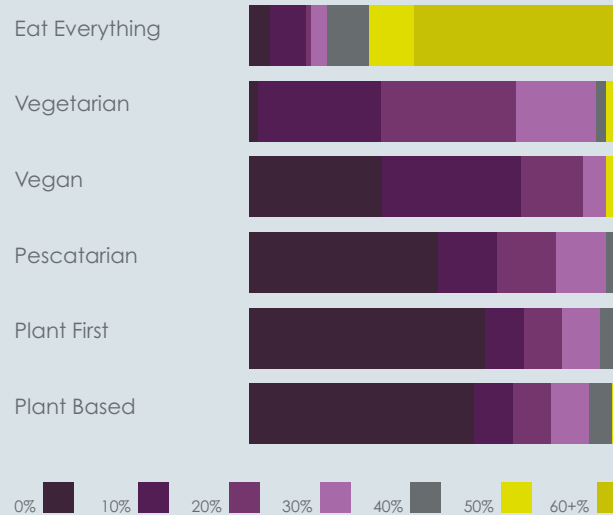
**8. Thinking about your average event, what percentage of guests have dietary requirements?**

10% of Guests	21%
20% of Guests	32%
30% of Guests	26%
40% of Guests	18%
50% of Guests	3%
60% of Guests	0%
70+% of Guests	1%

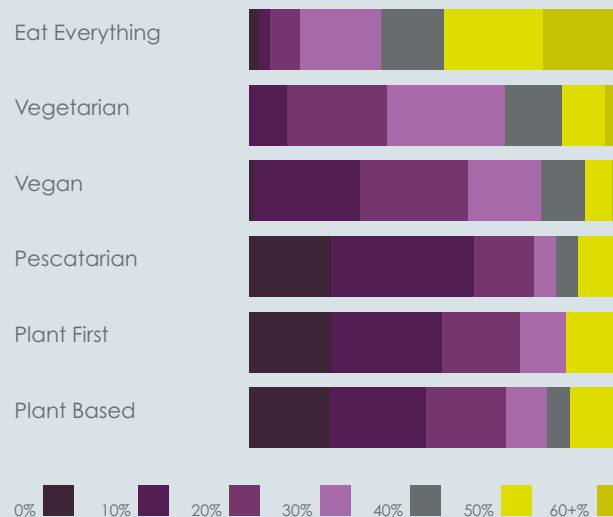
**9. Thinking about your average event in 10 years time (2031), what percentage of guests do you think will have dietary requirements then?**

10% of Guests	1%
20% of Guests	8%
30% of Guests	23%
40% of Guests	29%
50% of Guests	21%
60% of Guests	9%
70+% of Guests	8%

**10. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most, thinking of your average event; what percentage of guests/delegates would you say identify as the following:**



**11. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being the least and 5 being the most, thinking of your average event, in 10 years time (2031), what percentage of guests/delegates would you say will identify as the following:**





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## SUPPORTING DATA

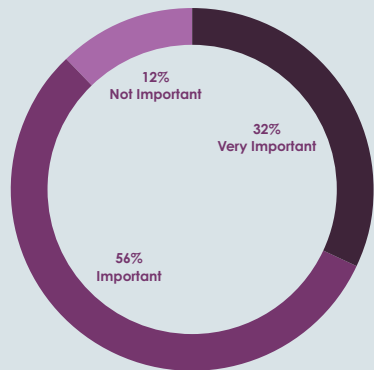
12. In general, how important is healthy food at your events?



**4.19 AVERAGE RATING**

13. At your event how important is it that venues/categories use locally sourced food suppliers?

• Very Important	32%
• Important	56%
• Not Important	12%



14. Would you/your client pay more for a sustainable menu (if extra associated costs were applicable)?

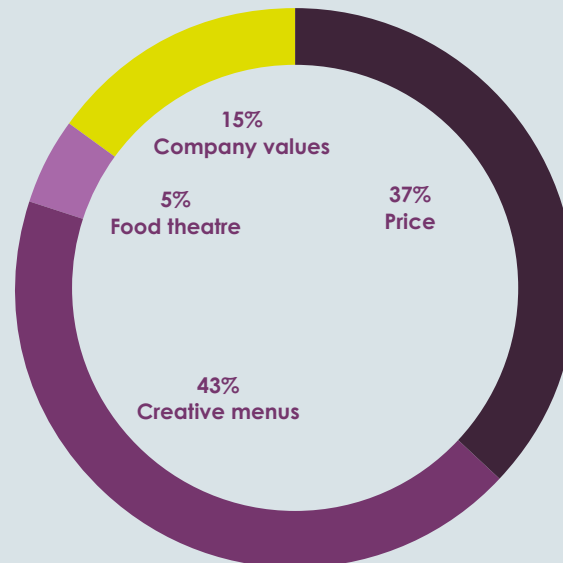
Yes	72%
No	27%
Other	1%

15. If you answered YES to Question 13, how much more might you pay for a sustainable menu?

0-5% more	32%
10% more	48%
20% more	19%
30% more	2%

16. When choosing an event caterer, what is most important to your event?

Price	37%
Creative menus	43%
Food theatre	5%
They match our company values	15%



17. As part of the world's largest food service company we aim to be net zero by 2030. How high on your company's agenda are net zero emissions?

Very High	35%
High	48%
Low	18%

18. What impact do you think COVID will have on food service at your events over the next 5 years?

Very significant	30%
Significant	54%
Not significant	15%
Other	1%

# ABOUT US

## LIME VENUE PORTFOLIO

The UK's largest collection of diverse venues, connected by great tasting food and memorable experiences.

Lime Venue Portfolio launched in 2008 and since then we've become the leading group venue finder for unique venues. Today we're proud to represent over 80 independent venues from all four corners of the UK.

We bring together individual venues, all operated by Compass Group UK & Ireland, in pursuit of a common purpose - to build their meeting, incentive, conference and event business.

Venues include zoos, museums, castles and stately homes; leading sporting stadiums and race courses alongside the UK's premier exhibition and conference centres, purpose built training and residential venues; providing event professionals with a variety of spaces to suit different event objectives.

Operating just like a hotel group central reservations service, our award-winning team search the portfolio of venues to save you time and money. Our venue experts will provide complimentary, detailed e-proposals to suit your deadlines and make booking an event with us hassle free.

Brands choose our iconic spaces to make a statement about their event and they choose Lime Venue Portfolio because of our unrivalled reputation.

**Find out more:**

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As part of Compass Group UK & Ireland, Lime Venue Portfolio recognise the risks posed to the planet from climate change and that the consequences of this change are being felt by people all around the world. That is why we are supporting our parent company, in the race to net zero.

We know you want to do the right thing, but that's not always easy! So, to remove any eco-anxiety when planning meetings, conferences and events we've launched **Meetings for Change**. Get in touch to find out more.

**RESEARCH & REPORT DEVELOPMENT:**

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**A MESSAGE TO THE REPORT'S  
CONTRIBUTORS:**

Thank you for your enthusiasm, commitment and support in developing this report. It couldn't have been produced without you.

**THANK  
YOU**

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

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