

Gourmet burgers

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

Study duration: 2015-07-01

Project code: FSA10029

Conducted by: Mintel

Background

Our Board agreed that a new framework for the control of risky foods needed to be developed to increase information provided to consumers so to facilitate more informed choices, manage public health risks, and minimize the costs to business caused by these controls. We have identified some foods as 'risky'; including raw burgers, i.e. burgers that would be considered deliberately less than 'fully cooked', and burgers cooked 'rare'/'medium-rare'. In particular, the Board have indicated concern about the growing trend of burgers being served rare in food service outlets, especially among niche gourmet burger restaurants.

The research commissioned under this project intends to identify potential supply and demand factors influencing trends in the gourmet burger restaurant sector. The resulting findings will help make decisions on the allocation and method of application of our resources, in relation to ensuring food business operators and consumers have the correct information to make informed choices and take responsibility in managing the food risks associated with raw burgers.

Research Approach

This research aimed to:

- Identify potential supply and demand side factors driving growth in the gourmet burger restaurant/outlet sector.
- Understand and quantify market characteristics including the competitive landscape and key market participants.
- Understand and quantify core gourmet burger restaurant users.
- Identify predictors of future growth in the sector, including anticipated investment, socio-demographic and macroeconomic trends and the role of changing consumer tastes.

The researched comprised a review of existing in-house Mintel IP, including UK market intelligence report and the quantitative consumer survey data contained within them, as well as analyst presentations. This was supplemented by desk research across company sources, industry and consumer publications and social media. Mintel also commissioned an additional quantitative consumer survey exploring usage of beef burgers and risky burgers in the foodservice channel.

Results

Gourmet burgers are not synonymous with burgers not being fully cooked. However, many gourmet burger venues serve their burgers as pink or 'medium' as standard. Gourmet burger bars are a recent phenomenon in the UK. While the market is growing rapidly, it remains a small and fragmented one. Various operators have announced expansion plans and, if fulfilled, this will bring new consumers to the market.

The penetration of gourmet burger bars is low, at just 5% of population. 16-34-year-olds, higher income households, individuals falling into the Socio-economic group AB, and Londoners and urbanites are the most likely users. Although the chains are positioned as an affordable option in the dining out market, their price points appear to curb usage. As such, the predicted future rise in real disposable incomes should, on balance, bring more users to the market.

Around a quarter of those consumers eating burgers at foodservices state having eaten a medium or rare burger. Preference for medium or rare burgers is fuelled by such burgers being seen to offer a superior eating experience in terms of taste, texture and juiciness. Given that this is a view held by current burger eaters, it is likely to be sustained.

The picture of potential channels of distribution of risky burgers is complicated by a number of other foodservice businesses offering thicker burgers that could be served pink or rare. The strong margins for the affordable dish bolster burgers' appeal for foodservice operators. Longer term, the development of the UK foodservice market poses established cuisine types, including burgers, with the challenge of holding their ground against the latest trends.

Consumer opinions are divided on whether burger restaurants should have the option to cook beef burgers rare, continuing to highlight the thorny issue, and the importance of customer buy-in to steps to address the associated potential risk.

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

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