

Out to Lunch investigation methodology 2019

If you have any questions about the Out to Lunch research methodology, please contact Hattie Shepherd, Policy Officer at Soil Association hshepherd@soilassociation.org or 01179 874 608.



The Out to Lunch league table will be constructed based on information from three sources:

1. Online menus on restaurant and pub websites

Restaurants will be surveyed in April and May 2019. Any questions not answered via the online menu will be checked by a phone call to customer services or a visit to the restaurant.

2. A survey of all chains, completed in April and May 2019

Surveys will be sent by email in April 2019, chains will be given a month to respond, then a further extension of one week with a reminder if the survey is not returned on time. Emails will be followed up by phone calls in instances where restaurants are unresponsive.

Restaurants will be notified from the outset that if they do not provide answers to the survey by the deadline given they will receive the lowest score available in these areas.

3. A field survey of chains conducted by parents across the UK

A representative sample of 80 parents will be chosen from a pool of self-selecting volunteers. The sample will be determined by region, ethnicity and income. Parents will be asked to visit two predetermined restaurants, and an average of the scores given will be used for the league table. Each chain will be surveyed six to eight times by different parents.

The information gathered will be evaluated by the Soil Association and parents against a set of criteria, designed to test the provision of:

Fresh food you can trust

This means - serving fresh, traceable, sustainable and ethically sourced food

This criterion included the following survey questions:

- Does the menu indicate where ingredients come from?
- Is the food cooked fresh?
- Are eggs used from caged or free range systems?
- Is meat farm assured or traceable to the farm?
- Is provenance information about meat on the menu available on request?
- Do manufactured meat and fish products dominate the menu?
- Is environmentally friendly food on the menu?
- Is British meat on the menu?
- Is palm oil used or sustainable sourced?
- Is the chain taking action on antibiotics in the supply chain?
- Is animal feed in the supply chain sustainable?
- Are menus adapted to use in-season produce through the year?
- What animal welfare accreditation does meat used have?
- Is sustainable fish on the menu?
- Is action taken to prevent and minimise waste?

A healthy choice

This means - providing variety and making healthy eating easy

This criterion included the following survey questions:

- Are meals or meal options balanced?
- Is there a variety of starchy foods on offer in different meals?
- Do chips accompany everything on the menu?
- Does a portion of vegetables of salad come with or in every meal?
- Are vegetables incorporated into meals?
- Is there a good variety of vegetables on the menu?
- Is fruit the main component of deserts or is fresh fruit available?
- Is a variety of protein, including plant-based proteins, on offer?
- Are there a good number of non-meat dishes available?
- Is oily fish included as a meal option?
- How much of the food is deep fried?
- Are healthy options given price promotions?
- Are healthy choices supported with information?
- Is the amount of food served a sensible amount for the child?
- Are puddings served in an appropriate portion size?
- Does the restaurant serve children's portions of adult meals?
- Can children's meals come in different sizes?
- Are added-sugar drinks on the children's menu?
- Do meals contain problem additives and colourings?
- Do meals contain trans fats?

Family friendly

This means – welcoming children and treating them well and accommodating parent needs

This criterion included the following survey questions:

- Is children's cutlery available?
- Are activities linked to healthy eating or where food comes from provided?
- Are there baby changing facilities?
- Did staff treat children appropriately?
- Are high chairs available?
- Does the food look appealing?
- Is the portion a suitable amount?
- Did children's food arrive at a suitable temperature?
- Does restaurant signage welcome breastfeeding?
- Are children's portions of adult meals available?

These criteria were chosen to reflect:

- What is important to parents - based on a representative survey of 1500 parents conducted in February 2013 and a further survey of more than 2000 self-selecting parents in April 2015 and 2017.
- [The School Food Standards](#)
- [Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England](#)
- Good practice proven to be achievable in over 1.8 million meals served to [Food for Life Served Here standards](#) each day

The scoring table for these criteria is detailed below.

Out to Lunch restaurant performance criteria



	This means	Key questions	How will measured performance	Max score
Fresh food you can trust				36 points
Food is made and cooked in the restaurant Traceable meat Environmentally sustainable & ethical food	Information readily available on where ingredients come from	Does the menu indicate where ingredients come from? (Country of origin, supplier, farm)	Not at all – 0pts In a few instances (1 or 2 separate ingredients on the menu) – 1pt In some instances (3+ separate ingredients) – 2pts	2 points
	Food is freshly prepared – cooked from scratch in the kitchen	Where do ingredients come from (country of production)?	Record origin of: All meat products, 1x fish if on menu, 2x vegetables, 1x salads, 2x staples.	No score (background research)
		Is the meat on the menu British?	No meat is British – 0 points Some meat is British – 1 point All the meat on the menu is British – 2 points	2 points
	Environmentally friendly food served	Is meat farm-assured/traceable to the farm?	No/minority of meat (by meat type) farm assured – 0pts Half or majority of meat (by meat type) – 1pt All meat is farm assured – 2pts	2 points
	Animal products are from higher welfare systems	Is provenance information about meat on the menu available on request?	No – 0pts Some information provided, but not where food was originally produced – 1pt Clear and detailed response given, including where food was originally produced – 2pts	2 points
	Fish from sustainable stocks	Is food freshly made/prepared in the restaurant?	None or a minority of named ingredients are made and prepared in the restaurant – 0pts Half or a majority of named ingredients are made and prepared in the restaurant – 1pt All the named ingredients are made and prepared in the restaurant – 2pts	4 points
	Efforts are made to use in-season produce	Is food cooked for the first time in the restaurant?		

	Do manufactured meat and fish 'products' dominate the menu? (burger, hamburger, sausages, pies, pasties, sausage rolls, shaped or coated meat – nuggets, meatballs, chicken breast)	In meals containing meat: Meat products are included in half or + of meals – 0pts Meat products are included in minority of meals – 1pt Meat products are not included in any meals – 2pt	2 points
	Is the choice of organic food given?	None – 0pts One organic ingredient – 1pt Two organic ingredients – 2pts Three+ organic ingredients – 3pts	3 points
	Are the eggs used free-range?	Caged eggs used or no information available – 0pts Mix of free-range and cages – 1pts All free range (includes organic) – 2pts	2 points
	What animal welfare accreditation does meat used have? (Welfare accreditation = freedom food, free range, organic)	No accreditation – 0pts Any accredited pork or poultry or fish on the menu – 1pt All pork is accredited – 2pts All poultry is accredited – 2pts All pork & poultry is accredited – 5pts	5 points
	Are steps taken to reduce antibiotic use in the supply chain?	No routine use of antibiotics (prophylaxis) – 2pts No medically important antibiotics – 1pts No policy – 0pts	2 points
	Is animal feed in the supply chain sustainable?	Animal feed is certified organic – 2pts Animal feed is certified sustainable – 1pt Details must be provided No certification – 0pts	2 points
	Is there sustainable fish on the menu, is there anything from MCS 'fish to avoid' list?	Menu includes fish on MCS 'fish to avoid' list - minus 1pt Menu does not include fish on MCS 'fish to avoid' list – 0pts Menu includes MSC or sustainable fish – 1pt Restaurant has a policy/public position on sustainable fish – 1pt	2 points
	Are menus adapted to use British in-season produce?	No – 0pts Yes, meals incorporate seasonal produce – 1pt Yes, menus change seasonally – 2pts	2 points
	Are steps taken to reduce the amount of food left uneaten/plate waste?	Signatory of Courtauld Commitment 2025/WRAP Food Waste Reduction Roadmap – 2pts A policy for managing plate/kitchen waste is in place – 1pt Details must be provided	2 points

		Is Palm Oil on the menu?	No ingredients contain Palm Oil – 2pts Only certified sustainable/organic palm oil – 2pt Palm oil is not certified/sustainable – minus 1pts	2 points
A healthy choice				44 points
Providing variety Making healthy eating easier	Good balance and variety of foods on offer	Are meals or meal options balanced? (include <u>one</u> starchy food and one portion of protein, and at least one stand-alone portion of veg or salad in a meal)	None or minority of meals are balanced – 0pt Half or majority of meals are balanced– 1pt All meals are balanced – 2pts	2 points
	Variety of starchy foods available	Is there a variety of starchy foods on offer in different meals? (bread, potatoes, pasta/noodles, rice, other grains)	Only one or two starchy foods on offer – 0 points Three starchy foods on offer – 1pt Four+ starchy foods on offer – 2pts Wholegrain/complex carbs available – 1pt	3 points
	Chips don't dominate the menu	Do chips accompany everything on the menu?	Chips all or majority of the meals on the menu – 0pts Half or majority of meals have chips with them – 1pt In a minority of meals, or chips are one of several options across the menu – 1pt No meals have chips with them – 2pts	2 points
	Variety of vegetables and salads available	Does veg or a portion of salad come with or in every meal?	Veg or salad comes with half or less of meals – 0pts Veg or salad comes with majority of meals – 1pt Veg or salad comes with every meal – 2pts Two portions of veg or salad with some meals – extra 1 point Two portions of veg or salad with every meal – extra 3 points	5 points
	Puddings contain fruit	Are vegetables incorporated into different meals? (e.g. pizza topping , vegetables in pasta dishes)	No meals available with veg incorporated – 0pts One meal available with veg incorporated – 1pt Two+ meals available with veg incorporated – 2pts	2 points
	Variety of protein available	Is there a good variety of vegetables on the menu? (other than peas/baked beans)	None available – 0pts Minority of menu items include one other choice – 1pt Majority of menu items include one other choice – 2pt All items include at least one other choice – 3pts	3 points
	Fried food doesn't dominate the menu	Is fruit the main component of puddings or is fresh fruit available?	None – 0pts In a minority of puddings – 1pt In half or majority of puddings – 2pts Fresh fruit available – extra 1pt	3 points
	Steps taken to make healthy eating easy			
	Healthy drinks on offer			
No salt on tables				
Free from problematic additives and				

colourings and trans fats	Are puddings an appropriate portion size?	<p>No pudding exceeds 220kcal per portion – 1 point One or more puddings exceed 550kcal per portion – minus 1 point</p> <p>No pudding contains more than 19g total sugar per portion – 3 points No pudding contains more than 24g total sugar per portion – 2 points 50% or more puddings contain less than 24g total sugar – 1 point The majority of puddings contain more than 24g total sugar – 0 point (Fresh fruit and no-added-sugar yoghurt are counted as ‘healthier puddings’.)</p> <p>No nutritional info provided – minus 1pt</p>	4 points
	Is a variety of protein on offer? (red meat, poultry, fish, plant-based)	<p>Only one or two protein options on offer – 0pts Three protein options on offer – 1pt Four+ protein options on offer – 2pts Variety of plant-based proteins available – 1pt</p>	3 points
	Is there a good choice of non-meat dishes?	<p>None or only one non-meat meal available – 0pts Two different non-meat meals available – 1pt Three+ different non-meat meals available – 2pts Three+ different non-meat meals available, comprising 25% or more of the menu – 3pts Majority of dishes are plant based – 4 points</p>	4 points
	Are meat free dishes displayed prominently on the menu?	<p>Meat free dishes are positioned at the top of the menu – 1pt Meat free dishes at the bottom of the menu – 0pts</p>	1 points
	Is increasing alternative protein offerings a priority over the next 5 years? Are efforts driven by consumer demand, competitive pressure, market opportunities, adherence to environmental goals, or another factor?		No score (background research)

		Is oily fish included as a meal option?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pt	1 point
		How much of the food is deep fried? (fried in manufacture or kitchen)	Majority or half of meals contain fried ingredients – 0pts Minority of meals contain fried ingredients – 1pt No meals contain fried ingredients – 2pts	2 points
		Are healthier meal options given price promotions? Unhealthy = no veg, fruit or salad, or inclusion of fried food	No, they are more expensive and/or meal deals limit choices to unhealthy options – 0pts All meals the same price – 1pt All meals the same price and all healthy – 2pt Healthy options are cheaper – 2pts	2 points
		Are healthy choices supported with information?	No indication of what is better for you – 0pts Some guidance, 5aday or meal highlighted as healthy -1pt Detailed info, nutritional info -2pts	2 points
		The only children’s drinks listed on the menu should be: plain water, milk, pure fruit juices, yoghurt or milk drinks (less than 5% sugar), combinations of the above	None or minority of drinks permitted in schools – 0pts Unlimited refills of sugary drinks available – minus 1pt Majority of drinks have no added sugar or sweeteners – 1pt All drinks have no added sugar or sweeteners – 2pts	2 points
		Did you have to ask for tap water?	Yes – 0 point No – 1 points	1 points
		Do meals contain problem additives and colourings? (see Catering Mark standards)	No information available or no policy/practice – 0pts Policy/practice - additives & colourings not allowed – 1pt	1 point
		Do meals contain trans fats?	No information available or no policy/practice – 0pts Policy/practice - additives & colourings not allowed – 1pt	1 point
		Is full nutrition information available to parents?	Yes – 1pt No – 0pts	1 point
Family friendly				20 points
	Children welcomed and treated well	Is the restaurant child friendly?	Score from 0-4 0 – Not at all 1 – Not bad, could be a lot better 2 – Overall pretty good, could be several improvements 3 – Overall very good, a few small things could be better 4 – Brilliant, couldn’t fault it	4 points
	Portion size is flexible			
	Kids portions of adult meals made available	Is children’s cutlery available?	No - 0pts Yes, on request – 1pt Yes, as standard – 2pts	2 points

Measures taken to accommodate children's and parent's needs	Is the amount of food served a sensible amount for your child?	No, it was too much – 0pts No, it was too little – 0pts Yes, it was about right – 1pt	1 point
	Does the restaurant serve children's portions of adult meals?	No – 0pts Yes, on request – 1pt Yes, as standard (made clear on menu that this can happen) – 2pts	2 points
	Can children's meals come in different sizes?	No – 0pts Yes, on request – 1pt Yes, as standard (indicated on menu) – 2pts	2 points
	Are activities provided for children? Are they linked to healthy eating/provenance/sustainability/environment?	No – 0pt Yes – 1pt Yes, linked to food/healthy eating – 2pts	2 points
	Are there baby changing facilities?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pt	1 point
	Did restaurant staff treat your children appropriately?	Yes – 0pts No – 1pt	1 point
	Are there high chairs available?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pt	1 point
	Did children's food arrive at a suitable temperature?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pt	1 point
	Does the food look appealing to you and your children?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pts	1 point
	Does the restaurant have signage welcoming breastfeeding?	No – 0pts No, but restaurant has provided written policy on breastfeeding – 1pts Yes, signage and policy – 1pts	2 points
	Are single use plastics used? (cups, cutlery)	Yes – minus 1pt	- 1 point