**Out to Lunch investigation methodology 2021**

*If you have any questions about the Out to Lunch research methodology, please contact Laura Chan, Policy Officer at Soil Association (*[*lchan@soilassociation.org*](mailto:lchan@soilassociation.org)*)*

**The 2021 Out to Lunch league table will be constructed based on information from three sources:**

1. **Online menus on restaurant websites**

Restaurants will be surveyed in July 2021. Any questions not answered via the online menu will be checked by a phone call to customer services or a visit to the restaurant.

1. **A survey of all chains, completed in July - August 2021**

Surveys will be sent by email in July 2021, chains will be given a month to respond. If the survey is not returned in time, a further one-week extension may be requested. 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.

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

A representative sample of parents will be asked to visit and survey two predetermined restaurants. 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 includes the following survey questions:

* Does the menu indicate where ingredients come from?
* Is British meat on the menu?
* Are eggs used from caged or free-range systems?
* Is meat farm assured or traceable to the farm?
* What animal welfare accreditation does the meat have?
* Is provenance information about meat on the menu available on request?
* Is sustainable fish on the menu?
* Do manufactured meat and fish products dominate the menu?
* Is palm oil used or sustainably 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?
* Is the food cooked fresh?
* 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](http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/standards/)
* [Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England](https://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/)
* Good practice proven to be achievable in over 1.8 million meals served to [Food for Life Served Here standards](https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/catering/food-for-life-served-here) each day
* [Eating Better Alliance](https://www.eating-better.org/betterbyhalf#1-1)

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** |  | | | **35 points** |
| Food is made and cooked in the restaurant  Traceable meat  Environmentally sustainable & ethical food | **Information readily available on where ingredients come from**  **Food is freshly prepared – cooked from scratch in the kitchen**  **Environmentally friendly food served**  **Animal products are from higher welfare systems**  **Fish from sustainable stocks**  **Efforts are made to use in-season produce** | Does the menu indicate where ingredients come from? (Country of origin, supplier, farm) | No – 0pts  In a few instances (1 or 2 separate ingredients on the menu) – 1pt  In some instances (3+ separate ingredients) – 2pts | 2 points |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| Is food freshly made/prepared in the restaurant?  Is food cooked for the first time in the restaurant? | None or a minority of named dishes/components are made and prepared in the restaurant – 0pts  Half or a majority of named dishes/components are made and prepared in the restaurant – 1pt  All the named dishes/components are made and prepared in the restaurant – 2pts | 4 points |
| None or a minority of named dishes/components are cooked in the restaurant for the first time – 0pts  Half or a majority of named dishes/components are cooked in the restaurant for the first time – 1pt  All the named dishes/components are cooked in the restaurant for the first time – 2pts |
| Do manufactured meat and fish ‘products’ dominate the menu? (burger, hamburger, sausages, pies, pasties, sausage rolls, shaped or coated meat – nuggets, meatballs etc) | 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 to two organic ingredients – 1pt  Three+ organic ingredients – 2pts | 2 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 on the menu – 1pt  All pork is accredited – 2pts  All poultry is accredited – 2pts  All pork & poultry is accredited – 5pts | 5 points |
| Do you have a publicly available policy on antibiotic use in the supply chain? | Publicly available policy restricting antibiotic use in all animal products – 2pts  Policy in place restricting antibiotic use in some animal products – 1pts  No policy – 0pts | 2 points |
| Is the animal feed in the supply chain deforestation free? | Yes (please provide evidence e.g. policy) - 1 or 2pts (depending on robustness)  No – 0pts  Don’t know – 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 – 2pts  Palm oil is not certified/sustainable – minus 1pts | 2 points |
| **A healthy choice** |  |  |  | **45 points** |
| Providing variety  Making healthy eating easier | Good balance and variety of foods on offer  Variety of starchy foods available  Chips don’t dominate the menu  Variety of vegetables and salads available  Puddings contain fruit  Variety of protein available  Fried food doesn’t dominate the menu  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 meals or meal options balanced? (include one 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 2 points | 5 points |
| Has the 2019 Peas Please pledge been fulfilled? (if a pledge was made) | Yes – 0pts [NB. points awarded for the criterion above]  No – minus 5pts | - 5 points |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| Are puddings an appropriate portion size? | No pudding exceeds 220kcal per portion – 1 point  One or more puddings exceed 550kcal per portion – minus 1 point  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’.)  No nutritional info provided – minus 2pts | 4 points |
| Is a variety of protein on offer?  (red meat, poultry, fish, plant-based) | Only one or two protein options on offer – 0pts  Three+ protein options on offer – 1pt  Variety of plant-based proteins available – 1pt  Some or all plant-based proteins are from whole foods (e.g. pulses) – 1pt | 3 points |
| Is there a good choice of non-meat dishes? | 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 | 4 points |
| Are meat free dishes displayed prominently on the menu? | Meat free dishes are positioned at the top of the menu or integrated within the main menu – 1pt  Meat free dishes at the bottom of the menu – 0pts | 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 4pts  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  Portion size is flexible  Kids portions of adult meals made available  Measures taken to accommodate children’s and parent’s needs | 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 |
| Is children’s cutlery available? | No - 0pts  Yes, on request – 1pt  Yes, as standard – 2pts | 2 points |
| 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 – 1pts  No – 0pt | 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 |