



Out to Lunch investigation methodology 2024

If you have any questions about the Out to Lunch research methodology, please contact Oona Buttafoco, Senior Policy Officer at Soil Association (obuttafoco@soilassociation.org)

The 2024 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-August 2024. 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 July – August 2024

Surveys will be sent by email in July 2024, chains will be given until end of August 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.

3. 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 roughly three to five 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:

Food you can trust

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

A healthy choice

This means – providing variety and making healthy eating easy

Family friendly

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

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
- [Eating Better Alliance](#)
- [Sugar Reduction Programme - Action on Sugar](#)

The scoring table for these criteria is detailed below.

Key questions	How we will measure performance	Max score
Food you can trust		46
Does the menu indicate where ingredients come from? (Country of origin, supplier, farm)	No – 0pts	2pts
	In a few instances (1 or 2 separate ingredients on the menu) – 1pt	
	In some instances (3+ separate ingredients) – 2pts	
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	2pts
	Some meat is British – 1 point	
	All the meat on the menu is British – 2 points	
Is meat farm-assured/traceable to the farm?	No/minority of meat (by meat type) farm assured – 0pts	2pts
	Half or majority of meat (by meat type) – 1pt	
	All meat is farm assured – 2pts	
Is provenance information about meat on the menu available on request?	No – 0pts	2pts
	Some information provided, but not where food was originally produced – 1pt	
	Clear and detailed response given, including where food was originally produced – 2pts	
Is food freshly made/prepared in the restaurant? (focusing on protein)	None or a minority of the protein on the menu (portion of meat, fish, plant-based protein or pulses) is prepared from scratch in the restaurant – 0pts	

	Half or a majority of the protein on the menu (portion of meat, fish, plant-based protein or pulses) is prepared from scratch in the restaurant – 4pts	8pts
	All the protein on the menu (portion of meat, fish, plant-based protein or pulses) is prepared from scratch in the restaurant – 8pts	
Is food cooked for the first time in the restaurant? (please provide details about the 3 most popular meals)	None or a minority of the items are cooked in the restaurant for the first time	No score (background research)
	Half or a majority of the items are cooked in the restaurant for the first time	
	All the items are cooked in the restaurant for the first time	
Do manufactured meat and fish ‘products’ dominate the menu? (hamburger, sausages, pies, pasties, sausage rolls, shaped or coated meat – nuggets, meatballs, etc.)	Manufactured meat and fish ‘products’ are included in half or + of meals – 0pts	2pts
	Manufactured meat and fish ‘products’ are included in minority of meals – 1pt	
	Manufactured meat and fish ‘products’ are not included in any meals – 2pt	
Is the choice of organic food given?	None – 0pts	8pts
	One to two organic ingredients – 4pts	
	Three+ organic ingredients – 8pts	
Are the eggs used free-range? (whole eggs only)	Caged eggs used or no information available – 0pts	2pts
	Mix of free-range and cages or barn laid – 1pts	
	All free range (includes organic) – 2pts	
What animal welfare accreditation does meat used have? (Welfare accreditation = freedom food, free range, organic)	No accreditation – 0pts	5pts
	A few (up to a third) are accredited – 1pt	
	Some (more than a third) meat is accredited – 2pts	
	All meat is accredited – 5pts	
Do you have a publicly available policy on antibiotic use in the supply chain?	Policy for using antibiotics responsibly – 1pt	3pts
	Restrictions on the highest-priority critically important antibiotics – extra 1pt	
	Collect data on antibiotic use in the supply chain – extra 1pt	
	No policy – 0pts	

Where there is soya in your supply chain (e.g. for animal feed), are your suppliers signed up to the UK Soy Manifesto?	All suppliers are signatories of the UK Soy Manifesto (or 100% deforestation-free certified) – 3pts	3pts
	More than 50% of suppliers are signatories of the UK Soy Manifesto (or 100% deforestation-free certified) – 2pts	
	50% or less suppliers are signatories of the UK Soy Manifesto (or 100% deforestation-free certified) – 1pt	
	No suppliers are signed up / Don't know – 0pts	
Is there sustainable fish on the menu, are you serving any fish that is rated 5 on the MCS Good Fish Guide?	Menu includes fish that is rated 5 on the MCS Good Fish Guide – minus 1pt	1pt
	Menu does not include fish that is rated 5 on the MCS Good Fish Guide – 0pts	
	Menu includes MSC fish or fish that is rated 1-2 on MCS Good Fish Guide – 1pt	
What percentage of your total spend on fruit and veg is on UK produce?	None – 0pts	2pts
	Less than 50% – 1pt	
	More than 50% – 2pts	
Are steps taken to reduce the amount of food left uneaten/plate waste?	Signatory of Courtauld Commitment 2030/WRAP Food Waste Reduction Roadmap – 2pts	2pts
	A policy for managing plate/kitchen waste is in place – 1pt (Details must be provided)	
	No policy – 0pts	
Is palm oil on the menu?	No ingredients contain palm oil – 2pts	2pts
	Only certified sustainable/organic palm oil – 2pts	
	Palm oil is not certified/sustainable – minus 1pt	
A Healthy Choice		44
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	2pts
	Half or majority of meals are balanced or can be balanced if the set menu choices permit (e.g. choose a main + side) – 1pt	
	All meals are balanced as standard – 2pts	

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	3pts
	Three starchy foods on offer – 1pt	
	Four+ starchy foods on offer – 2pts	
	Wholegrain/complex carbs available – 1pt	
Do chips accompany everything on the menu?	Chips are served with all meals on the menu – 0pts	3pts
	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 – 2pts	
	No meals have chips with them – 3pts	
Does veg or a portion of salad come with or in every meal?	Veg or salad comes with half or less of meals – 0pts	5pts
	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	
	No – minus 5pts	
Are vegetables incorporated into different meals? (e.g. pizza toppings, vegetables in pasta dishes)	No meals available with veg incorporated – 0pts	2pts
	One meal available with veg incorporated – 1pt	
	Two+ meals available with veg incorporated – 2pts	
Are there more than two vegetable options on the menu (full portion, min one of your 5 a day), in addition to peas and baked beans?	None or less than two available – 0pts	3pts
	Two other veg options – 1pt	
	Three other veg options – 2pts	
	Four+ other veg options – 3pts	
Do puddings contain a full portion of fruit (one of your 5 a day), and is fresh fruit available?	None – 0pts	3pts
	In a minority of puddings – 1pt	
	In half or majority of puddings – 2pts	
	Fresh fruit available – extra 1pt	
Are puddings an appropriate portion size? (Fresh fruit and no-added-sugar yoghurt are counted as ‘healthier puddings’)	No pudding exceeds 220kcal per portion – 1 pt	4pts
	One or more puddings exceed 550kcal per portion – minus 1 pt	
	No pudding contains more than 19g total sugar per portion – 3 pts	
	No pudding contains more than 24g total sugar per portion – 2 pts	

	50% or more puddings contain less than 24g total sugar – 1 pt	
	The majority of puddings contain more than 24g total sugar – 0 pts	
Is a variety of protein on offer? (Meat, fish, eggs, beans/pulses, dairy, tofu, plant-based meat or fish alternative)	Only one or two protein options on offer – 0pts	3pts
	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	
Is there a good choice of non-meat dishes? (starters, mains, breakfast where applicable)	None or <25% of the menu is non-meat – 0pts	3pts
	25% or more of the menu is non-meat – 1pt	
	50% or more of the menu is non-meat – 2pts	
	75+% of the menu is non-meat – 3pts	
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	1pt
	Meat free dishes at the bottom of the menu – 0pts	
Is oily fish included as a meal option?	No – 0pts	1pt
	Yes – 1pt	
How much of the food is deep fried? (fried in manufacture or kitchen)	Majority or half of meals contain fried ingredients – 0pts	2pts
	Minority of meals contain fried ingredients – 1pt	
	No meals contain fried ingredients – 2pts	
If menu includes a meal deal: Are healthier meal deal options given price promotions? Unhealthy = no veg, fruit or salad, high sugar, or inclusion of fried food	No, they are more expensive and/or meal deals limit choices to unhealthy options, e.g. it is more expensive to get extra veg – minus 2pts	0pts
	All meals the same price – minus 1pt	
	All meals the same price and all healthy – 0pts	
	Healthy options are cheaper – 0pts	
If menu includes a meal deal: Are meat free and dairy free meal deal options given price promotions?	No, they are more expensive and/or meal deals limit choices to options containing animal products, e.g. it is more expensive to get meat free and dairy free options – minus 2 pts	0pts
	All meals the same price – minus 1pt	

	All meals the same price and all meat free and dairy free – 0pts	
	Meat free and dairy free options are cheaper – 0pts	
Are healthy choices supported with information?	No indication of what is better for you, or calorie labelling only – 0pts	2pts
	5 a day information – 1pt	
	Sugar content and/or full nutritional information – 1pt	
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 from list – 0pts	2pts
	Unlimited refills of sugary drinks available – minus 4pts	
	Unlimited refills of artificially sweetened drinks available – minus 2pts	
	Majority of drinks have no added sugar or sweeteners – 1pt	
	All drinks have no added sugar or sweeteners – 2pts	
Is tap water readily available (offered at the table or self service)	Yes – 0 point	1pt
	No – 1 points	
Do meals contain problem additives and colourings? (see Food for Life Served Here standards)	No information available or no policy/practice – 0pts	2pts
	Policy/practice - additives & colourings not allowed – 2pts	
Do meals contain trans fats?	No information available or no policy/practice – 0pts	2pts
	Policy/practice - trans fats not allowed – 2pts	
Family friendly		20 pts
Is the restaurant child friendly?	Score from 0-4	4 pts
	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	
Is there a good choice of food?	Score from 0-5	2 pts
	0 - 0pts	
	1-2 - 1 pt	
	3-5 - 2pts	
Is children’s cutlery available?	No – minus 2pts	0 pts
	Yes, on request – minus 1pt	
	Yes, as standard (or N/A, adult cutlery not available in restaurant) – 0pts	
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 pt
Does the restaurant serve children’s portions of adult meals?	No – 0pts	2 pts
	Yes, on request – 1pt	
	Yes, as standard (made clear on menu that this can happen) – 2pts	
Can children’s meals come in different sizes?	No – 0pts	2 pts
	Yes, on request – 1pt	
	Yes, as standard (indicated on menu) – 2pts	
Are activities provided for children? Are they linked to healthy eating/provenance/sustainability/environment?	No – 0pt	2 pts
	Yes – 1pt	
	Yes, linked to food/healthy eating – 2pts	
Are there baby changing facilities?	No – 0pts	1 pt
	Yes – 1pt	
Did restaurant staff treat your children appropriately?	Yes – 1pts	1 pt
	No – 0pt	
Are there high chairs available?	No – 0pts	1 pt
	Yes – 1pt	
Did children’s food arrive at a suitable temperature?	No – 0pts	1 pt
	Yes – 1pt	
Does the food look appealing to you and your children?	No – 0pts	1 pt
	Yes – 1pts	
Does the restaurant have signage welcoming breastfeeding?	No – 0pts	2 pts
	No, but restaurant has provided written policy on breastfeeding – 1pts	
	Yes, signage and policy – 2pts	
Are single use plastics used? (cups, cutlery)	Yes – minus 1pt No – 0pts	0 pts
<p>Out to Lunch 2024 Pledge:</p> <p>‘Undertake an internal audit of items purchased between November 2024 and March 2025 and report to the Soil Association on the proportion of ingredients and products which are ultra-processed, i.e. meet the NOVA group 4 definition.’</p> <p>Specifically, this would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditing all ingredients and products purchased over a period of two months (any time between November 2024 and March 2025), identifying what percentage fall within NOVA categories 1, 2, 3 and 	<p>Yes – 5pts</p> <p>No – 0pts</p>	5pts

<p>4. This would include both individual ingredients (e.g. meat, fruit, veg, rice, flour), and products or menu items that are bought in already made (e.g. breaded chicken, sauces, plant-based meat alternatives). Guidance on the NOVA classification and which products are in scope is available here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing a breakdown of the products and ingredients available specifically within the children's menu.		
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