

## Out to Lunch investigation methodology



If you have any questions about the Out to Lunch research methodology, please contact Rob Percival, Policy Officer at Soil Association [rpercival@soilassociation.org](mailto:rpercival@soilassociation.org) or 0117 987 4561.

**The Out to Lunch league table has been constructed based on information from three sources:**

### 1. Online menus on restaurant and pub websites

The restaurants were surveyed in July and August 2015. Any questions not answered via the online menu were checked by a phone call to customer services or a visit to the restaurant.

### 2. A survey of all establishments, completed in July and August 2015

Surveys were sent by email in July 2015, establishments are given a month to respond, then a further extension of one week with a reminder if the survey was not returned on time. Emails were followed up by phone calls in instances where restaurants were unresponsive.

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

4 of 21 restaurants elected not to return their survey.

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

A representative sample of 80 parents was chosen from a pool of self-selecting volunteers. The sample was determined by region, ethnicity and income. Parents were asked to visit two predetermined restaurants, and an average of the scores given was then used for the league table. Each restaurant was surveyed at least three times by different parents.

**The information gathered was then evaluated by the Soil Association and parents against a set of criteria, which were 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?
- 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?

## 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 on offer?
- Is 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?
- 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 adults meals available?

### These criteria were chosen to reflect:

- What is important to parents - this was 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 2013.
- [The School Food Standards](#)
- [Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England](#)
- Good practice proven to be achievable in over 1 million meals served to [Food for Life Catering Mark standards](#) each working 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
<b>Fresh food you can trust</b>				<b>26 points</b>
Food is made and cooked in the restaurant	<b>Information readily available on where ingredients come from</b>	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
Traceable meat	<b>Food is freshly prepared – cooked from scratch in the kitchen</b>	Where do ingredients come from (country of production)?	No scoring, record origin of: 2 meat products (are meat products traceable to the farm?) 1 fish if on menu, 2 x vegetables, 1 x salads, 2 x staples	No score (background research)
Environmentally sustainable & ethical food	<b>Environmentally friendly food served</b>	Is meat farm-assured/traceable to the farm?	No or 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
	<b>Animal products are from higher welfare systems</b>	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
	<b>Fish from sustainable stocks</b>	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
	<b>Efforts are made to use in-season produce</b>	Is food cooked for the first time in the restaurant?	None or a minority of named ingredients are cooked in the restaurant for the first time – 0pts Half or a majority of named ingredients are cooked in the restaurant for the first time – 1pt All the named ingredients 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, 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
		Is there sustainable fish on the menu, is there anything from MCS 'fish to avoid' list?	Menu includes fish MCS 'fish to avoid' list - minus 1pt Menu does not include fish 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 in-season produce through the year?	No – 0pts Yes, ingredients change – 1pt Yes, meals change – 2pts	2 points
				<b>32 points</b>
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  Chips don't dominate the menu	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	2 points

	Variety of vegetables and salads available	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
	Puddings contain fruit	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	2 points
	Variety of protein available	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
	Fried food doesn't dominate the menu	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
	Steps taken to make healthy eating easy	Is fruit the main component of deserts 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
	Healthy drinks on offer	Is a variety of protein on offer? (red meat, poultry, fish, meat alternative)	Only one or two protein options on offer – 0pts Three protein options on offer – 1pt Four+ protein options on offer – 2pts	2 points
	No salt on tables	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	2 points
	Free from problematic additives and colourings and trans fats	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 [Free fruit or free salad/veg available - extra 1pt]	3 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	2 points

			Detailed info, nutritional info -2pts	
		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
		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
<b>Family friendly</b>				<b>22 points</b>
	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	Is children's cutlery available?	No - 0pts Yes, on request – 1pt Yes, as standard – 2pts	2 points
	Kids portions of adult meals made available	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
	Measures taken to accommodate children's and parent's needs	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?	No – 0pt Yes – 1pt Yes, linked to food/healthy eating – 2pts	2 points
		Are there baby changing facilities?	No – 0pts Yes – 1pt	1 point

		Do 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 – 2pts Yes, signage and policy – 4pts	4 points

**We did not score, but asked researchers to look for good/bad examples of:**

*Does menu imagery give an honest picture of what’s served?*

*Are healthy or unhealthy menu items or menus over promoted?*

*Is free tap water available upon arrival?*