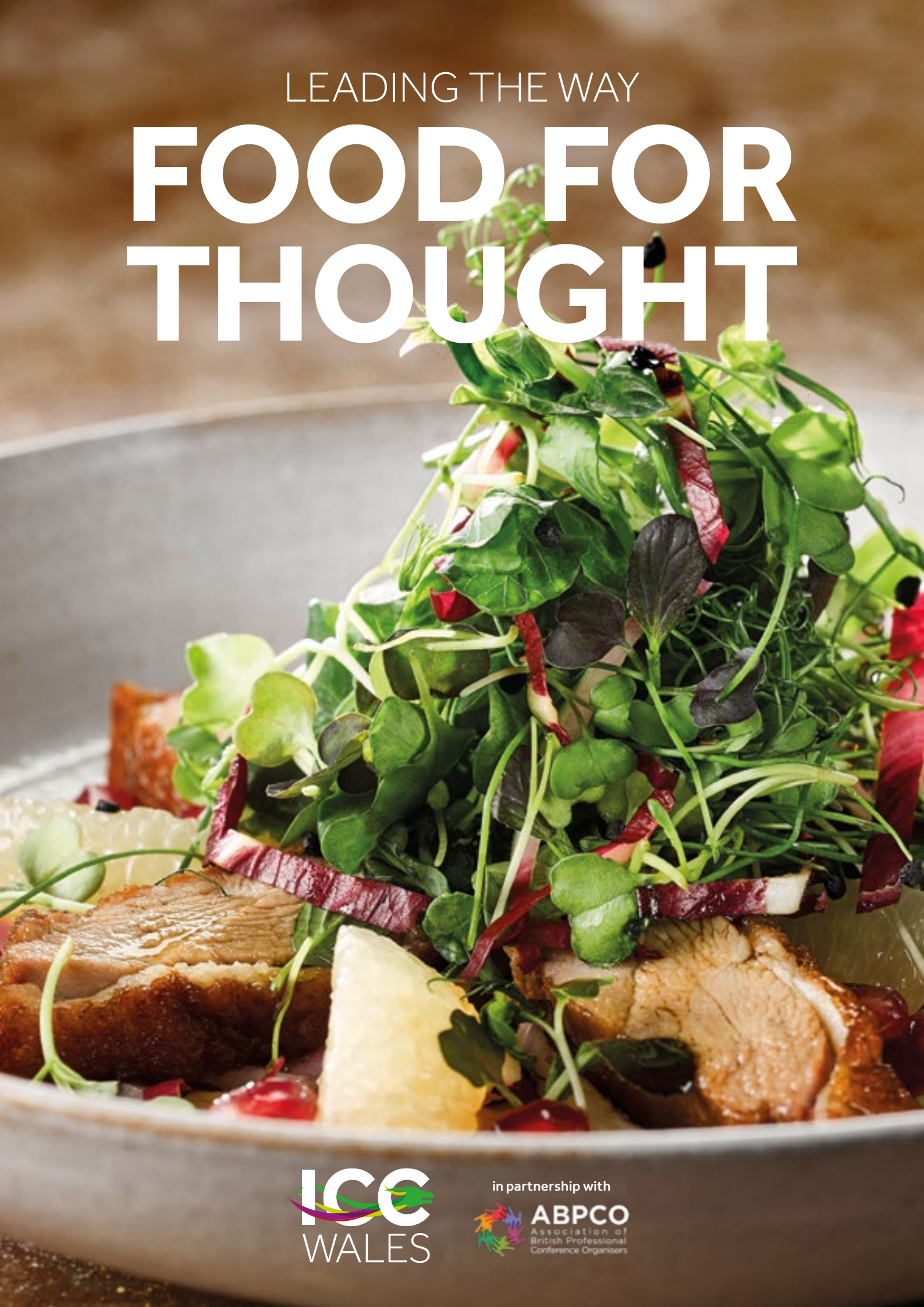
LEADING THE WAY

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



ICC WALES

in partnership with

ABPCO
Association of British Professional Conference Organisers

ICC WALES
LEADING THE WAY IN WELSH CUISINE

In 2019 the doors will open to the new International Convention Centre Wales (ICC Wales) in Newport, South Wales.

This flagship venue will truly herald the arrival of Wales on the international business visits and events scene.

An £83.7m joint venture between Celtic Manor and Welsh Government, ICC Wales will accommodate 5,000 delegates and includes a 4,000sqm pillar-free main hall, a 1,500-seated auditorium, 15 flexible meeting rooms, a double-height glass atrium and a 2,500sqm outdoor plaza.

Only a stone's throw from the M4 motorway, ICC Wales is built within stunning ancient woodland with floor to ceiling meeting room windows and outdoor breakout areas making the most of the stunning natural environment. As such, the new venue takes a fitting place in a country famed for the warmth of its welcome and hospitality, set against the backdrop of bold and beautiful landscapes.

Inspired by its proud history and heritage, its culture and community, a new Wales is emerging, alive with opportunity and real innovation. ICC Wales is right at the forefront of this and brings with it an opportunity to show the world what the people of Wales have known for a long time – as far as culinary excellence goes, Wales leads the way.

From high-quality, locally sourced ingredients to an unparalleled understanding of how to execute world-class catering and hospitality, ICC Wales is right on top of both food trends and food delivery.

With the main hall having the capacity to host 2,400 people for a gala dinner in Europe's largest pillar-free ballroom and a remarkable 1,250sqm of state-of-the-art kitchen space, the new venue will deliver its exciting culinary offering on a grand scale. So it knows the importance of getting things right in this crucial aspect of event delivery.

Expanding on ICC Wales' culinary philosophy of "Mind, Body & Soul", this report sets out the background, character and management of Welsh cuisine and ICC Wales' place in it.

The second part of the report takes a considered look at how the events world is responding to the rising expectations of event attendees – placing ever more demands on both event organisers and venues alike.

EXPECTATIONS ARE RISING **AND WALES IS READY**

33%

of people associate Great Britain as a whole with natural food and drink

42%

of people associate Wales with natural food and drink

An enduring demand for food creativity, quality and provenance has altered the nation's relationship with food.

Expectations at every table are high, food underpins successful events and there has never been a more important factor to get right. Not surprisingly, competition to produce the finest flavoursome fare is ferocious and Wales has found itself in a position of natural advantage. It's no coincidence that the rising stature of the Welsh National Culinary Team has been matched by Wales' bourgeoning reputation for food and drink.

The centuries old food traditions of Wales reflect an incredible ability to create wonder from the simplest ingredients. The country's prodigious natural bounty and full-bodied natural passion have come together in a hearty union of food virtue.

We live in an era where the potential for food and drink to enrich an experience is fully realised. People obsess over the provenance of the ingredients they buy, the nutritional value of their produce and the authenticity of the dishes they are served. The national food revolution continues to add new complexities and dimensions. Once it was about organic, then local and sustainable, today it's about all of these and more; it's about food and drink that caters for every diner's personal requirements, especially in terms of diet and provenance. Thus, it is vital that the catering element of events meets expectations and delivers delightful surprises. Now, more than ever, food underpins the success of events, the better it is, the better the perception of the event experience.

If this were rugby, we'd say the ball has been played to Wales' advantage, because the current state of play in international event catering suits the Welsh culinary game very nicely. Research has shown that across GB, according to The Value of Welshness report, on behalf of Food and Drink Wales, more people associate Wales with natural food and drink (42%) than Great Britain as a whole (33%). With health and freshness being macro trends in food and drink, this positive association between 'Welshness' and naturalness, is a valuable attribute of Welsh produce.

ICC Wales has reinforced a growing international awareness of Wales as a desirable event destination. The prospect of this new international conference centre in Wales has awakened the country's potential as a culinary force to be reckoned with in the business event world. Food celebration, diversity, experimentation, skill and passion are as abundant in restaurants, hotels and venues across the country, as the rich natural produce coming from its soils and seas.

In Wales, chefs are winning awards for international excellence by using the abundant fresh raw ingredients to recreate and reimagine traditional favourites into dishes of pure delight.

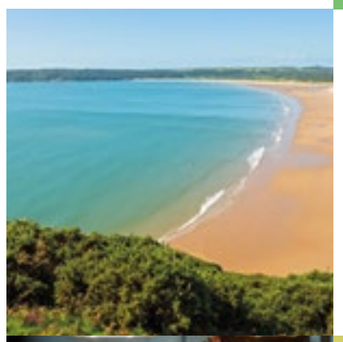
Welsh food is at last recognised as world leading. At food festivals, celebrations and markets in all parts of the country, people are discovering with pride the wonder of what food made in Wales can be.

NATURAL ADVANTAGE

FOOD PRIDE

Wales is a proud country, revered for centuries as the 'land of song'; its passion emanating through a profound love of rugby; its romantic spirit inspired by spectacular landscapes and scenery. Modern Welsh chefs embody this robust and soulful national character in their approach to creating some of the finest world class cuisine.

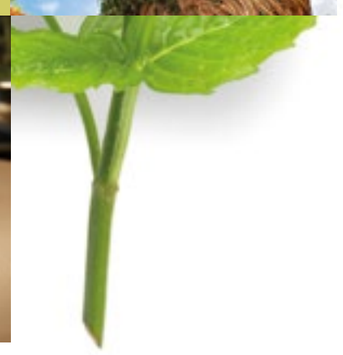
ROBUST & SOULFUL NATIONAL CHARACTER



SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPES

ROMANTIC SPIRIT

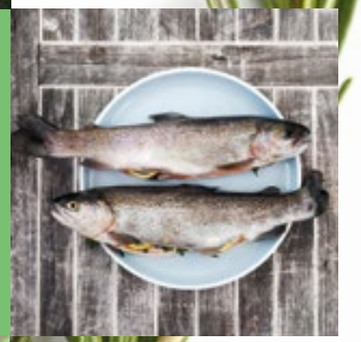
FINEST WORLD CLASS CUISINE



RICH NATURAL LARDER

Wales is blessed with a fantastic array of fish from its fabulous coastline, rivers and lakes, Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef rank alongside the world's finest meat, Welsh dairy produce, especially speciality cheeses, is in great demand and a wonderful range of produce grows naturally in the spectacular hills and rich, green valleys.

FISH FROM COASTLINES, RIVERS & LAKES



WELSH DAIRY PRODUCE

WELSH LAMB & BEEF

SPECIALITY CHEESES

AWARD WINNING WELSH WINE

TINY REBEL EXPORT TO 35 COUNTRIES

BEST GIN IN BRITAIN 2017

WELSH TIPPLE

The Welsh are a cheery people that like to perfect their craft, and never has that been truer than in the production of Welsh beers wines and spirits, of which Wales offers a wonderful selection.

Wales has a long-established reputation as a master brewer of beers and ciders, and today, along with its heritage producers, such as Brains, Wales' biggest brewer, established in 1882, the country is a key player in the modern craft brewing movement, with an exciting new crop of Welsh craft beers and ciders available. Bragdy Conwy Brewery is the first brewery in Conwy for over 100 years and Cader Ales, a micro-brewery at the foot of Cader Idris in Southern Snowdonia, sources the water for its beer from the Dolgellau hills and mountains.

Tiny Rebel is an award-winning brewery in Newport, which started off in 2012 as a team of two making beer from a garage and has grown into a craft brewery with thousands of fans. Tiny Rebel now employ over 100 people from their new premises in Newport, and export their beer to 35 countries. They offer tours and tastings, as well as an onsite bar and kitchen.

Wales is also firmly establishing its reputation as a wine growing country, with over 20 commercial vineyards located from the north to the south. Ancre Hill Estates, on the outskirts of Monmouth town, has a vineyard growing in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while Llanerch Vineyard in Carmarthenshire produces the award winning Cariad Welsh wine.

Not to be outdone by its Scottish, English and Irish cousins, Wales is now a proud producer of single malt whisky at the Penderyn Distillery in Glamorgan in the Brecon Beacons. One of the world's smallest distilleries, it produces single malt whisky, Brecon Vodka and Brecon Gin. Artisan gins are made with wild Welsh botanicals at the tiny Dyfi distillery in the village of Corris near Machynlleth were awarded Best Gin in Britain in 2017.

WALES LEADS THE WAY IN **SUSTAINABLE PRODUCE**

The UK organic market is now worth more than £2.2 billion and grew by 6 per cent in 2017, with Wales leading the way in new licences.

Soil Association Certification licensees in Wales recorded growth of 7 per cent; higher than the UK average, with 30 per cent of all Welsh sales coming from meat and poultry. Wales has a high concentration of organic producers and processors, accounting for almost 12 per cent of the UK total.

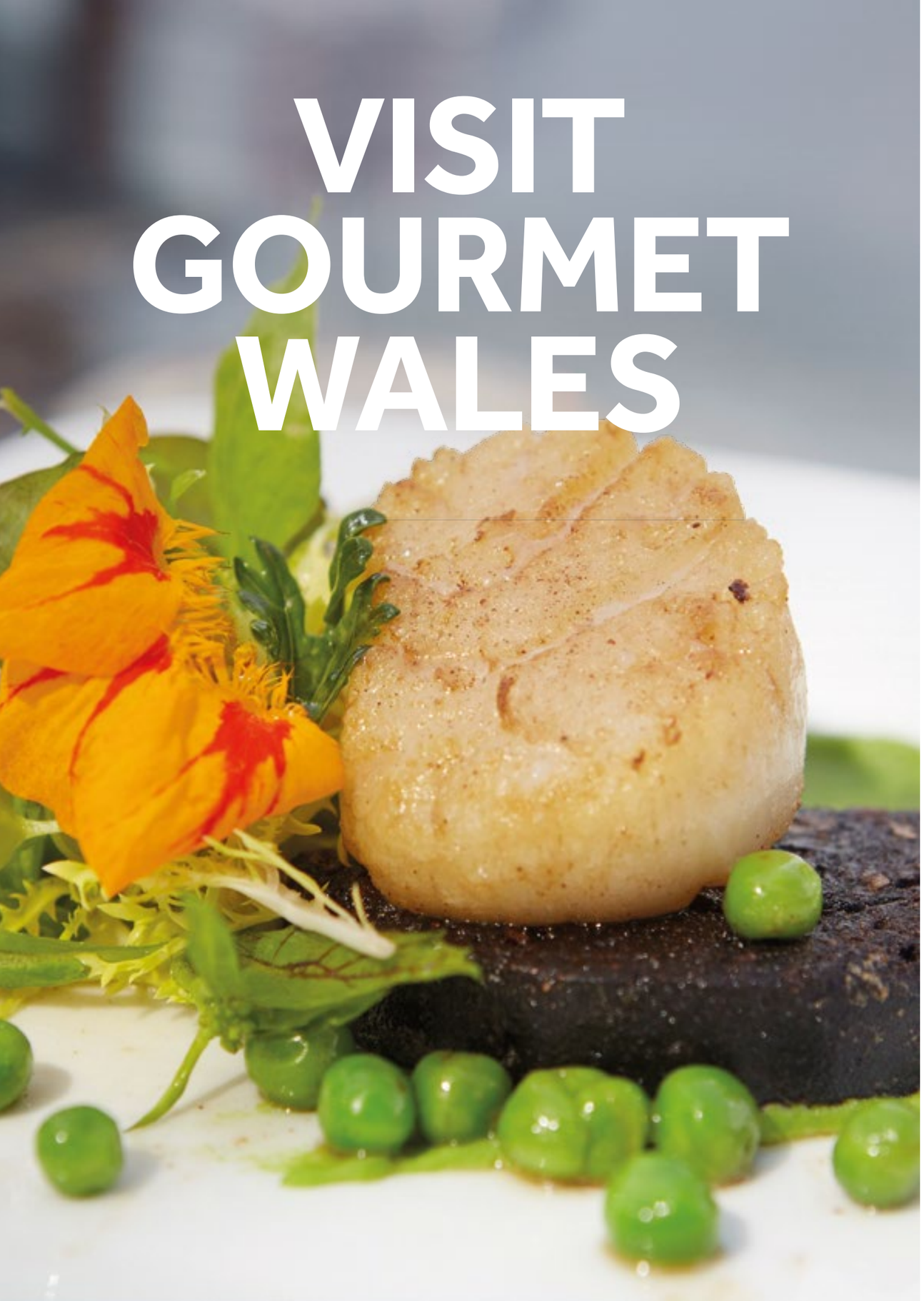
Haydn Evans, Soil Association Farmer and Grower Board member, said, ***"I'm pleased to see such strong growth in the organic sector in Wales this past year, with two key Welsh industries – meat and poultry, and health and beauty – performing exceptionally well."***

12%

Wales has a high concentration of organic producers compared to the rest of the UK.

30%

of all Welsh organic licences come from the meat and poultry sector



VISIT GOURMET WALES

DISCOVER CAERPHILLY CHEESES AT CAERFAI FARM

COCKLES FROM TIDAL PENCLAWDD SANDS

FOOD LEADS THE WAY TO **VISITING WALES**

Such is the growing awareness of the country's culinary advantages that Wales is now firmly on the map as a foodie destination.

GOURMET TRAILS

Welsh Gourmet trails are a wonderful way to discover the depth of quality of the food produced across Wales. Unique food experiences can be found at every step of the way - they're a chance to discover enticing and distinctive culinary delights from fresh fish, to distinguished cheeses and delicious seasonal fruit and vegetables.

FOOD TRAIL EXPERIENCES

Food trails are now a distinctive part of the Wales experience. At the Conwy Brewery, former oil man Gwynne Thomas, has turned his technical and scientific skills to brewing. He brews a wide variety of quality cask and bottle conditioned ales and visitors can try them all. Also in Conwy, the Edwards of Conwy butcher's shop is famous as the home of the award winning traditional Welsh Sausage Company.

The Blaenafon Cheddar Company in Blaenavon, where the historic industrial landscape is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, boasts a proud selection of handmade Cheddar and goat's cheeses made with local ingredients.

Delicacies on offer at the famous Swansea Market include cockles from the tidal Penclawdd Sands, laverbread, fresh fish, locally reared lamb and beef, Gower vegetables and local cheeses.

Westwards, Heavenly Emporium in Llandeilo, provides indulgent ice cream and desserts. And further West, Caerfai Farm in St Davids is an organic dairy farm where you can buy Cheddar and Caerphilly cheeses, organic milk, homemade bread and croissants.

ANGLESEY OYSTER AND WELSH PRODUCE FESTIVAL

ABERGAVENNY FOOD FESTIVAL

CARDIFF FOOD FESTIVAL

THE WALNUT TREE

JAMES SOMMERIN

THE WHITEBROOK

THE ROYAL WELSH SHOW

FESTIVALS

Food festivals are a regular feature on the Welsh events calendar - there's one nearly every weekend.

The Royal Welsh Show takes place each July, it is the best attended agricultural event of its kind, offering an array of Welsh meats, dairy products, famous Welsh cheeses and Welsh food and drink. The Abergavenny Food Festival held each September is an inclusive and welcoming event, described as having "a wonderful energy and individuality that no other food festival can recreate".

The award-winning Cowbridge Food and Drink Festival in May is a vibrant weekend of foodie family fun with over 100 food and drink exhibitors. A few months later, Pembrokeshire Fish Week celebrates the county's superb fish, seafood and culinary excellence.

The Cardiff International Food & Drink Festival attracts food producers and suppliers from Cardiff's international twin towns of Nantes, Stuttgart and Hordaland. Producers from these towns exhibit their fare alongside fine examples of Welsh produce.

Another popular festival, in October, is the Anglesey Oyster and Welsh Produce Festival, which promotes oysters and other seafood in pubs and restaurants across Anglesey. It's a chance to eat oysters while enjoying Welsh music, singing and dancing.

EATING OUT

One of the delights of Wales is eating the fresh products of the sea and field that have been caught or reared in a place not very far from your table. Throughout Wales the choice of places to eat is considerable and continues to grow. From warm and cosy pubs by the sea or in villages surrounded by lush green valleys, serving handpicked local fare, to fine dining restaurants - the likes of the Hare and Hounds in Aberthin and The Felin Fach Griffin in Brecon, make good examples - to modern city centre eateries serving inspiring foods from all corners of the globe. For centuries, world-renowned

Cardiff Bay has welcomed people from far flung regions of the world and today offers an eclectic mix of restaurants and eateries offering all types of world cuisines. Closer to home, Newport's restaurant scene, with its mix of independent eateries, fine food restaurants and hearty home cooking is emerging as a force to be reckoned with.

There is no shortage of Michelin star restaurants in Wales either. In 2018, seven Welsh restaurants have been awarded a Michelin star, three of which are less than 25 miles from ICC Wales:

- Restaurant James Sommerin, Penarth (21 miles from ICC Wales)
- The Walnut Tree, Llanddewi Skirrid (23 miles from ICC Wales)
- The Whitebrook, Monmouthshire (23 miles from ICC Wales)
- The Checkers, Montgomery
- Ynyshir, Machynlleth
- Tyddyn Llan, Llandrillo
- Sosban and the Old Butchers, Menai Bridge

ICC WALES
A CULINARY PHILOSOPHY

"FOOD FOR THE BODY IS NOT ENOUGH. THERE MUST BE FOOD FOR THE SOUL"

Against this background, ICC Wales is raising the benchmark with its innovative culinary thinking and is setting exciting new standards in outstanding conference catering with its Mind, Body and Soul Food philosophy.

Combining a warm Welsh welcome with world class quality cuisine, the highly skilled ICC Wales culinary team personally select the finest local ingredients and superfoods. These not only taste delicious but simultaneously boost alertness and energy levels, general wellbeing and overall good health to keep the mind sharp, body strong and soul nourished through great food.

Feeding a delegate's mind, body and soul with goodness is crucial to heightening attentiveness, concentration and ultimately upping productivity. Networking, table conversations at gala dinners and sustaining energy levels across the exhibition floor all benefit as a result.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Mind, Body and Soul Food symbolises a commitment to superior quality, nutritious dishes that feed both the body and the mind. This nutrition to fruition principle derives from exploring and understanding the science behind the ingredients included in event menus and the nutritional qualities they hold optimise delegate performance.

FEEDING MINDS FOR SUCCESS

The award-winning chefs at ICC Wales take special pride in every single dish they make, for every single event, keeping in mind the following three key menu essentials:

- Superfoods and fresh fruits and vegetables should be a prominent feature in all menus to help bring out the best in delegates
- Produce will be sourced from local and regional suppliers wherever possible to then be beautifully crafted into menus
- Dishes aim to be high in protein and low in saturated fats to help maintain energy, fight fatigue and sustain focus throughout the day, keeping delegates as productive as possible

PASSIONATE PRODUCERS WHO ARE THE **CREAM OF THE WELSH CROP**

At ICC Wales, guests will enjoy a taste of Wales. A taste of the vibrant, fresh and pure crop of the Welsh food producers whose enthusiasm for quality continues to grow the burgeoning food culture in Wales. Many of these passionate independent producers, we like to call our partners.

They supply ICC Wales' team of expert chefs with the finest ingredients, helping us create our inspiring menus. They deserve celebrating; to be given a voice, so people get to know them and experience a flavour of the wonderful food they produce - here's an introduction:

Castell Howell
A wholesaler championing Welsh produce

One of Wales' leading independent food wholesalers started out over forty years ago as a cow and chicken farm in West Wales. The pride for its rural roots is reflected in one of the company's core values of supplying and promoting the very best regional produce.

Douglas Willis
The finest Welsh meat

This family owned business is devoted to producing excellent meat from pasture to plate. With experience of farming and butchery extending back three generations, the passionate Willis family personally select their livestock which are free to graze outdoors all year round. Douglas Willis is the most respected meat producer in South Wales.

Halen Môn
Anglesey sea salt

The award-winning Halen Môn (the Welsh translation of Anglesey Salt) is run by a husband and wife team from the island of Anglesey. Made from 100% pure Anglesey seawater, the gourmet salts produced by Halen Môn are used by chefs across the globe and have been served at the London 2012 Olympics, a NATO summit and the Royal Wedding.

Shervington Farms

Shervington Farms is a family owned and run business on the Gwent Levels, just to the west of Newport, South Wales. The business began over forty years ago, producing, packing and distributing free range eggs from free to roam hens. The farm's birds receive a multi-level high standard of welfare, living in a stress-free environment in state-of-the-art poultry houses.

ICC WALES
KEEPING IT LOCAL

KEEPING IT LOCAL

In the face of worldwide challenges in recruiting and keeping qualified hospitality staff, ICC Wales is pressing ahead with a number of training and employment initiatives. The team is already working with catering and hospitality training centres in South Wales and work experience programmes with local colleges. The Celtic Manor Resort already works closely with Cardiff and Vale College and the University of South Wales, where students spend a portion of their time each week at the venue gaining invaluable real-life experience.

Culinary open days, hotel and hospitality apprenticeships and other outreach programmes will also be on the recruitment menu, as well as connecting with experienced and mature hospitality professionals who have a desire to work flexibly or job share and who are therefore often perfectly suited to working in hospitality.

As a longer-term plan, ICC Wales is looking into establishing its own employment agency to recruit and supply staff to ICC Wales, Celtic Manor and other venues in the area, contributing a valuable employment resource to the region.

SUSTAINABILITY

ICC Wales' sister venue, Celtic Manor, won a gold award for green tourism in 2017, and responsible tourism is something that ICC Wales will be taking equally seriously. Event planners are increasingly interested in measures to reduce the impact on the environment of their event. Take food waste, for example: although excess food can't be given away because of the risk of contamination, the venue's ethos will be to supply sensibly and to limit excess food where possible. Any food waste that is generated will be collected, burned and recycled as biodegradable waste energy.

EXPERIENCE COUNTS

ICC Wales is managed by the Celtic Manor Resort's expert leadership team, which was responsible for the successful delivery of the 2014 Nato Summit and the 2010 Ryder Cup.

Hosting an event like the Nato Summit demonstrated the team's ability to respond to last minute catering requirements at scale. Forty eight hours before the event, the team were still receiving changes to their menus and numbers. The team delivered because it had the experience and flexibility to cope with change and the demand of this and other large events.

LEADING THE WAY IN

CULINARY TRENDS

In 2017, the International Association of Conference Centres (IACC) highlighted the tremendous changes taking place in how event organisers and venues are responding to food and wellness trends among consumers.

IACC's survey of its member venues **"Trends in Nutrition and Delegate Wellbeing"** paints a picture of **"an unprecedented increase"** in health-orientated foods.

LOW CARBOHYDRATE

FREE RANGE & LOCALLY SOURCED

ORGANIC NON -GMO

GLUTEN FREE

DAIRY FREE

TRENDS IN NUTRITION & DELEGATE WELLBEING SURVEY

Source: International Association of Conference Centres (IACC)

According to the survey, 87% of venues have made changes or additions to their menus based on health and wellness principles or feedback from clients. A full 100% of survey respondents said that they receive more gluten-free requests today than two years ago (83% said the same for vegan).

87%

of venues have made changes or additions to their menus based on health and wellness principles or feedback from clients

100%

said that they receive more gluten-free requests today than two years ago

83%

said that they receive more vegan requests today than two years ago

KEY FINDINGS

An increase in popularity of communal interaction areas and public spaces.

Agreement that venues should take a pro-active role in providing healthier options for delegates.

Gluten-free and vegetarian / vegan meals are now must-have menu items.

Allergy and special dietary requests are growing, requiring advance notice to make quality, special meals.

"Brain foods" may continue to be a growing trend at meetings

Most of the changes in lunch and dinner trends are around offering more gluten-free and plant-based options.

ICC WALES
LISTENING TO EVENT PLANNERS

Against this background, ICC Wales teamed up with the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) to explore the implication of these and other trends in catering, particularly for large scale events.

A roundtable comprising highly experienced ABPCO Members - together with staff from ICC Wales - debated one of the most common but complicated topics faced by all event organisers and venue teams: how to make event catering seamless, affordable and satisfying.

Topics covered during the discussion included:

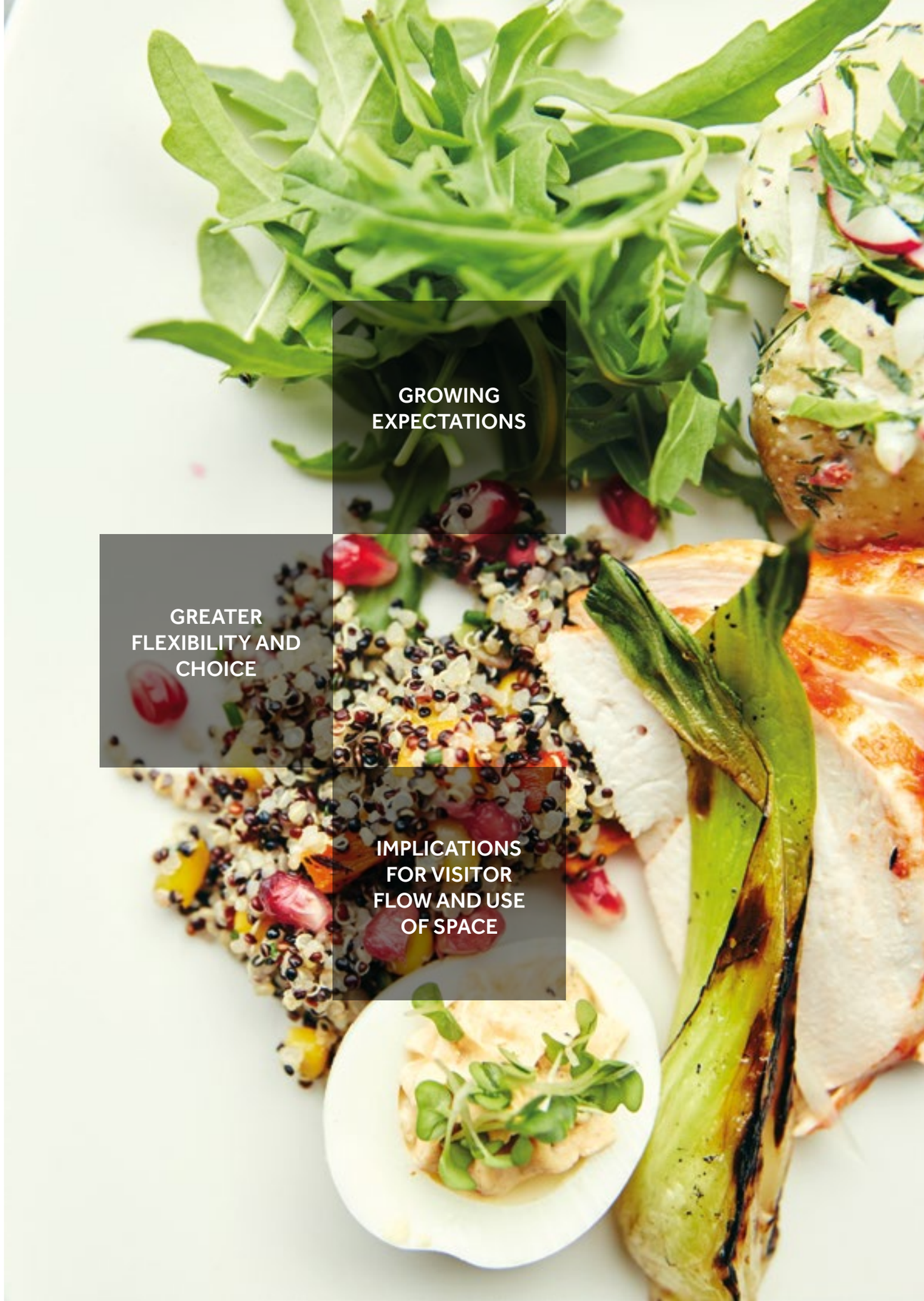
- Trends in catering - healthy eating versus biscuits and bacon butties
- The dynamics of delegate flow and keeping delegates fed and watered
- The increasing role that budget plays in decision-making – what does value look like?
- Emerging interest in the "local cuisine" experience
- The advantages and disadvantages of different options – from bowl food to cash catering
- Do purpose-built venues have a competitive edge over others?
- What does "flexibility" in catering mean for both the conference organiser and venue?

During the discussion it was clear that event catering is integral to the perceived image and success of an event.

Not just what the food tastes like, but how, where and when it's served, how it's presented, what went into it, where it's from and what happens to any that's left over.

The discussion centred around three main topics:

- Growing expectations
- Greater flexibility and choice
- Implications for visitor flow and use of space



GROWING **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Expectations are growing around both catering delivery and food choices

The culinary expectations of conference delegates – and event organisers – have been rising rapidly in the last decade, fuelled by societal changes, increasing quality and individualisation.

Thanks to the influence of social media, food bloggers and celebrity chefs and dieticians, our interest in what we eat has never been higher or more varied.

This has a profound influence on what we expect to be served at an event – raising the stakes for event organisers and venues alike. "If delegates' expectations are to be met, the marketing and imagery of a venue's culinary offer has to be matched by its delivery. There's no point in having great pictures and wonderful looking brochures if that's not what's served on the day."

"A menu tasting for twelve people has to be delivered at the same standard for one thousand delegates. Keeping up that level of quality at scale can be really challenging. "

"Managing delegates' expectations can be difficult when budget isn't limitless. You are always trying to achieve a balance of healthy options with more traditional foods, cold versus hot meals and all at the right price."

Presentation is important in meeting expectations

"The way food is served is important and can have a big impact on how it's perceived. You can meet expectations by simply thinking about what the food could look like."

"You can serve the same coffee in a more sophisticated-looking cup and people will nearly always believe it's worth more."

"Grab and go is definitely on the increase. There is demand for healthier grab and go options, which can be more expensive, although you have to be prepared for people to choose the less healthy stuff like crisps and chocolate bars too."

"Demonstrating that food has been sourced locally is increasingly important, even down to its labelling and how it's described. People like to have a sense of place about where the event is taking place."

"Sourcing food locally is sometimes a challenge when large quantity is involved – local producers and the local supply chain can't always deliver the amounts required."

There are increasing expectations about the impact of an event on the environment

"Younger delegates in particular are more aware of the potential environmental impact of the events they are attending."

"Plastic and recycling are really high on the agenda at the moment. Recyclable cups – and sometimes plates – will become ever more important."

"There's no straightforward answer to getting rid of plastic altogether. If people fill up their own bottles from water coolers, for example, you have to provide more plastic water coolers. "

"Even providing glass jugs of water isn't simple – they all need delivering, storing and washing."

"Plastic will disappear eventually but it's not yet clear what the alternative will be."

"Food waste is also really important – what happens to it afterwards. Celtic Manor transfers excess food between its seven restaurants and its staff canteen to reduce food waste. The food waste that is produced goes through biological processes to generate power for the grid."

"Chef's choice tends to reduce waste because you're not supplying such a wide range of choices that don't get eaten. It can also be more practical below a certain budget."

Pressure for greater flexibility and choice

"Sometimes a balance of both healthy and indulgent food makes sense."

"Creativity is really important in this kind of environment"

2. Pressure for greater flexibility and choice

Roundtable participants agreed that each event has to reflect the client's brand very clearly and should feel unique. Event organisers are looking for flexibility and choice from a venue, but more than that, they also want to feel like they are entering into a full partnership. The perceived success of an event will reflect well on both parties so each has a vested interest in delivering an outstanding culinary experience to delegates.

"Venues must listen to their clients very carefully about their objectives, not just send menu options. There should be a very open and honest dialogue. What does the event organiser really want to achieve?"

"Creativity is really important in this kind of environment – we should all be asking ourselves how can we make this work?"

"Healthy choices doesn't just mean superfoods. It can also mean smaller portions, less carbs and making sure we're meeting the expectations of people from different cultures."

"Sometimes a balance of both healthy and indulgent food makes sense. For some delegates, an event could be the one time of year they get away and they may just want to indulge in the so-called unhealthy foods. The client will have a good idea of the balance to be struck."

"It's important to look at the make-up of the delegates – many men, for example, won't be satisfied with just plates of sandwiches."

"Cash catering is increasingly familiar – perhaps more so in the US – but for it to work well, it really depends what catering facility is on site or nearby."

"We're definitely seeing more moves towards smaller grazing stations."

"Street food or festival style catering is increasingly popular."

3. Implications for the flow, format and space required for events

Successful catering isn't just about the food itself. How, where and when it's served is just as important. This means paying careful attention to logistics, timings and the available spaces within a venue. The traditional event formats of coffee breaks, sit down dinners and even set meal times are being increasingly challenged. Factors having an impact include: a decrease in the length of sessions as delegates' anticipated attention spans shorten; a desire for more networking and "flow" between sessions; the expectation of being able to dip in and out of an event but still have access to food and drink; and the dietary interest in keeping up energy and brain levels throughout the day.

"There's always lots of pressure on space for catering, particularly where exhibitions are involved."

"The general trend is towards more grazing opportunities and less formalised eating arrangements."

"Some countries like the US and some sectors – like the academic sector – still go for sit down lunches and dinners. But the general trend is away from this."

"Younger people in particular prefer more "informal" eating environments and engaging experiences – particularly the opportunity to mingle and meet people. The segregation of moresenior-level delegates from younger delegates is also unpopular."

"Younger delegates are also driving the idea of shorter sessions, more circulation and more rooms – a more "wow" experience if you like."

"Street food or festival style catering is increasingly popular. But the aesthetics are important – if you're going down this route, it must look good and not cheap."

"Rolling tea and coffee is much better than standardised "breaks" these days – people expect it."

"If a formal dinner takes place on the last day, fewer and fewer people are attending them. They don't have the same kudos that they used to."

"Eating outside the venue – perhaps a set-piece conference dinner – often requires coaches and can have a big impact on budget. But if it's in a spectacular city and part of the destination experience, for example, there's still an appetite for it. "

"We're definitely seeing more moves towards smaller grazing stations. Although this does leave the logistical issue of how you move people on so that there's not hundreds of people around just one small station."

CONCLUSION

Food and its preparation have been a crucial part of successful business meetings for almost as long as people have gathered together.

But in today's meetings' world, expectations about the quality, diversity, presentation and provenance of food amongst event attendees have never been higher. The challenges and pressures facing both event planners and venues to meet those expectations have also greatly increased.

From special diets and locally sourced produce, to the logistics of visitor flow and the use of venue space, only the highest forms of professionalism can deliver the orchestration of feeding hundreds, often thousands, of delegates to everyone's satisfaction.

In the future, new technology will no doubt play an increasingly important part in catering and hospitality. Robotics, apps and virtual reality are still in their infancy but it's not hard to imagine many ideas and applications that may appear in this field.

These developments are likely to produce both new opportunities and new challenges in event management that are, as yet, unknown.

Where we can be more certain, perhaps, is the increasing diversity and individuality of our own dietary expectations and what, where and how we want to eat whilst away from home. Wales is in an excellent position to make the most of these trends.

As a destination with a heritage and passion for food, combined with young, contemporary, cutting-edge local producers and chefs, Welsh food is being increasingly recognised as a reason to both visit and meet in this most historic and scenic part of the United Kingdom.

ICC Wales is also poised to take advantage of its experience and professionalism in catering for the most demanding event attendees - everyone from heads of state and celebrities to academics and associations – matching state-of-the-art facilities with world-class service.

You are welcome to join our journey in leading the way to culinary excellence for events.

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