

WEEKLY BRIEFING REPORT

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My insight

Not much happens in the summer – so it's usually the time for 'silly season' news stories. That certainly used to be the pattern when newspapers were much more widely read than they are nowadays. Today we can read what passes for news – grave or silly – all the time on social media, streamed news services as well as newspapers, television, and the rest. This is all by way of introduction to two stories that have emerged in the last couple of weeks – both of which involve fried chicken.

The first concerns Popeyes, the US fried chicken chain that has landed in the UK and now has 32 outlets, including 8 delivery-only kitchens. The news is that Popeyes has launched a wedding catering service – not so much a 'catering service' as the opportunity to flesh out your wedding receptions and parties with up to 150 chicken sandwiches (not of the triangular variety with cucumber – but in a bun) and 150 hot wings (all the rage).

And should you think this is somewhat outlandish, and not the sort of thing that newlyweds should expect on their big day, the wedding meal at the marriage of Beyoncé and Jay-Z in 2008 consisted of seven courses. As reported at the time, Popeyes fried chicken was one of them; others included Beluga caviar, and shrimp. As an aside, does this perhaps position Popeyes amongst the great aspirational dishes?

The other story concerns KFC. Before taking off from the Caribbean, attendants on a BA flight apparently identified a problem with the chilled meals provided by the flight caterer – the cart holding the food were not adequately chilled and risked the condition of the stored, inflight meals.

Rather than not serve any food at all, the cabin crew, using their initiative, set out for the terminal, and sought supplies for passengers from the KFC outlet. It must have been a heroic effort on the part of the staff at KFC to provide meals for the hundreds of passengers, even though they were only able to provide one piece of chicken per passenger. Some passengers apparently maintained that this was an outrageous dereliction of expected service levels – others were far more forgiving.

Anyway, out of this emerges the notion that you can serve fried chicken – from branded fast food chain operators – at weddings and on 12-hour airplane flights.

Not so silly, after all.

The numbers

Watching the wildfires around the Mediterranean makes for horrific viewing. A thousand miles away here in the UK, we look on aghast and then turn to other matters. But we cannot be immune. Precisely what happens and when, may not yet be known. But they have been making me think about what we humans have done to our planet, what humanity can and must do to bring the planet back, to where it must be, and how we should react to the ongoing changes. The effects of climate change are unfolding and will continue to do so.

Parochially, the foodservice sector must do what it can to reduce its impact on these changes - through using less fuel, wasting less generally, using less climate-invasive food, beverages, equipment and so on. But rather than focus on that, I have been pondering the pragmatic question: what are the coming effects of climate change on how the sector operates and what questions must it answer soon - if not now?

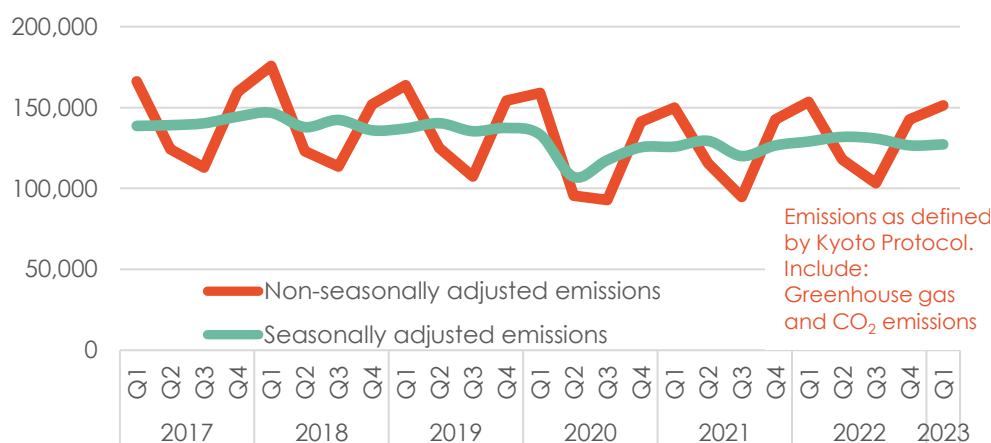
Just consider: high temperatures in the Mediterranean used to be in the 30s Celsius, now they are

in the 40s, and on present trends they will soon be in the 50s, at which point conditions are unsuitable for humans - we are not built for temperatures like that.

But maybe our weather in these northern islands, will turn warm and balmy all year round. Somehow, I doubt it. Instead, what will it be like? Wetter? Hotter?

And as a result will Britain be welcoming more

Total greenhouse gas emissions



Sources: Office of National Statistics, Ricardo Energy and Environment, Department of Energy Security and Net Zero

foreign tourists (because they don't want to go to traditional haunts which will become too hot)? Or will Britons be leaving for more temperate countries - northern Canada perhaps? Meanwhile at current temperatures, amongst many other harmful effects, water supplies are strained and that means crops cannot be grown where once they were. Other crops and other sources must be used. But what? And from where?

The pace of change means that it is likely we will have to face these questions, and many others like them, very soon - not in a hundred years but in twenty, or ten, or even five.

Crucially, what is the world of foodservice and hospitality doing in anticipation? Is it building leisure complexes to cope for an influx of foreign holidaymakers? Or investing in air conditioning (what about the effect of that on the climate? Hmmm)? Or perhaps, at the other extreme, is it closing down in anticipation of temperatures so high that there is no one left to serve?

We face these questions right now, and we'll need the answers pretty soon.

The rest of this Weekly Briefing Report provides a summary of the limited news in the past week:

News in the past week

QSR

- KFC UK system sales rose 10% in the three months to end June
- Greggs LfL sales rose 16% in the first half of 2023
- Domino's Pizza Group LfL sales rose 8.6% in the three months to end June; they rose 7.9% in the first three weeks of July

Pubs

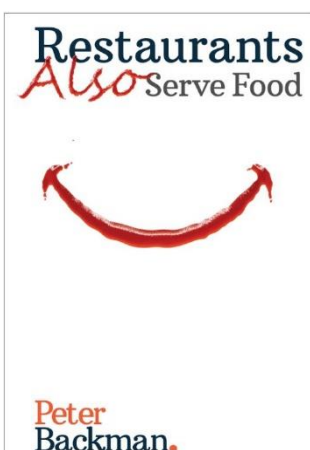
- Liberation Group LfL sales rose 8.1% in the first half of the year; food sales rose 5.2%

Hotels

- Marriott Hotels sales rose 13.5% in the three months to end June

Around the World

- Coca-Cola sales rose 6% in the three months to end June
- Melia Hotels sales rose 22.7% in the first half of 2023
- McDonald's global LfL sales rose 11.7% in the three months to end June; they rose 11.9% in the division that includes UK
- KFC global system sales rose 13% up 10% in the three months to end June
- Pizza Hut LfL global system sales rose 5% up 10% in the three months to end June
- Taco Bell global system sales rose 4% up 10% in the three months to end June
- Starbucks global LfL sales rose 10% in the quarter to end June
- Papa Johns global sales fell -1.6% in the quarter to end June



The revised edition of my book – **Restaurants Also Serve Food** – has now been published. It is addressed to suppliers, especially those who are proficient at selling to the retail sector but find selling to the foodservice sector is a challenge.

I recently took part in an engaging and highly informative **webinar** with Carl Orsbourn and Meredith Sandland. We discussed our books – theirs on the subject of delivery and mine on what makes foodservice tick – and what suppliers need to understand about it if they are to be successful in selling to this complex and ultimately rewarding sector.

You'll find more about Restaurants Also Serve Food – and how to buy it - **here**
