Eurest

The future of personalised nutrition in the workplace

September 2021



Chapter 1

Why what employees eat is now a health and wellness issue

Personalised nutrition has been on the health agenda for many years but businesses have largely taken its name literally, regarding it as 'personal' issue for employees and not a business-critical consideration; now things are about to change.

In a world in which we have a greater awareness of the value of physical and mental health following a global pandemic, attitudes are shifting so that what employees eat and drink is becoming a boardroom topic.

The trend emerged before Covid-19 but there is no doubt that almost two years of coping with its impact have focused minds and accelerated the discussion.

What businesses are starting to realise is that their responsibility for the health of employees whilst at work cannot begin and end with an employee benefits programme or a health insurance policy.

One estimate suggests we consume as much as 60 per cent of all our food and drink in the workplace – and spend more than 40 years of our life at work.

When you consider that statistic, it's hard not to reach a conclusion that what we eat and drink at work must have a significant impact on our overall health – and that businesses which provide food and drink therefore have, at the very least, a responsibility to consider more carefully what is offered and the impact it will have.

There are many definitions, including nutritionists looking at the complex relationship between nutrients and genes to create tailored diets that deliver what an individual needs to be in optimum health.

But for businesses, at least at the start of the journey, it's a little simpler – it's about how they can help and encourage employees to eat more healthily.

Perhaps the definition chosen by the British Medical Journal gets closest when it describes it as an approach that "assists individuals in achieving a lasting dietary behaviour change that is beneficial for health."

That does mean it runs deeper than just providing healthy food in the workplace restaurant, however.

There is an underlying strategic aim at work here, finding every way possible to nudge employees into better habits for their own and the company's good.

This means that lunch in the workplace restaurant is not the only driver, although that is a critical part of any catering offer. The solution may also include breakfast for those who arrive at work early, healthy daytime snacking, hydration and even healthy take-home options for evening meals with the family. It might see companies turning to health apps to reward employees for healthy eating or putting on cookery classes to help them eat better at home.

It is, however, all about what we eat, how much we eat and what it does to our bodies.

So, the question to ask is: if all that employees are able to eat at work is chips, sandwiches and confectionery, what impact is that having on their long-term health and what impact is it having on their ability to perform at optimum levels in the workplace?

It's too easy to say 'well, that's what they want to eat', as companies have concluded in the past, because evidence shows that when people are given choices and healthier options are put on display they often make different decisions. In fact, with clever presentation and informative labelling and culinary skill, businesses can even invisibly 'nudge' employees into food and drink choices which help improve their health - and thereby their performance.

This white paper will look in depth at the range of innovative ways businesses are becoming involved in influencing and improving the personal nutrition of their employees, often working with workplace catering partners at a strategic level to achieve their aims.

It will explore trends which are already in action in the UK and trends which may soon arrive on the market from other countries across the world.

What's clear is that businesses are opening their ears to suggestions that personalised nutrition is no longer something outside of their remit or beyond their levels of responsibility. It's a topic which needs to be discussed openly, with the merits and benefits of addressing it – both for employees and the business – considered at board level.

The political background

The direction of travel in the UK when it comes to nutrition is clear as politicians and health experts discuss whether the nation's obesity crisis was one of the reasons it suffered so badly during the pandemic.

The new National Food Strategy, headed up by Leon co-founder Henry Dimbleby, has been set up to deliver a programme for change and recently made a series of recommendations for government to consider ahead of a white paper.

These included a Sugar and Salt Reformulation Tax (£3 per kg on sugar and £6 per kg on salt sold for use in processed foods, restaurants or catering businesses), with Dimbleby reporting that poor diet currently contributes to an estimated 64,000 deaths every year in England alone.

Other suggestions included a plan to enable doctors to prescribe fruit and vegetables to patients suffering from poor diets.

Not all these recommendations will be taken up, there is a long way to go and much debate ahead. But against this background, businesses should not be surprised to find that in future they may be expected to take more responsibility for how employees eat and drink in the workplace.

If poor nutritional health and an obesity crisis can paralyse a nation during pandemic, then its impact on the workplace cannot be underestimated, either.

The NHS says one in four adults in the UK is obese, with a BMI of over 30, leading to a greater risk of Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. In 2020 there were 11,117 admissions to hospital in the UK directly related to obesity and another 876,000 where it was a factor. So, there's no doubt that as a society we need to act.

Raising prices and demonising individual foods as 'unhealthy' however, may not necessarily be the answer for businesses as they look for a suitable strategy.

Much better is to provide employees with exciting choices which encourage them to eat more healthily without being forced to do so; and we will discuss the science of 'nudging' later in this paper.

What we cannot shy away from, however, is that one of the most popular meals in Eurest restaurants in UK is still fish and chips, which plays into the indulgence curve that peaks on a Friday.. But if employees are eating a healthy balanced diet across the week then there is nothing wrong with indulgent dishes toward the end of the week, and businesses need to think about how they can slowly change the culture in their restaurants and dining areas.

We have to be careful here, too, in judging all people the same and presuming everyone needs the same nutrition.

personalised nutrition is about eating what is right for you, and that may depend on your genes, your DNA and also your role at work, which is why choice is so important.

An office worker sat at a desk all day is likely to need a very different diet to a worker in manufacturing who works on his or her feet for long hours and needs food which provides energy to get through the day.

Employees working nights or unusual shift patterns are another example. They may well get through the night with a can of Red Bull or other energy drink, but we can find something healthier to offer which provides the same energy content and gives the same boost, rather a paternalistic approach of just taking it away or adding 5p to the price?

Innovative workplace caterers such as Eurest are driving a new way of looking at workplace food and drink, searching with partners for healthier snacks and drinks as well as how to make meals more nutritious.

Just as importantly, discussions are now taking place at a strategic level with businesses, discussing how workplace catering and personal nutrition can help them achieve strategic aims.

Not all clients are there by any means, but the trend is towards a strategic approach to personalised nutrition in the workplace and businesses are starting to understand the impact it can have.

Let's take a look at some of the key strategic benefits that can result from investing in personalised nutrition:

Reducing absenteeism and sick leave

The link between poor health and absenteeism is clear, but what has not been explored so explicitly is what part personal nutrition plays on the illnesses which cause employees to take time off.

There may be little an employer can do to protect employees from some serious illnesses, which is where a robust employee benefits programme and good health insurance comes into play. But by helping to look after their personal nutrition it may be possible to reduce all manner of minor illnesses.

The gut microbiome plays an important role in our immunity and hormones, with 70% of our immune located in the gut – and many days are lost to avoidable conditions such as constipation.

In fact, 118.6m working days were lost because of sickness or injury in 2020 according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), even though the overall figure dropped to a record low because so many people were either working at home or on furlough because of the pandemic.

Minor illnesses (including coughs, colds and flu but also sickness, nausea and diarrhoea), were the number one cause of sickness leave, but gastrointestinal problems made up 6 per cent of the total and genito-urinary problems.

Diabetes, which can often be attributed to a poor diet, was included amongst 'other' illnesses which accounted for 17 per cent of cases, and of course obesity can also lead to heart and blood pressure issues, which account for another 3 per cent of sick leave. Mental health is also directly impacted by diet and a major driver of sick leave and absenteeism.

Improving engagement

Keep people engaged and feeling like they are part of the team is even more important in the current climate when so many employees are not in the office all the time.

The workplace restaurant can be the perfect place to bring people together, and by catering for the personal tastes of employees and looking after their nutrition, they are more likely to feel they belong. People with friendships at work are known to enjoy greater resilience.

Improving concentration

Hydration is vital to concentration and studies show that even small levels of dehydration can impact brain function. A study by Loughborough University in 2015 found that dehydration is almost as bad as being drunk in terms of its impact on concentration.

Drivers who drank only 25ml of water an hour, instead of the recommended 200ml made twice the number of mistakes as those who were well hydrated.

Increasing productivity

There have been many studies tracking the impact of health on productivity and it's clear that wellbeing has a major influence on how employees perform. By helping employees to improve their health, and to take proper breaks regularly, businesses may find the quality of their work improves with it.

Bolstering recruitment and retention

With employees in some companies nervous about returning to the workplace and other sectors suffering significant labour shortages, employers are seeing food, restaurants and cafes as a way to both attract and retain talent.

Recruitment is a burning issue across many industries and with recruitment drives tipped for 2022 as the economy grows, every differentiator in how employees feel valued by their employers is powerful. One or two treats here and there are not going to be enough; the competition for high-quality staff means longer-term benefits and a wider strategy are required.

Reaching Net Zero targets

UK businesses are focused on reaching Net Zero targets by 2030. Offering employees plant-based options in the workplace restaurant, and making conscious choices to source local ingredients, can play a part in that journey.



Chapter 2

The art of nudging and how it can empower others

Innovation, new thinking and technology behind the personalised nutrition trend

The role of an employer in aiding employees to live healthier lives is a complicated one and unlikely to be achieved through a didactic approach.

The days of employers behaving like parents or head teachers, setting rules and regulations to shape the behaviour of those who work for them are long gone.

Banning high-fat or sugary foods, organising compulsory group exercise and removing chips from the menu is not going to cut the mustard with the modern workforce, which wants to think and act for itself.

This is why psychologists and nutritionists recommend the art of 'nudging' employees into better and more healthy choices.

By offering choice rather than banning foods, and by using clever techniques to encourage healthy choices, employers can utilise a more subtle way of achieving results and encouraging long-term preference for good personal nutrition.

It could be something as simple as putting the brown rice in front of the white rice or taking time to make healthy options look attractive. An attractive photograph of summer berries at the dessert counter, for instance, can be a clever way to encourage a healthy pudding.

People really do want to be healthy, but the truth is they are struggling to achieve it.

A Mintel report in 2019 suggested six in 10 adults try to eat healthily most or all of the time – and yet around 65% of the UK population is overweight or obese.

The good news is that workplace restaurants can play a part in helping people make healthy choices and influencing portion control. Psychologists have told us that much of what we do is subconscious. 'Quick decisions' or 'auto-responses' shape our lives, driving our behaviours day-in and day-out, without conscious consideration.

Khody Damestani MSc BSc (HONS) DIHP, is a Psychotherapist and Health Coach who advises Eurest and understands the process of how human beings make choices.

He said: "When it comes to helping employees choose healthier options, it is worth bearing in mind that it is more difficult to change someone's mind, or their perception, than it is to help them make a choice.

"While a cognitive approach would centre on building a positive mental association with the desired change, in this case choosing healthier foods, a behavioural approach would involve facilitating change, making it easier for the individual to develop the behaviour of choosing healthier foods."

So, how does that work? The key, according to Khody, is in behavioural nudging.

He said: "Our brains have a tendency towards making the easiest choice, and most behaviour is founded in opportunity rather than in conscious thought. Behavioural nudging begins with breaking the desired behaviour down to the easiest, most doable step possible. This first step is the most important part, and research from Stanford University has shown the importance of making it simple.

"Next comes prompting the choice. Take a cup of tea or coffee: if the desired behaviour is having fewer sweet beverages or using a plant-based milk, both the behaviour and prompt are simple: you do it whenever you make a hot drink. It is not a complicated behaviour and it is something that is done regularly.

"Breaks and lunches at work offer a great opportunity to build behaviours as they happen so regularly – whether that's a healthy habit like choosing fruit as a snack or an unhealthy habit like picking up fast food!"

The ways you can nudge

Reducing calories in old favourites

There are some dishes which will always be popular, so rather than discourage people from buying them caterers have the option to adjust the recipe to reduce overall calories and improve their nutrition. That's something Compass has enacted this year, putting extra vegetables into spaghetti bolognese, and making mac 'n' cheese with sweet potato, for instance. We've also increased the use of wholegrains as standard. It means meals are healthier but nobody is missing out on the things they love.

Plant-based options

Growing numbers of employees are now following a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, and there is an expectation they will be catered for in a workplace restaurant.

Gone are the days when if you were vegetarian and the menu was chicken and chips that the caterer's attitude would be: just chips for you, then. That's not a great experience.

The benefit of vegetarian and vegan options is that they increase the vegetable intake of those who choose them, one of the key aims of the National Food Strategy, as well as dramatically reducing saturated fat.

Eurest's Plantilicious plant-based range has been made in conjunction with partners such as Nestle, Santa Maria Pulled Oats and many others who provide Garden Gourmet meat-free ingredients and also train chefs on how to cook plant-based meals.

However, you do not need to be vegan to enjoy dishes which do not contain meat and there is a rapidly growing interest in the wider population about incorporating more plant-based and plant-forward meals into their diets. The key is to ensure the nutritional value of meat-free options is high.

With careful planning by nutritionists to ensure each dish has an appropriate balance of amino acids, many vegetarian or vegan dishes can outperform their meat counterparts on key nutrients such as protein.

Choices, choices, choices

The key to encouraging people to eat healthily is not to take food away but to provide a wide range of exciting choices. There's no point telling someone they can't have chocolate and serve a rice cake instead. Far better to provide an exciting, well-presented alternative.

Frame choices in the right way

Commercial insight and social impact organisation IDG has published some interesting findings in its Appetite for Change research document.

It says that the way choices are presented, whether it be as a loss or a potential gain, affects how they received.

Actively marketing only diet varieties of soft drinks, for instance, has been shown to make them more appealing than the regular varieties.

So, framing the healthier choice as positive, not as missing out, will help shift purchasing decisions.

Avoiding a sense of loss is key when promoting plant-based options. They can be reframed instead as a gain in terms of their health benefits, fitting into a balanced diet in which you eat less meat. Creating in-store prominence then normalises the change – and influences behaviour.

Don't exclude the doubters

There will always be groups which resist change, but it's important not to exclude them. Over time they can be persuaded to start their journey.

These groups are turned off by labels such as vegan or vegetarian, for instance. So, focus on introducing new, exciting products which grab their attention – and on the health benefits rather than the absence of meat. Nudge tactics should concentrate on making it easy to take that first step.



Advice on how to embrace personalised nutrition in the workplace

It is not only psychologists who can help businesses encourage healthy choices in the workforce and create an environment in which their people embrace personalised nutrition.

Workplace catering experts have a wealth of experience and knowledge and can be key strategic partners.



Liz Forte, Health & Wellness Director at Eurest UK, sums up some of the best advice

1

Take advice from nutritionists

Having access to experts in nutrition is vital if you are to understand how to help employees improve their wellbeing through what they eat and drink.

We have more nutritionists than any of our competitors, and it's a big advantage. But we also look outside the organisation for new approaches and new ideas, as well as to our offices in countries across the world.

2

Don't follow fads or superfoods – but consider foods with additional benefits on top of their nutritional value

It's important for businesses to avoid the temptation to embrace dieting fads – instead base your menus and catering strategy on facts and nutrition.

Superfoods are one of the great myths of the current age. Very few foods have a significant impact on their own, even if they are high in vitamins or antioxidants, and the idea that eating a few berries is going to change your health is misleading.

Turmeric seems to be the current fad but ask a scientist and you'll find there is no real basis to many of the claims that surround it. That doesn't mean it's bad to consume turmeric, far from it, but the focus should be on a diet that meets all your nutrition needs.

There is also growing scepticism around so-called "immune boosters", a term adopted by some influencers and brands that is not based in real scientific evidence, but which gained extra traction during the pandemic.

Our focus at the moment is on functional food - foods that deliver additional benefits on top of their nutritional value, such as probiotics and prebiotic fibre. This can be as simple as adding oats to a dish. We don't always need to look to more exotic ingredients that may have serious environmental impacts, like avocados. British produce has the fibre we need. Prior to the pandemic, food and beverages with a functional upside had already seen strong growth, with an increased interest in gut health. This trend has continued. It includes foods with anti-viral properties and also herbal and mineral supplements or vitamins, which are all experiencing high levels of growth. There is an increased focus on foods that are believed to target different areas of health, depending on the individual's personal priorities.

3

Consider what your workforce wants

It's important to consider the tastes and needs of your workforce because all are different. If they want chips or a jacket potato, the answer isn't to remove these items from the menu – it is far better to provide healthy options to accompany them.

Perhaps the first question to consider is: have you actually asked your employees what they want?

4

Support the local food chain

Choosing food which is grown locally in the UK is good for employee health, good for the community and good for the environment, too. It can also encourage greater buy-in from the workforce if they know what they eat at lunchtime is grown locally.

5

Don’t forget to include snacks in your nutrition plan

A survey by Eurest revealed that Generation Z are more likely to graze throughout the day rather than eat a big meal. So, planning a variety of menu options including hot, rustic main meals, treats and snack dishes can help employees.

Food for mood is a growing trend because during difficult times, and especially in recession, there is often a spike in consumers wanting smaller treats. Providing healthy mini treats supports this need and can help encourage levels of serotonin in the gut, the hormone which stabilises our mood and feeling of wellbeing.

Increasing numbers of employees have taken an interest in exercise at home and gut health during the pandemic and are searching for options which provide slow-release energy rather than snacks high in sugar. Snacks can also be made more easily accessible through apps which allow employees to order them to their desks.

6

Embrace plant-based options

One of the keys to successful nudging is to take an innovative approach to workplace catering which looks beyond a one-hour lunch break, because personal nutrition is not only about what you eat in the workplace restaurant.

The most obvious example is the growing interest in plant-based and vegan menus, which can be a powerful way of improving diet.

At Eurest, the focus has been on introducing a greater choice of plant-based dishes in our Plantilicious range and ensuring that all dishes provide the right variety of nutrients for a healthy diet and include familiar and comforting plant-based dishes so people don’t feel they are missing out by choosing plant-based.

Other initiatives include a Kitchen Club, helping employees learn how to cook healthy meals, and Wellness Wednesday where a nutritionist provides advice on how to lower blood pressure or how to reduce salt intake, for instance.

It is also important that caterers train their own chefs on how to cook plant-based options and meat alternatives. They are often cooked very differently, with ingredients such as aquafaba, made from chickpea water, going into plant-based mayonnaise, or nutritional yeast, which contains B12 (often lacking in plant-based diets) to thicken sauces.

7

Offer healthy food to take home

An initiative to help employees eat healthily at home can bring positive results. Home delivery, meal kits and recipe boxes are on-trend examples for innovative workplace caterers. Imagine you have set yourself a personalised diet of 3000 calories a day, and you know you can get all those meals, correctly measured with the right nutrition, from your workplace. It can be a real boost. It’s probably not something employees will do every day but it’s a great service to have access to.

8

Focus on transparent and informative labelling – and consider PACE

Providing employees with clear and transparent information on what is in their food is important but, again, nudging is more effective than shouting. Rather than labelling food as ‘high fat’ or ‘high in calories’ it may be more effective to how far an employee would need to walk to burn off the calories, or how many steps they would need to climb to achieve the same. This is called PACE (Physical Activity Calorie Equivalent) and is likely to be seen in workplace restaurants more regularly in 2022.

9

Reduce sugar and calories in ‘old favourites’

Reducing sugar, fat and calorie content in favourite dishes can be an effective way to nudge employees to a healthier diet almost without them noticing. It is important, however, to ensure they taste just as good. Eurest chefs, for instance, don’t use salt but they do use vinegars, herbs and pepper to increase flavour.

A gearshift in workplace catering – and the value in subsidising healthy choices

By Chris Stern, Stern Consultancy, Independent catering consultant

Workplace restaurants have long been valued as a key employee benefit and for their role in helping to foster a strong workplace culture. But a recent gearshift – which has pushed the issue of workplace catering firmly up the boardroom agenda – has been driven by the shortage of people.

Many employers, in business and industry workplaces alike, had not fully anticipated the impact of a smaller labour pool. Now, post Brexit and in the midst of a pandemic, there's a drive to innovate, to make the catering offer as appealing as possible, to attract and retain staff with the right skills and experience and in the right numbers.

Before the pandemic hit in 2020, there had been a culture of cutting subsidies and a myopic move towards a nil subsidy model. Now many employers have refocused on the importance of catering and are open to subsidised catering. We're also seeing certain items such as fruit and healthy snacks being free issued more widely, usually in conjunction with long-standing coffee and tea offers.

Alongside this, the rise of hybrid working has accelerated investment in workplace catering, with senior management keen to tempt their teams back into the workplace with a space to come together with colleagues over an appetising meal or a coffee.

A centralised menu planning system such as the Eurest model can work very well. The nutritional information is all there and the introduction of Natasha's Law means that the framework is all in place, making it simple to get up and running. All centralised caterers will need a system like this.

Personalised nutrition, and really thinking about what people want, is absolutely the direction of travel.

We must not fall into the trap of thinking that industry workers just want unhealthy food – after all, we know how popular salad bars are. Some employers might be tempted to go for the quick and easy option and serve up the chips and energy drinks. Of course, there are no 'bad' food and drink options as such – choice and balance are vital. But there is an increasing recognition by employers that they have a responsibility to support their teams' health and wellbeing by taking a more active role.

A key question for employers to consider is: could the business subsidise healthier choices to make them cheaper and easier for people to choose? That can have a big impact. And how can businesses engage and empower frontline teams to play an active role in supporting positive change, and to feed in their own ideas?

The key is effective communication with consumers and to the frontline teams to offer people choice but gently nudge them into making healthier selections.

Four simple ways employers can boost their people's health

By Rees Bramwell, Eurest Nutritionist



1

Make it easy for people to stay hydrated: We associate our stomach rumbling with hunger but this happens when we are dehydrated too. The guidance is that people should aim to drink around 2 litres of fluid per day for optimum performance and health, with water making up at least half of that. Drinking little and often is ideal to keep your team topped up and it's important that they don't wait until thirst kicks in so make sure water stations are widely distributed.



2

Base snacks around fruit. Traditionally, snacking is linked to crisps, chocolate and other sweet treats. While this is fine in moderation, we want to approach snacking as an opportunity to give our people some goodness. Fresh fruit is best but tinned, dried or frozen are good convenience options and have a longer shelf life. Mix with low fat yoghurt, nuts and seeds to help keep your people full until their next meal.

3

Introduce more plant-based meals: Start slowly by swapping one portion per week for a plant-based alternative. The protein in meat can be swapped with soya or pea-protein based alternatives such as veggie mince which often have comparable protein but around a third of the saturated fat. Beans and pulses are key as 80g counts as 1 portion of people's 5 a day due to the high fibre, vitamin and mineral content. There are several benefits to swapping meat to plant-based, especially around heart health.

4

Switch carbohydrates to wholegrains. These are less processed, which means they have a higher fibre content. Brown rice for example has nine times more fibre than white versions, and has a richer and nuttier taste. Gradually increasing fibre intake can bring real benefits to gut health which supports a huge number of processes in the body. There is a growing body research to show a strong connection between the gut and brain health too.

Chapter 3

Around the world: how personalised nutrition in the workplace might look in future

A letter from America

Lisa Lahiji and Michael Fiato, Compass USA, explore food innovation in the United States

Graze: the collision of personalisation and customisation

Prior to the pandemic, we saw strong growth in personalisation and customisation across our business. Now more than ever we see guests wanting control on both ingredients they eat, as well as portion size.

Our Graze concept allows our operators to offer warm protein extensions to traditional stations like a salad bar as well as creating entire self-serve 'by the ounce' stations. Combining all the new diet trends with food allergies and gluten sensitivity it's no surprise that 80% of guests prefer to build their own plates.

The rise of Graze was meteoric. It quickly moved from a popular new station to our number two seller behind the salad bar

Nutrigenomix®

The way our guests define "healthy" is evolving to focus on what benefits food could bring to them personally. This includes gut health, mental clarity, sustained energy, and many other positive health outcomes.

Nutrigenomics or nutritional genomics is the science that looks at the relationship between genes, nutrition and health. It allows us to understand how our individual genetic makeup affects the way we respond to the foods, beverages and supplements we consume.

Our exclusive partnership with Nutrigenomix®, gives us the ability to bring nutritional genomic testing to clients and guests, in conjunction with menu offerings that allow hyper-personalization. After implementing a successful pilot with over 40 Compass Group executives and senior leaders, we now have two models available:

- Model 1: Nutrigenomix® Counseling Session | Individual guest/student/patient orders and pays for test
- Model 2: RDN-Certified Counselor | Compass RDN acts as provider by ordering test kit and counselling the patient

Good Food 4U

Good Food 4U is a subscription-based, personalised fresh and healthy meal programme expertly guided by our registered dietitians.

Guests can let us know their nutrition preferences and we craft meals and snacks for them that can be picked up each week in our marketplace to take home.

As part of the programme, we can also offer engaging and exciting nutrition literacy through education such as cooking demonstrations and how to be healthy with the convenience of a fully integrated solution delivering personalised meals.

The Basic package uses dietary needs, preferences and patterns to provide an individual food programme along with food as medicine educational resources. The Premium package incorporates nutritional genomics and adds virtual one-on-one wellness counselling and health coaching services.

HelloFresh

Our business model has changed this past year with a majority of our customers now working from home and they are looking for different ways to connect with their teams.

In partnership with HelloFresh, our TeachingKitchen@ home+ platform offers an interactive team building component with meal kit ingredients delivered right to the front door. This partnership allows us to provide convenience with transparency and connect with work from home.

Ingredient Transparency

We know that guests are focused on what is in their food and where their food and ingredients come from.

We take ingredient transparency very seriously so guests can make an informed decision based on their health and personalised choices. Our vast collection of recipes based on innovative global cuisine, trends and local preferences are created in partnership with chefs and registered dietitians and are managed in our Webtrition2 menu management system that provides nutrition and Ingredient information.

We offer an Ingredient Ambassador programme where are guests are encouraged to ask us how their food was prepared and managers and associates are trained to handle questions regarding ingredients in food.

A view from Australia

Top trends from Down Under by Jonny Neech, General Manager, Brand Development, Compass Group Australia and Rebeca Pobar, Operations Manager, Compass Group Australia

There is an appetite in Australia for investment in food innovation to help build a sustainable and healthy future for everyone, and there's no doubt that workplace catering here is forward leaning.

In fact, Australia is ranked sixth out of 113 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2018 Global Food Security Index, due to its excellence in food knowledge.

The top five health and wellbeing trends we are following in Australia are:

1. Wearables – data-driven inputs and outputs
2. Holistic health (whole body/mental health)
3. Clean food/plant based
4. Food as medicine
5. Food supplements/fortification – and automated personalised nutrition innovation

There are some key aspects to keep an eye out for which are big influencers on food in the workplace.

These include:

Sustainability: healthy and sustainable diets. Includes everything from healthy dietary intake to responsible sourcing. Food waste, plant forward options, promoting crop diversity and then positive behaviour messaging around this to really drive change.

Functional foods: moving away from a focus on energy and macronutrients (which were very on trend over the last 5-10 years) and more on micronutrients and ingredients. It's not the total of the food we eat anymore but the "sum of the micro parts". Looking for functional benefits of the micronutrients that whole foods contain.

Plant-based diets: increasing plant-based menus whether it be vegan, vegetarian or flexitarian. Increasing non-meat options as well as natural and processed meat alternatives.

Digestive/Gut health: microbiome, microbiota density and diversity. There is a massive focus in Australia on improving mental and physical health through gut health. This includes a traditional focus on probiotics (fermentable foods) but moving more to the diversity shown in prebiotics foods (resistant starch and fibres).

Total wellbeing: the link between good nutrition/ individuals' diets and physical, mental, social health, sleep, longevity, disease and balance.

A Discussion from the UK

David Barnes (Channel Lead for Workplace) and Katalin Lugosi (Activation Manager) at Nestlé debate where the trend is heading and how fast it will develop.

What does personalised nutrition in the workplace mean to you as it currently stands?

David: "It's an important question because the term has come to mean a lot of things to many people.

"At Nestle personalised nutrition is a key area of focus in our nutrition divisions. It's very scientific work, looking at things like diabetic feeding, or taking a reading of an individual's body and then suggesting a diet that goes with it.

"That's not always possible in the workplace but there are some important areas in food service which are being influenced by the science.

"Chronological health is one. If you are working night shifts, early shifts or day shifts your diet needs may change.

"In the workplace it's not so much personalised nutrition as job-based nutrition – for now, at least."

Katalin: "It's an interesting subject to explore. On one hand there is your evolutionary biology which influences the food and nutrition you need. This has played out in the current trend for 'fasting' which shows that many people perform better if they eat in an eight-hour period, as mankind did originally when they hunted only when the sun was up.

"The constant availability of food and constant opportunities to snack has meant we are no longer eating in the optimum way. So that is something employers, caterers and food providers are exploring.

"Then there is the emergence of AI technology which makes it possible to monitor a person's personal biology,

by taking and analysing strands of hair or blood from a finger prick. From there it's possible to know what vitamins and nutrition your body needs and how you can eat optimally to be the best version of yourself.

"We are a long way from this being common, but it's a trend which is growing – think about how many people wear watches which count the number of steps they take. The demand for healthy food and personalised nutrition is only going to grow from here."

Do you see a time in future when employers may provide personalised nutrition for each employee?

David: "Not just yet, but it's foreseeable, especially in businesses where high productivity is vital.

"A new service just arriving on the market is worth watching. Essentially, it allows you do a finger prick test, send it off and receive a personalised nutrient analysis of what minerals and vitamins you need. Then the company 3D prints what looks a multicoloured, multi-layered lozenge which has the perfect balance of vitamins and minerals to balance your body. This technology is there. Will it ever find its way across into food service? Well, potentially, yes!

"Wearable tech has come a long way already and it's moving fast, too. It will tell you in future that you are down on your energy levels, calorie levels or iron levels – and eventually it will become even more specific."

Katalin: "I think the future of personal nutrition in the workplace will be driven by demand from employees. As people get more conscious about what they are eating, where their food comes from and what they want from an ethical employer, the onus on employers to be more conscious of employee wellness is only going to grow."

So, could you even envisage a time when employers are testing employees to see what kind of nutrients they need and how well they are functioning?

David: "That sounds futuristic, but it's not a large step from sports nutrition. If you think about the Olympic team, every one of them will have a personalised diet, the same for team sports. When they have a drink at half-time it's a drink that has been blended especially for them with their personal blend of the nutrients their body requires. So, it's not a massive leap from sports nutrition to workplace nutrition. I just don't think many people have thought about it yet.

"You can see it coming over into the workplace, for sure, and it is employers such as Amazon, who are highly focused on measuring productivity, who are likely to drive it.

"If you take a sports mentality to performance then you want to do everything possible to help employees achieve peak performance, whether they are a footballer or someone working for a global employer."

Could the cost of these kind of programmes be prohibitive for businesses?

David: "That depends on your view on the return the programme brings and the value of your employees. If you have a CEO who earns millions of pounds then why not treat him or her in the same way as an elite athlete to guarantee maximum performance? The cost benefit will be different for every company and it may begin at a higher level rather than on the shop floor. But also the move to offering perks and incentives to lead a healthier life fits into this space, and it's only going to grow."

Katalin: "You also have to think about the next generation coming through and what they will want from workplace nutrition. It's a generation which is far better informed on health issues, one which drinks less and smokes less – and one which is totally engaged in tech solutions and self-measurement."

How does a plant-based menu fit into personal nutrition?

David: "People think of plant-based menus as something new but Nestle have been doing plant-based since 1986. The current expansion is rapid, however, and has been boosted by evidence that eating a plant-based diet can bring around better general health, immunity and also reduced fat levels in comparison to a meat-based diet.

"A lot of mainstream food service providers are moving towards a plant-based offering to flexitarians right now.

"It's about nudging the 86 per cent of people who are looking to cut back on meat. They have read about the dangers of processed food and want to make changes to their diet."

What do you make of the trend for more employers to subsidise workplace restaurants or even offer meals for free? Does it play into the future of personal nutrition?

David: "I think it does. It allows you to nudge more effectively – for instance by removing meat on one day a week or in one category (such as all burgers being meat free). You could even offer all healthy food for free and charge for treats.

"Subsidy completely went away a few years ago but it is coming back in a big way at the moment, not least because businesses need to tempt people back to work after the pandemic. It may well prove an important driver for recruitment and retention."

Conclusion: A strategic view on the future of personal nutrition in the workplace

By Morag Freathy



What employees eat and drink at work has rarely been a boardroom discussion in the past, let alone what they consume at home, but there is growing realisation that personalised nutrition is going to play a strategic role in the workplace of the future.

The corporate journey into this largely unexplored space has a long way to go. Most companies are only just starting off on the path, slowly coming to terms with what it means for the way they run their businesses and taking small steps towards a different culture.

But technology, together with very different expectations from younger employees, will soon up the pace of change which is already gathering momentum in several areas of the world, including the United States.

It may sound like something out of a science fiction movie to suggest that companies in future will utilise the genetic make-up of employees to deliver personalised nutrition plans that allow them to achieve optimum performance at work. But, as some of our experts have already outlined in this white paper, the technology is already there to support such a scheme and there is growing interest on how the return on investment could be measured.

Of course, such a scenario is a long way down the line and not what most companies are planning right now. But what they are thinking about is how to have a more strategic discussion about food and nutrition in the workplace and how it might impact performance, productivity and wellbeing.

When you consider the statistic that up to 60 per cent of a person's food and drink is consumed during working hours then the importance of making healthy choices – and the responsibility of an employer to aid, nudge and make those choices easier – is significant.

As a provider of workplace catering services to businesses and corporations across the world, we've certainly noticed that discussions about food, nutrition and hydration have become increasingly strategic, with companies far more open to innovation as well as to solutions based on scientific and nutritional research.

We see our role as being to deliver fantastic food that is the right kind of food to help businesses to achieve their goals and provide consultative advice on how those goals can be reached. It's a philosophy that is working, because taking that approach is delivering new business for Eurest and we are tapping into a trend and a direction of travel that we are convinced is going to balloon in future.

So, although some of the stories around personalised nutrition sound like science fiction, the real key here is that businesses get on board early, as we have done, and start to realise their responsibilities for the wellbeing of employees extend beyond health insurance to taking greater strategic notice of what their people consume in the workplace. This is how we future-proof our organisations.

Ultimately it's about understanding the importance of food and the power of food -and of the impact it can have on performance and results.

If employees are healthy, happy and feel looked after – and as a result they are performing well - then it stands to reason it can have a positive impact on the bottom line.

In addition, the use of plant-based food options, which can lead to a healthier diet, also help companies achieve their Net Zero targets.

What we're not saying is that by serving only plant-based food or by offering employees nutritious snacks instead of confectionery there will be an instant and measurable rise in productivity; those kinds of claims are overblown and need further scientific research. But by providing a more holistic approach to food and hydration in the workplace it is possible to connect workplace catering more closely to business goals and corporate strategy. And as wearable tech continues to develop it is going to be far easier to measure the impact of that decision in future.

If you think about what everyone in the world has been through in the last two years, it's not surprising that health is rising up the agenda, of course.

There's no doubt the pandemic has accelerated the personal nutrition trend. It has focused the c-suite on the health of their employees and, in the short term, on what is most likely to entice them back into the workplace.

That, perhaps, is why a greater number of our clients are considering offering free food in their workplace restaurants, allowing them greater opportunity to 'nudge' employees into healthier food choices but also creating a perk which will aid recruitment and retention.

The post-pandemic trend of companies moving out of city centres to greenfield sites also plays into a stronger future for personalised nutrition.

Out-of-town sites are more likely to focus on the quality of their workplace restaurant, not least because employees have fewer options close by, and are embracing an opportunity to think about the health and wellbeing of those they feed.

There are a range of companies which have never had a workplace restaurant before and are now looking to offer one for the first time and take personalised nutrition on board. In addition, others which previously offered in-house catering are now looking to outsource and work with a strategic partner to the same ends.

For businesses only just starting out on the personal nutrition journey, the key is to begin with an internal audit to find out what is right or wrong about their current catering and ask employees what they want to see more or less of.

The strategic discussion about how to take that data and use it to create a healthier environment which helps deliver corporate goals and drive meaningful change, however, is vital to successful outcomes.

Increasingly, we are seeing companies work in exactly that way – and they are telling us that what employees eat and drink at work is no longer an after-thought.

Personalised nutrition in the workplace may be new on the boardroom agenda but it is here to stay and is a trend which will develop rapidly in the coming years.

It seems like a very old adage that 'you are what you eat' but in corporate terms it has found new meaning.