

Rise of 'foodie culture' has left the working class behind

April 4 2017, by Tony Trueman

The rise of a new foodie culture of world cuisine in England has left the working-class and non-Londoners behind, new research by The University of Manchester has found.

The study found that less than 10 per cent of [people](#) who eat out frequently in a broad variety of types of restaurants are working class.

The researchers surveyed 1,101 people in London, Bristol and Preston in 2015, comparing their results with similar research carried out in 1995. They found that:

- People's satisfaction with their meals had dropped over the 20 years
- Three-course meals are much less common, with fewer people having dessert or starters
- People now spend less time eating their meal in a [restaurant](#)
- More people eat out alone, and fewer people eat in very large groups
- Of all the types of restaurants visited in 2015, the most frequented were traditional British, followed by Italian, Indian, and Chinese.

Dr Jessica Paddock, Professor Alan Warde and Dr Jennifer Whillans, of Manchester's Sustainable Consumption Institute, also found that around one in five had eaten during the previous year at a wide variety of outlets, such as Thai, Japanese and French nouvelle cuisine and ethnic

cooking restaurants. But of these 'gastronomes':

- Only eight per cent were working class, and 70 per cent were professional middle class
- 70 percent had a degree, 30 percent did not
- 51 percent were in London, 38 percent were in Bristol and only 11 percent in Preston
- 71 percent were aged 16-39, and 29 percent were 40 and over.

In detail, the researchers found:

- People's satisfaction with their meals dropped over the 20 years – those liking the food, decor and service 'a lot' fell by around 9 percentage points (food from 81% to 72%, decor 57%-48%, service 65-57%). Those thinking the meal was value for money fell from 69% to 56%.
- Three-course meals are much less common, with fewer people having dessert or starters (a fall from 33% in 1995 to 22% in 2015 in those eating three courses)
- People now spend less time eating a main meal when in a restaurant – the percentage of meals taking less than one hour increased from 20% in 1995 to 35% in 2015.
- More people eat out alone – a rise from 3% in 1995 to 6% in 2015.
- People tend not to dress up specially for the occasion as much as they did in 1995. This fell from 39% in 1995 to 26% in 2015.
- In 1995, 29% said their most recent restaurant meal was for a special occasion – this fell to 22% in 2015. In 1995 the percentage saying their last meal out was a snap decision taken for convenience was 19%, rising to 26% in 2015.
- Of all the types of restaurants visited in 2015, the most frequented were traditional British (60% of those surveyed had visited one or more in the previous year); Italian (53%); Indian

(44%); Chinese (31%); American-style (26%); Thai (21%); Japanese (16%); French (14%) and vegetarian (13%).

- There was no significant increase in the frequency of eating out between 1995 and 2015.

Provided by British Sociological Association

Citation: Rise of 'foodie culture' has left the working class behind (2017, April 4) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-foodie-culture-left-class.html>

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