

ASF

THE FIT OUT PEOPLE.

# How Millennials Are Shaping the Dining Experience.

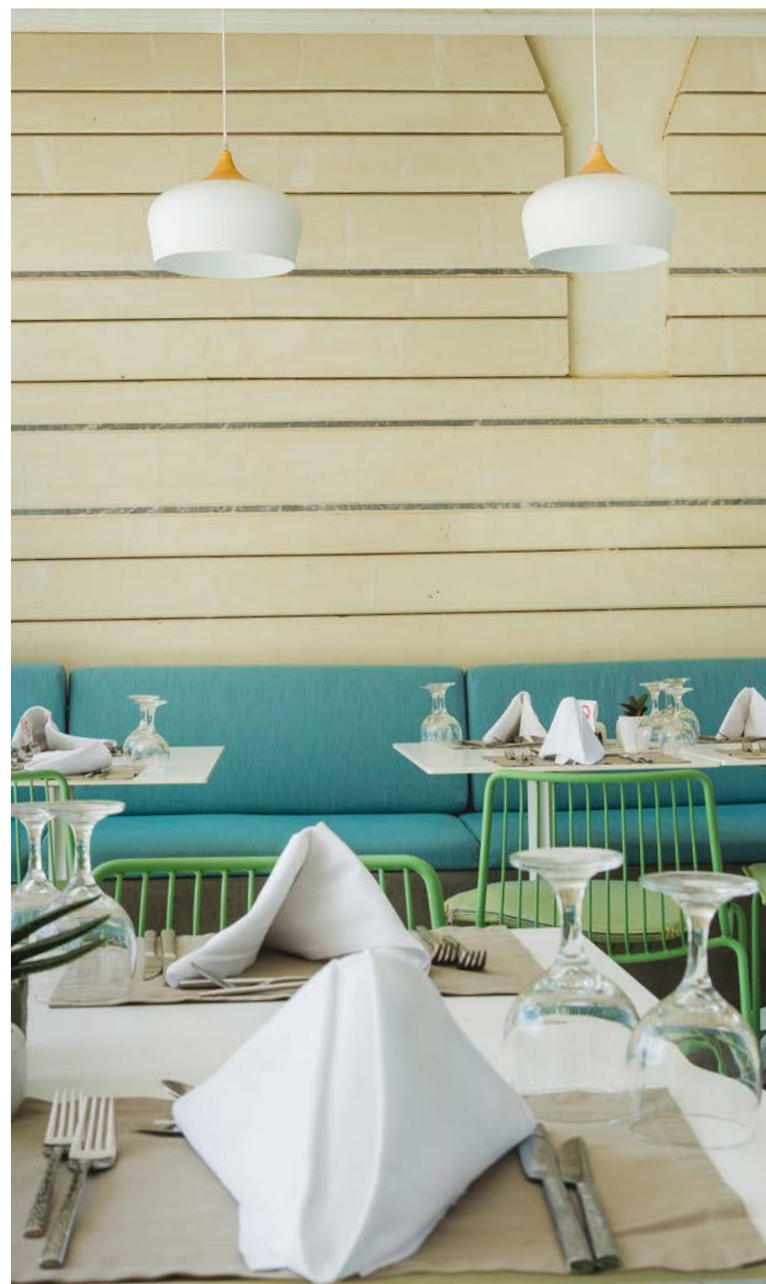


# How Millennials Are Shaping the Dining Experience.

Millennials have a reputation for being hard to please. But they are also becoming the country's largest group of diners, with 17 million millennials making up almost a quarter of the UK population ([source: Statista](#)). Millennials have the greatest spending power of all the demographics in the UK and dining out is no exception. They spend a whopping 13% of their income in restaurants and bars ([source: Foodspark](#)). Here at ASF, as experts in restaurant, bar and café interior fit outs, we know how important this age range is for your business to grow.

Your dining experience needs to cater for this mercurial group but it is not always easy to know how. Usually defined as born between 1980 and the mid 1990s, millennials are tech-savvy and distrustful of conventional restaurant marketing. They are time-poor convenience lovers who want affordability but they also ask for sustainable, locally-sourced foods. They say they don't just want to eat out but to have an experience. If that doesn't sound confusing enough, you then need to decide what changes you make in your business to capture their interest.

ASF have pulled together the latest insights to help you navigate the stats and speculation around millennial eating preferences. We've used our years of expertise creating restaurant layouts, improving operational flow and designing bar, café and restaurant interiors to give you practical ways to really cater for millennials, get them coming back and talking to their friends about your dining experience.

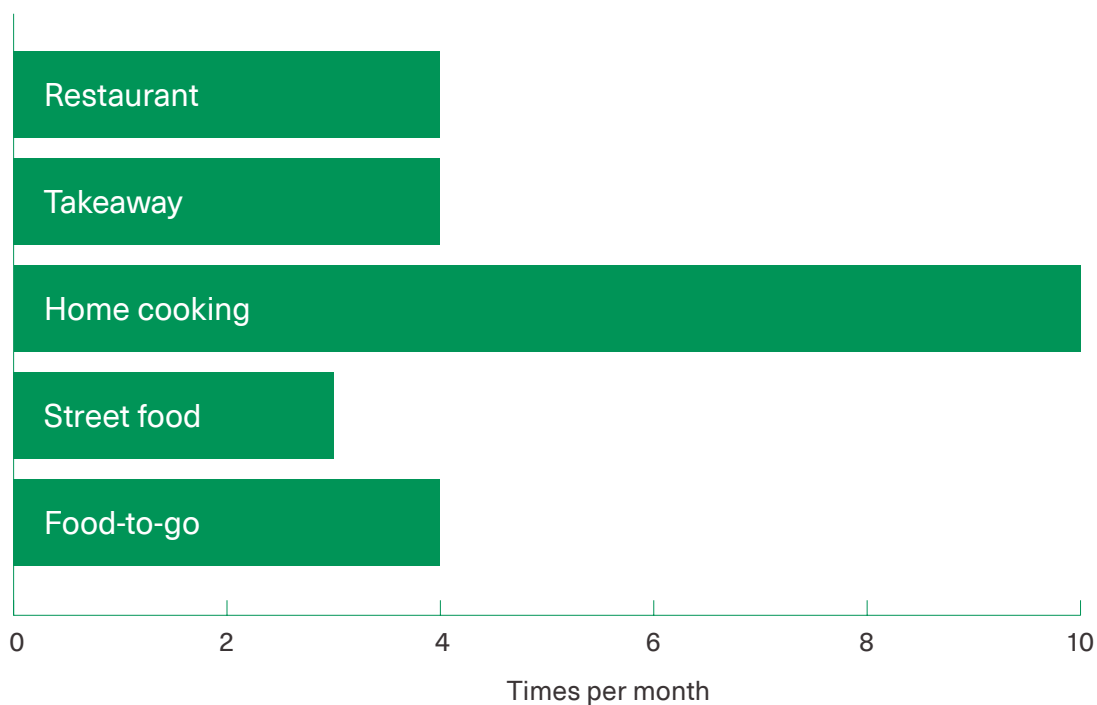


## Convenience and Speed.

55% of millennials say convenience is a top driver when buying food, while baby boomers say taste matters more.

— International Food Information Council's 2017 Food and Health Survey

Millennials lead busy lives. There are more of them in the UK workforce than any other age group. Many are now starting families. It's no surprise that eating out isn't always a special occasion for them. Each month the average millennial eats at a restaurant four times but has street food, orders delivery and has food to go 11 times. It is not to say that taste isn't important to millennials but eating out is much more than an activity reserved for the weekend: it is a time saver. They may well choose a restaurant for its great reviews one night of the month but for every night like that, there are twice as many occasions when they eat out simply to make their lives easier. We can see this in the fact that casual dining outlet visits from 16-24s are up 15% year-on-year and 9% among 25-34s (source: Foodspark).



— **Tip 1:**

*Convenience isn't just about quick food but the ease you create around your dining experience. ASF fit-out contractors always work with you to develop a floor plan that creates the best operational flow for your business. Millennials will love eating where the service is smooth and wait times are reduced.*

— **Tip 2:**

*Make sure your menus are well positioned in your store layout and consider tech that could speed up your millennial turnaround times like self-service kiosks.*

## Millennials Love a Bargain.

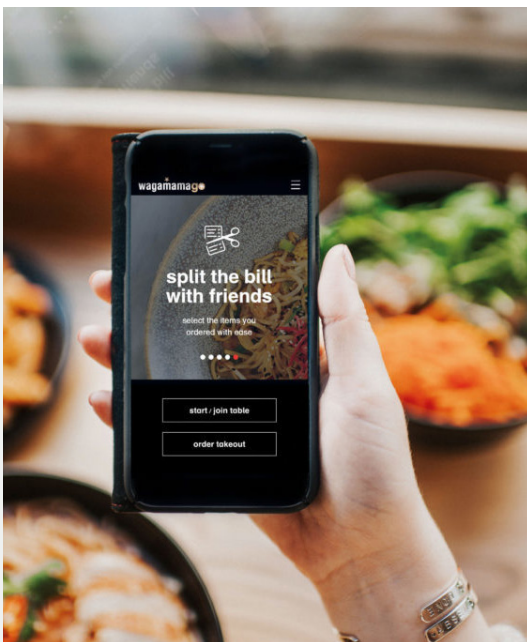
UK millennials aged 18-34 were most likely (34%) to eat out less in 2018 than 2017. Two-thirds of those are doing so to save money, with 17% saying they don't have the time to eat out.

— Flyt

Again, we see that time is a big concern for millennials but also affordability in these results. Millennials do love a bargain. Of course, the environment is another big driver for millennials but 35% said they would even compromise their values a bit to save some money (source: [The Balance Small Business](#)). But they are not looking for super-sized meals or food by the bucket. They want healthy meals at reasonable prices.

— **Tip:**

*Loyalty schemes are a great way to encourage millennials to eat at your restaurant, bar or café. ASF refurbishment contractors can help you find the best areas to promote your loyalty scheme when designing your layout.*



# Create an Experience.

78% of millennials prefer spending money on an experience or an event to buying something desirable.

— Business Community

Millennials are open minded and curious, always looking for more than just a meal. They value adventure and consider food another way to experience the world with friends. Millennials are also more likely to see communal seating as an opportunity to experience new social connections ([source: Restaurant Development + Design](#)).

— **Tip 1:**

*Introduce live events: kombucha brewing lessons, gin making sessions, sourdough classes.*

— **Tip 2:**

*Eating out is very much a social activity for millennials. ASF love creating communal seating areas for social dining experiences millennials will love. Plant walls or partitions can be used to divide spaces, allowing for both casual and more formal seating areas in your layout.*



## The Search for Newness.

**53% of millennials rated a new experience an important feature when choosing a place to eat.**

— Foodspark

Uniqueness is king for millennials. They love unusual dining experiences they can shout about. This could be simple shareable experiences like Sushi Samba's photo-friendly lollipops, popcorn-adorned dessert and dry ice, or the complex narrative-based taster menu of Restaurant Story. Whatever it is, you will win millennial hearts with a little creativity.

— **Tip:**

*Update your interior to help you keep your dining experience feeling fresh. ASF use flexible fit out layouts to give you room for change: space to host live events, movable furniture layouts to create a different atmosphere for outdoor dining in the summer and layouts that allow you to change the seating to create a more casual feel for lunchtime diners.*



## Customising your Meal.

**46% of millennials say their favorite quick-serve restaurants gave them the option to customize their meals from start to finish.**

— GiveX

Millennials love to build their own meals. From choosing the ingredients for a salad or pizza to building your own burrito bowl or burger. This is part of the experience, choosing exactly the foods they want and giving them the power to make the meal different every time they visit.

— **Tip:**

*Open kitchens are a great way to connect your customers to the creativity in the kitchen. ASF love that open kitchens create interactions between chefs and diners. You might expect open kitchens to leave chefs feeling watched but Harvard Business Professor Ryan Buell showed that an open environment 'meaningfully alters the way the chef experiences their job'. The result was that they cooked tastier food. Perhaps, the ultimate customised meal is one where your guest's interaction influences the tastiness.*

## Cooking Up Some Atmosphere.

**15% of under 40s say atmosphere is a top priority.**

— Hubspot

There is no doubt that your interior matters to millennials. The muted blue colour schemes, industrial and mid-century modern furniture, dotted with Edison light bulbs have dominated bar and restaurant interiors since 2017. It seems no coincidence that so many of these design elements foster great atmosphere. Low lighting encourages intimate conversations and blues are thought to be calming. It may not be easy to guess whether millennial pink, that blueless gender-neutral colour that took Instagram and interiors by storm in 2018, will stick around. Will neo mint take off, as forecasted by WGSN trend forecasting service? Or will Pinterest's 45% increase in mustard-yellow searches creep into our interiors ([source: Pinterest 2018 Back to Life report](#))? You can read more about our projections for mustard yellow in ASF's trends for 2019 blog. The one thing you can be sure of is that your space needs to focus on atmosphere above all of these questions in order to make millennials feel at home in your restaurant.

Picking colours that are relaxing is a huge part of this but your lighting is too. We've seen the affordable Edison light bulbs start to be replaced with more diffused white lighting with a nod to art deco, echoing Michael Flos designs. But all of these options give off a soft light that gives your dining area a snug but stylish feel.

— **Tip 1:**

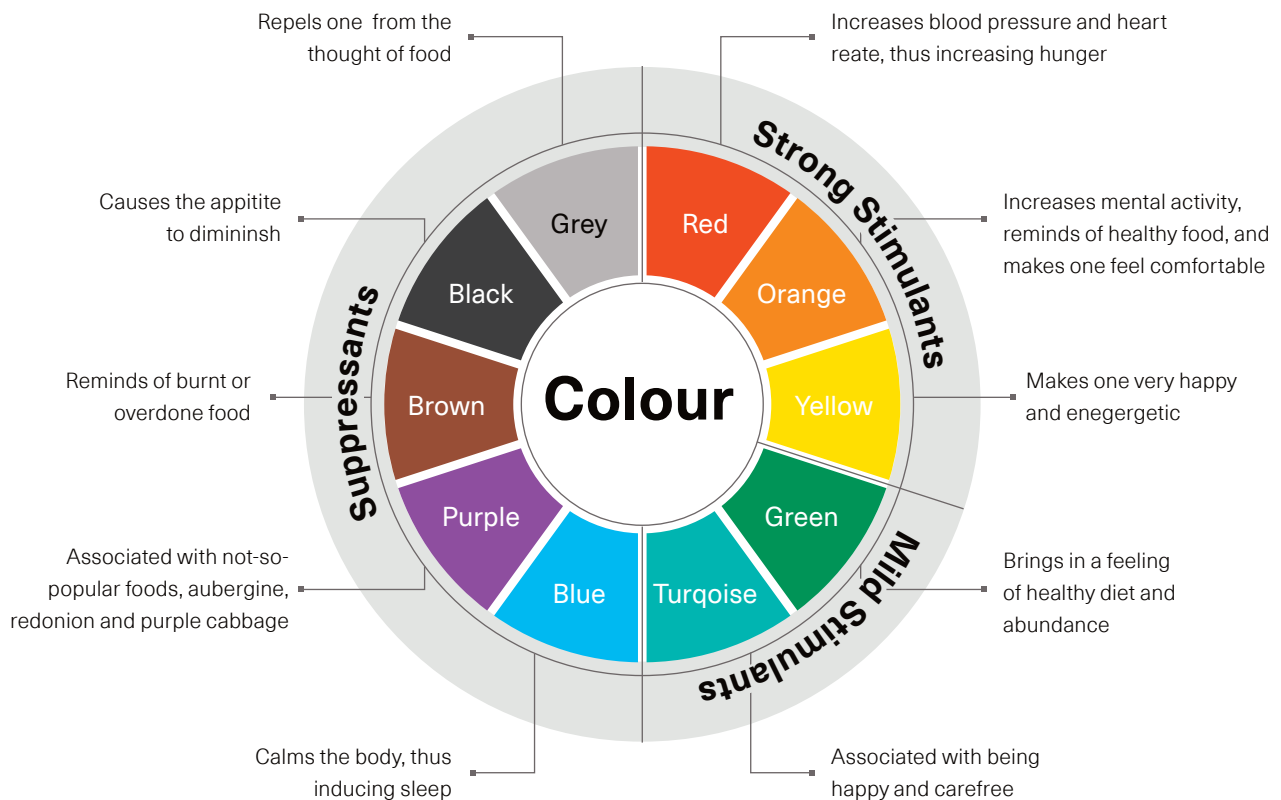
You can switch exposed filament bulbs for opaque over-sized globe bulbs to update your look and give an even softer light. If you want some industrial touches, why not have fit-out experts ASF salvage industrial coolicon lighting and retrofit the bases with acrylic to diffuse the light? You can read ASF's 4 Tips on Bar and Restaurant Lighting for more help.

— **Tip 2:**

To up your atmosphere during the day, create a bright and airy space for breakfast and lunch. The installation of mirrors, helps you make the most of any natural lighting.

— **Tip 3:**

If you're looking for longevity, use neutrals in your commercial fit out but pair with on-trend soft furnishings and wall art that allows you to easily update your interior.





## Seating The Share Generation.

Three out of four millennials say sharing food among friends, family or coworkers is a great way to socialise.

— The Halo Group

Also known as the 'share generation', the millennial thirst for newness makes this group keen food sharers, looking to experience everything on the menu. Taster menus are another great way to achieve this and avoid any cases of millennial FOMO.

— **Tip:**

*Your layout determines how shareable your food can be. ASF fit-out experts always work to ensure your layout maximises the space of your interior. This allows us to optimise your seating, not only in numbers but also in the experience you create. Table size and the direction your seating faces will change how intimate your dining experience is and how easily your customers can share food.*



## Up Your Tech Game.

77% of millennials say restaurant technology improves their dining experience.

- 2017 Restaurant Technology Report

### Table Booking.

Two-fifths of millennials want to be able to book a table via apps or social media. 1/3 would like more accurate wait times for a table delivered to smartphones.

- Foodspark

We know millennials love convenience so it's no surprise that many vote for online table booking. Many of this generation were also the last to have analog youths and the first to have digital adulthoods. They've grown up with a thirst for new technology that makes them unafraid to try the next new thing and lovers of time-saving apps. Sure enough, 54% of restaurant app users are aged between 18 and 34 ([source: Technology at the Table Feeds Profit](#)).

- **Tip:**

*Alongside an app, your bar layout can make all the difference for ensuring time-poor millennials are willing to wait for your tables. ASF refurbishment contractors are specialists in creating bar areas that will optimise your space and feel connected to the rest of your restaurant without interfering with your dining area acoustics. We want to create atmospheric waiting areas where customers will love to spend their time.*



## Ordering with Ease.

**54% of millennials say self-ordering kiosks improve the restaurant experience.**

— Toast

Self-ordering kiosks are fast becoming popular within food to go and it's no surprise that millennials are the first to embrace them. 54% of millennials also said they order exclusively on self-serve ordering kiosks when they are available and 60% of millennials say they would go more often to restaurants if self-serve ordering kiosks were installed (source: [UEat](#)). Obviously, investing in self-serve kiosks could optimise your flow and increase your turnover but it has even been found to increase customer satisfaction (source: [Zendesk Benchmark Study](#)). Nearly half of millennials would also love the option to order food and drink in advance of arrival through an app (source: [Foodspark](#)).

— **Tip:**

*ASF fit-out contractors will work with you to find the best position for your self-service ordering kiosks to maximise your operational flow.*



## Paying the Millennial Way.

**44% of millennials want to pay the bill through an app.**

— Foodspark

Time-poor, tech-loving millennials are embracing the convenience of apps. The average time customers are willing to wait between asking for the bill and paying is only 9 mins 8 secs so apps are a great way of reducing the strain of this on your workforce. More than that, 12% of millennials have fallen out with a friend or family member over splitting a bill, compared to only 6% baby boomers (source: [Springboard](#)). If you want to keep your millennials happy as they settle up, make splitting the bill as simple as you can.

— **Tip:**

*Creating an app with payment methods can take time but changes to your layout can help speed up service in the meantime.*



## No Need to Go 3D Just Yet.

Only 16% of millennials think 3D virtual entertainment would improve a dining experience. 13% of millennials say hospitality and human touch are more valuable when choosing a restaurant.

### — Foodspark

There are some exciting developments in restaurant tech, from augmented reality menus to virtual cocktails. Wagamama is already using augmented reality. Customers can use their smartphones to scan their placemat and virtually explore the menu, visit music festivals, watch art being made, vote for their favourite dishes and 'like' Wagamama on Facebook. But millennials don't see this as a main driver. Again, the shared experience is much more important for them.

### — Tip:

*You don't have to introduce augmented reality to make your space millennial friendly. Start with small changes: ASF fit-out experts recommend installing extra plug sockets for charging and laptop use, and Wi-Fi with good signal strength across your space. Elements of your interior, from a fireplace to a fish tank, can slow your signal and frustrate your customers.*



## Getting Healthy; Going Local.

8 in 10 millennials say it's important to eat healthily and indulge occasionally.

— The Halo Group

Millennials are unabashed foodies who love to know the latest health trend. But that doesn't mean they won't indulge. Think with Google say 3.9 million video views featured the benefits of turmeric in food. Apple cider vinegar, jackfruit, bone broth, cauliflower rice and avocado oil were popular search terms (source: [The Halo Group](#)). They are clued up on the latest health foods but they still like to treat themselves.

— **Tip:**

*As well as updates to your menu, consider how healthy or sustainable your bar, café or restaurant branding feels. It is a great start to add healthier dishes but you want your brand to shout about the changes you make in order to change customer perception. Everything from your menus to your interior colour scheme are clues for your health-conscious millennials. ASF find pale and muted greens are often a great way to get your interior fit out to reflect your eco-friendly efforts. Customers also associate neutrals with clean, healthy food, grey being the top neutral for millennials (source: [Stellarising](#)).*



## Let Them Know You Care.

**73% of global millennials are willing to pay more for sustainable goods.**

— Nielsen

Sustainability is the hottest of topics in hospitality and it matters to millennials most. 73% will pay more for sustainable produce compared to 63% of the general global population. Whilst replacing your plastic straws is a great start, millennials want to buy a lifestyle not just one guilt-free margarita. This doesn't mean you need to make huge changes but every small eco-friendly step you take will let your customers know that you're aligned with their personal values.



- **Tip 1:**  
*Consider how green you can go with your refurbishment. Lots of changes you can make will also lower your monthly bills. ASF fit outs recommend LED lights to lower your electricity bills and can recommend and install appliances with high energy efficiency ratings. We also source and upcycle reclamation yard finds for your fit out that can help show millennials you understand their rejection of 'fast furniture'. There is also not a lot the ASF team can't do with an old Kilner jar, from lighting to planters! Reclaimed woods and recycled materials work well for countertops and bars and are often a cheaper option for your renovation. We can work with you to make sure sustainability really helps you make the most of your budget.*
- **Tip 2:**  
*You don't need a hydroponic garden to show your ethical millennials you're making an effort. Make simple steps to show some of your sourcing on your menu, such as listing items as fair trade or farm-to-table. ASF recommend installing spaces for your home-grown herbs that your diners can see and enjoy.*
- **Tip 3:**  
*Small-batch alcohol, like infused gin or local craft beers are a simple way to add a local touch to your drinks menu.*
- **Tip 4:**  
*New initiatives like the Carbon Free Dining scheme also give you something great to shout about by allowing customers to donate 99p towards planting a tree that offsets the carbon footprint of their meal.*

## Give Options: Veganism and Free-Froms.

Veganuary 2019, going vegan for January, saw a quarter of a million sign ups.

### — Veganuary

The millennial love of options doesn't end with customisation. They want to be able to choose foods which are ethical and have obvious health benefits. From alternative milks and gluten-free options to the rise in veganism, millennials know it's important. 66% of British millennials and gen-zers believe veganism will continue to rise (source: [Live Kindly](#)).

### — Tip:

*Make sure to include some healthy options on your menu. McDonald's introduced salad-based meals to create a 'halo effect': the presence of healthy options actually increases orders of the more indulgent options on their menu. We perceive the overall health index of the menu to be better so feel less guilt treating ourselves to that triple chocolate cheesecake (source: [Behavioral Economics](#)).*



## How Millennials Find You.

Millennials are 44% more likely to trust experts, who happen to be strangers, than adverts; and 247% more likely to be influenced by blogs or social networking sites.

— Hubspot

Millennials are known to be sceptics of traditional advertising. Well-tried marketing formats often fail where they seemed to work with the previous generation of baby boomers. But that is certainly not bad news for your marketing budget. Using blogs and social media can often be more targeted and trackable, meaning you can use your budget more efficiently. The hard work comes in creating a really visual brand that customers will want to shout about. But with millennials so much more likely to find you on their smartphones, this has never been more important: 85% of millennials search for food on the go ([source: Toast](#)).

— **Tip 1:**

*Your visual decor is a huge part of your brand identity and ASF always work with you to make sure your interior's look and feel creates continuity with your online presence.*

— **Tip 2:**

*Make sure to list on Google My Business to be searchable for millennials on the move.*

## Instagrammable from Your Aperitif to Your Interior.

18-35 year olds spend five days a year browsing food images on Instagram, and 30% would avoid a restaurant if their Instagram presence was weak.

— Independent

Social media has changed the way millennials choose restaurants, bars and cafés. 65% of social media conversations are said to be about where to eat out ([source: YAYA Connection](#)) and having an Instagram presence that reflects your dining experience is all the more important when 34% of Instagram's users are millennials ([source: Hootsuite](#)). For inspiration, take a look at the Evening Standard's round up of London's most Instagrammable restaurants.

— **Tip 1:**

*You don't need views of the city skyline — or Damien Hirst's crystal-encrusted Pegasus hung from your ceiling like Brasserie London — to stand out. ASF believe great fit outs introduce small eye-catching moments to your interior with wall art, patterned tiling, plant walls, lighting installation or a photo-worthy threshold.*



— **Tip 2:**

*Making sure your food your food is Instagrammable isn't just down to your chefs. ASF use soft diffused lighting to help your guests get the perfect photos. Customer tables with no patterns will give customers better backgrounds for top-down photos. White table tops will provide great light for photos but black will give you lots of contrast. Think of the colours of your plates and the food that you serve so you can work with your fit-out contractor and find the best solution.*

— **Tip 3:**

*Don't forget to make a location page on Instagram for your restaurant or café so users can tag you!*



♥ Curry 551,701 posts



♥ Avocado 271,789 posts



♥ Fish & Chips 63,856 posts



♥ Yorkshire Pud 51,556 posts



♥ Cream Tea 45,189 posts



♥ Sausage Roll 29,113 posts



♥ Trifle 11,359 posts



♥ Cornish Pasty 6,393 posts



♥ Beef Wellington 2,432 posts

# Conclusion.

From introducing subtle lighting to improving your operational flow, there are many small changes you can make. Soon your time-poor, adventure-loving millennials will have a dining experience they can't wait to talk about.

## Who Are ASF?

- ASF have worked as refurbishment contractors for some of the biggest names, delivering restaurant and bar fit outs nationwide over the past two decades. All our fit outs are end-to-end and delivered on time by our talented team. We can look after everything from planning and interior design to construction and finishing. But what makes us different is that, at ASF, we believe we have to have a deep understanding of every individual business to deliver a great commercial fit out. We love working with restaurants, bars and cafes to create interiors that not only look great but will really help you grow your business.

**For more help on refurbishing or fitting out your interior, get in touch with ASF, The Fit Out People:**

- 01634 510 244    [info@asfcommercial.co.uk](mailto:info@asfcommercial.co.uk)

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T. 01634 861544  
E. [info@asfcommercial.co.uk](mailto:info@asfcommercial.co.uk)  
W. [asfcommercial.co.uk](http://asfcommercial.co.uk)

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ASF, Unit 4, Forward Way, Laker Road,  
Rochester, Kent, ME1 3QX