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From The Times

July 15, 2009

And that's just for starters

Breaking the trend: Ian King

Although the Allegra report highlights tough times, it is not all bad news. It highlights a number of well-known brands that are expanding, such as JD Wetherspoon, the pub-restaurant chain. It was one of the first operators accurately to identify that the smoking ban would lead to greater demand for food in pubs. The report also cites McDonald's, Whitbread's Costa coffee business and Subway, the American-owned franchised sandwich chain, among those that are expanding.

The report highlights a number of relatively new chains that it predicts will have a "greater presence". These include Jamie's Italian, the fast-growing Italian restaurant chain launched by Jamie Oliver, the celebrity chef; Leon, the London-based fast-food restaurant chain that specialises in healthy food and seasonal ingredients; and Ping Pong, the Asian food and cocktail chain.

Allegra also singles out Sacred, a specialist in "gourmet coffee" that has "brought the New Zealand café experience" to the UK, and Tossed, the healthy eating restaurant chain that specialises in providing freshly tossed-to-order salads.

The last of the up-and-coming restaurant chains identified in the report is Vapiano, the fast casual restaurant and lounge concept, where customers use chip-and-pin technology to order and pay for their food instead of being served by waiters.

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