

DINER INSIGHTS

# Connect with guests this festive season

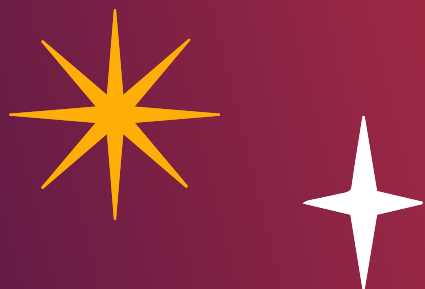
More than 1,100 people told us how they're planning to dine out during the festive season, what they're craving most, and what they'd like to see in the new year.



As we enter one of the busiest periods for restaurants, we've been speaking to people about how they're dining out and planning to celebrate Christmas. The responses suggest they're after memorable experiences and can't wait to enjoy a meal out and about.

Getting insights into what diners want and how they plan to celebrate helps restaurants prepare for the festive season and make decisions that lead to more demand.

OpenTable conducted our quarterly diner survey, designed to take the pulse of diners. Let's dive into what they think.



# People want to eat out, even amid COVID variants

Many are eager to celebrate, and the pandemic hasn't influenced their dining decisions

**58%**

say that Covid hasn't affected their willingness to dine out



## Celebrations will be merry and bountiful

Diners are eager to make up for lost time and eat, drink and be merry with friends and family this Christmas.

Christmas planning is at the top of people's lists and is even up from pre-pandemic days\*

**96%**

increase in December reservations made prior to 19 October 2019

**115%**

increase in December reservations from 2018

\*OpenTable reservation data comparison for the whole month of December 2018 to December 2021

## They're ready to celebrate again and again



**62%** say they'll be dining out 2-5 times to celebrate Christmas



**18%** say they plan to dine out more than 5 times this festive season



**9%** say they don't plan on dining out during the holidays

**TIP** Stay in the thoughts of those who want to dine in at home by offering options such as takeaway and meal kits.

## And they'll dine out all festive season long



**Christmas Eve**  
**36%** of diners are looking to dine out



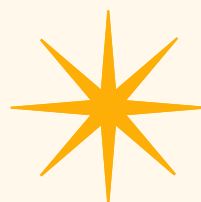
**Christmas Day**  
**37%** of diners in the UK and Ireland plan to spend the big day at a restaurant



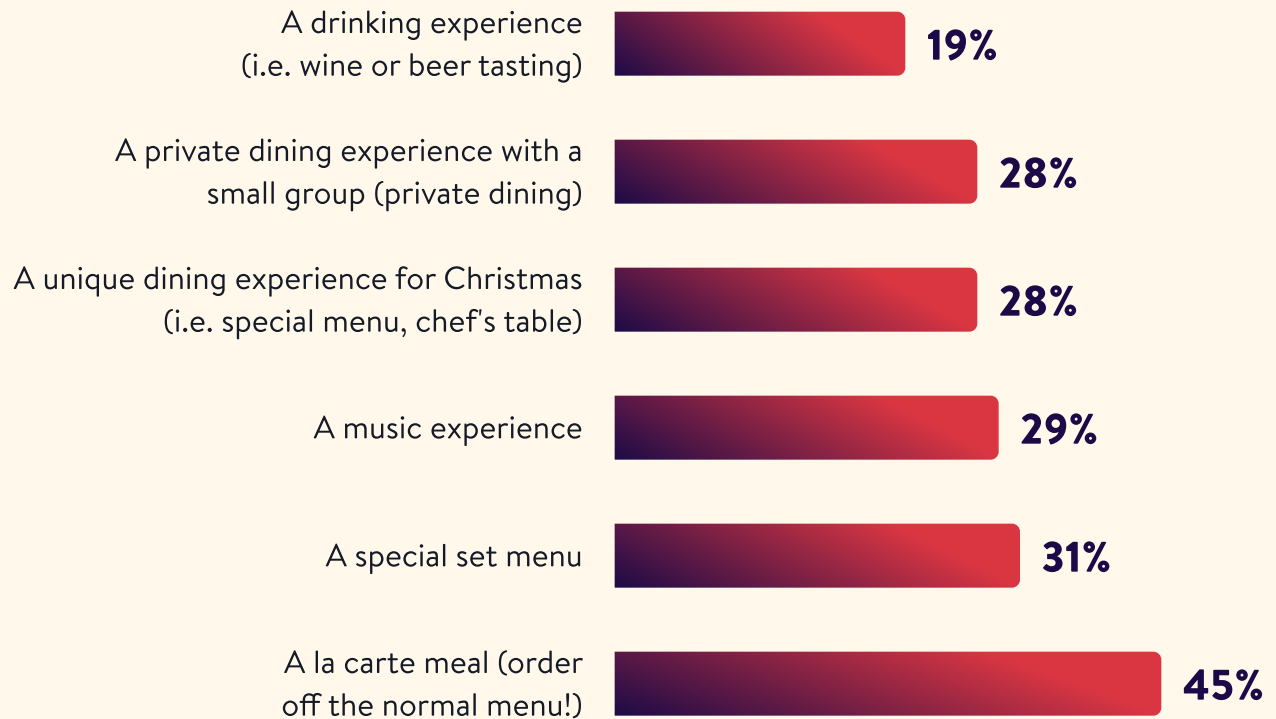
**New Year's Eve**  
**34%** want to go out to bring in the new year



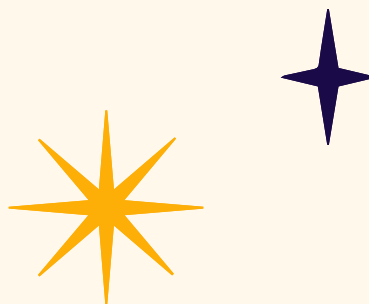
**New Year's Day**  
**23%** are looking to eat out



## Dining experiences people crave the most this year



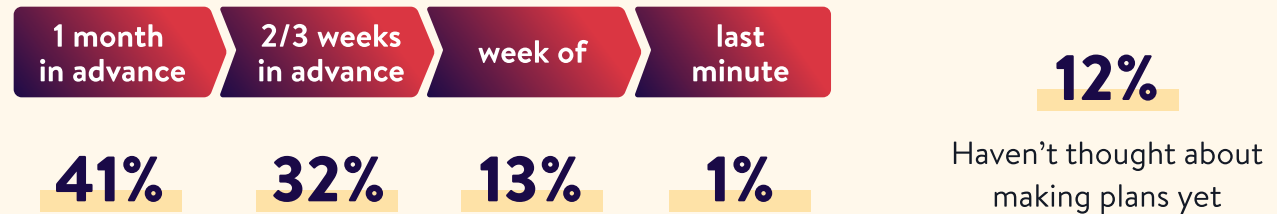
**TIP** Offer festive and unique experiences, such as pre-paid holiday events and add-ons, to celebrate this Christmas with guests.



# And the planning starts early

As people look forward to Christmas, a majority are booking in advance after getting recommendations from multiple people and places.

## People are booking in advance for this festive season



**TIP** Get your books ready early and share the experiences and menus you're offering for Christmas to capture early planners.

## And they'll pay to secure their spot

**63%**

say they're willing to pre-pay for festive experiences



## Also, they expect fewer company celebrations, but more private ones

**18%**

say they'll be celebrating with colleagues

**48%**

aren't having corporate parties this year, private dining is picking up for smaller celebrations

**18%**

plan to host a private event

**21%**

are going out to dinner with smaller groups

**8%**

are having a party

**TIP** Rethink your private areas and encourage smaller groups with intimate spaces.

## Diners turn to multiple sources to find festive experiences

**72%**

Look at favourite restaurant websites

**70%**

Recommendations from friends and family

**49%**

Search on OpenTable

**43%**

Google

**21%**

Email

**7%**

Other reservation sites

# Tips for a merry christmas at your restaurant

## Maximise covers and revenue

- Make it easy for people to find your unique festive menus and offerings by featuring them as Experiences.
- Consider prepaid Experiences to bring in engaged guests looking for a special event, have certainty in your shifts and earn revenue up front.
- Adjust floor plans and shift settings to ensure successful service at any volume.
- Get in more turns – and set guest expectations – with dining time limits.
- Keep track of revenue performance by connecting your POS system with OpenTable.
- Showcase your gift cards on OpenTable and motivate guests to give the gift of your restaurant to others.

## Let your festive creativity run wild

- Consider festive and unique Experiences, such as set menus and pre-paid Christmas events, to celebrate with guests in style.
- Create DIY kits that reflect your brand and let diners take them home this festive season, whether it's a New Year's Eve cocktail kit or a festive-themed beef wellington dinner.
- Add various types of seating with OpenTable dining areas, from igloos to outdoor heated spaces that create a winter wonderland for guests.
- Decorate your indoor and outdoor spaces to get guests in the festive spirit.
- Reimagine your private dining space and promote it on OpenTable and your website to generate new Christmas leads and bookings.
- Consider giving guests a small gift, such as a candy cane with restaurant recipes or a confectionery bag.



## Get more guests heading into 2022

- Update your Experiences, photos and menus to get in front of guests via the Newsfeed.
- Reach out to previous Christmas regulars and VIPs through targeted and automated email campaigns. Invite them to join you again during the festive season.
- Give guests a reason to visit you more than once in the season with special events or exclusive offerings for past guests.
- Fill late cancellations with a reservation waitlist or Availability Alerts.
- Target same-day bookers or fill last-minute cancellations by starting a targeted digital marketing campaign or by using Bonus Points.
- Add any Christmas delivery options on your OpenTable profile.

## Keep guests in the know

- Go the extra mile on your OpenTable profile – update menus, Experiences, and promote takeaway and delivery availability, and don't forget to upload photos.
- Provide clarity about your safety precautions so guests can see how you minimise the risk of Covid.
- Customise booking confirmations to communicate with guests before every reservation and remind them of any dining mandates that must be followed.
- Avoid surprises upon arrival – use Direct Messaging to confirm reservation details with guests ahead of time.
- Use QR codes for contact-free menu sharing, safety precautions, contact tracing surveys and more.



Keep a pulse on industry trends in 2021 using data and insights on OpenTable's state of the industry hub and get additional tools and tips to get back in action.

Discover everything you need to know to tackle the industry's latest challenges in our resource center.

#### About the survey

OpenTable surveyed over 1,100 diners in the UK and Ireland on the OpenTable network between 9 October, 2021 and 19 October, 2021.

