

Economic Impact of the Catering Mark

The Catering Mark is an award for all types of caterers, including restaurants, local authorities and contract caterers. Over **800,000** Catering Mark meals are served each day. 6000 schools across the UK serve Catering Mark meals, including 70% of London Boroughs. 350 early years nurseries and 30 workplaces serve Catering Mark meals. The Bronze, Silver and Gold awards are for caterers who offer their customers healthier, more sustainable meals and are proud to tell their customers where their ingredients have come from. The average consumer expects freshly cooked meals made by real chefs with quality ingredients and the Catering Mark standards help caterers to achieve this. The Catering Mark is the most widely respected award within the industry.

The Catering Mark rewards caterers who serve healthy, sustainable and ethical food – it is not a cost-cutting exercise, but the standards are achievable without always having to increase spend. In some cases ingredient spend can go down. This document looks at the financial aspects of the Catering Mark.

What the Catering Mark rewards



- UK and regional produce
- UK welfare standard meat
- Seasonal produce
- Free range eggs
- Free range meat
- Fairtrade
- MSC
- organic



- Non-traceable meat
- Endangered fish
- Ready meals
- Battery eggs
- Reconstituted meat
- Out of season produce
- Additives
- Highly processed ingredients
- Trans fats

We work with caterers to help them improve the provenance of their ingredients whilst remaining within budgets. The Catering Mark encourages smarter procurement by shortening supply chains, buying seasonally and locally, and encouraging cooking with fresh ingredients to improve quality and reduce waste.

Catering Mark meals numbers have more than doubled this year, which includes a significant number of caterers increasing the amount of meals they chose to have accredited, which is a key indication that the Catering Mark is good for business.

Direct financial benefits:

- increased sales/uptake
- save money by choosing different ingredients
- Win new business/new contracts

Long term benefits

- support your local producers
- staff empowerment
- better reputation
- Joining the country's biggest caterers in demonstrating best practice

Increased sales/uptake

"sales have gone up by almost a third since we achieved the Catering Mark"

St Joseph's Hospital

"Our income across the business has increased by 13% over the past three years and we attribute much of our success to implementing Catering Mark menus."

Havering Catering Services

"The Catering Mark has played an important part in the success of the school meals service in Merton. We saw a 7% increase in meal uptake in the 2009/2010 academic year and a 10% increase in 2010/2011; the years which Merton achieved the Mark Bronze and Silver awards.

ISS Education

"In real terms, we have seen a 30% increase in the number of meals served over the period since becoming a Catering Mark holder: a recognition of the quality of food we now serve."

Plymouth Council

"Anyone who says that customers don't care where their food comes from is wrong. We find that customers are increasingly willing to spend a bit more on organic, ethical or free-range food."

Elior

"We hope more pupils and parents in Cornwall will be encouraged to take up school meals knowing that our menus have received this brilliant accolade from the Soil Association."

Chartwells

Save money on ingredient costs

"School meals in over half of all London Boroughs are now Food for Life accredited. In Richmond the Borough Council re-tendered school meals to secure Food for Life Silver standards at the same time as achieving savings of up to 40p per meal"

The Food for Life Partnership

"By reviewing all our suppliers and moving over to fresh food instead of ready-made, we made savings of 29-33%".

St Joseph's Hospital

“As a result of changes to procurement, including a concerted effort to localise the supply chain, we have achieved savings of over £800,000 a year.”

Nottingham University Hospital Trust

"The [main] impact on school meals has been the rising price of potatoes, especially jackets, where wholesale prices have doubled and the quality is poor. Understandably, this has put pressure on the school meals service. In spite of this, we have been able to maintain the price of our school meals and the Silver Food for Life quality standard by still using local and freshly-sourced food where we can."

Nottinghamshire County Council

“Our meal cost has not increased since achieving the Silver Catering Mark. Extra spend required to introduce better quality ingredients to our menus (3p to their average patient meal costs per day), have been balanced by cost savings elsewhere, including sourcing staples in bulk to make food from scratch.”

North Bristol NHS Trust

“In terms of cost, there have been pleasant surprises – switching to organic yoghurt has actually resulted in a saving on the non-organic yoghurt previously used. We have found that meeting the Catering Mark criteria, while keeping within strict cost constraints, has required some creativity - tailoring meals according to the nuances of our business, such as having more expensive items such as free range chicken on the menu on lower volume days.”

Early Years Catering

Winning new contracts

"We scored the tenders of possible providers 55 per cent on price and 45 per cent on the basis of quality. This consideration of both price and quality has now been shown to be vitally important, when local authorities' catering procurement has been brought into question nationally."

Richmond Council

We are increasingly seeing the Catering Mark written into catering contracts. Companies chose to do this to ensure high standards, and to ensure that their sustainability objectives are being met. We are increasingly working with companies to help them write the Catering Mark into their contracts as a requirement, and we continue to work with Public Health and Local Authorities across the country to encourage this as best practice.

Support your local producers

“For every £1 invested in Food for Life menus, the social, economic and environmental return on investment for the local authority is £3”

New Economics Foundation

“One of my local suppliers has employed an additional three people in order to service my contract and his business has grown by thirty percent over the last two years as a direct result.”

Shire Services

Staff empowerment

“Achieving the Catering Mark has proved to be a real boost for the catering team. It has given considerable value to the work they do every day.”

Busy Bees Nurseries

“All this hard work has secured jobs for all my staff, and the staff are happier. Who wants to be opening boxes and boiling food in the bag all day?”

St Joseph’s Hospital

It also boosts staff morale – if staff believe that management and owners want the best for the children – they follow that example. It really supports staff and they are proud of our achievements – they all work extra hard to maintain it and to stay true to the ethos.

Little Green Rascals Nurseries

“Customers want to know exactly where their food comes from and having the Catering Mark gives our staff the confidence to talk to their customers about the food making them passionate and proud to work for Bumpkin.”

Bumpkin restaurant

Reputation

“It [Gold Catering Mark] has been immediately recognisable by parents and we have kudos in achieving it. As I said before it also ensures peace of mind for our parents and staff that we are doing what we say we are.”

Little Green Rascals Nursery

Demonstrating best practice

“We’re aware how highly regarded the Mark is within our sector and are proud to be part of it.” *Edwards and Ward*

Cost of Accreditation

For public sector in-house providers, fees for the Catering Mark are capped to simply cover the costs of the Soil Association’s work in providing a rigorous certification and inspection scheme. Contract caterers and the commercial sector pay a fee which is based on the size and scale of their operation that is put through the award process. Full details of fees can be found [here](#).