

Education Caterer of the Year

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THE SHORTLIST

Aramark

Impact Food Group

Thomas Deacon
Education Trust

PAST WINNERS

2022

Taylor Shaw

2021

CH&Co Education

2019

Hampshire County
Council Catering
Services

2018

CATERed

2017

ISS Facility Services
Education

2016

Murray Soper,
Bartlett Mitchell

2015

Emma Williams,
Green & Fortune

2014

Jamie Stevenson,
BaxterStorey

2013

Renier Oberholzer,
Harbour & Jones



Impact Food Group

Impact Food Group's (IFG) mission, to 'feed more students better food', has enabled it to cater to almost 360 state and independent schools across the country.

The group was founded five years ago and over the past three years its client base has grown by more than 20% annually. In 2019, its two state school brands, Innovate and Cucina, catered for 193 schools, and by September 2022 that number had grown to 355 schools. IFG hopes to be serving 415 schools this academic year.

Alongside growing its strong state school portfolio, in 2019 it launched Independent to work with the independent school sector. In 2020 it won its first school, growing to seven by September 2023, and adding a further four this academic year.

Its quick growth in a short space of time is largely due to the strong partnerships it fosters with its clients. IFG invests around 10% of the contract value in new facilities at the client's venue to deliver its desired 'restaurant' experience, which sees IFG buying in new kitchen and serving equipment to ensure consistent quality in the preparation and presentation of food, and investing in the school's dining halls to enhance the surroundings.

It also places the pupils' needs and wants at the heart of its operations, and many of IFG's initiatives introduced over the past three years were borne out of feedback from students. In addition, IFG chefs work with students on tasks such as harvesting honey and create jams, chutneys and coulis to 'sell' in school to increase young people's business acumen.

IFG's focus on its clients and pupils is evidenced by its strong retention rate of 90% a year over the past three years. In addition, over two-fifths of IFG's current clients have enjoyed an eight-year or longer relationship with the catering firm.

Keen to attract, develop and retain quality

"As a values-based business its philosophy and ways of working are clear"

Jo Harley

staff, IFG offers opportunities for career progression and champions a work-life balance. This is reflected in the number of schools its operations managers oversee. Managers are given no more than 15 schools (12 on average), with each receiving support from an operations support manager and support chef.

To ensure brand consistency, IFG has developed a 'brand standards' manual, providing a step-by-step guide on what's expected of them, including an introduction to the company, IFG's food mission and its approach to sustainability. The company also holds three two-day brand standards days to introduce new colleagues and to reinforce IFG's standards.

IFG is aware that provenance is important to clients, and so it aims to support local and national suppliers while ensuring a fair pay for their produce. For example, it buys Red Tractor Assured meat whenever it can.

As judge Jo Harley said: "Impact by name, and impact by nature, a very deserved win."

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

"We loved this entry. As a values-based business its philosophy and ways of working are clear, and it shows it really cares about the students, their parents, the clients and their people. The involvement of all these in developing new initiatives shows a culture of empowerment and this has played out in the amazing commercial growth in a fiercely competitive market."

Jo Harley

