



GET MATCH FIT FOR

XLMAS



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XLMAS

After yet another year of huge upheaval and challenge across the UK hospitality sector, the final two months of 2022 offer a “once in a lifetime” opportunity for food and drink outlets to have an amazing end to the year.

Welcome to XLMAS - not just a regular XMAS but an XL-sized period which offers hospitality venues the opportunity to offer customers an amazing experience in November and December.

Uniquely, one of the biggest events for food and beverage operations in the UK, the FIFA football World Cup, will be held in the Winter - from the opening game on Sunday 20th November through to the Final on Sunday 18th December there are a total of 64 matches played over the 28 days when fans of all types will want to watch the biggest names in world football together.

For the first time ever, this coincides with the traditionally busiest time for hospitality, with the Festive season driving office parties, family get-togethers and more frequent nights out.

So clearly, this is a massive opportunity for all venues in the UK to take advantage of, but at the same time, there is a lot of uncertainty around what exactly is going to happen. How busy will venues get? Will people stay all day? Will people want to eat and drink at different times to fit around games? How will office parties work alongside passionate footy fans in the same room?

If planned and managed well, XLMAS presents a fantastic opportunity to hospitality businesses. If delivered poorly, there could be unhappy guests, neighbours and lasting damage inflicted on the reputation of the business. Like a football team, you will want to avoid penalties, and this means making sure the business is the right side of the law all of the time.

This guide and the [Risk Assessment template](#) offers help, insights and support to help you plan your preparations for the unique opportunity.

Being “Match Fit” means you will be in the best possible position to maximise the opportunity having minimised the potential of issues and risks around food safety and hygiene, health and fire and safety.

Keep your staff and customers safe this #XLMAS



YOUR CUSTOMERS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- There are likely to be groups of people who either want to watch the World Cup, or want to have a party, or both, or neither.
- You may wish to redesign the layout of your premises to accommodate different groups in separate areas. Remember there will be areas where the different groups meet, for example entrance halls and the toilets. Consider increasing your supervision of these areas to ensure there are no issues and everyone has a great time.
- A change in offer, for example, different menus or an outside bar, may bring different customers to your premises. Ensure that your risk assessments cover the needs of all customers, suitable controls are in place and staff are trained in how to meet the needs.
- For many businesses, the obvious solution for increasing capacity will be the use of outside spaces to accommodate extra customers. However, these spaces are normally used during the summer months and need to be suitable for the dark, cold winter evenings. Ensure that structures are suitable for the weather, the area is sufficiently lit and heated and there is safe access and egress.
- Patio heaters are a great way of making outdoor areas more comfortable. If using electric heaters then ensure they have been fitted by a registered electrician and if using LPG heaters, the manufacturer's instructions must be followed. Ensure team know how to check patio heaters for signs of damage and how to use safely.
- Ensure that any changes to the layout or use of the space does not increase the risk of fire. This will mean making sure that escape routes remain clear and capacity is not exceeded.
- Incidents of respiratory and communicable diseases increase over the winter months so ensure hand sanitiser is readily available and touch points are being cleaned effectively and regularly.
- Good ventilation is key to reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19. Ensure that the ventilation is working correctly and windows and doors are opened regularly to allow fresh air in.
- It is good practice to have a plan to deal with snow and ice in car parks and walkways. This details what paths are cleared of snow and ice and how it is done. Make sure the plan covers any change in trading areas and use of outdoor space.
- More customers means more cleaning! Review the cleaning schedule to ensure that all areas of the business are kept clean and tidy.
- The current UK Terrorist Threat Levels are published online at mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels. These threat levels help inform your risk assessment and ensure appropriate and proportionate security arrangements are in place.





TOP TIPS

- Consider offering tickets for the days/evenings when there are likely to be the highest footfall.
- Removing tables and chairs may allow you to accommodate more. Think about where these tables will be stored once moved.
- More customers means more visits to the toilet - make sure you have sufficient loo roll and soaps.
- Implementing table service for food and drink will reduce the number of customers moving around the premises and could also provide a great opportunity to upsell.
- It is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in customers when the home nations are playing. Also consider when a national team is playing that might attract large numbers from your local community.



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YOUR TEAM

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- You may need to rely more heavily on temporary staff who will need full training on the health and safety aspects of working at your venue.
- Make sure all your team have completed all the required training, and where possible, offer a refresher before #XLMAS begins.
- When asking young people to work, make sure you don't exceed the specific limits that are set by age.
- Changes to layout, service style and products may introduce new hazards to the business. Ensure that these hazards have been risk assessed and the team understand the safe ways of working. Consider how your team will move about the premises, with clear walkways and not blocking the television at that vital match moment.
- Team members may need to be working outdoors more, for example serving tables or working on an outside bar. Review your policy to ensure uniform is suitable for the different working conditions.
- With incidents of norovirus increasing in winter months, ensure that food handlers are aware of the need to be excluded if suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea. For many reasons, the team maybe reluctant to report illnesses and carry-on working. Managers and supervisors must be particularly diligent at identifying signs of illness in the team and ensuring they are excluded from work.
- Christmas parties and televised matches can be lively events, with noise levels rising. As a guide, if your team can stand 2 meters apart and hold a conversation without having to raise their voice, then it is unlikely that a full workplace noise risk assessment is needed.
- Increased noise levels could also create a nuisance for your neighbours, particularly if outside areas are to be used. Consider the location of speakers and times of events to reduce the likelihood of complaints.
- With larger crowds visiting or if running ticketed events, you may decide that door team are required. With a reported national shortage of door supervisors, consider booking cover now.
- What is already one of the busiest times of the year is set to be even busier. Ensure that your team are supported during this time and be aware of the signs of stress and action that can be taken to help team members.



TOP TIPS

- Hold a daily “huddle” with your team members to talk about what went well during the previous shift, and what do you want to do differently in the shift coming up. This is also a great time to set sales challenges and introduce some competitive fun to the shift.
- Consider purchasing bundles of e-learning licenses. This means you can quickly allocate courses to new team members and also benefit from a cheaper rate. E-learning can cover many subjects, including mental well-being.
- With team possibly working outside more, there is an opportunity for some new branded uniform. Hats and scarves with your logo on could be a great way to promote your business.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) offer professional support to team members needing help, ranging from financial worries to mental health. Providing access to an EAP is a great benefit to all employees at any time, but may be even more valuable during this extra busy and potentially stressful time.



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YOUR MENU

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- When adding new dishes to the menu, ensure that you have the correct and sufficient equipment to store, prepare and cook the dish safely.
- If you change your menu during #XLMAS make sure that any additional food safety controls and checks are in place. Review your food safety management system to ensure that the new dishes are covered and the safe methods are understood by the kitchen team.
- If relying on cook and chill for dishes, ensure that food can be cooled quickly enough and then adequately refrigerated. Inadequate cooling and refrigeration of food is recognised as one of the most significant causes of foodborne illnesses. Alternatively, look at using different ingredients that have already been cooked and simply need to be reheated in the kitchen.
- In the summer months the use of outdoor space for cooking proves very popular, for example a barbecue or pizza oven. It is unlikely that this will be possible during the cold and dark months of XLMAS. Consider what dishes can be added to the menu that can be easily delivered within the current kitchen space. If you decide to hot hold food, such as pies and curries, ensure that they are held above 63C or for no longer than 2 hours.
- Changing menus and substitution of ingredients can introduce new food allergens into the business. Ensure that allergy records are up to date and the correct allergy information is accurately communicated to customers. If providing food to team members, ensure allergy information is also available to them.
- Businesses are still suffering with disruption to the supply chain. With increased demand and a faltering supply chain it is likely that stock levels will increase. Ensure that there is sufficient storage space for food, cross contamination is controlled and there is enough fridge and freezer space. Increased supplies mean it is even more important to operate a good stock rotation system and ensure all products are within the dates marked upon them.
- Additional guests means more waste. Ensure that bin collections are amended to allow for increased waste and that the business is clear of waste before Christmas. The many Bank Holidays over the Christmas break could mean waste being on site for a longtime and will attract pests.

TOP TIPS

- Give kitchen teams some extra time each day to ensure all checks are being undertaken and recorded, separately to food prep, cooking and cleaning.
- Have some extra kitchen whites in case you need more people to work than you originally thought.
- Cross-train other members of the team, for example front of house team in food safety - so they could potentially step up in case of staffing issues.
- Sharing platters are popular additions to a menu and a great way to bring efficiency to a kitchen.



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We are Food Safety, Fire Safety and Health and Safety experts with 20 years experience helping the Hospitality industry.

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