



How acoustic performance can affect a restaurant experience

Does visiting a restaurant with heavy bass music leave a bitter taste in your mouth? Science may have an explanation for that. Scientists are discovering strong links

between noise and taste meaning that, increasingly, dining out in restaurants is not just about the food.



The impact of sound on taste

The bitter taste from low notes is just one discovery that has been made that shows how sound can target and affect particular tastes, textures or flavour attributes we experience when we eat. The effects of ambient background noise and other sounds on how we taste food is an area of research that has seen huge leaps in understanding

in the past few years. Research has now found that there is a direct link between the ear and the nose, which may go some way toward explaining how and why noise affects what we taste.

Certain sounds can enhance tastes - for example, classical music may enhance

the perceived quality of food and wine, and high pitched musical notes can enhance the perceived sweetness of food. However, sound can also detract, and loud background noise can negatively affect how we experience flavour and texture.

Noise can have a negative impact on health

Beyond affecting how we taste, and how we experience restaurants, research now shows that noise acts as a stressor and can also cause over-eating. Findings from a 4-year study by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden found that for every 10-dB increase in the road traffic noise levels, there was a 3cm increase in waist size for residents exposed to the noise. Furthermore, those exposed to loud airplane noise had a waist line that was, on average, 6cm larger.

Background noise is also a major and growing problem in restaurants, cafés and pubs. Nearly 80% of people have left a restaurant due to noise according to research by the charity Action for Hearing. Furthermore, the charity's research found that 91% of people said they wouldn't go back to a venue where noise levels were too high, and nine out of 10 respondents said that background noise was the biggest problem they faced when eating out. This can have a major impact on the

businesses - 35% of those surveyed write reviews on websites like TripAdvisor after dining out - with half of these reviews mentioning high noise levels.

For restaurants that have bad acoustics, the use of well-placed absorptive materials can help bring a festive and cosy environment to your restaurant.



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