

pizza my world

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Chris BraDer, group event director of Casual Dining and lunch!, is based at the Brighton office of international event organiser Diversified Communications. Under his leadership, the shows have enjoyed strong industry support, glowing testimonials, and won five industry awards. Casual Dining – the UK's first dedicated trade event for the Casual Dining sector, attracted 6 industry professionals to its launch event last February. Just a few months later it went on to win best trade show at the Association of Event Organisers' hotly contested Excellence Awards – the first launch show to do so in over five years. Its second edition takes place on Wednesday and Thursday – 6 February, at the Business Design Centre in Islington, London.

7.00am

I'm currently obsessed by mango. Strangely I've yet to buy an actual mango but I've recently swapped an amazing bacon, egg and spinach bun that I'd started to buy before work every day for little punnets of mango. It's much healthier (obviously) – and it offsets the fact that I have yet to start jogging! February is just too cold to start, so it's mango, coffee, and then a short drive to the office from Ditchling.

8.00am

My job is a juggling act. A few months ago I was at meetings every other day but with the show so close now, I spend much of my day on the phone. But before all that, it's time to check Casual Dining's visitor pre-registration data. From the moment registration goes live, it's the same every morning. It's not just about the figures, but keeping an eye on the quality of our prospective attendees. Tracking new pre-registration additions can be addictive. Especially when you see that key buyers from companies that you know are on your exhibitors' wish list – like ASK, Browns, Wetherspoons, La Tasca, and Pizzeria Express, plus thousands of independents – are responding to the show's marketing campaign and making time for Casual Dining in their diaries.



10.00am

This year there are over 60 companies exhibiting at the show (including big names like Coca Cola Enterprises, Kimbo UK, Peroni, DiSotto Foods, Reynolds, and La Tua Pasta), so there's often quite a lot of emailing and telephone chasing to ensure that they take full advantage of the marketing and PR opportunities that we have to offer (like our exhibitor press release page on the web site, which offers visitors a sneak preview of all the fantastic new launches that they can see at the show).

1.00pm

Brighton is blessed with a dazzling array of fantastic eateries. So come lunchtime my colleagues and I are spoilt for choice. Right now though, it's Carluccio's turn to feed the Casual Dining team. Dan Lawrence and Simon Watkins, the show's senior sales executives, have been doing a fantastic job and taking them out to lunch is the least I can do. We've all got a busy week ahead of us – so we might not get another chance for a while.

2.00pm

Exhibition News emails me. They're putting together a short preview for their web site and want to run over what's new at the show. Perhaps the most noticeable difference for me is the extension of exhibition space into a new upper feature level, making room for around 20 more companies. This new upper feature level is now also home to the Innovation Challenge Showcase, the new Speciality Wine (Millage, the Craft Beer & Cider Showcase and a second, new show theatre – dedicated to Drinks Innovation. That reminds me to contact Simon Broad, owner of Ten Green Bottles, to discuss his session on wine menus.

Since I've dealt with a few urgent exhibitor emails, I get on the phone to Trevor Watson, director of David Coffey Foods. He's the chair of the show's new property panel, which also features Youngers' Alex Hillely. They'll be sharing their insights and giving advice to operators on everything from securing the best sites to dealing with rent and service charge negotiations. This year's Keynote line-up reads like a who's who of the sector. There's Karen Forrester (TGI Friday's), Stephen Holmes (ASK Italian and iDD), Alasdair Murdoch (GBK), Scott Macdonald (Bill's), Kate Nicholls (The AM), and Ian Neill to name just a few.

