

RESTAURANT SOURCING

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Module: Produce, Provenance and Sourcing (BMGM4005)

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Word count: 1532

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1. Introduction: Presenting the restaurant – Jintana Thai Bowness.

Jintana Thai Bowness is the restaurant I chose to make my report on because it is not only the restaurant that I did my placement, but also the restaurant in which I work. It is located in Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria, UK. This restaurant is part of a chain that includes three Thai food restaurants in different locations and also 2 different specific restaurants.

This restaurant has a specific of Asian Thai food. In order to give the customers the best and authentic experience most of the staff, especially the kitchen staff, is formed from native Thai people, brought in UK by the owner of the restaurant.

The owner also takes a few trips to Thailand throughout a year and brings back special ingredients, food basis, and sauces, to ensure that the food produced, cooked and served in his restaurant is as authentic as it can be. By making this trips, one could say that the owner/business is practicing in a small dose of course, global sourcing.

Because this is a small business, Jintana works mostly with distributors, and not with producers directly, and as it will be shown in this report, most of the sourcing is local, with distributors from nearby towns or areas.

2. Sourcing practices of Jintana Thai Bowness .

The restaurant Jintana Thai Bowness has three main suppliers: Booker, Caterite, and Sing Kee Foods.

Sing Kee Foods is a Chinese supermarket located in Leeds, UK. From here the head chef, or the manager, orders special Asian ingredients like food bases for curry dishes, rice, noodles, and even some exotic fruits.

Although is not a direct producer of the ingredients that they supply, it is a wise choice regarding sourcing practices because this kind of ingredients cannot be produced locally, not even at a national level. Because the ingredients required are specific to another geographical area, a different continent even, the option for this restaurant are two: either sourcing globally and import the necessary products, or sourcing locally by collaborating with distributors like this supermarket, who imports on his own the products.

On the first look, it would seem that this is an expensive sourcing practice because the prices of the ingredients are much higher bought from a company that already imported, than directly from Asia. But if we take in consideration that ordering from this middle distributor the costs of shipping, land transport, the food miles, are very low or none, than we realise that this is the best and efficient way of sourcing for a small company like this. Although it is a chain of restaurants, on a business scale this is a small company and sourcing globally it is not an option because the costs are too high at this level.

The products from this supplier are ordered online, quick and efficient, as is also the delivery.

Caterite and Booker are located locally, which means that the sourcing is also local. They are also distributors, but ones that supply the ingredients by working directly with growers and producers throughout the United Kingdom. That means that Jintana is supporting local and national economy when buying ingredients or products from this two suppliers. This two distributors provide the restaurant with meat, vegetables, sauces, drinks for the bar, but also consumables for the kitchen like cooking gloves, kitchen sponge, cleaning products. Another big advantage when sourcing from this to suppliers is that they deliver from Monday to Saturday, covering almost all the week, and by that the restaurant does not encounter the situation in which a product or an ingredient might miss.

Being closely located means quick delivery, reduced carbon miles, reduced delivery costs, and fast delivery time. It also means that local economy is supported; all of this being benefits of local sourcing.

3. The impact of sourcing practices on the restaurant's menu, quality, and customer experience.

The sourcing practices of the restaurant have a direct impact on its menu because deciding from who and from where you buy your ingredients may decide which dishes you can put in the menu and serve to your customers. When you have ingredients that are rare or difficult to find, or need to be imported, you cannot have in your permanent menu dishes containing them. That is the main reason that Jintana Thai Bowness restaurant decided to source locally, and buy the necessary ingredients from distributors and not directly from producers. The lack of an ingredient leads to the incapacity to serve to customers a dish that is written on the menu, which can lead to unsatisfied

customers and bad reviews and that is why the sourcing practices have a big and powerful impact on the restaurant's menu.

In order to provide the best quality of services, dishes and experience, the restaurant management has to ensure that the suppliers contracted are the best choice. It is not enough to deliver fast, or to have good prices. It is utterly important to provide ingredients and products of high quality. Food is perishable, so freshness of the ingredients is mandatory. Also, cooking food that is specific to another country, even continent, means that not only the quality of the ingredients is needed, but also the quality of the staff and their training should also be and its peak, in order that the final product, the dish, that arrives at the customer.

We talked about the customer, about the final product, in this case dish, that arrives on his plate. Watching the restaurant and the way it works from the perspective of an observant and not of an employee, made me understood better the way a customer sees and experience a visit here.

The fact that the ingredient are well chosen, that they are fresh, that the menu is always complete without dishes lacking, makes the customers experience at a high level. This shows how important it is to choose wisely the suppliers and the method of sourcing.

4. The challenges and strengths of the restaurant's sourcing strategies.

By choosing to source locally and working with distributors there are many advantages, as I mostly presented them earlier. But this not means that the risks and challenges are missing. Not having a direct producer supplying the Asian products means that there is the risk to be deprived of some ingredients. The restaurant cannot afford to import directly from Asia the ingredients it needs, and the owner's trip are limited. There where cases in which the supermarket that is usually supplying the business with Asian products had difficulty or delays in receiving their goods. In this kind of case, the restaurant reaches to occasionally suppliers. This suppliers are not permanently contracted, which means that the costs of the products and delivery are higher. But in a crises situation this is the solution. There are moments in the functioning of the restaurant in which local sourcing may be equivalent with limited choices or higher expenses.

But, fortunately, in Jintana the situations elaborated earlier are very rare due to a well organised staff and sourcing strategy. The head chef knows very well the quantity of ingredients she needs and how often the orders need to be placed. By having observant staff, the restaurant is provided in time with all the ingredients, the products and all the other necessary items required for a good functioning final quality dish.

Having this said, it is well noticed that in this case the local sourcing functions at its best: fast deliveries, easy way to order, easy way to communicate with the supplier, the possibility to have deliveries every day of the week, distribution costs, low pollution on the area. This is definitely a strength point in the restaurant's sourcing strategy.

5. Conclusion

In the end I would like to underline how important it is to source correctly and efficiently in order to have your business work without interruption. At Jintana Thai Bowness Restaurant the sourcing strategy functions marvellously, being chosen the best suppliers for the restaurant's need. The deliveries are fast and efficient, the cost are low, and the errors are minimum. And even if one distributor fails to deliver, Jintana always has a back-up plan to cover all the lacks in the ingredients or products. I myself order the dinks for the restaurant, and I ensure that the orders are always placed in the appropriate time, in order to keep our stock to a functional level, so choosing our suppliers in the nearby area is a strategic choice, well thought and calculated.

I can definitely say that the right choice in sourcing can keep a restaurant on the market. Strategies in sourcing, and well chosen suppliers can absolutely make a difference in making your restaurant one well known and booked, or one which will not celebrate a year of existence.

6. Reference list

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