



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **COMPETITION HOTS UP FOR CHRISTMAS PARTY BOOKINGS**

The countdown to Christmas is well underway with just a few weeks until the big day and research by online bookings specialist, liveRES, shows that planning is at the forefront of many people's minds.

With the most recent recession, the industry saw a move to more last-minute festive bookings, possibly as a result of diners' confidence being low. In an interesting reversal, there is now a growing trend for people to book their office Christmas party and their family festive meal earlier each year.

Last year the busiest month was October compared to November in 2014, with over 60% of bookings for Christmas dining made during this month. Several bookings were made as much as a year in advance, although as many as 15 people left making their booking until Christmas Day itself.

And the stats for this Christmas have shown a sharp rise in the number of people securing their Christmas day meals in October, up 57%. The same goes for December parties, with 72% more people booking a party last month.

The stats also reveal that most people start thinking about their Christmas plans after they've finished the working day, with the most popular times to make a booking being 5:30-6pm and 8:00-8:30pm.

"Dining out on Christmas Day is becoming increasingly popular each year. Competition to guarantee you get a table at your favourite dining spot is hotting up and consumers are prepared to book early rather than lose out.

"And given that most people are booking outside traditional office hours, it's important that operators make sure their online booking facility is easy to use on a mobile device, especially when people are browsing menus and checking availability on the go," said Olivia FitzGerald, managing director of liveRES.

The most popular day for a Christmas get-together, whether with colleagues or friends, in December is Saturday, avoiding the risk of a workday hangover. Last year's research gives the lie to the assumption that women are the best organisers - most Christmas party bookings were in fact made by men, and the most common name for a party booker was David.

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The research also shows that giving customers a choice of menus and dining options are becoming increasingly important in the festive season, with customers continually looking for the best deal. Last year, 73% of bookings for Christmas Day were booked with a special menu or offer.

“The competition for the festive pound gets fiercer every year. Our experience shows that those operators with a highly responsive website and an online booking system that’s easy to use on any device, together with a choice of seasonal menus, will have a cracker of a Christmas. Operators need to be more sophisticated than ever if they’re to capitalise on these trends and attract the maximum number of diners during this peak trading time of year,” concluded Olivia.

**ENDS**

#### **About liveRES**

liveRES works with some of the biggest hospitality brands in the UK, delivering online booking, integrated table management and customer engagement tools. liveRES helps to increase profits from each and every table, time slot and diner. Being part of the Zonal family, liveRES fully integrates with Zonal EPoS, unlocking access to spend data and in-session table management.

#### **About Zonal**

Zonal Retail Data Systems is the leading provider of integrated hospitality management solutions to over 9,000 leisure and hospitality businesses across the UK. For over 36 years, the company has been working closely with clients to enhance the customer experience through market leading technology, experienced people and a partnership approach to business.

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**For further information contact Jo Mathers on 07799 662389 or email**

**[jo@limegreencommunications.com](mailto:jo@limegreencommunications.com)**