

EDEN: BETTER QUALITY AND GREATER PROFITS WITH PSL

eden project

In a giant crater in Cornwall nestle the largest greenhouses in the world.

The Eden Project not only offers visitors the opportunity to experience diverse landscapes and vegetation ranging from towering rainforests to tropical crops, but also offers a wide range of dishes to reflect the ingredients grown and exhibited on site.

In its first year Eden attracted over three times the projected visitors and it has continued to exceed expectations, drawing a massive 1.8 million visitors in 2002 alone. With each visitor spending on average over three and a half hours at the Project, foodservice facilities are of the utmost importance.

Visitors choose from four very different restaurants and cafés. Two restaurants are sited between the biomes; 'Zzub Zzub', a self-service café serving light lunches and 'Morocco Red', an assisted service restaurant. A new Gallery Restaurant offering fantastic panoramic views of the biomes has also recently opened in the Visitor Centre, and the departure lounge houses a coffee bar, 'Apple Café'. In total, the 250 staff in the foodservice operation provide some 3,000 covers a day and serve just under 1,000,000 meals and snacks a year.

Improved quality, improved service, improved savings

When Eden first opened in March 2001, the catering operation was put under huge and constant pressure. Mark Jones, their Operations Director who joined the Project in December of that year was under no illusion that help was required:

“Due to the unprecedented demand from visitors in the first few months, there was little time for procedures, especially in the catering operation. We also appreciated that the required skill level to create the procedures in a high volume site were not available to us at that time. Outside help was the logical route in order to implement solutions quickly.”

We approached food consultants PSL to assist. In their first year of working with us, they not only helped us to implement appropriate controls, but also worked closely with us to develop a group of quality, local suppliers in line with our policy of showcasing the best of Cornish produce. At the same time they delivered savings on food purchases of £642,454.”



PSL's brief was to focus on the four main drivers behind the Eden Project's catering policy: **Quality, 'Cornishness', Seasonality and Price**. They were challenged to deliver quality Cornish produce at as close to national basket price as possible. Unusually, the Eden Project does not use any national distributors and aim foremost for local suppliers with local produce. At the last analysis, 47% of all Eden's bought-in produce was Cornish. When you consider that bulk purchases of tea, coffee and chocolate cannot be Cornish – the actual percentage of potential local produce is over 80%.

Negotiating power increased

PSL produced a full purchasing analysis for the Eden Project, including supplier evaluation and cost comparison, plus an in-depth study of procedures for food purchasing and distribution. In addition, dishes are regularly re-costed by PSL and the Eden Chefs under Head Chef Tony Henshaw and menu revisions planned with local produce in mind.

Mark Jones commented, *“As well as bringing our food cost in line with expectations, the quality of produce has improved by insistence on fresh and local options. This is not necessarily as a result of changing suppliers, but mainly due to improved relationships and a better understanding of our objectives by our existing suppliers. Furthermore, PSL have advised on many procedural and administration-related issues. Cost of sales and profitability by outlet can now be identified and monitored following their introduction of batch costing and internal transfer pricing.”*

PSL's analysis highlighted opportunities to create savings in the operation as well as the possibility of increasing on-site production as opposed to buying in from suppliers. This has resulted in increased use of the central production unit, with all baguettes, sandwiches and salads now made on-site using local bakery products.

PSL exceed expectations

Mark Jones believes PSL has more than lived up to their strong reputation, *“Our catering is of sufficient volume with long periods of extreme pressure that only the most professional and committed of operators could have hoped to achieve significant improvements. PSL has exceeded our expectations in terms of their energy, integrity and results-focused input.”*

Furthermore, Mark would have little hesitation in recommending PSL's services to other establishments, *“If you have genuine concerns about either the efficiency or cost of your catering operations then PSL is, in my opinion, the only credible consultant with national coverage. In short, they are a highly organised and structured short cut to the achievement of optimum costs and sourcing of quality ingredients.”*

