

Wagamama

No-nonsense noodles for positive living



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Since opening its first branch in London 14 years ago, Wagamama's reputation for no-nonsense noodles and positive eating has earned it a loyal and discerning following.

There is a widely held belief amongst dieticians and food experts that eastern diets are healthier than their western counterparts. Wagamama is modelled upon the concept of the traditional ramen shops in Japan, which have been serving nutritious Chinese-style thread noodles in soup for over 200 years. It was Wagamama who introduced the idea of noodles as the perfect fast food to the UK. Its rice dishes, and range of fresh juices, are alternative healthy options and it also offers a variety of side dishes (for the hungry) that include meat and vegetable dumplings, skewered chicken, deep-fried prawns and salads.

All Wagamama restaurants promote democratic eating; being built around the ethos that you don't need money or extravagant surroundings to dine well. In terms of design each branch offers a simple informal dining area with benches and long refectory-style communal tables. The kitchen is open plan, allowing customers to see their food as it is being prepared. There is no booking policy – in line with the democratic eating ethos – and in support of its positive living motto smoking is not permitted throughout.

Wagamama has refined the relationship between technology and customer service in the way it handles customer orders. Every order is entered onto an electronic handheld PC and zapped straight through to the kitchen, allowing

dishes to be cooked to order – no fuss, no delays and no chasing up, just part of the Wagamama experience.

By doing its utmost to offer the best value for money it can, Wagamama enables customers to have a meal and drink for under £10 per head. Since its inception in 1992 the brand has tapped into a market of discerning diners who expect good food at reasonable prices and would be hard pressed to find other outlets that serve quality Japanese-style food for less.

There are now 43 Wagamama noodle restaurants in the UK, ranging from Canterbury through to Glasgow. The brand has also gone international, with 11 locations in Australia – including one at Sydney airport – two in Ireland, three in the Netherlands and more recently outlets in Antwerp, Auckland, Copenhagen and Istanbul have been opened. Although all of its international restaurants are franchised (it wholly owns the UK branches) Wagamama ensures that each site meets its strict criteria and disciplined systems.

Since the launch of its first recipe book in May 2004 – by acclaimed food writer Hugo Arnold – Wagamama customers have been able to recreate simple signature dishes in the comfort of their own kitchens. The book demonstrated the simplicity of the brand's food, enabling customers to learn the basic techniques required for cooking up the likes of seared beef sashimi, seafood ramen, monkfish yakitori and miso soup. A second book, 'Ways with Noodles', was launched in May 2006 (also by Hugo Arnold) and focused on what Wagamama does best – noodles. With chapters by occasion, from entertaining friends and healthy solo dining to a selection of recipes for kids (not overlooking the soups and salads), it's a cookbook that offers something for everyone.



The brand has won (and been short-listed) for a host of awards including its nomination this year by Time Out magazine for 'Best Family Restaurant' and in 2005 being voted 'Most Popular London Restaurant' by Zagat readers. Wagamama aims to be a culinary democracy where families, business professionals, backpackers, students and 'ladies who lunch' can discover its unique experience which is defined as positive eating + positive living.

