

# IS FOOD THE NEW FASHION?

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THE INTERNET HAS NOT BEEN A CURSE FOR EVERY OFFLINE INDUSTRY: THE GASTRONOMY SECTOR IS FLOURISHING. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FASHION?



Burberry

**EHL**, a real estate service provider from Vienna, believes food could be the answer to struggling shopping malls. “A gastronomy component of 10 to 15 percent of the total space is currently standard, but 30 to 40 percent will be realistic in the future,” the company’s 2017 Retail Market Report predicts. “Innovative gastronomy concepts are developing from a secondary factor into an essential frequency driver.”

According to a study carried out in the US by commercial real estate company CBRE, 84 percent of customers visit shopping centers to combine shopping with food. Newly created food courts increase visitor frequency in malls – but if you want to ensure these customers also set foot in your store, integrating your own food concept is the best move. Successful cafés in concept stores, such as

the garden café at Milan’s **10 Corso Como** and the Water Bar at **Colette** in Paris, have been around since the end of the ’90s. Even designer brands, such as **Ralph Lauren**, **Armani** and **Burberry**, are now offering a range of food items. Vertical suppliers are also getting in on the act: H&M plans to include a café in the first flagship store for its new Arket label, set to open in London this fall.

“Nowadays it’s easy to order high fashion from your sofa – but if you want to meet a friend for a cappuccino or finish a day’s shopping with a glass of rosé, the place to go is the Uzwei Deli,” explains Florian Braun, chief executive of fashion store Uzwei, as he outlines his brand’s food offering. “Our gastronomy concept has become a real hot spot in Hamburg, creating a positive energy that is passed on to our store.” British retailer **Wolf & Badger** has part-

nered with Raw Press café at its store to reach “new customers who wouldn’t normally have heard about [our] business,” says co-founder Henry Graham. “We are always looking to create experiences that can’t be replicated online.”

His top tip for those looking to make a move into food? “Make sure you find a great operator who shares the same values as you do.” Braun warns that “gastronomy is time-consuming and if you don’t have the right partners and a motivated team, it can quickly turn into a financial mess”. Restaurants usually have fewer sales per square foot: “There isn’t a great deal of profit in selling food and coffee in comparison with selling clothes,” says Tim Vallance, Head of UK Retail & Leisure at commercial real estate specialist **JLL**. “This [is] about driving footfall.”