

'No waiter' restaurant opens in London next month



Vapiano: 30 outlets in Europe and USA

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A German restaurant chain that replaces waiting staff with chip-and-PIN-style technology is to make its UK debut this summer, opening its first outlet in central London.

Vapiano, which has 30 outlets in Europe and the USA, will open on Great Portland Street next month. Customers will be served at counters where fresh pasta, pizza and salad ingredients will be prepared in mini-kitchens, enabling

customised meals to be cooked freshly in front of diners.

Guests at the 300-seat restaurant will be given a credit card-style chip card which they swipe at each of the stations where their food is being prepared. On leaving they hand the card to a cashier and pay.

Stephen Minall, managing director of the supply chain consultancy Moving Food, told *Caterer* the concept marked the start of a new trend in casual-

dining outlets. "We're all used to our Oyster cards [pre-paid cards for travelling on London transport] and this is an extension of the same idea."

But he warned that while Vapiano had worked well in Europe, it remained to be seen whether it would take off in London. "London is a very tough market and overheads are so much higher that the restaurant will need to have a very high turnover to succeed," he said.

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