3 DECADES OF EVOLUTION IN PRIVATE JET CATERING - INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL ROBINSON FROM NICHE & BESPOKE & DELUXE CATERING

News / Business aviation

Even today, quite a few people still have preconceived notions about the business aviation industry. The same is true when it comes to in-flight catering for private flights. Personally, I prefer to talk to the service providers, ask lots of questions, and get a very clear picture of the subject. I had the pleasure of speaking with Daniel Robinson from Niche & Bespoke & Deluxe Catering. Sharing the essential of our discussion:

T.O.Talking of In-flight catering, some people know that it began to evolve from pre-packaged, cold sandwiches in the 1930s, during the dawn of luxury air travel. Your company was founded back in 1989, by a former VIP Flight Attendant. Can you guide us through more than 3 decades of evolution in private jet catering?

D.R.: Founded in 1989, Deluxe Catering has been at the heart of the evolution in private jet

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catering. In the early years, it focused on delivering quality meals and reliable service to a growing executive jet market, however what was missing in this market was a first-class inflight catering service. By the 2000s, passengers were seeking greater choice, with demand increasing for more international cuisine, personalised menus and catering to specialist dietary requirements.

The 2010s saw a growing emphasis on sustainability and ingredient provenance, with travellers increasingly seeking fresh, locally sourced produce and restaurant quality dining. What began as a focus on knowing where ingredients came from, has since evolved into a broader commitment to responsible sourcing, environmental awareness and complete transparency throughout the journey from farm to flight.

Today, Deluxe Catering is part of the Niche & Bespoke Group, operating in an era where private jet catering is more personalised than ever before. Combining world-class cuisine, global sourcing capabilities and the flexibility to fulfil highly specific requests, often at very short notice, we as one team, continue to meet the evolving expectations of modern travellers.

Passengers now expect menus tailored to their individual tastes, dietary requirements, wellness objectives and sustainability values, while still receiving the exceptional quality, discretion and attention to detail that define the highest standards of private aviation service. Over the decades, technology, tastes and expectations have changed dramatically, but the essence of private aviation catering remains the same: delivering exceptional food and seamless service, wherever in the world a journey may begin.

T.O.:Your teams are based at Stansted Airport and Andover and additional kitchen and distribution facilities in Birmingham, can you share most the most active airports where orders are placed in terms of UK airports that you are working with ?

D.R.: With teams and facilities based at London Stansted Airport, Andover and Birmingham

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International Airport, we service flights across the entire UK mainland. While demand varies throughout the year, some of our busiest locations include London Stansted, Farnborough, Biggin Hill, London Luton and Birmingham. These airports are major hubs for business aviation and private jet movements, generating a significant volume of catering orders, dry stores requests and concierge services.

Beyond catering, we regularly arrange a wide range of bespoke passenger requests including floral arrangements, premium champagnes and wines, newspapers and magazines, laundry services and personal shopping, helping to ensure a seamless and personalised experience both on the ground and in the air.

T.O.: Quality seasonal ingredients, is a logical must have for VIP catering. Can you share with us some of the craziest challenges you've had so far?

D.R.: In private aviation, no two days are the same and we continue to see its share of unusual requests. We are frequently challenged to deliver unique experiences, often at very short notice and some can be incredibly demanding. Over the years, we've sourced everything from out-of-season luxury ingredients and rare vintage beverages to highly specific products requested at just a few hours' notice before departure. Requests for specific childhood comfort foods, favourite restaurant dishes recreated onboard or highly specialised dietary protocols, are becoming more common place.

However, one of the biggest challenges is often time. Flight schedules can change rapidly, passenger numbers can increase at the last-minute or a client may request an entirely new menu shortly before take-off. We've had occasions where our team has had to source specialist ingredients, arrange bespoke concierge items and deliver everything to the aircraft within a matter of hours. The key is having trusted suppliers, a dedicated team and the experience to find solutions quickly.

In private jet catering, the impossible is often simply a question of logistics and the challenge is always to make the seemingly impossible happen. That's what makes this industry so exciting; every request is different and finding creative solutions is all part of the service.

T.O.: It is clear that it is easier for you work if the order for in-flight catering is received well in advance. But we know that business aviation is one of the most flexible industries. What happens if the booking is urgent and last-minute?

D.R.: Last-minute requests are very much part of the business aviation world, where schedules can change in an instant. Flexibility is therefore essential. Our teams are experienced in responding to urgent catering and concierge requests, often with only a few hours' notice. Whether it's a complete VIP menu, specialist dietary requirements, premium beverages or additional concierge items, we work closely with our network of trusted suppliers to source and deliver everything as quickly as possible.

The key is preparation, experience and strong supplier relationships. Our teams at Niche & Bespoke and Deluxe Catering have developed the systems and partnerships needed to respond rapidly without compromising on quality, ensuring aircraft can depart fully catered and ready for their passengers, even at very short notice.

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