

# It's too noisy in here

## Why noise levels could be harming your business:

I often joke with my patients that the first café or restaurant that bothers with good acoustic design and advertises "almost as quiet as a library" will do a roaring trade and make themselves a fortune.

Sadly not enough attention is paid by owners of restaurants and cafes to minimise noise levels. Simple solutions such as acoustic panelling along walls and ceilings, tablecloths, rubber caps on chair legs, soft or carpeted floors and monitoring ambient background music levels make for a far more enjoyable social and dining experience.

As an audiologist with over 30 year's experience and also a keen foodie, I am well qualified to advise restaurateurs and café owners on the perils of an establishment that is just too noisy. So much attention gets paid to food quality and hopefully also service. But how much attention is paid to acoustic design and management?

From my experience very little or none at all. Yet it is excessive noise which can destroy one's culinary experience. How do I know? Because everyone over 40 years of age complains to me about it. It's different when you're 20 something, the more noise the better. But when you're 40 plus you start to become irritated by noise in cafés and restaurants.

## Music levels:

The question I would ask is: Why music in the first place?

Is it really necessary, especially first thing in the morning? How about a "no music till late morning" policy? If you must have music, then ask your customers if the level of background music acceptable.

Also is the music appropriate to the customers you are trying to attract? Who chooses the music and sets the sound level? Are they really the age and demographic of the customers you are trying to attract?

If you are a café or restaurant owner reading this you may think I'm exaggerating this issue. But I can assure you I know what people think and Australians don't like to complain. If it's too noisy they'll just go elsewhere next time.

## Tips for consumers:

Here are some suggestions for consumers worried about noise.

Check reviews of restaurants online and if words such as noisy, lively or bustling get mentioned it might be worth booking elsewhere.

Check the restaurant's website for photos of the interior. Bare walls and floors and lots of glass suggest that the venue will be noisy.

When booking, request a quiet table or at least when being seated ask to not be seated near



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speakers, open kitchens or coffee grinders.

Avoid dark restaurants as they make lip reading much harder.

Finally, if noise is an issue let the manager know, as this may prompt them to turn down the music or better still prompt some redesign initiatives.

Café owners can monitor their noise levels using a simple decibel app on a smart phone. Ideally the aim should be to limit background noise levels to below 80dB.

Better acoustic design will increase business and put money in their pockets.

I guarantee it.

**For more information or to make an appointment contact the Bendigo Hearing Clinic on 54425800 or visit [www.bendigohearingclinic.com.au](http://www.bendigohearingclinic.com.au)**

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