

Waitrose agrees buffet deal with Eurostar

Grocery chain to supply cross-Channel rail service with snacks, ready meals and drinks in its first large onboard catering deal

Press Association

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Waitrose has agreed an onboard catering deal with Eurostar. Photograph: Felix Clay

Grocery chain **Waitrose** is making its first big foray into onboard catering with a deal to supply **Eurostar** buffet carriages.

The supermarket chain will start supplying the cross-Channel rail service with sandwiches, ready meals, salads and drinks from Tuesday, also marking its first big move into northern Europe.

The employee-owned grocer, part of the **John Lewis** Partnership, will supply all standard-class buffet cars in the Eurostar fleet with hot and cold food including mushroom risotto, chicken tikka masala, classic British sandwiches and *croque monsieur* grilled cheese and ham sandwiches.

It marks another expansion abroad for the chain, which already earns export sales of £25m a year – up 20% over the past year.

Waitrose already supplies food to 45 countries including Singapore, Thailand, New Zealand and India.

Waitrose business-to-business director David Morton said: "This is a very exciting opportunity for us to work with such a prestigious brand, which shares our commitment to quality and service.

"To be the first food brand that Eurostar's customers experience when they are visiting Britain is tremendously powerful as we seek to expand our presence within northern Europe."

The deal gives Waitrose access to Eurostar's 10 million passengers a year who travel between destinations including Paris, London, Lille, Brussels and Calais. It will supply more than 20 products.

Julian Welham, head of onboard services at Eurostar, said: "Our British passengers will be well-acquainted with the Waitrose brand, but for many of our continental customers this will be their first experience and we look forward to introducing them to the new range which includes both French and British classics."

Waitrose also has a smaller catering deal to supply yoghurt and fruit to premium passengers on British Airways flights.

The retailer has been a rare success story in a squeezed grocery market, with its latest market share hitting a record 4.9%, according to market researcher Kantar Worldpanel. It has 291 shops across the UK and Channel Islands.

No value or duration was placed on the deal.