NEWS LESSON

Waiting for the Food or the Photo?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What food would you queue an hour to try?
2. Does a long queue make something look better to you?
3. Would you travel for a snack you had seen in a video?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**converted**	☐	A	a place or thing that many people want to visit
2	**attraction**	☐	B	a bad part of something that is good in other ways
3	**influencer**	☐	C	something that many people suddenly like or do
4	**downside**	☐	D	the food that goes inside or on top, like cheese or beans
5	**trend**	☐	E	changed so that it can be used in a new way
6	**extraordinary**	☐	F	a line of people who are waiting
7	**fillings**	☐	G	very special, not normal
8	**queue**	☐	H	a person with many online followers who tells them what to try

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

People have waited 24 hours for a jacket potato. Why do some foods become so popular online, and what does it mean for small restaurants?

1 Imagine waiting outside a food stall all night. You're not waiting for a famous chef or a special meal. You're waiting for a baked potato. It sounds ridiculous, but the owners of a business in Preston, in northern England, say it happens. The brothers behind SpudBros say that some people have camped out nearby and waited almost 24 hours to buy one of their loaded jacket potatoes. We only have the brothers' word for the waiting time.

2 Jacob and Harley Nelson sell baked potatoes from a converted tram. Their food is simple: a jacket potato, which is a large potato baked in its skin, with fillings such as cheese, beans or chilli. However, the brothers did something that changed their business. They began putting out videos on social media. People enjoyed watching them prepare the food, talk to customers and add generous amounts of filling. Their videos reached millions of viewers.

3 The business soon became an internet attraction. Fans travelled to Preston from other towns and even other countries. Some wanted to taste the food, but they also wanted to take photos and tell their friends they had been there. A normal lunch had become an experience. The queue itself was part of the excitement, because a long line made the food look even more popular.

4 This is happening at other food businesses too. Small bakeries, ice-cream shops and cafés can suddenly become famous when an influencer shares a video. For the owners, that attention can be extremely helpful. It brings new customers at a time when rent, food and energy costs are high. A small business that used to struggle to attract people may suddenly have more customers than it can serve.

5 But internet fame has a downside. Staff can feel exhausted, local people may find it difficult to buy food from a shop they used to visit regularly, and customers who have travelled a long way may be disappointed. A video can make a meal seem extraordinary, even when it is only an ordinary, well-made snack. Popularity can also disappear quickly when viewers move on to the next trend.

6 There is nothing wrong with enjoying a baked potato, and the brothers have worked hard to make their business successful. Yet their story says something interesting about how we choose where to eat. We often trust what we see online, especially when thousands of other people seem excited. The next time you see a huge queue outside a café, it might be worth asking whether everyone is waiting for the food or for the chance to say they joined the queue.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. SpudBros sell baked potatoes from a converted tram. T F NG
2. The brothers became famous through newspaper advertising. T F NG
3. The brothers plan to open a second location. T F NG
4. Fans have travelled from other countries to visit. T F NG
5. The text says rising costs can make new customers very useful for a small business. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

attention	customer	disappointed	generous	ordinary	popularity	struggle

1. The cook was _____ with the cheese and put a big handful on every potato.
2. Fans who travel a long way can feel _____ if the food is not as good as the video.
3. Many small shops _____ to pay their rent when prices go up.
4. Nobody was paying _____ to the menu; they only wanted to film the potato.
5. The _____ of the shop grew quickly, and soon people waited in the street all day.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The brothers _____ videos online when business was slow. (MAKE)
2. People enjoyed _____ them prepare the food. (WATCH)
3. Their videos _____ millions of viewers. (REACH)
4. Many visitors _____ a potato, then ate it in the street. (BUY)
5. The queue _____ longer every hour. (GROW)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A collocation is a pair of words that sound right together. Think about the other word in the sentence and choose the partner.

give	hard	join	make	pay	take	tell

1. Many visitors _____ photos of the food before they eat it.
2. Small cafés must _____ rent every month, even when business is slow.
3. Visitors have to _____ the queue and wait for hours.
4. The brothers have worked _____ to make their business a success.
5. Fans like to _____ their friends that they were there.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. When does the queue become part of the experience?
2. Would you trust local advice or a viral food review more?
3. What would persuade you that a famous food was worth the wait?

9 Role-play: the famous queue

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who wants to go

You've seen a famous food stall online. The queue is very long and some people wait all night. Ask your friend to come with you. Explain why you want to go and how you'll make the wait easier.

Student B · the friend who isn't sure

Your friend wants to wait a very long time for a famous snack. You think it's too much. Ask at least two questions, then say yes, say no, or suggest a different plan.

Useful phrases

I'd love to try it, it's all over my feed.

Isn't it a bit silly to wait that long for a potato?

We could go on a weekday, when it's quieter.

I don't mind queuing if we take chairs and snacks.

That's a lot of time for one meal.

Let's compromise: we'll wait two hours, not twenty-four.

Afterwards, tell the class: did your friend agree to go, and was the plan fair?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 E · 2 A · 3 H · 4 B · 5 C · 6 G · 7 D · 8 F

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 generous · 2 disappointed · 3 struggle · 4 attention · 5 popularity

6 Verb forms

1 made · 2 watching · 3 reached · 4 bought · 5 grew

7 Language focus

1 take · 2 pay · 3 join · 4 hard · 5 tell

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