

Q&A with En Route: Engaging, satisfying and adventure-worthy dining experiences

This is a special feature from the [April 2025 WTCE issue](#) of *PAX International* on [page 48](#).



Tom Lay, Head of Marketing, En Route International

Fresh from launching the rebranded [En Route](#) at last year's WTCE, *PAX International* sat down to talk with Tom Lay, Head of Marketing, about what is required when managing the needs of airlines, caterers and passengers.

***PAX International:* How has the last year been for you since launching the new brand?**

Tom Lay: It is incredible to think that a year has gone by already given everything the business has achieved since we reintroduced ourselves at WTCE. Our brand refresh was not just a cosmetic change; it is a reflection our renewed commitment to innovation, customer focus and excellence.

In the time since, we have positioned ourselves as a global specialist in passenger solutions, supply chain services and sourcing for airlines and airline caterers and I am thrilled to have seen many new partnerships form in the last 12 months as the industry recognizes the capabilities En Route has to offer.

***PAX International:* How do airline challenges compare to passenger expectations in 2025?**

Lay: Airlines are without a doubt always striving to enhance the passenger experience without compromising efficiency. The challenge lays in meeting passengers' ever-evolving expectations—it is consistently high-quality versus managing costs.

It is not an easy balance but can be helped by strategically partnering with suppliers like En Route that can provide diverse meal options to cater to varying dietary needs, preferences, and seasonal/consumer trends.

Additionally, we are all astutely aware that there is a growing focus on sustainability—passengers are demanding meals that are environmentally conscious, and airlines consistently need to step up to meet these demands.



En Route's cold-pressed juices contain fresh fruits and vegetables, are sugar-free and 100 percent natural

***PAX International:* How does the relationship between airlines and suppliers like En Route factor into this?**

Lay: The relationship itself is crucial for achieving this balance. I see us as a strategic partner that can execute the airline's food vision. We have a challenge to provide not just quality meal solutions but also flexibility, scalability and the ability to meet tight timelines, globally, which we can do across our supply chain and sourcing capabilities.

Additionally, from a marketing perspective, we must also align with the airline's brand, ensuring that the entire passenger solution reflects the overall quality of service—whether it is a gourmet meal in Business Class or a simple yet satisfying snack in Economy that tells a story through effective

packaging and overall design treatment.

PAX International: What role does passenger satisfaction play in airline catering decisions?

Lay: What I love about this industry is that airlines always have the passenger front and centre of the decision-making process. We too hold a value as a business that is simply ‘Represent the Customer,’ which mirrors the landscape in which we operate. Passenger satisfaction is the ultimate goal, and food plays a huge role in shaping perceptions of an airline’s service—just look at social media and sentiment from passengers in relation to food and you can see why. In today’s market, passengers expect more than just basic sustenance. They want meals that are fresh, flavourful and tailored to their needs; personalization is a massive trend that is showing no signs of slowing down.

Demand for ethical, health-conscious meals—like plant-based, organic, and locally sourced options—is rising. Airlines are adapting, balancing diverse passenger preferences with logistical and cost efficiency.

PAX International: How does marketing tie into this delicate balance?

Lay: Marketing plays a significant role in communicating the value of the catering offerings to passengers. It is not just about promoting the food, it is about taking people on a journey by highlighting the story behind the products.



major role in airline catering decisions in the year ahead

Whether it is the airline's commitment to sustainability or the use of local ingredients that connect passengers with the destinations they are flying to. Our cheese program is a great example here; we work with regional farmers across the world to bring artisanal cheeses to the skies. It is a fantastic story to tell passengers as they indulge in different flavours and pairings whilst learning about the provenance of the product.

PAX International: What is shaping the future of inflight catering?

Lay: The future of inflight catering is very exciting. We are already seeing advancements in sustainable packaging and onboard technology. For me, I am a big believer that personalization will be the driving force behind innovation as we embark on the next ten years or so.

Passengers are already demanding more tailored, meaningful journeys and this is only set to increase.

F&B will play a key role, with a move toward incorporating more regional flavours and ingredients. This not only enhances the travel experience but also connects passengers to the culture and stories of the regions they visit. From a marketing standpoint, this opens up new opportunities to create personalized and memorable experiences for passengers.