



#### **SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL**

James Ward, who runs Roots & Fruits vegetarian café in Leeds, and Marlene Meadow, the owner of Swansea's La Baguette du Jour café, have been shortlisted for *She* magazine's 1995 Small Business Award. The award is run in conjunction with Midland Bank.

#### **CHARITY ACCOLADES**

Holiday Care Service, a charity that provides travel and holiday information for the disabled, has launched its fifth annual awards promoting improved access in the industry.

For details of the two hotel accommodation categories contact Derek Moore on 01293 774535.

# Law change to open litigation floodgates

BY ANDREW DON

THE industry could soon be bombarded with legal action for personal injury, following one of the most radical shake-ups of the system in modern times.

The Conditional Fee Agreements Order and Regulations 1995, which became law on 5 July, look set to slash the cost of litigation as they allow solicitors to take personal injury cases on a no-win-no-fee basis.

And in a separate move, the Law Society is shortly to launch the Accident Line Protect Insurance Scheme. This will enable clients of participating solicitors to sue without having to pay their opponent's legal costs if they lose. They will just pay an insurance premium of £100 when the solicitor accepts the case.

Jonathan Simons, a personal injury solicitor at London firm Simons Platman & Rechin, warned there would be a substantial increase in claims against the hotel and catering profession. This would cover not only accidents among employees but injuries to customers, including serious food-poisoning cases.

"It is a fact that more than 60% of people who are injured make no investigations as to whether they are entitled to compensation," said Mr Simons.

"Market research has shown the reason most people do not wish to seek legal advice is that they are fearful of the cost. Either people are worried about the initial expense or, if they are not certain as to the strength of their case, they are

worried about having to pay their opponent's costs if they lose."

Mr Simons said people would now sue "left right and centre", and he urged businesses in the industry to ensure that their employers' liability insurance and public liability insurance policies were up to date.

This point was echoed by David Harrold, chief executive of the Restaurateurs Association of Great Britain, who said: "They must make sure they have sufficient liability cover."

Jeremy Logie, chief executive of the HCIMA, expressed the concern that if members were tied up defending a large number of trivial cases, it would take them away from running their businesses.