

# Foodservice Updates

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## How can you extend your brand?

Over the past few years, the expense and challenges of the operating environment have made it necessary for restaurant operators to think more creatively about their business models. For many operators, running a dining room with takeout capabilities is no longer enough to get by – or certainly to grow. As a result, restaurants have been conceiving of new ways to extend their brand well beyond their walls. Restaurants have been reimagined into businesses that are far more multidimensional than they once were – and this is an exciting thing for the industry, even as the outlook for 2024 appears to be more optimistic than it has been in recent years. Beyond the dining room, some operators have been creating retail operations that offer select foods from the restaurant that guests can prepare for special gatherings at home. Some have been diving into education, offering guests an opportunity to learn about regional wines, make handmade pasta or bake pastries. Others are operating wholesale foodservice businesses that ship food to other restaurants around the country, helping them draw revenue during times when their own restaurant is experiencing slower periods. These developments are allowing operators to think beyond the daypart when considering sources of revenue: They are crafting recurring revenue streams through subscription services, for example, and offering classes and events that tap into consumers' year-round desire to improve their lives by learning new skills. In so doing, these restaurants are weaving themselves into their guests' lives in different ways. It's a good way to build loyalty, operate leanly, and offer new kinds of development opportunities to the people you want to hire and retain.





# Tech Talk

## Using AI as an idea generator

Artificial intelligence may already be supporting various tasks in your restaurant, from automating scheduling to monitoring inventory to personalizing staff training. But it can also serve as a self-contained brainstorming meeting of sorts by helping you develop new ideas that can keep your restaurant fresh for guests. For example, in recent months, chef Tom Aviv made headlines for using Dall-E, the image generator from OpenAI, to design the menu and décor for his restaurant Branja in Miami. One of the results was a chocolate mousse inspired by Picasso. Such uses of AI tools can help you formulate new recipes, identify different ingredient combinations, create engaging menu descriptions, and help you identify ways to bring your restaurant's décor and online presence into better alignment with your brand. These tools need human intervention to generate the best results, but if you give them increasingly specific prompts, they can trigger new ideas in you that you can use to offer exciting experiences to guests.



## Making the food safety connection in your restaurant

If your restaurant's food safety culture is strong, you will likely see benefits in other areas – like an improved P&L, lower employee turnover, and enhanced guest experience and loyalty. But sometimes it's difficult to maintain a commitment to food safety across a fast-paced organization where new people are regularly coming on board. Having a few elements in place can help you cement your food safety culture across your business: First, leaders can set the right tone by clarifying expectations and weaving the benefits of food safety into regular conversations with employees and vendors across functions. Second, training can demonstrate the “why” behind required tasks, whether it has to do with the wearing of gloves or the use of a certain cutting board for a food prep task. When people know what can happen if they don't follow a procedure, they are more apt to see its importance. Finally, bring some humility and positivity to the training process: It can be nerve-racking to have someone watch you perform a task and then correct your mistakes, but it can help when the trainer admits when they don't know things or aren't sure, points out the areas where the person is performing well, and treats the identification of mistakes as progress. After all, you're simply working together to help your organization be the best it can be.



**#FoodSafety**




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## Mocktails are on trend – and they're a profitable choice too

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Is there room to step up your mocktail menu? Nonalcoholic beverages have been on the rise in restaurants in recent months and will likely continue to draw interest in the New Year as consumers place renewed focus on health and nutrition. According to research from DataM, the global market for nonalcoholic beverages is expected to grow 6.5 percent annually through 2030. All of this is good news for restaurants because the cost of nonalcoholic drinks tends to be lower than that of alcoholic drinks, yet guests are generally willing to pay similar prices for them. An interesting beverage can help a person feel more social when out with a group, so there is opportunity to promote your offerings to larger gatherings. Consider mixing in on-trend fruit flavors, pairing unfamiliar flavors or functional ingredients with more familiar ones, as well as creating options that mimic the fun and flavor of alcoholic drinks like mojitos and margaritas but omit the alcohol.



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