

Foodservice Updates

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How will you shake up your menu in 2024?

Looking back at the past year can reveal some clues as to what we can expect in the year ahead. For many restaurants last year, food became more creative again as restaurants looked for ways to provide fresh experiences to guests while sticking to small core menus and tight budgets. One approach restaurants used accomplished this – and are likely to use again this year – is offering a rapid progression of limited-time offers. Technomic research found that in October alone, restaurants introduced more than 2,200 new menu items, of which a whopping 93 percent were limited-time offers. These items are vehicles that enable restaurants to inject something new into the menu on a frequent basis. Restaurant Business reported that some restaurants have been offering limited-time menu items with shifting seasonal ingredients, variations on core menu items, and more innovative items that allow chefs to test potential new offerings or show off a skill that might not have a chance to shine on a core menu. As you look ahead to the rest of the year, are there opportunities to more frequently change up your offerings with items that can refresh the experience you offer guests?





Tech Talk

What can you digitize?

As you look for ways to make more informed business decisions this year, the data you have on hand will provide a window onto what needs attention – and where you can make the greatest strides. To help, a recent report from Nation’s Restaurant News Intelligence advises operators to add a digital aspect to as many parts of the business as possible – and to aim to ensure the information you collect is complete and provides some nuanced detail about a guest. (For example, the brands that have the best handle on guest data tend to know more than just the person’s basic demographics – they seek to understand the person’s lifetime value, spending habits, order histories and preferred payment method.) Regardless of the kind of restaurant you operate, are there opportunities for you to digitize more transactions, enhance your loyalty program to gather more information on what your guests enjoy, connect every sale to a known guest, and engage guests in more targeted ways? Looking for ways to gather more and better information will help you make the kinds of decisions that can help drive your business forward.



Fine-tune your food safety response

If a guest asks a question about the potential for an allergen in a dish, how confident are you in the response your employees are likely to provide? If a guest experiences an allergic reaction while in your restaurant, how confident are you that your staff can respond with speed, efficiency and sensitivity? Chick-fil-A is one restaurant brand that has earned accolades for its handling of such questions. In a recent webinar from Food Safety Magazine, Steven Lyon, Ph. D, the brand's director of food safety – field operations, shared some information about how Chick-fil-A manages communication around allergens, as well as its response to guest concerns and allergen reactions. The brand uses a number of safety nets to support staff. For example, while servers should be able to describe dishes, tell guests how an item is prepared, and suggest items that don't contain the allergen in question, Chick-fil-A employees can help guests make a more informed decision about a dish by hitting a button on the POS system to generate a list of allergens in a food. The kitchen helps ensure cross-contamination doesn't happen by using separate cooking oils and fryers for allergens, clearly identifying allergens on an order, confirming the order with staff, and delivering the order to the guest to ensure there is no cross-contamination from plate to plate. Beyond the cooking process, they label food packaged onsite, work with suppliers to understand the potential for allergens to be introduced during food production, and use a system that sends its stores recall updates in real time. If a guest has a reaction, Lyon recommends having a minimum response plan. For example, that may include knowing to call 911, what details to provide an emergency responder, and how to take care of a guest waiting for help – information that may or may not be common knowledge among your staff.



#FoodSafety

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Reaching guests with the most lifetime value

If you're like most businesses, about 60 percent of your revenue comes from only 20 percent of your guests. Instead of directing your marketing time and effort toward the 80 percent of people who are less likely to support you, you stand to gain far more if you can channel your resources into that valuable 20 percent who buy from you frequently and spend more when they do. Understanding customer lifetime value (CLV) can help you zero in on this critical segment of your audience. (You can calculate it by dividing the average per-guest spending each month by the percentage of guests that don't return.) If you have the tools to understand your CLV, you know which offers and channels have driven the most sales. You are able to take the behaviors of your best guests and turn them into incentives that drive repeat business. You can use that information to attract similar guests who have the potential to become more loyal. You also understand what promotions and messages generate the best sales. Improving your CLV can help you expand the size of your most valuable segment of guests. So how can you do this? Track how much money a guest is likely to spend on repeat visits and other interactions with your business, or how likely they are to refer your business to others. Look for opportunities to collect actionable information from each step of a guest's journey. Toast suggests making it as convenient as possible for guests to buy from you and share information. That includes their feedback, which you can use to assess your performance and identify action items. Lean on your loyalty program to encourage return visits and to communicate in targeted ways with your guests. Finally, bundle your offerings – it increases guests' perception of your value.



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1-888-891-3103 or visit our web site at www.teamfourfoods.com

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