

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- Would your customers scrap the app? | Say it with salad | Make safety a selling point | How safe is the food on its way to you? |
- Kitchen equipment designed to manage pandemic challenges |
- Use online ordering for better pre-order management

Ready, set, winter

At the time of this writing, the National Restaurant Association had just announced that more than 110,000 restaurants around the country – representing one in six dining establishments – had closed either long term or permanently due to the pandemic. If you're reading this, your business has likely already developed strong survival strategies, but the winter months are likely to test them yet again as the country manages winter illness spikes and more potential lockdowns. Is your restaurant as ready as it can be? In a recent Restaurant Dive article, several attorneys from the global law firm Goodwin's financial restructuring group offered guidance to help restaurants weather the challenges of the next few months. Specifically, they said restaurants have two critical capabilities now: their ability to identify and implement practices to enhance revenue and reduce expenses, as well as their ability to connect with stakeholders and create a mutually agreed-upon restructuring plan that maximizes the value of the business and develops a business model that is sustainable in the current environment. As part of this, restaurant operators will need to conduct a thorough analysis of their operations, including calculating all assets and liabilities, and consider potential opportunities for getting concessions from landlords and suppliers, as well as securing external sources of funding. While there are sure to be more restaurant closures ahead before this crisis is over, there will also be opportunities available. Savvy businesses that have a precise understanding of their operation, as well as contingency plans in place to provide help in various scenarios, will be in the best position to seize those opportunities.



Use online ordering for better pre-order management

One change to life after the pandemic that could be a lasting one is the drift in meal times and snack times during the day. Your online ordering system – and your use of it to manage pre-orders during the day – can help you accommodate those changes and serve more people. A recent Eater report describes how the owners of Dee Dee, a Thai food truck in Austin, are actually doing more sales volume now than before the pandemic. While their customers have long asked if they could place orders ahead of time, before COVID-19 this was too difficult for the owners to manage in the midst of serving the long line of customers appearing at their window each day. That line could require a wait of between 45 minutes and an hour, but now that the owners have taken their ordering fully online, there is no longer any wait. Knowing when people will want their food – and having the freedom to spread out those orders – helps them churn out more of them in less time.



Kitchen equipment designed to manage pandemic challenges

The new pandemic-era guidelines that restaurants must follow may help protect health and safety, but they can also slow down service: More frequent handwashing and cleaning, fewer staff on hand at once, and a decline in shared work surfaces can add time to food preparation. Is your kitchen equipment earning its keep by helping you adjust to these changes? This year could be time to swap out single-use tools and appliances for smaller, multifunctional ones – and if you are in the market for an oven, consider a smart oven like a cook-and-hold oven that you can set and forget, or a smart combi oven that can cook using convected heat, steam or both. In addition to helping restaurants manage labor costs, maximize available space and remotely monitor cooking, these kinds of appliances can save energy and also track safety.





Say it with salad

The New Year is always a time when people refocus on their health and that may be especially true after 2020. Salads are a natural meal or side option for people looking to boost their health and consume more nutritious foods. Could your salad options use some innovation in 2021? Elevate your greens and vegetables with a mix of hearty grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, or – now that salad bars are a relic of pre-COVID times – consider making your entrée salads customizable with those items.

Food Trends

Roscoe Salad

Ingredients:

Pickled Green Beans

- 1 1/2 cups HEINZ VINEGAR
- 1 1/2 cups Water
- 2 tablespoons Salt
- 1/4 cup Sugar
- 1/2 tablespoon Garlic, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon Fresh Dill, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes

- 1 1/4 pounds Green Beans, cleaned and trimmed

Deviled Eggs

- 10 each Large Hard Boiled Eggs
- 1/4 cup KRAFT MAYONNAISE
- 1 tablespoon GREY POUPOIN DIJON MUSTARD
- 1 teaspoon TAPITIO HOT SAUCE
- 1/4 teaspoon Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon Pepper

Croutons

- 5 cups Cornbread Cubes, 1/2"
- 2 1/2 teaspoons Parsley, chopped
- 2 1/2 teaspoons Chili Powder
- 1 1/4 teaspoon Garlic Salt
- 2 1/2 tablespoons Olive Oil

Salad

- 1 1/4 cup BULLS EYE BBQ SAUCE
- 1 1/4 cups KRAFT RANCH DRESSING
- 2 1/2 pounds Salad Greens
- 10 ounces Cucumber, halved and sliced
- 10 ounces Celery, sliced
- 10 ounces Grape Tomatoes
- 10 ounces CHEDASHARP SHREDDED CHEESE
- 10 each 4-ounce Grilled Chicken Breast, sliced



Instructions:

1. Day in advance: Prepare the pickled green beans by bringing the vinegar, water, salt, sugar, garlic, dill and pepper flakes to a boil in a medium pot.
2. Add the green beans, simmer for 1 minute, remove from the heat and allow to cool. Refrigerate until ready to use.
3. Prepare the deviled eggs, by cutting the eggs in half and scooping out the yolks into a small bowl.
4. Mix the yolks with the mayonnaise, mustard, hot sauce, salt and pepper.
5. Place the mixture into a piping bag and fill each egg white.
6. Preheat oven to 400 F.
7. Prepare the croutons tossing the cornbread cubes with the parsley, chili powder, garlic salt and oil.
8. Place the season bread cubes onto a sheet pan and bake for 10 minutes.
9. Mix together the BBQ sauce and Ranch dressing.
10. Assemble each salad on a serving plate/bowl starting with a 4 ounce bed of salad greens. Top with 1 oz. cucumber, 1 oz. celery, 1 oz. tomatoes, 1 oz. cheese, 2 oz. pickled green beans, 1 chicken breast fanned out, 2 deviled egg halves and 1 oz. croutons.
11. Serve with 1/4 cup BBQ Ranch Dressing on the side.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Kraft Heinz



Make safety a selling point

As we wait for the COVID-19 vaccine to be distributed to more people across the country, we must still manage what could be an especially challenging winter for restaurants. Ongoing cases of COVID-19, on top of normal seasonal concerns like the flu, will make restaurant health and safety practices take on extra importance right now. Make your commitment to safety clear on everything from your front door to your website. Persist with mask wearing indoors and when delivering food (whether through in-house staff or a vendor), enforce social distancing in your dining areas and kitchen, and regularly ensure your facility is well ventilated, air is purified and high-touch surfaces are cleaned. It will help you earn trust from customers, and at a minimum, could help you minimize winter-illness absences on your team.



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How safe is the food on its way to you?

Increasingly, consumers care about the precautions businesses are taking to protect the safety of their food en route to the businesses selling it to them. The software and engineering firm Emerson recently surveyed 1,000 U.S. consumers about food safety practices – and what they expect to see from suppliers. More than 50 percent of respondents said they would be less likely to shop at stores that aren't using (or requiring suppliers to use) the latest technology to keep food safe. Half of respondents said they are now more concerned about the safety of their food than they were before the pandemic. Nearly 60 percent said the pandemic has made them want to support local businesses. When you promote food safety to guests, look beyond your operation. Trace the path of your menu items and try to shorten that path where possible. Share the tech products and practices that help keep their food fresh and safe between its source and their dinner table.



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Would your customers scrap the app?

The winter weather will mean customers will be more apt to lean on restaurant delivery – and third-party delivery apps – to get the food they crave. But as a recent New York Times article reported, “restaurants have quickly found that the apps, with their high fees and strong-arm tactics, may be a temporary lifeline, but not a savior.” That’s especially true when an app can charge fees surpassing 30 percent per order and take customer data along with them. In 2021, how can you set yourself up to encourage your customers to come to you directly when they want to order from your restaurant? If you can’t divert waitstaff to delivery duty, use a third-party provider as a courier service only (which typically involves paying a payment processing fee and delivery fee but not losing any customer data), or make it more appealing for guests to collect their orders. In every bag to be collected by a third-party vendor, include a coupon good for a pickup discount – along with an explanation about how third-party fees are impacting restaurants right now. Offer rotating specials that are only available through orders placed via your website. Finally, use your social media and website to directly urge customers to come to you. Reinforce how much they will save on fees by simply collecting an order from you or (if possible) having you deliver it to them directly. Explain the difference side by side and tell them how much money your business makes or loses depending on how an order is placed – sometimes a consumer’s decision to use an app is not a conscious one and the person just needs to be reminded of how you’re feeling the difference. Your customers have surely seen some of their favorite restaurants close in recent months – and they want to see you survive and thrive. Tell them how to place orders that can best support you right now.



Team Four/Value 4 provides customized Supply Chain Solutions and Business Consultancy to the foodservice owners and operators throughout the United States. To find out how we can help your business save money contact us at:

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