

# Foodservice Updates

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## Shift into chef-forward mode

Experiential. High-value. Exclusive. These words come up repeatedly when consumers are surveyed about what they enjoy about restaurant dining nowadays – and what makes them crave a return visit. In the recently published LDEI Trends Report 2023, one theme that emerged was how bringing chefs front and center – in more ways than before – can help restaurants succeed in accommodating those consumer preferences. The visibility of your chef can send a message about everything from your restaurant’s values to the quality of the experience you offer. Because consumers are increasingly savvy about ingredients, food sourcing and how various foods affect their personal health, chefs can add interest and education to a menu offering by finding ways to share the story of sourcing a special, high-quality ingredient and how it makes a significant difference in a dish. They can also make on-trend meal preparation methods more accessible – like by showcasing how to bring vegetables to the center of the plate in appealing ways, for example. Seeing chefs cook – in a pop-up setting, table-side, at a chef’s station in your restaurant, or even in a food truck – can lend some spontaneity to a meal and make it feel like an exclusive experience – something worth more than the price of the food itself. Regardless of your restaurant category, you can benefit from making your chefs a highly visible part of the experience you offer. Are there opportunities you haven’t tested yet?



A photograph showing a man in a dark suit and light blue shirt looking down at a chef in a white uniform and tall white hat. They are in a professional kitchen setting. In the background, other chefs are visible working at a counter with plates of food.

# Management Minute

## Ghost kitchens, reinvented?

At the height of the pandemic, it seemed like ghost kitchens might be the restaurant industry's salvation. But once restaurant dining rooms reopened, many of the large brands developing these operations failed as consumers directed their dollars toward businesses whose locations and brands they recognized – not (as many consumers perceived) tech companies that happened to prepare food. But now the remnants of major ghost kitchen brands Nextbite and Kitchen United are being repackaged into something new that may help revive and repurpose ghost kitchens. Fast Company reports that Sam Nazarian, founder and CEO of the hospitality brand SBE, who recently acquired the above ghost kitchen brands, is reassembling them in ways that lean on the individual brands of the restaurants they include and the chefs and other personalities behind them. Further, this reinvention of ghost kitchens is embracing the physical spaces – including grocery stores, food halls and hotels – that consumers trust when they make decisions about the food they eat. Nazarian is then weaving in the strong digital ordering and distribution channels that made ghost kitchens seem so promising in their original incarnation. While it's early to say if this updated approach to ghost kitchens will pay off, it may set the tone for how restaurants might be able to use them to tap into new income streams going forward – capitalizing on efficiency and scalability but retaining more of the qualities that have always made restaurants desirable to consumers.



## Upgrades to oil management can boost safety, among other benefits

Sixty percent of worker's compensation claims are the result of slips, falls, strains and burns at work, according to the National Council on Compensation Insurance. Between 2020 and 2021, the council found that among the costliest lost-time claims by cause of injury were burns (\$52,161 for each claim) and falls or slips (\$49,971 for each claim). Unfortunately, these risks are common in restaurants – and tasks such as managing cooking oil increase risks of both burns and slips or falls. If you're experiencing losses in these areas, it's worth conducting an audit of the risks that tend to generate worker's compensation claims. Addressing them can deliver a ripple of benefits. For example, if you're still managing your cooking oil using manual processes, automating it can improve staff safety, labor efficiency and food quality, as well as reduce your overall oil usage and expense, according to a new report from Restaurant Dive. The tech-based monitoring that accompanies automated oil management can also help you keep tighter control on your oil quality and costs by alerting you when there are problems.



**#FoodSafety**

# Foodservice CEO

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## Help guests see how they gain from dynamic pricing

Consumers are no strangers to dynamic pricing in their daily lives – whether they are buying an item on Amazon or booking a flight, they have come to expect that they will pay more for an item in high demand and may be lucky enough to snag a good deal at other times. But dynamic pricing in restaurants is relatively new to consumers – and following years of budget tightening and food inflation in restaurants and grocery stores alike, many consumers are wary of it. (When Wendy’s announced its plans to implement dynamic pricing recently, the brand had to scramble to explain itself amid consumer backlash to the news.) To be sure, it may take time for consumers to come around to dynamic pricing in their favorite restaurants – but restaurants in all categories have opportunities to frame it in ways that make their guests more loyal, not less. For example, you could mine your guest data to create segments of dynamic, limited-time offers. This can help you ramp up your ability to make a guest’s experience feel more personal and worthwhile. In practice, you might send one guest an offer for 50 percent off a large pizza after their kid’s soccer game, or alert another guest to a discount on a smoothie to help them beat the heat during your town’s Memorial Day parade nearby. Fine-dining restaurants that have more reservation requests than they can manage during the weekends but struggle to fill tables midweek could use dynamic pricing to encourage table reservations at off hours. Dynamic pricing is about guiding guests toward the specific value you offer them – value that will only increase (and hopefully translate into loyalty) as they return and share more of their preferences with you.



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