

# Foodservice Updates

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## What your guests' ordering habits say about your menu

Despite all that has been done to simplify restaurant menus in the past few years, it appears there may be room to go further. Restaurant Business says that according to a newly published survey of 1000 consumers by U.S. Foods, the average restaurant guest spends nine minutes perusing the menu before ordering — and for the vast majority of guests, that is on top of the time they spend skimming the menu before arriving at the restaurant. Further, even though 82 percent of guests said they prioritize convenience when they choose where to eat, the average guest spends 23 minutes contemplating what to eat — not the most convenient way for guests to access restaurant food (or the most efficient way for restaurants to turn tables, either). So where is there room for change? Most consumers surveyed said they dislike QR codes and even more said that physical menus should be available at restaurants, so it sounds like the physical menus themselves still need greater simplification and clarity. The survey found that more than half of consumers said they still felt they had too many options to consider on restaurant menus, while 79 percent said they struggle to decide what to order. They key elements that consumers said they preferred on menus included clear descriptions that listed all ingredients, images of menu items, and prices, so you might consider these factors as a guide. In your on-site interactions with guests and in guest reviews, do you detect signs that your menu needs further simplification? Are guests confused by the variety of options, looking for ways to modify existing menu items, or struggling to find items in their price range? As you optimize your menu in the coming months, there may be opportunities to refine your options and make the process of ordering from you faster and more convenient.





# Tech Talk

## Tap into AI's potential to enhance your restaurant's

Artificial intelligence is already proving its potential to help restaurants fine-tune their brands — largely by creating the kinds of experiences that specific guests crave. You may already be using AI algorithms to analyze guests' order histories and preferences to provide targeted food recommendations, but the technology's capabilities expand beyond that. Do you have guests who ask a lot of questions about your menu or otherwise need help landing on a dish? AI voice-enabled assistants can give guests information about a dish's ingredients and nutritional value, as well as help guests select meals — easing the burden on staff and likely speeding ordering times. Upon a guest's arrival at your restaurant, it can greet a repeat guest by name, remember their favorite table, and suggest menu items or specials they are apt to enjoy. Expect to see AI play a larger role in building the ambiance of restaurants too — by suggesting music and lighting based on your guest data, or offering immersive dining experiences through virtual or augmented reality. On the service side, an AI chatbot on your app or website can help you make your ordering more accurate and also respond to customer service enquiries at any hour of the day. When guests leave reviews, AI can screen their input and pull out key insights you can use to improve your experience. Some of AI's benefits still feel futuristic, and the earliest adopters are bound to hit snags along the way, but it's worth paying attention to how the technology is moving the needle on the experience and service a business provides. Consumer expectations are bound to shift as a result.



## Prepare now for summertime safety

If recent years are any indication, we're likely to experience periods of record-setting heat in the coming months — and this can impact food safety from several different directions. A number of foodborne infections, including Salmonella, E. coli and others, peak in the summer months. Research has also found that food recalls increase during the summer. The blackouts that have become more common on sweltering days can further put food at risk — such events put restaurants in the position of having to keep foods chilled during power outages when outdoor temperatures are compounding the problem. Even on hot summer days when you're not dealing with the issues above, your kitchen team may still struggle to perform at their best when working over hot equipment — particularly if your kitchen isn't climate-controlled or well ventilated. It's a good time to assess how all of these potential issues could affect your restaurant, then put some plans in place to help you avoid problems later. Perhaps that means connecting with suppliers with any concerns about tracing and reporting summer food recalls, having a food safety backup plan in place in case you experience a blackout, and adjusting staffing or work protocols to allow for more frequent breaks during the hot season.



**#FoodSafety**



# Foodservice CEO

[www.foodserviceceo.com](http://www.foodserviceceo.com)

## Do you have a plan to guide you through a tech crisis?

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While technology has opened the door to new revenue streams and other capabilities for restaurants, it has also created vulnerabilities that can play out in public. In March, McDonald's experienced a system failure that left customers in pockets of the world including Australia, Japan and the U.K. unable to order food. Panera went through something similar, with its digital ordering channels down over multiple days in March. These risks require restaurants to have comprehensive, tested crisis management plans outlining the steps that all levels of the organization must take before an emergency (to best prepare for one) and in the aftermath of one (to get the business back on its feet with minimal disruption). This can help ensure that the business is ready with an alternative action plan, knows what information to share with various stakeholders at key points, and has support in place who can guide the business back on track as quickly as possible. Looking at your business, have you considered how you would respond to various tech-related crises, whether that may be a widespread outage or a cyber attack? What support might you line up to help you? The technology you have adopted may be new enough that you haven't had to manage its failure yet, but having a carefully considered plan in place before you actually need it can help you navigate more smoothly through an emergency if and when one happens.



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