

# Foodservice Updates

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## Get ready for steady sales this holiday season

Strong third-quarter retail sales and overall growth in the U.S. point to a promising sign for restaurants as the holidays approach: Consumers may be looking to spend more freely than they spent in earlier months of the year. Are you ready to make the most of guest traffic? First lean on your technology – to enable seamless payments in the forms guests prefer, to generate greater participation in your loyalty program, to anticipate high-traffic peaks (and valleys), to schedule staff accordingly, and to deliver targeted promotions to guests looking to get out and celebrate with others over the festive period. Assess potential bottlenecks in your various sales streams, as well as opportunities to promote different parts of your business that could do especially well over the holidays. For instance, what mechanisms do you have in place to manage catering orders, track reservations, maintain your ingredients for your most popular holiday dishes, and promote retail items? What safety nets are in place to support you when problems happen? It can help to review the guest journey along every sales stream you have, gather feedback from staff about what works well and what needs to improve, and to check your online reviews to identify parts of your business that may need attention.



# Tech Talk

## These two AI paths are increasingly supporting key restaurant functions

As artificial intelligence becomes a larger part of consumers' daily lives, it is taking a couple of distinct paths in the restaurant industry. Its generative applications are helping restaurants respond in real time to guest questions in the drive-thru line, as well as draft emails to staff and develop ideas for guest promotions. Its predictive applications are enabling restaurants to make more educated decisions about how to manage inventory, schedule staff, and anticipate guest traffic over a holiday weekend. These applications are increasingly being woven into restaurant tech platforms and becoming just a part of doing business – Square and AzureOpenAI are among the companies whose generative and predictive AI applications are being adopted by large brands right now, Restaurant Dive reports.



## Making tech-driven service pay off



Only 37 percent of consumers agree that more technology inside of restaurants means better customer service. That's according to a PYMNTS Intelligence survey of more than 2,200 U.S. consumers conducted last year. That doesn't mean that technology isn't delivering better service – just that the guest-facing applications don't necessarily make that clear to guests. So focus on using tech to operate as efficiently as possible behind the scenes – to keep guests' favorite menu items in stock, automate repetitive tasks that occupy your staff's time, and prioritize line prep tasks so your staff can effectively balance competing streams of orders. The better you can manage demand in the kitchen, the more time your staff will have to spend in the dining room with guests, making sure their experience feels like a positive one.

# Trends

## Are you a morning person?

Technomic recently released its predictions for the next year in foodservice. Among them is an anticipated shift in the occasions that will bring people out to restaurants. Specifically, there seem to be opportunities in both breakfast and brunch – largely because of the perceived value they offer. Technomic says more consumers will treat themselves to breakfast instead of lunch during the work week because of the affordable satisfaction it offers. Then once the weekend rolls around, brunch could become the “new dinner” because it offers an interesting mix of adult-friendly beverages and brings people together socially – all at a lower price point. Is your restaurant in a position to capture some of this interest in morning meals?



## Contain the spread of foodborne illness

Approximately 48 million people in the U.S. – roughly one in six people – get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die each year from foodborne diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The financial impact following a single foodborne illness outbreak associated with a restaurant can run into the millions of dollars, not to mention the threats it poses to people’s lives. While these outbreaks are a significant problem, the good news is that they are largely preventable. As seasonal illnesses ramp up, do you feel your staff is focusing in the correct areas to limit the spread of infection? Prioritize the targets with the biggest protective potential – such as thorough handwashing on the job and labor scheduling to help ensure backup if and when staff are ill this winter. Your training can reinforce the “why” behind these precautions.



**#FoodSafety**

# #FoodSafety

## Does your restaurant have this predictor of food safety success?

In a recent webinar about the return on investment of food safety programs, leaders from Steritech shared some telling research from the USDA. The research emphasized how important it is to not only have a strong food safety program, but also to combine it with managers who can discuss it knowledgeably. Specifically, it found that quick-service restaurants that lacked this combination generated 4.7 high-risk violations on average per inspection, compared to 1.7 violations for those that had a strong program and knowledgeable managers. Making this connection turned out to be a strong predictor of food safety success in these restaurants. If your food safety is lagging in certain areas, could it help to connect the dots between your program and the managers in charge of overseeing it?



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## Adjust your model for the long term

For years now, it has felt like restaurant operators have been furiously swimming upstream. First, the pandemic jolted restaurants into a new reality, forcing them to change their business models overnight and adopt new technology to compete. Then, even when the toughest months of the pandemic were behind us, restaurants still had to battle with supply chain problems and high inflation. Tough as these conditions have been, they forced a much-needed fix in the industry. In a recent essay in the New York Times about the current restaurant revolution, San Francisco Chef Anthony Strong said the survival of his business has meant transforming his business model from 2020 into something with more staying power: He shifted from an 80-seat restaurant to a 35-seat dining room with a separate retail shop that sells pasta, sauces and upscale pantry items. So right now, as things finally feel a bit more – dare we say it – normal, how does your restaurant look different? As we approach a new year, it's a good time to take a step back at the changes you have made this year. Is there a leg to your business that can reliably prop you up when another leg weakens? How can you strengthen each of those pillars? Where have you made important progress this year that can be replicated in other parts of your restaurant – and where is there opportunity to fine-tune your practices so you can last for the long term?



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