

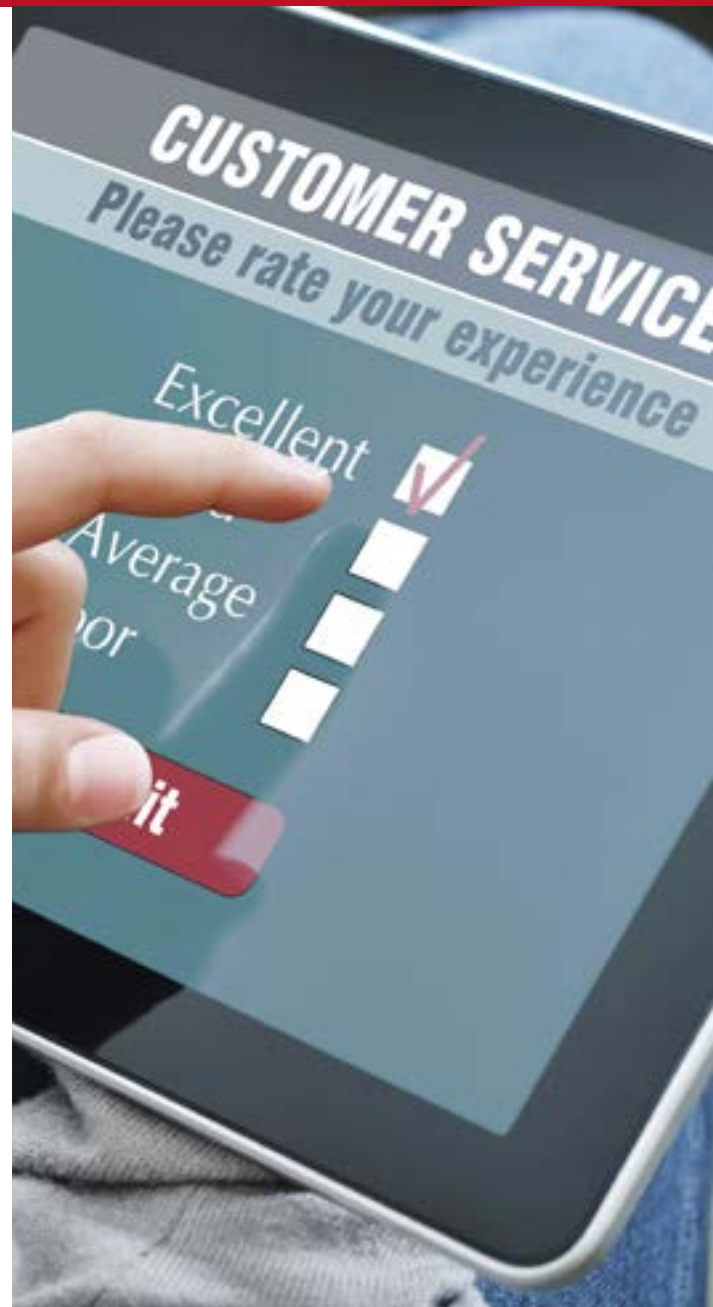
Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Craft messaging that speaks to guests' holiday needs](#) | [Tastes for the in-between times](#) | [Double down on safety training for first-year staff](#) | [Industry examples of strong food safety](#) | [The emergence of the digitally native restaurant](#) | [Use tech to manage guest events](#)

Managing the risks and rewards of reviews

Love them or hate them: Restaurant reviews are powerful. Economists at the University of California, Berkeley found that a half-star improvement on Yelp's 5-star rating scale makes a restaurant 30-49 percent more likely to be fully booked during peak dining times. Google has become especially important, attracting 73 percent of all online feedback, because so many people find a restaurant by searching Google Maps. At the same time, reviews carry risk for restaurants. Guests may not feel inspired to write a review unless they have an extremely good or bad experience, and the bad reviews often amount to noise, including nothing that could actually be used to improve the business. Accordingly, research from Nationwide Insurance and Edelman Data & Intelligence found that when restaurant operators were asked about their digital risks, 25 percent of them reported that managing negative reviews was among their biggest risks. This is where you can lean on your special occasions – like your holiday gatherings, contests and other features of this time of year that delight guests – as well as your loyalty program. Target these guests when asking for reviews. After they visit, send them an email or text asking them to share their review on Google if they enjoyed their meal (and link to the review page so it's easy for them). Include some simple boilerplate language on each of the general messages you send to your list and invite people to leave a review. When you serve a happy group that has clearly had a great experience with you, consider mentioning at the end of their meal that they will be getting an invitation to review their experience – and that their feedback really does help you.



Tech Talk

The emergence of the digitally native restaurant

No doubt, we have seen significant development in the tools restaurants use to operate in recent years. But when it comes to restaurant categories, we haven't seen much change in decades. However, according to Meredith Sandland and Carl Orsbourn, restaurant experts and authors of "The Path to Digital Maturity," there is a new restaurant category emerging: the digitally native restaurant. This is a combination of ghost kitchens, virtual brands, automation, robotics and delivery fulfillment that is optimized for off-premise sales. They believe that once operators find the right approach to this kind of restaurant, the category will grow faster than the rest of the industry. There are a number of restaurant brands that are already testing the waters here, but for the rest, the possibilities of an emerging digitally native restaurant category are likely to change consumer expectations about speed, efficiency and customization everywhere – and necessitate the technology that helps operators deliver on those benefits. Using your tech stack, can you pull information about what your guests are buying, how often, if and when they return, if they buy items on special, how they modify their orders, and which channels they use? How accurately does that inform how much food you make on a given day?



Use tech to manage guest events



Does the prospect of hosting back-to-back events this holiday season leave you feeling nervous about managing all of the details? Or are you simply looking to offer more of these experiences in the future and need assistance on coordinating them? Event management software can help make the process more seamless. If you offer tickets to events, the software can help you sell tickets online, manage details about your bookings, and generate insights about your sales. Ideally, it should include functions that help you market, customize and digitally track details about your event promotions, as well as collect online payments securely.

Trends

Tastes for the in-between times

If you have been feeling your dayparts dissolve a bit in recent years, you're not alone. Consumers are craving their favorite foods at any time of day, which creates both challenge and opportunity for restaurant operators. A number of large restaurant brands have been trying to drive sales outside of their normal dayparts. Restaurant Dive reports that Pizza Hut is making a push for late-night snackers, Denny's is adding a burrito virtual brand to boost sales during off hours, Wendy's is launching efforts to draw both late-night and breakfast traffic, and Marco's Pizza launched a handheld pizza designed for eating on the go. Taking a look at your guest traffic, do you see opportunities to encourage more sales at hours that fall outside of traditional meal times?



Double down on safety training for first-year staff

Data from Travelers insurance company found that first-year employees are at greatest risk of workplace injuries – and the restaurant industry generates the most insurance claims from first-year employees than any other industry. The research indicates that more than half of restaurant claims involved their newest workers and represented 47 percent of total claim costs. The most common causes of these injuries were overexertion, along with slips, trips and falls. With that in mind, how might you enhance your training to help new staff avoid these hazards? Showing your team how to avoid injuries that result from simple overexertion can be an easy win. Do your newest team members know how to safely carry and move loads of any size, as well as how to move through the restaurant in ways that don't cause unnecessary strain and can lead to injury?



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Industry examples of strong food safety

Food safety can sometimes feel like a thankless task – guests are more likely to speak up about a poor food safety experience than a great one. But that isn't always the case. (And sharing some strong examples of food safety may help others in the business.) Earlier this year, the food safety consultancy Steritech recognized Chipotle with the 2023 Excellence in Food Safety Award – with MOD Pizza and Five Guys earning honorable mentions. Specifically, Chipotle stood out for its multi-tiered approach to food safety. That includes a focus on each link of the supply chain, from how their food is raised through every employee level to ensure safe handling and preparation. Internally, the restaurant has a Food Safety Advisory Council, a dedicated food safety section on its website and the brand invests in local and small business suppliers to help meet its food safety standards.



Foodservice Updates

Craft messaging that speaks to guests' holiday needs

Consumers want restaurant food this holiday season. A recent HungerRush survey of 1,000 adult consumers in the U.S. found that 64 percent of respondents said they planned to order at least one food item from a restaurant to include in their holiday meals, while 37 percent said they would order their entire holiday meals from a restaurant. Does your data hold clues as to how you can best support your own guests' holiday wishes for festive food? Maybe they're looking to treat themselves after cutting back on meals out of the house this year, to minimize their own prep work at home, or to simply enjoy the festive season with foods they wouldn't normally make themselves. Fill out your calendar with outreach that taps into those wishes. This could include contacting last year's guests (and other segmented groups on your email list) to share your holiday menus, take-out meal bundles or limited-time offers. Or, help people get into the holiday spirit by creating videos of your decorated restaurant or your chef preparing a special menu item that you share on social media. Encourage new social media followers (and sharers) by launching a social media contest and offering a free meal or a gift card as a prize. If you have community partners – like charities or complementary businesses – coordinate your social media efforts with them to encourage new people to support you this season. With each promotion, ask yourself what need you're aiming to fulfill so you can ensure you're sending out content that connects with your ideal guests.



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