

Foodservice Updates

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Be energy smart this winter

So much can feel out of control right now with regard to the supplies you need to run your business. One supply (among many) that has been climbing in price and scarcity in recent months is natural gas. In September, CNBC reported that prices had climbed 99 percent higher on a year-to-date basis due to escalating demand and concerns around supply. But unlike the many other items in short supply right now, natural gas consumption is something you can take active steps to reduce in your business without a significant downside. If you experience an especially cold winter or simply broad fluctuations in the traffic coming to you, being more efficient with your natural gas usage in cooking, washing and heating could generate significant savings. The Rail suggests that when cooking, aim to avoid overusing appliances – so limit the time you spend preheating, avoid using a larger oven when a smaller one will do, precook foods in a steamer prior to frying, limit use of the range top and schedule your cooking to ensure you are making most efficient use of ovens and cooktops. When washing, wait to use your dishwasher until it is full, turn off water heaters when the restaurant is closed, and ensure that water tanks and pipes are well insulated. When heating, use smart thermostats and set them to align with the business schedule and occupancy. Finally, keeping appliances maintained, clean, and free of buildup – whether grease, limescale or dust – can help ensure you're not overusing energy.



Simplifying the path to a virtual brand

The pandemic has taught restaurants the value of generating new income streams, and virtual brands – which have been on the rise since the pandemic started and are presumed to continue their climb in the future – are an appealing way to do that for many operators. But as restaurants work to capacity to meet demand from their dining rooms and virtual brands amid supply shortages, how can they best keep everything running? At the Restaurant Leadership Conference in December, Wow Bao CEO Geoff Alexander said menu simplification could help. He suggested that while many restaurants slashed their menus early in the pandemic to ease the burden on staff, that approach could now help restaurants free up critical capacity by absorbing the work and production know-how that the discontinued items once required. If you're looking to create or sustain a virtual brand, take a closer look at your existing menu and look for opportunities to trim and simplify what you offer.



Weed out your weakest link

The new technology coming to market holds lots of promise for streamlining orders, payments and data. But those capabilities are only as powerful as your weakest tech tools. If you're still using elements of legacy systems from over 20 years ago, any benefits of new tech will be limited. Aiming for a cloud-based POS will help you adapt and upgrade more easily in the future, minimize any downtimes and boost your security – and you don't necessarily have to start from scratch. According to Upserve, many third-party vendors have cloud-based apps that allow you to maintain your rewards and promotions planning from legacy systems.



Farfalle pasta salad with green beans and tomatoes

Ingredients:

- 1 1/3 Box Barilla® Protein+™ farfalle
- 5 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
- 6 Tbsp. Lime juice
- 8 Oz. Green beans, blanched and cut into 1 inch pieces
- 4 Plum tomatoes, diced
- 2 Cans White beans (15 ounces), drained
- ¼ Cup Parmigiano cheese, grated
- ¼ Cup Parsley, chopped
- Salt & black pepper to taste

Be a pasta pro

What's more versatile than pasta? Treat it as a critical resource in your toolbox at a time when you need to make every item in your inventory count. It can be a tasty side dish when combined with fresh vegetables and a vinaigrette, offered as a craveable appetizer when baked with cheese or elevated to an entrée when paired with seafood. Serve it hot or cold, make it health-conscious or indulgent, and swap in different shapes to instantly kick up the interest of a recipe.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta 1 minute less than package directions.
2. Meanwhile, combine green beans, tomatoes, white beans, parmesan and parsley into a large mixing bowl.
3. Whisk together oil, lime juice, salt and black pepper.
4. Add pasta to the mixing bowl and top with lime dressing.
5. Mix well and allow to sit for 30 minutes to overnight.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla



Help staff and guests avoid foodborne illness

If you're preparing food in large batches for guests in an effort to be efficient with your available resources, remind staff of food safety precautions to protect food as it cools. Steritech advises clients to cool cooked foods from 135°F to 70°F in two hours, and to 41°F within six hours. Divide dense foods into smaller portions and shallow containers to make cooling more consistent and avoid covering containers tightly until the food is fully cooled. If sending food home with guests, advise them to reheat their leftovers to at least 165°F and to freeze any food they won't eat within three or four days.



#FoodSafety

The best way to reinforce food safety practices

Food safety tasks can be among those restaurant responsibilities that you pay closest attention to when something has gone wrong – a customer gets sick or leaves a negative review about the cleanliness of your facility, or an inspector notes something in your operation that needs to get better. But to set your business on the strongest possible course and improve staff behaviors in a lasting way, it's important to focus on the positive. A recent Harvard Business School study found that regardless of the industry, business teams performed best when there was a positive-to-negative comment ratio around 6-to-1. In your training, team meetings and one-on-one interactions with staff, do you have plenty of ways to praise what is going well – through contests, positive comments or simple thank-yous? This may be even more important than reminding staff of what they need to do to improve.



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Expediting full-service recovery

At the recent Restaurant Leadership Conference, Technomic's Joe Pawlak had some good news about key segments of the restaurant industry (and less-great news about another) – namely that business for quick-service and fast-casual restaurants had returned to pre-pandemic levels, but fine dining was still three years away from a full recovery. To be sure, the technology that has kept businesses going during the pandemic has been a closer fit for limited-service restaurants. However, many of the tech tools that have been used to elevate efficiency and hospitality these past two years still apply to full-service restaurants, albeit in different ways.

In a recent episode of the webcast Restaurants Redefined from Modern Restaurant Management, three industry professionals weighed in on how they see technology evolving for restaurants after the pandemic – particularly for full-service restaurants. At the front of the house, for example, technology can help ease some of the friction points. What if a restaurant could use geofencing technology to identify when a guest arrives and get a jump on preparing their favorite appetizer or having their usual wine on the table as they sit down? While a full-service restaurant might not want to use a QR code for guest ordering, offering a code (or other app-based option) for paying the bill when the guest is ready to depart could improve the overall experience. Empowering a server to offer a refund or other check adjustment on the spot as needed via tech tools can also boost service. At the back of the house, technology that minimizes human interaction – ovens, grills and other appliances that don't require much human oversight – will help free up staff to elevate guests' experience at the front of house. Finding ways to adapt the technology available – not so much to minimize human contact but to improve the human contact that full-service is known for – might just help hasten the recovery of these businesses.



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