

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- Menus to reflect the times | Prepared foods, reinvented | (Visible) safety is money | Time for an efficiency check | Prepare yourself to flex | Robotics within reach

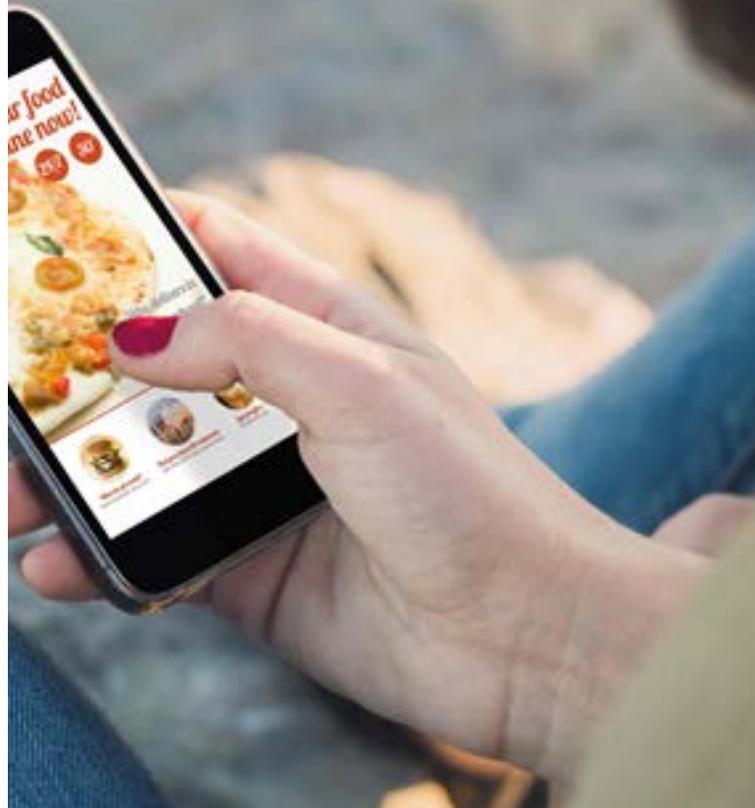
Ask and you may receive

At the time of this writing, retail vacancy rates were forecast to rise to 19.2 percent for the end of 2021, surpassing the previous high of 17.6 percent in 2010, according to Moody's Analytics. But what sounds like bad news for the state of the industry could actually be good news for restaurant operators looking to negotiate and renegotiate contracts with landlords. Landlords want to keep their good tenants operating, and according to Amy Eskola, a partner with the law firm Messner Reeves who specializes in real estate transactions and contract negotiation, there is a lot of opportunity for operators to secure more beneficial terms right now. During a recent podcast interview with Elliot Maras of Kiosk Marketplace, Eskola said operators are (often successfully) seeking to adjust their contract terms in a wide variety of ways right now, including rent adjustment, abatement or deferment; basing rent on a percentage of sales, and for new locations, negotiating longer buildout periods, arranging to have rent commence at the time of permitting or opening, or securing a lower rent for the first year of operation. Anything is possible if you can present a solid, thoughtful case for it. Before approaching your landlord, conduct some market research so you have a clear sense of what terms similar businesses in your area are getting. If you're seeking an agreement that hinges on your sales, also ensure you can present clear and organized financial statements that demonstrate your plans to manage expenses and build the business over the long term.



Prepare yourself to flex

As Covid-weary diners flock to dining rooms and short-staffed restaurants struggle to meet the demand, some operators are shutting off less profitable streams of service (like delivery) during periods when they couldn't otherwise manage all of them at once. The Wall Street Journal reported recently that Applebee's, Olive Garden and IHOP were among the restaurants choosing to shut off online orders at specific times. This capability, if you don't have it already, is one to consider implementing this year as part of your tech toolbox. Going forward, there may well be times when you need to scale up and scale down order streams at the flip of a switch. Being able to handle those transitions smoothly – and also marrying those actions with corresponding offers designed to attract guests to your other service areas – can help ensure a steadier flow of business.



Robotics within reach

If you can automate food preparation as much as possible, you will reduce waste and grow your margins. While small operators might believe having a kitchen robot is an impossible expense, the pandemic may be changing that. The growth of virtual restaurants – and the creative approaches to challenges that operators have found during the pandemic – have increased the number of offsite options that can bring automation within reach for smaller operators. If you have food preparation tasks that could benefit from automation, consider other businesses in your area that likely have the same needs. At a time when so much food preparation is being done away from a restaurant's public-facing location, you may be able to share the expense of a robotic machine based in an offsite kitchen that can churn out precisely chopped ingredients on a larger scale for multiple businesses.





Baileys® Cheesecake Cannoli Flatbread

Ingredients:

- 1 Flatbread crust
- 4 oz Unsalted butter
- 1 Slice Bistro Collection® Baileys® Pre-Sliced Cheesecake
- 6 oz Ricotta cheese
- 1 Lemon, zested and juiced
- 1 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1/2 C Shelled pistachios, roughly chopped
- 3 Large cannoli shells
- 1/2 C Dark chocolate baking pieces

Prepared foods, reinvented

At a time when staffing shortages require operators to do more work with less people, ready-made and speed-scratch ingredients can be lifesavers. If you have resisted using as many of these prepared items as could benefit your business, consider getting more creative with them. Can you invent a unique appetizer, entrée or dessert by combining the best parts of different prepared items you have on hand?

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Brush flatbread all the way to the edges with butter.
2. Toast in a 350° F oven until crisp. Cool slightly.
3. Combine the cheesecake, ricotta, lemon juice, lemon zest and cinnamon. Mix to incorporate.
4. Spread a generous layer of the cheesecake mixture on the warm toasted flatbread.
5. Top with the chopped pistachios, crushed cannoli shells and chocolate pieces.
6. Cut into wedges and serve immediately.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Sara Lee Bakery



(Visible) safety is money

Consumers still care a lot about restaurant safety – and according to a new Deloitte survey of 1,000 consumers who had eaten in a restaurant in recent months, they want to see it in action. More than half of the respondents (55 percent) said they would be willing to pay 10-15 percent more at a restaurant if they were told about the safety and cleanliness measures the business was taking to protect their food during transport and preparation. Further, consumers are noticing both traditional cleaning measures and more recent Covid-safety measures more acutely right now. Find ways to make your safety efforts more visible – in cleaning surfaces around your facility, preparing food or protecting employees and guests, and even with signage that explains all you're doing to protect the people you're serving and employing.



[#FoodSafety](#)

#FoodSafety

Time for an efficiency check

Your staff needs to be able to focus on preparing food, serving guests and keeping your facility clean. Drains and dishwashers that are slow to clear, and other equipment that isn't working effectively can not only consume your staff's time but also potentially cause a food safety problem. As the new year begins, make it a priority to check equipment and schedule any needed maintenance and repairs to ensure your staff can stay focused on the task of serving guests.



Foodservice Updates

Menus to reflect the times

Covid has changed consumers' relationship with foods, their ideas about health and their perceptions about what ingredients mean. According to Health & Wellness 2021: Reimagining Well-being Amid COVID-19, a new report from the Hartman Group, health and wellness have become more top-of-mind considerations for a broader set of consumers in the past two years as they have seen first-hand how infectious diseases, immunity, vaccine effectiveness and safety and mental health all play critical roles in their lives. They are now applying that experience to the foods they consume and are approaching menus more mindfully as a result. So what does that mean for restaurant operators? After the greater amount of time consumers have spent cooking meals at home in recent years, expect more scrutiny of ingredients, as well as the pursuit of less-processed, naturally plant-based foods. For example, the report indicates that more indulgent brands that are making wellness claims will need to be able to back them up more precisely – and that more natural presentations of plant-based proteins are likely to emerge as preferred options by health-conscious consumers. If you have a brand that is built around wellness, or if you simply make wellness claims around specific menu items, aim for simpler, unprocessed ingredients and be ready to answer questions about what's on (and in) the menu.



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