

# Foodservice Updates

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## When your rewards programs must compensate for the economy

A restaurant's rewards program is a critical tool for attracting and retaining loyal guests – even more so since the pandemic has changed how the public buys food from restaurants. Now, the uncertainty in the economy has encouraged restaurant brands to not only get more creative about the rewards they offer, but also to overhaul their programs altogether. In some cases, the changes may be designed to appeal to guests in new ways, while in others they may simply be an unavoidable reflection of the challenges restaurants are experiencing. Starbucks, for one, will soon be changing its loyalty program for the first time in two years. The brand is reducing the number of thresholds at which guests can redeem rewards, while lowering the reward cost of several menu items. The consumer response to the change has been largely negative, which may serve as a warning sign for other brands. If you're contemplating scaling back your rewards program out of necessity, consider how you might still send the message that you're providing value. That may have to happen in ways that don't stretch your budget – perhaps some exclusive menu items for rewards program members, or an experiential benefit for your best guests.



## Check for rebates on high-efficiency equipment

High-efficiency appliances and equipment can save an operator money – but often, the up-front costs of these items are insurmountable for restaurants struggling to make ends meet. But instant rebate programs currently available in 13 states can make it possible for operators to purchase quality, efficient equipment at lower prices, according to the Food Service Technology Center at Frontier Energy. Not every product qualifies, but if you're in the market for new equipment, it may be worth checking to see what options are available in your state. Call (714)787-1098 or read the report from the National Restaurant Association for details.



## Promote the cultural benefits of automation

What dangerous and/or repetitive kitchen tasks can you outsource to automation this year? These tasks, which could include anything from working the fryer to chopping vegetables, tend to be ones that aren't attractive to current or potential staff. This, in turn, sends operators into an endless cycle of having to attract, hire and train workers. When you consider new tech, think about its impact on your current and future labor spend, as well as how it affects the language you use in job postings. Changes you make on the tech side can have a positive impact on your culture if you use them to turn your open positions into roles of increasing responsibility.



# Food Trends

## Creamy spinach artichoke zucchini crust

### Ingredients:

- 1 Each par baked zucchini crust
- 1/3 C Prepared alfredo sauce, heated
- 1 oz Wilted Spinach
- 2 oz Marinated Artichoke Hearts
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp. tomato, seeded and diced
- 2 tbsp. cream cheese, cut into cubes
- 1 tbsp. Shaved Parmesan cheese



### Instructions:

1. pre heat pizza oven to 400F
2. chop artichoke hearts
3. mix together sauce, spinach, artichokes, salt and pepper
4. top Par Baked Zucchini Crust with mixture
5. top with cream cheese, parmesan and tomato
6. bake for 6 to 8 minutes until crust has browned and topping is bubbling

Recipe and photo courtesy of Rich's

## Swap out the bread



Delicious as bread may be, many consumers scrutinize their consumption of bread products – whether due to allergies or digestive issues, or simply because they want to consume more whole foods and fewer processed ones. Making changes to accommodate them could mean ramping up whole grains in certain menu items, swapping in a vegetable where a wrap or crust might otherwise be used, or trying vegetable-forward options that mimic the flavor and mouth feel of bread. Keep these varying consumer needs and preferences in mind when you set your menus this year. Where is there room for customization with a bread substitute that is just as – or nearly as – appealing to guests?

## No history of foodborne illness outbreaks? Don't be fooled.

More than 60 percent of all foodborne disease outbreaks in the U.S. are caused by restaurants. If your restaurant has not, to your knowledge, caused a foodborne disease outbreak, that doesn't mean it isn't causing sporadic cases of illness that can occur outside of an outbreak. In a recent webcast from Food Safety Magazine, Hal King, managing partner of Active Food Safety, cited the example of one strain of Salmonella that the CDC traced backed to a single restaurant over the course of 10 years. The pathogen was on different surfaces around the restaurant over that period of time, causing sporadic illnesses there. If you hear of a guest becoming ill, consider it a warning sign about your food safety and a reason to investigate customer complaints you have received in the previous month. What patterns do you see that might help you zero in on problems in your processes?



**#FoodSafety**

# #FoodSafety

## Is that veggie burger really meat-free?

Ten to 15 percent of Americans identify as vegetarian or vegan, according to the Vegetarian Resource Group – and three-fifths of U.S. households now eat vegetarian at least on occasion. These figures represent an all-time-high, and they are likely to expand even further, considering half of all vegans are young adults in their 20s and 30s, according to research from Faunalytics. As more of your guests look for vegetarian or vegan options, what are you doing to avoid cross-contamination with meat? At a time when restaurants are scaling back on their real estate, it may be difficult to avoid grilling a veggie burger on the same surface as a beef burger. Some restaurant brands have even stepped away from calling their vegetarian items meat-free due to the possibility of cross-contamination. If you have more guests looking for purely vegetarian or vegan options, tools like PTFE baskets or mats may be able to help keep these items separate on the grill.



# Foodservice Updates

## Maximizing profits while toeing the line on price

While the economy is still struggling, it doesn't seem to be putting a significant dent in consumer spending in restaurants. According to Paul Westra, managing director of restaurant investment research at Capital One, consumers are only dining out 10 percent less than they were in 2019. He predicts that any recessionary impact on consumer spending is more likely to occur in the second half of this year – so in the meantime, restaurants have an opportunity to maximize profitability and build up a cushion ahead of a possible slowdown. Dynamic pricing may help operators make the most from busy periods and drive traffic during slower periods. In fact, Restaurant Dive includes dynamic pricing among its predicted trends for 2023, saying the ability to adjust pricing based on factors such as weather, time of day, or local events may help protect restaurants' bottom lines. Just tread lightly on changes. While consumers tend to understand the need for restaurants to inflate prices to compensate for supply shortages, inflation and overall operating costs right now, they may be more cynical about seemingly random shifts in price. Be prepared to answer questions from guests, particularly if they have noticed your business elevating costs for premium ingredients or the costs of taking care of staff.



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