

Foodservice Updates

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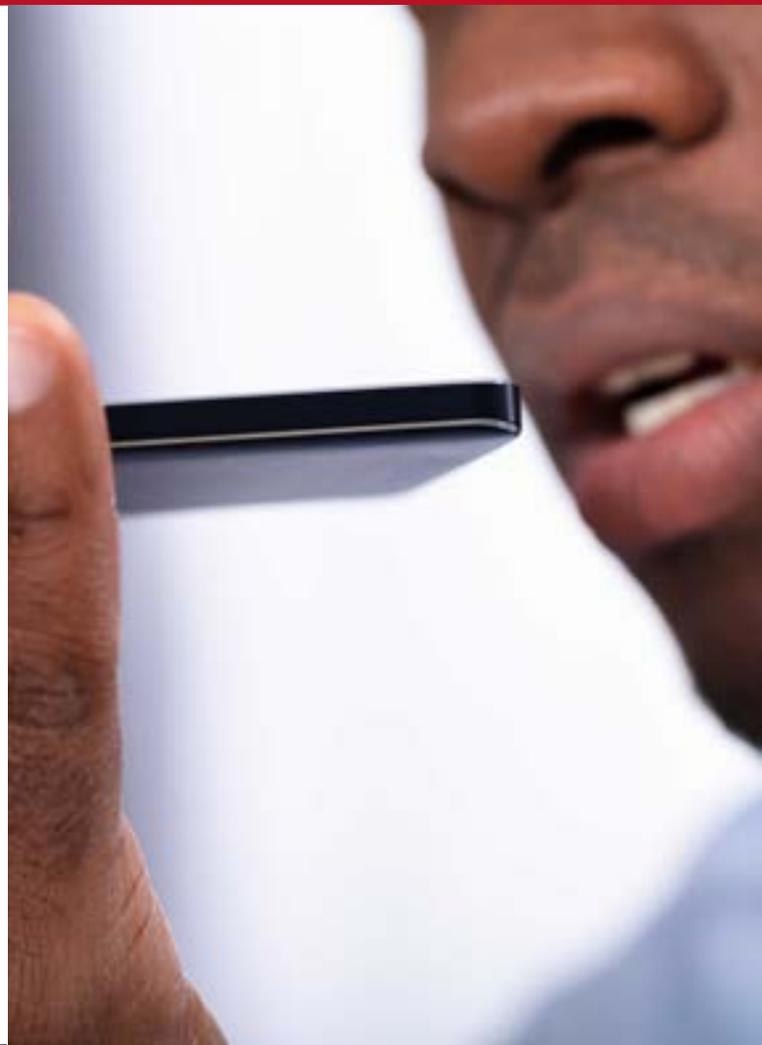
Adjust your recipes for delivery

Winter weather can make it that much more difficult to entice people out of the house and into your dining room. But takeout and delivery could be an easier sell – if you make it worth their while. Is your menu up to the task? Your restaurant might take some cues from the surprise success of Rick Bayless’s Tortas Frontera restaurants at O’Hare Airport. While airports aren’t necessarily known as great destinations for a quality meal, Bayless has managed to make his restaurants such a draw that, according to a recent article in the Washington Post, business travelers are known to purposely schedule connections and layovers at O’Hare just so they can pick up a meal at Tortas Frontera. It gives new meaning to motivating guests to go out of their way to come to your restaurant. The Post article shares how Bayless has ensured his restaurant delivers the kind of quality that keeps guests coming back – and thinking about his restaurant even if they live across the country from it: He knew that his guests would likely be picking up their food, then boarding their plane, then waiting for takeoff and the beverage cart, before digging into their food – a process that would likely take about an hour. So when testing his menu, Bayless placed finished dishes in to-go boxes and let them sit at room temperature for an hour before tasting them, then adjusted the recipe as needed. It’s a formula that restaurant operators looking to grow their delivery business could use too. Taking the time to understand the typical journey of a takeout meal, the habits of those eating it, and how long it generally takes between a meal’s preparation and consumption – can help you make the incremental adjustments a recipe needs to turn casual customers into loyal guests.



Is this the year for AI voice ordering?

Whether you operate a drive-thru, or your website or phone line could benefit from some tech-driven labor savings, this may be the year that AI voice technology finally takes off. As a recent report from Nation's Restaurant News says, 2021 marked the launch of AI voice ordering, 2022 marked its spread, and 2023 marks its improvement and perfection. Specifically, a number of companies (SoundHound is just one) are training the technology to respond more readily to natural speech patterns, versus the Alexa-style way of stating a clear demand in a quiet room and having to take turns speaking. To be sure, AI voice ordering has had a shaky takeoff in some places. But if you're considering investing in it, expect some perfected versions to emerge this year and beyond – and ask your vendor questions about how they will be training their product to continuously evolve and improve.



Technology laws in the coming year

As restaurants adopt more technology, new federal and state regulations surrounding it become all the more relevant. Brennan Duckett, director of technology and innovation policy at the National Restaurant Association, recently weighed in on potential technology-related legislation that could impact restaurants in the coming months. He anticipates the American Data Privacy Protection Act (H.R. 8152), which didn't pass in the last Congress, will be introduced again. The legislation would create a federal data-privacy framework giving consumers more control over their personal data and legally requiring businesses to meet specific standards to protect and secure that data. Duckett says the Association plans to advocate against the legislation in its current form because certain provisions within it (those regarding the preemption of state laws and enforcement through private lawsuits) could harm restaurants. Data privacy legislation is also expected to be active at the state level this year, with the potential for a patchwork of state laws creating a confusing mix of regulatory standards for restaurants to meet, Duckett says.



Food Trends

Gluten free penne with pork tenderloin, chipotle pesto and queso fresco

Ingredients:

20 OZ. Barilla® gluten free penne
12 Oz. Cooked pork tenderloin, diced
9 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
1 Garlic clove
½ Cup pistachios
6 Cups assorted baby greens
2 Tbsp. Canned chipotle pepper
1 Pint multi-colored cherry tomatoes, halved
2 Limes, zest and juice
½ Cup parmigiano, grated
½ Cup queso fresco, crumbled
¼ Cup cilantro, chopped
Salt & black pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. In a food processor pulse garlic, salt, pepper, and pistachios until ground.
2. Add in greens, chipotle pepper, 8 tbsp. Olive oil, lime juice and zest.
3. Pulse until blended well. Add parmigiano cheese and set aside.
4. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta according to package directions.
5. In a skillet add remaining olive oil and tomatoes. Cook 2-3 min.
6. Add pork, pesto, and half of the cilantro.
7. Drain the pasta and add to pesto and mix well.
8. Garnish with queso fresco and remaining cilantro.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla

Make room for tasty gluten-free options



For a number of years, gluten-free menu options felt like an afterthought – a substandard substitute for guests who weren't able to digest the intended version of a dish. But the need for gluten-free menu options has changed that: According to new research, the global market for gluten-free foods was estimated to be worth \$5.9 billion in 2021 and is expected to climb at a compound annual growth rate of 9.8 percent between 2022 and 2030 due to rising rates of celiac disease, as well as other digestive disorders. This calls for gluten-free ingredients that are permanent, purposeful and tasty parts of the menu. Consider what substitutions you can make to elevate your menu options with gluten-free ingredients.

Prepare your team for the newest major food allergen

Beginning this month, sesame legally became the ninth major food allergen that requires clear labeling if it is an ingredient in a food product. According to Food Safety Magazine, cross-contamination and mislabeling of food have caused allergens to be the most frequent reason for food recalls each year. It's a good time to give your team a refresher on overall allergen awareness and the steps needed to document training and prevent cross-contamination in your operation.



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Delivering effective food safety training across generations

Chances are you have people from a range of generations on your team – and the mix is always shifting. That has an impact on how your food safety training is received and how it must be delivered as a result. According to operators at the 16th annual Nation’s Restaurant News Food Safety Symposium, multigenerational teams often need varying instruction. For example, the fast-casual brand Noodles & Company employs workers across four generations – and the restaurant’s director of food safety and quality assurance says the brand’s younger workers respond best to 30-second instructional videos, while their older team members tend to respond best to written cards. If you’re getting mixed food safety results in your restaurant, it may be worthwhile to take a closer look at your training and seeking feedback from staff about how they learn best – whether due to generational differences or simply preferences. You want to make sure your most important lessons are being delivered in ways that are most likely to be absorbed.



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Next-level loyalty offers

Loyalty has become coveted currency for restaurants angling for guests – and at a time when loyalty programs have become so widespread, restaurants are testing creative strategies to entice new sign-ups. McDonald's, for one, is raising the stakes in a way that is likely to be imitated by other restaurants and even other businesses, such as supermarkets, that compete with restaurants. During the month of December, the brand launched its Gold Card Promotion, whereby it gave away three gold cards (along with three additional gold cards for each winner that can be given to friends and family). Holders of the gold cards are entitled to free McDonald's meals, worth up to \$10 per meal, twice per week for 50 years. All a person had to do to enter to win a gold card was download the McDonald's app, enroll in the rewards program and make one purchase during the gold card promotion period from Dec. 5 through Christmas. As a recent Forbes report implied, the promotion hinted of the gold-ticket fever on display in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory – and that's probably the idea. Expect companies to raise the stakes in the coming months when it comes to loyalty by taking more extreme, newsworthy steps to attract attention and change the lives of just a few people – in exchange for collecting a whole lot of valuable data about a much larger segment of the population.



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