

Foodservice Updates

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How well does your kitchen comply?

You may have found ways to socially distance tables in your dining room, invent curbside pickup service outside your restaurant or create an outdoor eating area where one didn't exist before – but how feasible has it been for you to make the changes to your kitchen that the pandemic has mandated for safety compliance? Restaurant kitchens generally conjure images of busy, loud spaces where people collaborate side by side, proper ventilation is a challenge and mask wearing can hinder both communication and comfort. That model doesn't work anymore – so what can be done to both keep your kitchen busy with food preparation and minimize risks to staff? Futuristic Labs founder Goutham Gandhi says automation, which has become the norm in so many other facets of our lives, still has a long way to go in the kitchen – and the pandemic may fast-track its deployment. In a recent Modern Restaurant Management report, he predicts that the use of tools such as Riku, an automatic rice and curry maker that creates a range of recipes, will become the norm. This winter may prove telling in that area, particularly if and when operators experience last-minute labor shortages due to illness or lockdowns. Even if the automation of food preparation tasks isn't practical for you, it's still important to assess your menu and identify ways to minimize the labor and time required to prepare it. That may involve incorporating more speed-scratch and frozen foods, and identifying areas where labor-saving tools, technology or procedures may help you do more with less staff.



Real-time restaurant management

If there were ever a year to ditch the paper, this would be it. From your inventory management to your menu to your employee training, tech tools are helping operators eliminate paper processes and their inefficiencies. Perhaps the biggest benefit of making the switch is real-time management: Knowing your inventory shortfalls as they happen can help you adjust your digital menu to substitute an item or promote a new special on the spot. Being able to inform your staff of day-to-day changes in operating procedure electronically – and ensuring compliance in real time – is especially crucial now as COVID-19 infections affect how restaurants can serve guests. Ask Team Four how you can eliminate any paper processes that are holding you back this year.



Make your app the place to be

Eager to drive more sales through your app? Try offering enticing options that are only available to people ordering via that channel. Sweetgreen, which has experienced a 178 percent jolt in digital orders through the course of the pandemic, is among the chains that have recently released collections of online-only dishes based on the favorite food orders of notable chefs and athletes. Even if you don't have well-known guests to tout, simply creating and promoting dishes (or offers of bonus loyalty points or two-for-one appetizers) that are exclusive to your app can help bolster off-premise sales and safeguard your business for the months ahead.



Stand-out salads

Creating a restaurant-quality salad at home isn't easy: The textures and combinations of flavors can be difficult to replicate, they require a fair share of labor for a home cook to prepare, and they often generate waste in the process. This fall, your salads can help guests not only avoid those frustrations but also feel they are doing their part to protect their health. Raise your salad game with flavorful combinations that can be served as entrées, side dishes, or packaged in kit form for easy, no-waste preparation at home.

Food Trends

Italian Chopped Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 (15-ounce) can Chickpeas, drained
- 1 ea. Red onion, julienne
- 1 lb. Provolone, sliced ¼ in. thick then julienne
- 1 lb. Genoa salami, sliced ¼ in. thick then julienne
- 12 cups Pepperoncini sliced into rings
- 1 cup Kalamata olives, halved
- 2 cups Artichoke hearts, quartered
- 2 cups Cherry tomatoes cut in half
- 8 oz. Ken's Red Wine Vinegar and Oil
- 1 head Iceberg lettuce, cored, and cut in ribbons ¼ to ½ wide
- 1 head Radicchio cored and cut in ribbons ¼ to ½ wide
- 2 tbsp. Dried oregano for garnish
- 8 ea. Lemon wedges for garnish



Instructions:

1. Place the chickpeas, red onion, provolone, salami, pepperoncini, artichoke hearts, kalamata olives and tomatoes into a bowl.
2. Add dressing and mix gently. Set aside until ready to serve.
3. When ready to serve, add the iceberg lettuce and radicchio to the salad bowl and toss to combine with the dressing. Mound high.
4. Garnish with oregano and lemon wedges. Serve immediately.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Ken's



Your cleaning practices can earn good reviews

Safety is central to hospitality these days – and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. So it makes sense that travel and hospitality review sites would try to help consumers identify businesses that have made a clear commitment to protecting guest safety (and in the process, penalize those that don't). Tripadvisor's recently added Travel Safe feature filters businesses including restaurants by their health and safety protocols. The feature must be activated by the business and relies upon businesses to share and promote their safety practices. This may become the norm on more review sites as the pandemic persists, so keep tabs on the sites where your business may be rated and reviewed – and be ready to provide information about the precautions you're taking.

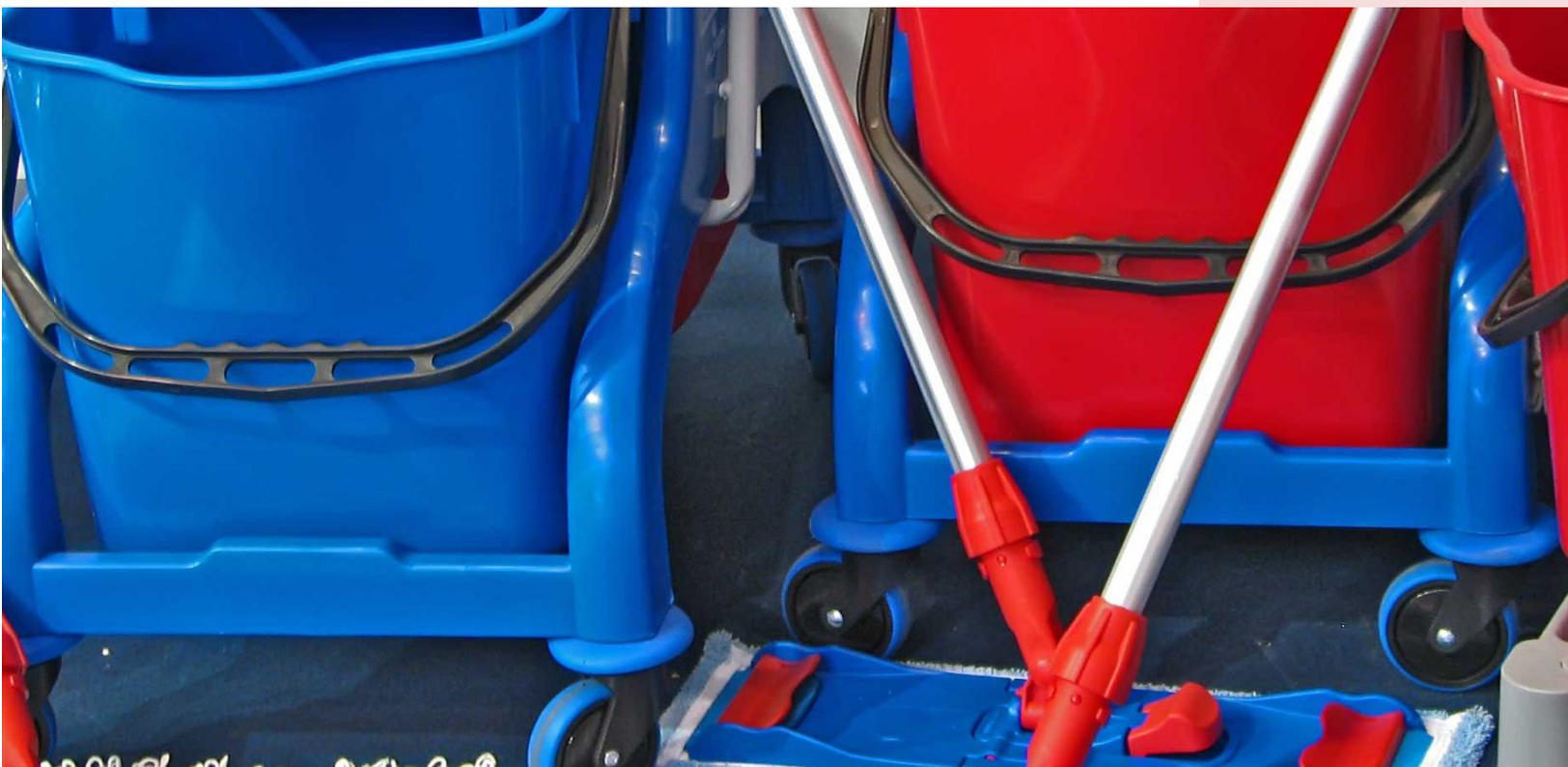
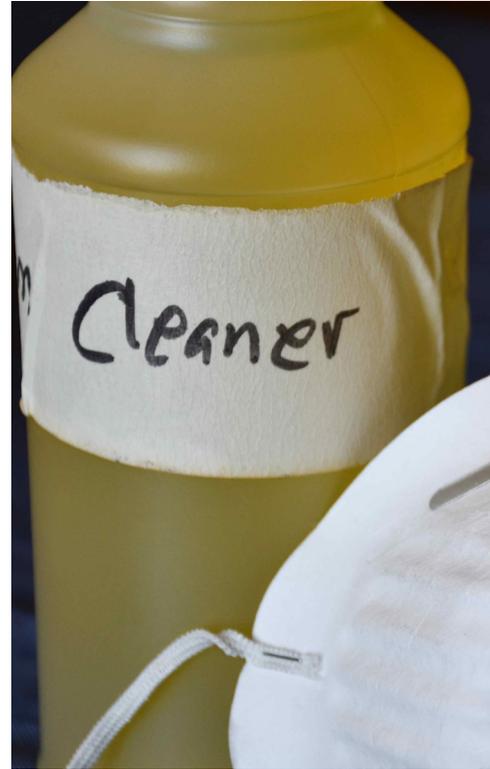


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Keep your cleaning solutions straight

If, before the pandemic, your restaurant generated most of its business through dining room sales as opposed to through off-premise sales, your staff may be used to communicating far differently about your menu. If your team was near-perfect when it came to suggesting substitutes and communicating about allergens during conversations at a guest's table, have you found a new system for replicating those communications as effectively either electronically or during the shorter in-person interactions that are common now? As the National Restaurant Association reports, the increase in off-premise sales and the decline in on-premise sales mean your servers don't have as direct of an opportunity to discuss food allergies and sensitivities. So it's important (and, in some locations, required) to update your allergen profiles as your recipes change – and to make sure that information is readily accessible in written form – on your website, app, or at your restaurant for those who order food in person. That's especially true to remember as you update your menu for a new season or substitute new ingredients due to shortages.



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A look at the future restaurant landscape

No question, the restaurant landscape will look a lot different once we emerge from the pandemic. Technomic estimates that 20 to 25 percent of independent restaurants won't reopen. It's easy to dwell on the sad realities of losing these businesses, but what if this period is what is required to usher in an industry transformation that many restaurant operators and employees would argue is long-needed? In a recent Eater report, two dozen restaurant leaders were asked to predict what the industry might look like in five years. Many of them see reasons for optimism – but first, they say some broken systems need to be overhauled when it comes to employee compensation, food transparency, consumer education about the true cost of food, management of the supply chain, and changes to the ownership structure of restaurant businesses. In the meantime, what's clear is that consumers' demand for restaurant meals won't diminish – and as the Washington Post reports, new service formats like ghost kitchens are actually experiencing significant growth right now to meet that demand. While the experience of dining on restaurant food may well change in the coming months in years, perhaps the range of new restaurant businesses that emerge from this period will serve as incubators for fresh ideas on making the industry work more sustainably for all.



Team Four/Value 4 provides customized Supply Chain Solutions and Business Consultancy to the foodservice owners and operators throughout the United States. To find out how we can help your business save money contact us at:

1-888-891-3103 or visit our web site at www.teamfourfoods.com and www.valuefour.com