

Foodservice Updates

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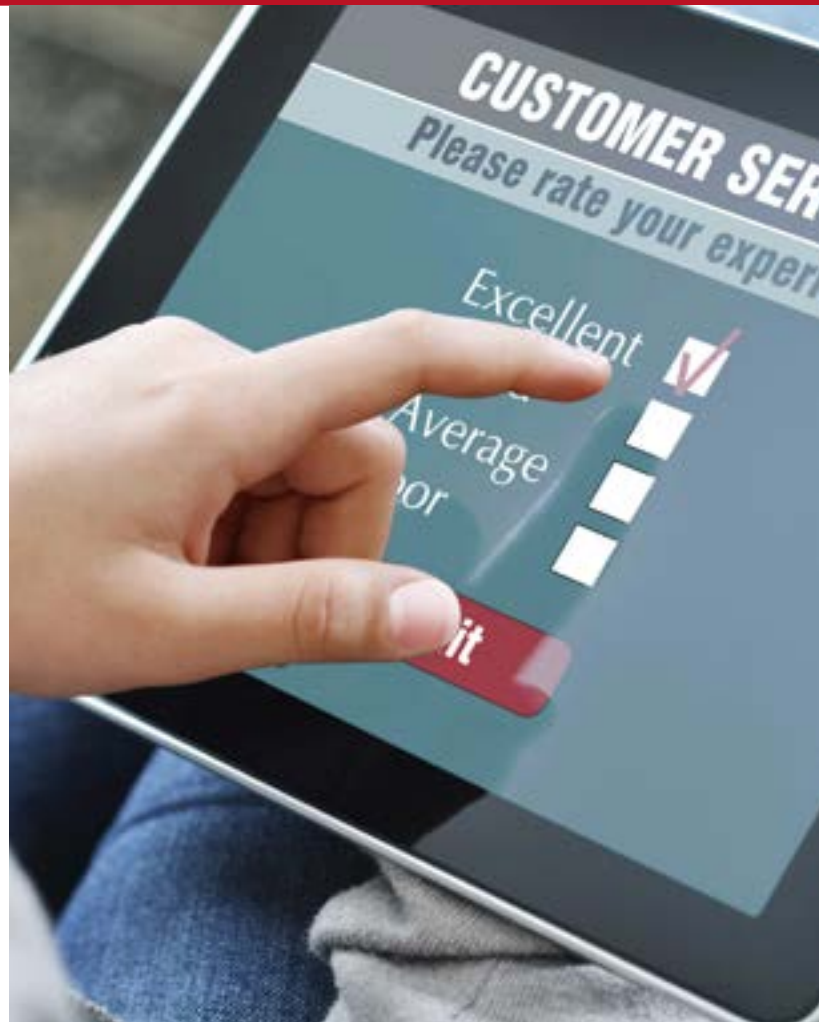
Using fall to prepare for winter

Fall is the season of preparation. What can you do now to keep business steady through the winter? In Chicago, no stranger to frigid winters, IDEO, BMO Harris Bank and the Illinois Restaurant Association partnered to launch the Winter Dining Challenge, which invites Chicagoans to suggest creative ways that the city's restaurants can transform their on-premise dining areas to comfortably serve guests through the winter. (The selected ideas will be announced in late September and each winner receives \$5,000 and the opportunity to develop their idea at a restaurant or bar.) If your menu and service model are a fit for takeout, double down on your efforts to offer seamless curbside pickup and, ideally, in-house delivery this winter. That includes ensuring your menu travels well, is profitable, is easy for customers to order via your website or app, can be prepared quickly and efficiently in your kitchen, and is packaged in a way that protects both the safety and quality of the food. Or...you might step back altogether. Some operators are considering closing their doors during the winter months. This option may suit operators that are not only financially able to hibernate for a few months but are also used to doing a robust business for holiday parties and groups that won't be gathering in large numbers this winter. While the loss may be too large for some operators to manage, taking a break may provide a rare opportunity to renovate dining rooms for a new way of operating, make overdue repairs and upgrades, and revamp menus, technology, staffing plans and promotions for a grand reopening in the spring.



Use best practices for consumer data collection

You're likely collecting more customer data these days – whether for enabling contact tracing, enhancing mobile ordering or boosting your marketing efforts. As you consider new technology to support that effort, be mindful of consumer privacy concerns – and ensure you are able to tell guests how you are using their information. Since you won't be able to get guests to share information with you without demonstrating you are trustworthy, make sure your providers use guest-centric practices – collecting only the information that is needed to facilitate a transaction or interaction, limiting the tracking of location data, and never sharing or selling personal information or location data. This report from QSR Magazine outlines some precautions to take when collecting guest data and vetting potential providers. (<https://bit.ly/2Frvqhi>)



A peek at the restaurant of the future

The pandemic has underlined the need for restaurants to perfect their off-premise dining experience – and embrace technology that can help them accomplish that. Now is a good time to observe what solutions early adopters are implementing as part of that effort – and what may or may not be feasible to try in other concepts. Burger King, for one, recently unveiled a restaurant design concept to streamline the collection of food. Restaurant Technology News reports that in the new model, which will be built in select cities next year, customers who order via mobile app can notify the restaurant upon their arrival and get a designated parking spot, or collect food from a coded food locker at the restaurant. The most noticeable change in the model is a taller (but smaller) restaurant footprint – the kitchen and dining area are suspended over an expanded number of drive-thru lanes, and a conveyer belt system delivers food to the vehicles waiting below.





Mexican Chopped Salad with Honey Lime Dressing

Ingredients:

Salad:

- 12 ounces Cobblestreet Market Pan Roasted Oil Browned Turkey Breast, diced
- 6 cups chopped romaine lettuce
- 2 cans (15.5 oz.) black beans, rinsed and well drained
- 1 ½ cups chopped seeded tomato
- 1 ½ cups chopped peeled jicama
- 1 ½ cups fresh corn kernels, uncooked (or frozen or canned)
- 1 ½ cups thinly sliced radishes
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 2 red bell peppers, chopped



Honey-Lime Dressing:

- ½ cup fresh lime juice
- ½ cup olive oil
- 4 tablespoons honey
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 2 teaspoons chopped jalapeño pepper (use canned for less heat)

Instructions:

1. Toss all salad ingredients in a large bowl.
2. In separate bowl, mix dressing ingredients.
3. Pour dressing over mixture and toss again.
4. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Jennie-O

Elevating plant-based dishes

Recent research from NPD Group found that 54 percent of consumers want to incorporate more vegetables into their diets – and that their desire to make their existing eating behaviors healthier is driving it. Restaurant preparation can go far in elevating the appeal of a plant-based dish. As you look to offer more plant-based meals on your menu, consider using global flavors to boost the craveability factor of new dishes, from salads and soups to plant-based side dishes.

Food Trends



Understand sanitizing

Hand sanitizer dispensers have become a common sight at restaurant entrances, in restrooms and on tables in recent months. While thorough handwashing with soap and water is the gold standard when it comes to preserving hygiene, hand sanitizers can be a helpful tool in managing the spread of germs in various parts of a restaurant. Just make sure your staff is aware of how to use sanitizers most effectively – and where they fall short. Sanitizers cannot protect against the bacteria that causes diarrhea, so they are best used in conjunction with washing with soap and water, or in situations where handwashing isn't possible – not as a substitute for handwashing or as a reason to delay it. To be effective, sanitizers should contain, at a minimum, 60 percent alcohol. Finally, despite the expense of sanitizers, don't cut corners when sourcing them. Purchase them from a supplier who can ensure quality.



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Anticipate food safety challenges before severe weather hits

Don't let hurricane season or other severe weather events compromise food safety at your restaurant. If possible, take steps now to safeguard your facility against weather threats. The USDA advises designating space well off the floor to store non-perishable items that would otherwise be contaminated in the event of a flood. Have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer to monitor temperatures during power outages. You can also better preserve foods by freezing items in your refrigerator that you won't need right away, grouping frozen items together to keep them cold longer, and using gel packs, frozen containers of water and dry ice to maintain cold temperatures in your freezer if your power is out for an extended period.



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Hurry up and adopt new tech – but not so fast

Well before COVID-19, restaurants had been moving toward the adoption of technology that could support increased off-premise sales. Now, however, such technology is being perceived in the industry as critical to survival in the near term and as a means of becoming pandemic-proof in the future. The investment community is backing up the idea that the restaurant industry needs to make rapid, technology-supported change: AgFunder News reports that while investment into many sectors has slowed while people wait to see how the pandemic plays out, that hasn't been the case for restaurant technology, where a number of multimillion-dollar fundings and acquisitions have taken place in recent weeks. Restaurants looking to make changes may be more apt to find – or be able to negotiate – deals with tech suppliers right now as a result. Nation's Restaurant News reports that a number of providers of services including online ordering and delivery, curbside pickup and food safety have been offering reduced rates and waiving startup fees. Just use caution when considering nascent service providers entering the field. Screen offers carefully to ensure businesses have the financial backing and expertise to deliver on contracted services and that you won't be surprised by high fees a few months down the line.



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