

Foodservice Updates

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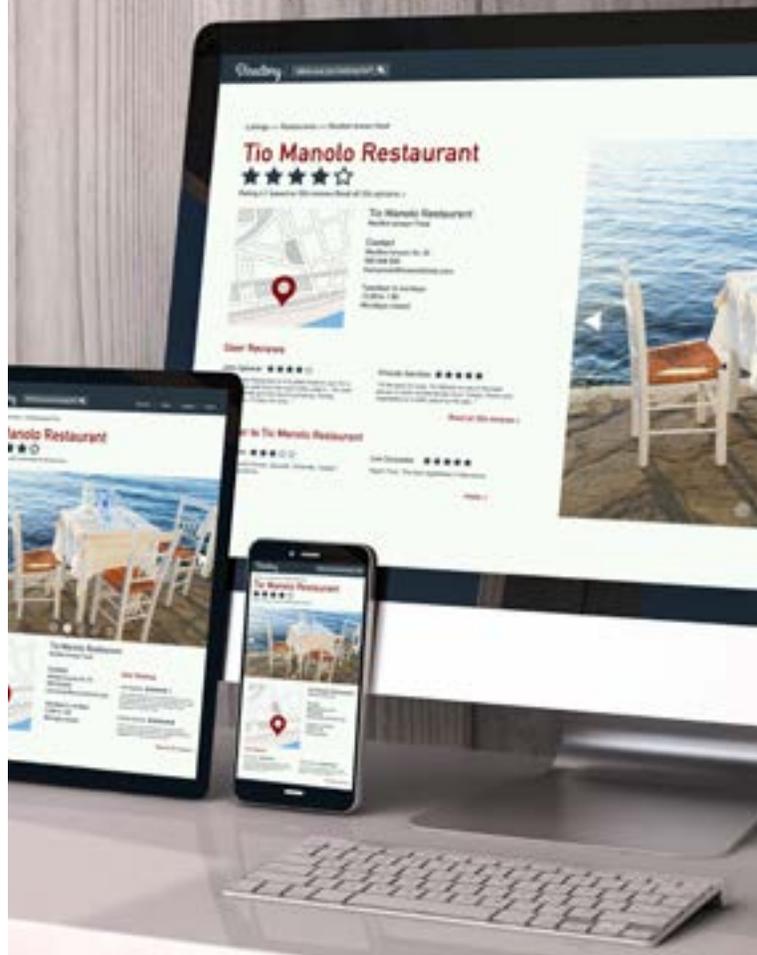
Does your staffing plan need reinvention?

Restaurant businesses have required some radical reinvention in 2020. Everything ranging from menus to service models to hours has required some assessment and adjustment – often with little advance notice. The same may be true of your staffing plan. As we approach the winter months – and the added challenge of flu season – labor is yet another wild card restaurant operators must be able to manage. Now and in the longer term, it will help you to find way to accomplish more (e.g. orders and prep tasks) with less (e.g. workers and kitchen space). If you had to operate with a skeleton crew today, what would it look like? How many staff would you need to accept and prepare delivery orders? What technology or systems could be made more efficient? Has COVID-19 made any new staffing positions necessary or existing positions obsolete? To what extent have you cross-trained staff to help with kitchen, customer service, delivery or even back-office tasks in specific cases? Could you automate any tasks that people currently oversee? Before you need it, fine-tune your crisis management strategy with an updated staffing plan – and test it to determine where it works well and where it needs further adjustment. While this year has been full of challenges, it has also rewarded operators who have been able to pivot to new ways of working. The steps you take now can help you minimize the hurdles you may face in the months ahead.



Strengthen your online presence

A recent Kantar survey of 25,000 consumers in 30 markets found that as the pandemic has persisted, web browsing has increased 70 percent and social media engagement has increased 61 percent over normal rates of usage. As a result, you should consider your primary storefront to be your website and the other channels that comprise your online presence – including social media networks, online business directories and review sites. If you have longtime, loyal customers, how seamless is it for them to place a takeout order with you online? Do you have readily accessible information about their past orders – and are they earning rewards for their repeat business? If they recommend you to a friend and that friend searches for you online, will the person find accurate information about your hours and menu? Are there quality images of your food on your website and social media accounts? Put yourself in the shoes of someone who has never visited your restaurant and discovers you online – or better yet, ask a new acquaintance to research your restaurant online and provide feedback. What impression do you give them?



Don't let the ghosts creep up on you

Restaurant industry analysts have said that in a period of just a few months, the pandemic has thrust the ghost kitchen market several years into the future. As more ghost kitchens come into the market, traditional operators may need to adapt to shifting budgetary needs and consumer expectations. A Restaurant Dive article reported recently that Peter Schatzberg, founder of Dubai-based Sweetheart Kitchen, said while a typical restaurant processes 15 to 20 delivery orders per hour, a ghost kitchen can process 60 orders – and with a single employee. If ghost kitchens increasingly demonstrate such economies of scale – by churning out orders quickly to more customers, with fewer staff, working from real estate occupying a smaller footprint – it will likely change the game for restaurant operators offering delivery from their traditional kitchens. How could your restaurant adapt?





Serve a stand-out seasonal dish

Are you serving up (or packaging up) Thanksgiving meals at your restaurant this year? While Thanksgiving is one of those holidays where people enjoy eating traditional dishes year after year, you can help your menu stand out by offering alternatives that don't stray far from the classics but still add interest to the menu. Instead of trying to sell guests on creative new main dishes and sides, try incorporating special marinades, gravy and on-trend spices and flavors that will elevate – but not distract from – the classic foods consumers crave.

Food Trends

Pecan Turkey in Bourbon Maple Cream Gravy

Ingredients:

10 each JENNIE-O® Prep Chef™ Filets,
1 ½ cups pecan halves
2 cups all-purpose flour 4 teaspoons kosher salt

Bourbon Maple Cream Gravy:

6 pork bacon slices ½ cup chopped shallots
5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2/3 cup maple syrup
½ cup whole grain Creole mustard ½ cup bourbon
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
3 cups heavy cream



Instructions:

Pecan Turkey:

1. Combine turkey and buttermilk in a large zip-top bag and place in refrigerator for 4-6 hours.
2. Heat deep fryer to 350°F.
3. Place pecans in a food processor and process until finely chopped.
4. Combine with flour and 2 teaspoons salt.
5. Remove turkey from buttermilk and discard buttermilk.
6. Dredge turkey in pecan-flour mixture, turning to coat both sides well.
7. Fry in oil until cooked through to 165°F as measured by a meat thermometer.
8. Place on wire rack to drain off oil.
9. Keep warm.

Maple Bourbon Gravy:

1. Cook bacon in a large saucepan over medium heat until crispy.
2. Place bacon on paper towels. Crumble once cooled.
3. Add shallots to bacon drippings and sauté over medium heat for 2 minutes.
4. Stir in flour and cook, stirring continuously for 2 minutes.
5. Whisk in maple syrup, Creole mustard, bourbon, Dijon mustard, salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
6. Cook and stir for 3 minutes.
7. Gradually whisk in cream.
8. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook, stirring frequently for 5 to 8 minutes, or until thickened.
9. If too thick, thin with a little milk.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Jennie-O



Make your COVID safety plan your permanent plan

Much like airport security measures changed for good after 9/11, COVID-19 is altering the way we eat out – and many of those changes are likely to be permanent. That means it's important for operators to act now to make lasting changes to how they prepare and serve food – not simply apply a band-aid solution intended to work until a vaccine is available. If you have offered food via a buffet, salad bar or even on large, shareable platters served to a single table, implement a lower-contact plan to serve those foods. Train your staff on your updated safety procedures and make them visible to your guests within your facility and on online channels. In a recent FSR Magazine report, food safety expert Francine Shaw also suggests updating your crisis management plan for the long haul, as well as broadening your list of suppliers to help ensure you can always source the ingredients you need. Doing so will help your operation protect itself against a range of potential future challenges – not just COVID-19.



#FoodSafety

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Focus on cleaning the right surfaces

You have likely stepped up your cleaning procedures since the start of COVID-19, but some procedures shouldn't change. Case in point: Your existing methods for ensuring the safety of food including fruits, vegetables and packaged products. According to the CDC, the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 by eating or handling food and food packages is very low. Further, the CDC advises against wiping down cardboard or plastic packaging with disinfectants meant for hard surfaces, which may contaminate the food itself. After handling packages, it's most beneficial to simply wash hands with soap and water.



Foodservice Updates

Contain your enthusiasm

If your restaurant has pivoted to mostly takeout service in recent months, you may long for the days when you were serving attractively plated meals. But since takeout is here to stay, can you find a better way to present your off-premise meals? Offering durable reusable containers may help you – and may also help ease your customers' guilt about the mountain of takeout containers and utensils they have likely accumulated from their favorite restaurants this year. (The Washington Post recently reported the troubling statistic from National Geographic that the U.S. uses more than 36 billion disposable utensils annually – an amount which, if laid end to end, would circle the world 139 times.) Not only is serving food in reusable containers more eco-friendly and budget-friendly if used in the long term – it's more appealing to customers than eating out of cardboard or from an unrecyclable plastic container that has to then be tossed in the garbage. It also provides an additional means for restaurants to demonstrate (and market) to customers that they are taking steps to minimize their impact on the environment. This Fast Company report mentions Dispatch Goods as one company that is offering a reusable container service that, for a small additional fee, allows customers to set their takeout containers outside in a reusable bag for pickup, cleaning and later reuse by the restaurant. Companies like this are becoming more common and cost-effective for restaurants. Could the model work for you?



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