

Foodservice Updates

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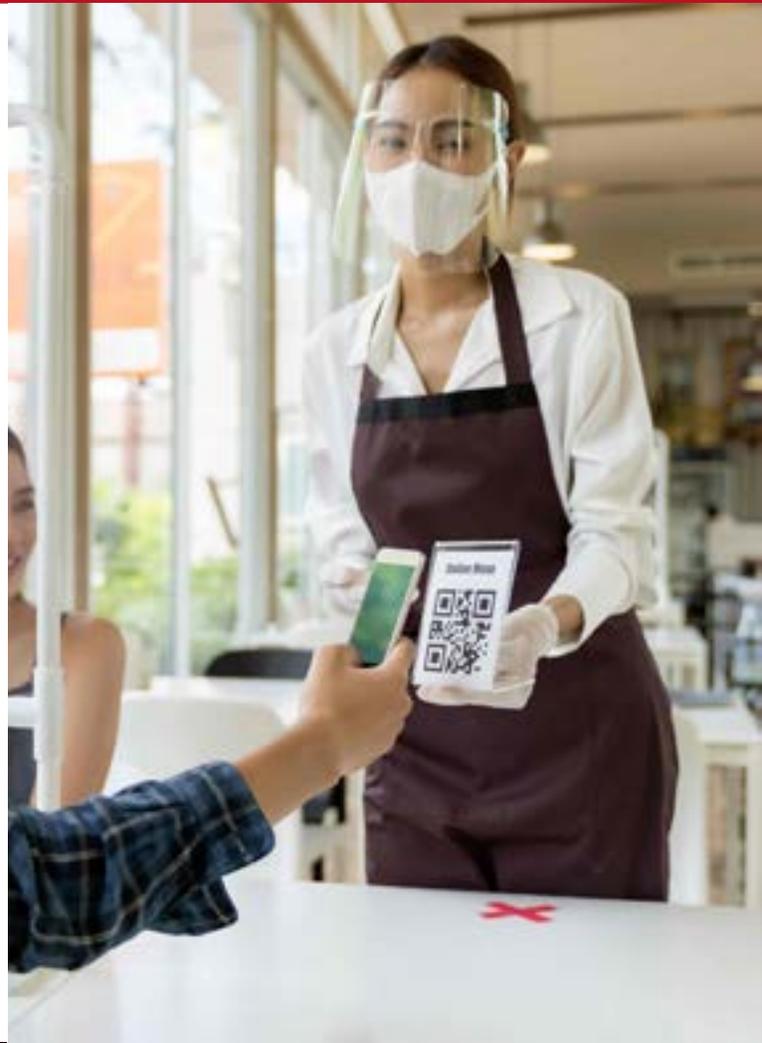
What's your long-term game plan?

Even before the pandemic, the shift from on-premise to off-premise dining was happening. But the pandemic truly accelerated it, and even as people return to restaurant dining rooms now, there is still a way to go before things look the way they did a couple of years ago. To be sure, the trend is especially stark for full-service restaurants – new data from FSR Magazine indicates that in September of 2019, 80 percent of traffic at full-service restaurants was on-premise (compared to 20 percent for carryout), whereas the mix in September of 2021 was 56 percent on-premise, 44 percent carryout. Still, across restaurant categories, an operator needs to make a clear-eyed assessment of their business model in light of current market conditions, then take steps to protect the business for the long term. That means expanding, not limiting, opportunities to serve guests – and resisting the urge to revert back to how you were operating pre-pandemic. Consider new opportunities for catering, particularly as businesses are looking for ways to maintain connections between hybrid workers and clients. Keep communication open with neighboring restaurants and complementary businesses that may be able to pool resources, share staff, or collaborate with you on promotions. Think about how to make it easier and faster for your food to reach guests who want to eat it off-premise, whether that means assessing third-party delivery providers to find the best-possible arrangement, starting an in-house delivery service or using a ghost kitchen.



Could dynamic pricing work for you?

While the pandemic has held plenty of challenges for foodservice operators, it has also sparked a period of creative solving like never before – and the lessons will be useful for the long term. One example is the ongoing refinement of menu engineering, and specifically, operators' ability to adjust prices on the fly based on supply and demand. Operators can use dynamic pricing to increase the price of a menu item that is selling well, for example, and decrease the price of an item being sold during a slower shift (some restaurants are even starting to use dynamic pricing for the chance to reserve their most in-demand tables on busy nights). Using a QR code system can enable this sort of flexibility. At a time when it's become all the more challenging to keep the right supplies coming in and anticipate customer traffic, dynamic pricing may provide some extra flexibility. The key is adjusting prices downwards (when possible) as well as upwards so customers perceive it as a fair strategy.



Design your ideal candidate

Are you using old-school techniques to attract potential hires? Like so much else in the industry right now, tech tools can help you reach the right people. If you're already harnessing data to target your best customers and predict what they will want to buy, you can use the same approach to find staff. A recent report from QSR Magazine suggests taking the profile data of your best staff and setting out to find others with similar characteristics by creating "look-alike audiences." Is there anything you are doing to attract and retain customers that can be adapted to potential employees?



Warm Roquefort Mousse

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups Roquefort/Blue Cheese
- 1 1/2 cups PHILADELPHIA CREAM CHEESE
- 7 each Large Eggs
- 7 tablespoons Heavy Cream 1/2 teaspoon Paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Pepper 10 each Bread Slices
- 1 3/4 pounds Grapes
- 2 each Apples/Pears, sliced

Cold-weather comforts

The winter months are meant for noshing. The cozy nights in, weekends watching sports on TV, and casual gatherings with friends all call for tempting comfort foods across the menu. As the weather cools, how can your menu persuade people to place an order instead of cook? Think tempting appetizers that can be shared, family-style entrées for social gatherings, and multi-course meal bundles that can be ordered for easy weeknight dinners.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Prepare individual 4 ounce ramekins or tin cups by generously coating with butter.
2. In a food processor, blend the blue cheese, cream cheese, eggs, cream, paprika, salt and pepper until smooth.
3. Fill the ramekins and place them into a hot water bath pan.
4. Baked covered for 30 minutes.
5. As needed, toast the bread slices and then cut out 4" circle bases.
6. Unmold the warm mousse cups onto the toasted bread bases.
7. Serve with small cluster of grapes and apple/pear slices.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Kraft Heinz



Food safety training that sticks

The pandemic has ushered in a new era in food safety – and made employees and consumers more aware of the practices restaurants use to protect health. Ongoing training is key to making food safety processes take hold, along with using multiple approaches for workers who learn in a range of ways. For example, Panda Express, which is a 2021 winner of the Fast Casual/Steritech Excellence in Food Safety Award, uses a training process that includes auditory, visual and tactile instruction, paired with hands-on learning. Kenny Chuang, executive director of Food Safety and Quality Assurance for the brand, told Fast Casual that this approach has helped cement comprehension of food safety terms, equipment and procedures across the business.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

How do you keep score?

Better food safety practices are likely to be among the permanent effects of the pandemic for foodservice operations. To ensure your improved practices have staying power, it's important to bring together the various metrics you use to evaluate your food safety – including inspections from health departments and third parties as well as your own assessments – then review them regularly and communicate them clearly to staff. Comparing results over time and synthesizing evaluations from different sources can help you identify problem spots that need attention and translate them into clear action items for your team.



Foodservice Updates

Rethinking consumer connections

It used to be a whole lot simpler: Restaurants were valued as places where consumers could share a meal and connect with people. While that is still the case, the pandemic has turned the idea on its head. Whereas the early months of the pandemic made it necessary for this “coming together” to happen at home or virtually in an effort to keep business flowing, many food-service operators – along with complementary brands – are now redefining what it means to gather, even as dining rooms fill back up again. A new food-and-drink-trends report from Mintel mentions the increase of online hubs that offer ecommerce, brand-specific communities and opportunities to socialize virtually. Some restaurants are already well on their way: As reported by The Spoon, Chipotle recently created a Halloween promotion in partnership with the online game platform Roblox. Roblox gamers could enter a virtual Chipotle restaurant (specially decorated for Halloween) and collect a promo code good for a free burrito back in the real world. Granted, such partnerships may well be more feasible for major brands than small independents, but the example shows how the idea of coming together over restaurant food is being reimagined for the current times. How might you reimagine what it means to create memorable experiences for your guests?



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