

Foodservice Updates

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Is it time for radical reinvention?

By now, you likely know the approved COVID-recovery playbook for restaurants: Fine-tune your off-premise menu, offer digital ordering, make your pick-ups low-touch, etc. But restaurants aren't all alike – thankfully – so a cookie-cutter approach to COVID survival and success isn't going to work for everyone. If this sounds like you, what could work for you? What might inject your business with enough lifeblood to keep it going until spring, when the environment may look a whole lot better for restaurants? A recent New York Times report profiled the Brooklyn restaurant Gertie, which serves updated Jewish-American deli food and has embraced reinvention mode. When the pandemic hit, the restaurant had no takeout or delivery operation – the one thing believed to be a must for operating in these times. So the owners created one. Far from being a saving grace, it was a “dead end.” So instead, the restaurant has focused on nonprofit work – partnering with a range of meal programs around the city that distribute meals to the hungry. Prior to the election, they planned a weekly event designed to boost business while encouraging support for candidates running for office. So far, it's keeping them going, and they continue to look for ways to reinvent themselves. The environment for restaurants is severe – but money is still flowing in this economy. What organizations in your community could be critical partners for you right now? What causes might inspire your best customers to support you? This isn't what you'll be doing forever but it may help carry you through these next few months to a point next year when life feels a bit safer, people want to get out and support restaurants, and yours will be among the ones there to serve them.



Managing the transition to remote audits

We're all getting used to doing more tasks remotely lately – and your food safety audits may be heading in that direction if you aren't already conducting them remotely. These audits tend to be conducted either via cameras installed onsite or via a handheld camera that employee uses to do a walk-through of your facility. Food Quality & Safety advises that you conduct employee training on how to present your facility professionally via video, and also manage the related risks carefully – particularly when it comes to data security and keeping sensitive business information safe.



It's time for a data dive

Is your digital ordering platform up to the challenges this winter will bring? The season will be a test for restaurants everywhere: The days of generating only a small fraction of business from off-premise orders are over – perhaps permanently. So consider this winter an opportunity to get to know your data better than ever before. Andrew Robbins, the CEO of Paytronix, recently told Pyments.com that this winter would be a chance for brands to get to know their guests even better by exploring their customer relationship management systems and – with the help of artificial intelligence – analyzing customer purchasing patterns. “This can lead to long-term changes, like data-driven subscription programs that further cement the relationships between brands and their guests,” he said. Instead of looking at this winter as a period to survive, consider it a time when you can harness your systems to truly understand the data you're collecting – and then turn it into offers that build the kind of loyal following that will carry you through times like this.





Cook up some comfort

Couldn't we all use a little comfort right now? Research has confirmed that Americans have turned to comfort foods more regularly since the start of the pandemic. As the holidays and colder weather approach, look to add items to your menu that customers will crave for comfort on a night in. And your comfort foods don't have to be unhealthy. Maybe you can experiment with global spices and sauces to create a new twist on an appetizer – or invent a new dish by combining two of the popular items on your menu.

Food Trends

Quesadilla Burger

Ingredients:

10 each JENNIE-O® 5.33 oz. White Turkey Burgers,
5 ounces JENNIE-O® Turkey Bacon, #2711-06,
chopped
20 (6-inch) flour tortillas
10 slices smoked provolone cheese (unsmoked is fine
if smoked is not available)
5 ounces green onions, diced
5 ounces red peppers, diced
Olive oil, as needed
Roasted Garlic White Cheddar Sauce:
10 ounce white cheddar cheese
1 tablespoon garlic powder



Instructions:

1. In small pot, melt white cheddar cheese until smooth.
2. Add garlic powder and mix well.
3. Keep warm until ready to use.
4. Preheat flat top to 350°F. Place frozen burgers on hot grill. Cook for a total of approximately 18 minutes, turning 3 times. Always cook to well-done, 165°F as measured by a meat thermometer.
5. When burgers are close to being done, oil 2 spots on flat top and heat tortillas until golden brown and crisp.

To build the burger: Top one tortilla with provolone cheese, then the burger patty, red peppers, green onions, bacon bits, garlic cheddar sauce, and top with the remaining tortilla.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Jennie-O



What's your long-term COVID safety plan?

Even after we have a vaccine for COVID-19, the virus will still be with us and there will be a portion of the population especially vulnerable to it. Much like we have adapted our kitchens and food preparation practices for those with gluten allergies, we will likely have to make long-term changes to how we operate to protect against the coronavirus. Think about the ventilation in your facility, the level of interaction among your staff, technology that enables fast and contactless payment, and seamless pick-ups. Are there changes you have made in recent months that feel temporary but could be made permanent – and might help customers feel safer with you in the long term?



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Is your packaging doing the job?

The sharp rise in off-premise dining likely means that most, if not all, of your menu is being eaten a good 30 minutes after it's prepared. How well does it survive the journey from chef to customer? Just as you have likely had to give your business an update to operate effectively right now, your off-premise packaging may need some fine-tuning to make sure it keeps hot foods hot, cold foods cold, and protects food safety overall. Companies are coming to market with new packaging to suit the times – and some operators (like Garry Kanfer of Kissaki Omakase in New York) are even designing their own solutions. If you're looking for improved methods of packaging foods and protecting them during transport, you're apt to find plenty of models that may help.



Foodservice Updates

Give your loyalty program a COVID update

Does your loyalty program look different now than it did in February? It should. The kinds of promotions that were central to your loyalty program back then – along with your method of operating your program – might come across as inappropriate now. It's especially critical that you're using your loyalty program to fuel the parts of your business that need support in the current environment and to collect information about how, when and what your customers are ordering. This will help you to keep business coming in now and provide a more secure bridge to operating post-pandemic. So what do you want people to know about your restaurant? In what areas of your business do you want to build awareness and generate more sales? Your loyalty program is a great vehicle for directing customer focus. Incentivize people to place their order via your website or app and pick it up curbside. Integrate contactless payment with your loyalty program so you're automatically generating data (and at a time when safety is the new hospitality, also ensuring your guests don't have to swipe a physical card to earn points). Increase the appeal of your program by creating joint offerings with partner businesses and offering more flexible terms. Stay in contact through email and social media – posting daily on social media is important for awareness right now – and make sure to promote your safety practices.



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