

Foodservice Updates

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Be energy aware

For restaurant operators increasingly watchful of their spending, energy bills are a common area of concern. In recent months, electricity bills for consumers increased nearly 16 percent over the same period last year, marking their highest rise since 1981, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Total energy costs were about 24 percent above August 2021 levels. For restaurants, which rely heavily on gas and electricity for so many functions that are central to business, finding ways to trim energy expenses and use energy as efficiently as possible is especially important to the bottom line. This is particularly true as the industry continues to recover from the pandemic, extreme weather has disrupted production in oil-producing states, and the war in Ukraine has put upward pressure on natural gas and coal prices. If you don't have a strong idea of the biggest contributors to your energy costs, conduct an energy audit to help you better understand how your equipment – and your staff's use of it – can be improved. Your equipment itself may be adding unnecessary expense due to a malfunction or inefficiency. Refrigerators, for example, can be responsible for half of a restaurant's power use; gas burners consume far more energy than induction burners. You may be running appliances for longer periods than is necessary. Sensors and other energy-efficient tools can help, as can a regular survey of equipment to ensure it's operating as it should.



Better two-way communication through tech

Employees who don't feel heard aren't apt to stick around for long. On the other hand, those who do feel heard – and who also believe they are being trusted with the information they need to do their jobs – are more likely to buy into the mission and values of their employer. Tech-based communication tools can help ensure everyone hears the messages they need to hear, when they need to hear them. They also provide your team with a repository for their comments, questions, criticisms and ideas. Meanwhile, they free up time for more senior staff and make sure everyone is hearing the same message. In your business, are you using your technology to keep everyone on the same page and prevent miscommunication?



Helpful tech in a smaller package

For smaller restaurants, building a tech stack may feel intimidating, considering the potential expense and their shortage of human resources as compared to major brands. But it doesn't have to be overwhelming – particularly at a time when so many restaurant tech companies are emerging for restaurants of all sizes. Smaller operators can build their ideal tech stack by pin-pointing the top areas where they need support, then finding cloud-based solutions to provide it. For example, in a recent Nation's Restaurant News report, Peter Baghdassarian, co-owner of Massis Kabob, a seven-unit Armenian kabob chain, said two of the key parts of his restaurant's tech portfolio have been digital menu boards to help describe the menu and anticipate the many questions they would otherwise hear from guests (saving staff time), and leaning on partner Incentivio for building out and monitoring their loyalty app. The latter solution ensures Baghdassarian can leave the data analysis – a critical function for any restaurant – to people who specialize in it, while he can focus his time and money on serving guests well.





CHEESY MUSHROOM ORZO BAKE WITH GENOVESE PESTO

Ingredients:

20 Oz. Barilla® whole grain spaghetti
20 Oz. Ground beef (80/20)
8 Oz. Italian sausage, off the casing
5 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
1 ½ Cup onion, chopped
3 Garlic cloves, chopped
32 Oz. San Marzano tomatoes, crushed
4 Slices white bread, no crust, diced
1 Cup parmigiano cheese, grated, divided
14 Oz. Bocconcini mozzarella
1 Tbsp. Parsley, chopped
¼ Cup basil, sliced
Salt & black pepper to taste

Different pasta, different experience

At a time when ingredients' availability can be unpredictable, changing up the experience of your menu can be as simple as adjusting the grain at the foundation of a dish. For maximum impact of your pasta dishes, pair the sauce or dressing of each item with a pasta shape that will best amplify its flavors. Consider orzo to add subtle bulk to soups or salads, or use it as a risotto stand-in. Pair fettucine or other ribbon-shaped pastas with richer, meaty sauces, and thinner strands like vermicelli with oil- or cream-based sauces. Have a special sauce you'd like to show off? A pasta like lumache will hold the sauce in its ridges and capture even more of it in its curved, hollow center, ensuring you're serving up a plate of perfect bites.

Food Trends



Instructions:

Bake off Pretzel Bites® in a 350° F oven for 3 minutes or until slightly crunchy
Remove pretzel bites from oven and allow to cool slightly
Toss pretzels in a mixing bowl with melted butter until fully coated
Add 1/2 cup of Mexican blend cheese, half of the bacon, and salt to the bowl and toss until distributed evenly
Place pretzel bite mixture into an 8" cast iron skillet and bake in oven for 5 minutes
Remove skillet from oven and top with remaining bacon and cheese
Drizzle cheese sauce over pretzels bites
Garnish with scallions, jalapeno's, and sour cream
Serve immediately

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla

Consider a Process HACCP plan

About 60 percent of all foodborne disease outbreaks in the U.S. are caused by foodservice establishments. To change that figure in a more positive direction, restaurants might take some cues from robust food safety processes required elsewhere. While a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan is mandatory for many food production facilities, it is voluntary for restaurants – but a Process HACCP plan is tailored to foodservice businesses and could be helpful to establishments struggling with food safety. As a recent Food Safety Magazine report explains, a Process HACCP plan helps define the flow of food preparation in a kitchen for all products, much like the flow of food in a manufacturing facility production line. It includes every recipe from the stage of sourcing ingredients through receiving, storing, preparing and serving them, offering the opportunity to identify and prevent potential hazards at each step – before they become sources of foodborne illness for guests.



#FoodSafety

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Are your restaurant's safety hazards isolated – or part of a trend?

Like most restaurant tasks these days, the hazards in and around your kitchen can be digitally monitored and managed. If you're struggling with staff absence due to injury – especially on a repeated basis – it may benefit you to collect data that can tell a story about what needs to change. As a recent QSR Magazine report explains, health care management software can help an operator track how much time someone spends on dangerous or unhealthy tasks. It can also compile information that feeds into reports on dangerous situations and help an operator identify trends that could harm staff and, by extension, the business.



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Consider new paths to hiring

As so many restaurant operators struggle to recruit and retain employees, it may help to consider tapping into alternative sources for potential staff. For a growing number of operators, that has involved hiring people who have been through the justice system and are reliant on their work as a bridge to an independent life. Recently, 50 representatives from around the country joined the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the success of the Foundation's HOPES (Hospitality Opportunities for People (Re)Entering Society) program, which has enrolled more than 700 people who have been through the justice system and were subsequently connected with career opportunities in the restaurant, foodservice, and hospitality industry. The program, which launched in 2019, is a collaborative effort across seven states to identify, train, employ, and ultimately advance people who have been through the justice system and are seeking a career path in the restaurant industry. It facilitates work-readiness and restaurant industry-specific training through its network of state Departments of Corrections, state restaurant associations, and 13 community-based organizations. Following their training, participants are connected with opportunities through its network of local and national employer partners, including MOD Pizza, Inspire Brands, and Dave's Killer Bread Foundation. Chooserestaurants.org provides more information about the program, its results and how to get involved.



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