

Foodservice Updates

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Stock your inventory with chameleon ingredients

The National Restaurant Association recently published its annual What's Hot forecast for the coming year, highlighting the ingredients and approaches it expects to see in the industry in 2023. Included in these trends is an anticipated continuation of the blending of dayparts as consumers spend more time working from home or from places other than the office and eating at odd hours as a result. So in addition to regular mealtimes, the in-between times – happy hour or snack times, for example – continue to be important to attracting guests. Restaurants that may have played down those times of the day before may now be looking for menu options to lift business during those periods, not to mention staff to cover the orders that come in. At the same time, however, one of the top three macro trends in the 2023 forecast was menu streamlining. More than before, restaurants face having to do more with less when it comes to the ingredients they weave into the menu. An ingredient must work hard – not simply as a featured player in an entrée, but also as a supporting player in several other dishes in different menu categories. Yet those dishes must be different enough to make the menu sufficiently interesting to guests that they are motivated to order from restaurants at a time when their money isn't going as far. Restaurant operators are doing a delicate dance right now to find the right mix of dishes on their menu. The ingredients that can elevate a dish – but also disappear into it by becoming something new when combined with different spices, sauces and textures – can help operators spread their inventory as far as it needs to go right now.



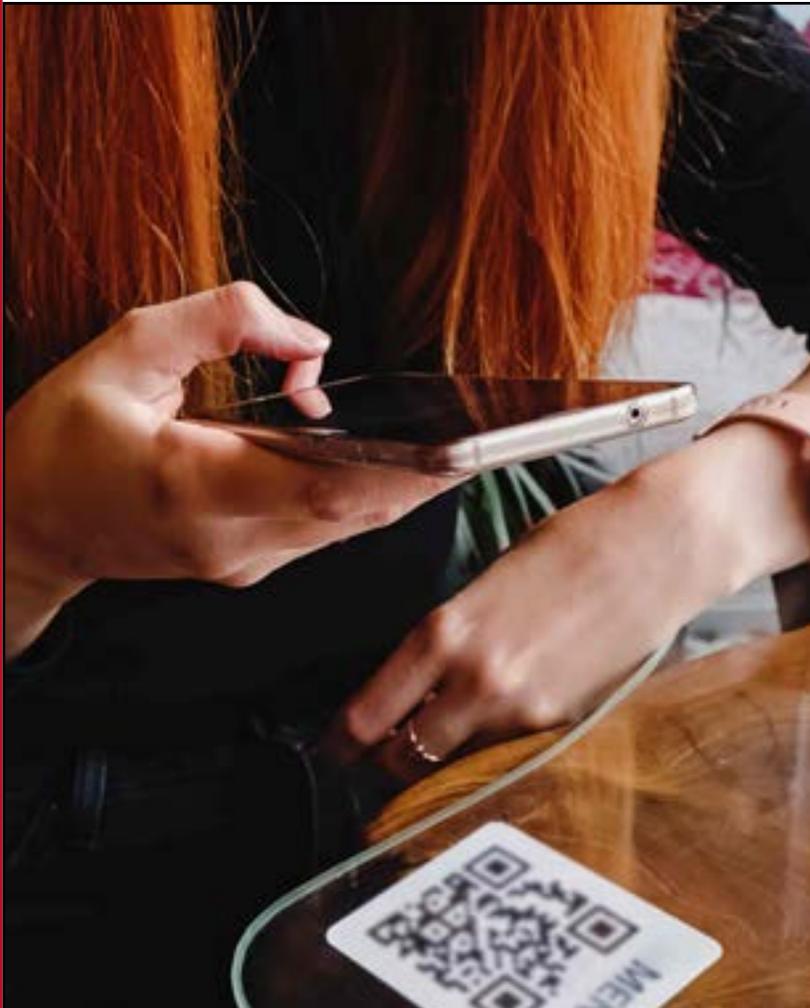
Put your money where your inventory is

There is a lot of waste – and therefore money – that can hide in your inventory. The topic loomed large in a recent survey of restaurant operators by the National Restaurant Association and the accounting software provider Sage Intacct. Inventory management systems rose to the top of the list of technologies restaurant operators are looking to implement in the next one to two years. The responses represent an evolution from how operators were feeling in the middle of the pandemic, when delivery apps and QR codes jumped in popularity. Regardless of the times, being able to manage your inventory with greater precision can be a significant boost to your efficiency. It can help you tighten up your menu and ensure that every ingredient you have on hand is pulling its weight in terms of profitability and popularity. At the same time, it can minimize the space you need to store what you serve, the amount of food coming back to the kitchen untouched, and the scraps you have to discard.



Tech-based processes help you go green

Nowadays, being a “green” company is an important brand benefit – and a compelling part of the story you can share with guests. But while being green is often associated with using sustainable suppliers or serving takeout food in compostable containers, your technology can also play a major role in how environmentally responsible you can claim to be. Restaurants can be paper-heavy businesses – from the takeout menus they generate, to the ordering pads and checklists used for tracking inventory. Any efforts you make to automate your paper processes using technology can contribute not only to your overall efficiency but also to your greenness – and the story that can help you connect with your guests.





One-ingredient wonders

Elevating your menu items doesn't require complex combinations of ingredients. The addition of a single premium ingredient can transform an ordinary appetizer into something memorable or justify a higher price point for an entrée. In fact, making these small enhancements to your menu is an easy way to help you make a popular item that much more profitable – and allow it to earn its place on your menu.

Food Trends

Bacon Wrapped Tater Tot Bombs

Ingredients:

16 each frozen tater tots At room temperature
1 oz sharp cheddar cheese cut into 1/4 inch squares
4 slices bacon quartered
1/4 cup brown sugar packed
6 fl oz Boom Boom Sauce as dipping sauce



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Wrap each tater tot and cheese square in a piece of bacon . Repeat with remaining tater tots, cheese squares and bacon pieces.
3. Dredge each tater tot in the brown sugar, pressing to coat.
4. Place tater tots seam side down onto the prepared baking sheet. Place into oven and bake for 20-25 minutes or until bacon is crisp.
5. Serve immediately with Boom Boom Sauce as a dipping sauce.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Ken's

What's your riskiest day of the week?

Restaurants tend to have one day, perhaps even more, when food safety issues are most likely to occur for them. According to a recent webinar from Steritech and the National Restaurant Association, often that day is Sunday – worryingly, a day when it's common for people to eat out at restaurants – but for your restaurant, it might be any day that your general manager is at an offsite meeting or on vacation. The variance between worst days the better days can be as high as 30 percent, according to research cited by Chris Boyles Steritech, so there are clear opportunities for restaurants to make improvements through corrective action. If you don't know your restaurant's riskiest day of the week when it comes to food safety, investigate it so you can identify the root causes of the risks you're seeing on those days. Who is on staff? Who is not? Then prioritize your biggest risks and the ones you're seeing the most frequently.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Know who, specifically, is responsible for food safety

When a general manager is asked who on their team is responsible for food safety, a common answer is “everyone.” On the surface, that answer makes sense – protecting food safety should be everyone’s job. But it can end up meaning that no one is responsible, with everyone assuming someone else on the team knows the right way to clean a piece of equipment or complete any number of important food safety tasks. An FDA study found that there are more than 60 percent fewer critical issues when the person in charge could describe the operation’s food safety management system. The system should include specific procedures, training and monitoring of how staff are carrying out procedures – and for any critical procedures, the food safety management system should identify the specific people responsible, as well as where they can find additional information if they need help. Does your food safety management system have that degree of clarity? If not, your team members may be assuming that someone else has an important responsibility covered.



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Robots begin to build a track record – and it's a mixed bag

As restaurant operators struggle with perennial challenges around labor (made more difficult in times of high inflation), more of them have turned to robots as a means of easing labor struggles for good. According to the International Federation of Robotics, which conducts an annual robot census based on global vendor data, approximately 121,000 service-sector robots were sold last year to carry out tasks ranging from transportation to vacuuming. The potential benefits have sounded appealing. Robots may offer restaurants a means of managing the shortage of workers, along with offloading labor-intensive, repetitive, time-consuming or even dangerous tasks. But as a recent Wall Street Journal article describes, the machines have been experiencing some growing pains. Companies ranging from Amazon to DoorDash are no longer operating a home-delivery robot and a salad-making robot, respectively, having found that their robots weren't meeting their service needs or simply weren't worth the investment. Other reviews of robots have been more mixed, with businesses interested in adopting the technology but feeling some ambivalence about investing in robots without being certain of their longterm benefits. What's clearer is that enough companies are using robots for a variety of tasks now that lessons are due to emerge about where the machines can best meet an operator's needs – and where they may fall short. In the meantime, focusing on smaller-scale automation – e.g. improving digital ordering, streamlining order preparation through a connected kitchen display system, or using chatbot technology to respond to calls or on-line requests – may be the more prudent way to go. The same goes for your employee policies, since it could take some time for businesses to determine how best to operate without a human touch – or even with a bit less of one.



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