

Foodservice Updates

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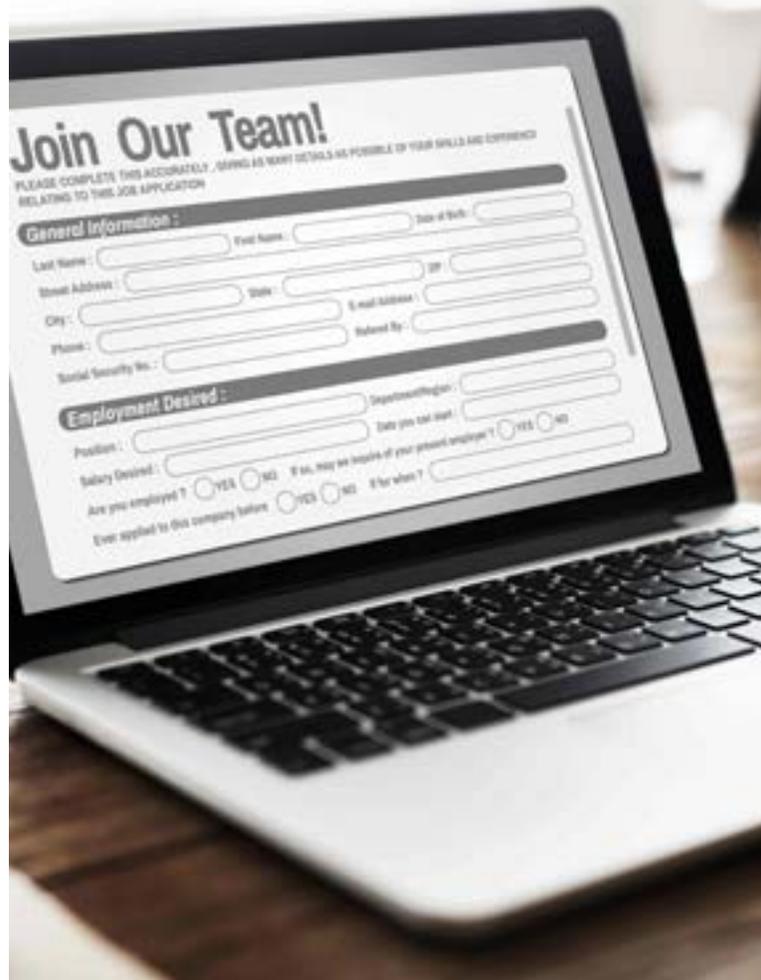
Where is opportunity knocking?

Times of challenge create opportunity – and while the pandemic has presented plenty of hurdles for restaurant operators, it is also revealing new possibilities for those with the resources and flexibility to snap them up. Case in point: A number of large restaurant brands are planning aggressive franchise expansion right now. According to a recent Restaurant Dive report, lower taxes, milder weather and more relaxed Covid restrictions have made the South and Southeast U.S. attractive targets for restaurant expansion lately. Shake Shack, for one, announced that it will be adding up to 50 new locations in 2022 – its largest expansion to date. Even for independents and smaller chain restaurants, there are opportunities. As restaurants have closed during the difficult months of the pandemic, some are leaving behind real estate pre-configured for drive-through business, along with heavy-duty equipment that may be available at a reduced cost. With an excess of restaurant real estate on the market, look for more preferable terms from landlords as well – particularly in high-end locations that may have been out of reach pre-pandemic. Finally, if you're open to less conventional arrangements, consider other restaurants or even complementary businesses that may want to join forces via sub-leasing arrangements or other partnerships that can help you both bring business in the door.



Are you using tech to make the right first impression?

At a time when so many restaurant workers have left the industry, the first impression you make on a candidate matters. According to a recent webinar from the National Restaurant industry entitled “New Thinking for New Challenges - Technology, Workforce and The Restaurant Operator,” the technology you use during initial candidate interactions can help. That’s especially true because the millennial generation, which grew up around technology and is comfortable with it, will comprise 75 percent of the workforce by 2025. The industry experts participating in the podcast suggest you have a strong online presence through your website, then enable candidates to apply for positions via a text or a scan of a QR code. Further, any information you request from a candidate on an online form should then feed into other forms (such as I9, W4 and WOTC tax forms) so you’re not asking for the same information multiple times.



Biggest pandemic tech pivots that are here to stay

While restaurant technology had been steadily gaining ground before Covid, it appears to have changed many processes for good. During a recent online discussion presented by the National Restaurant Association, industry leaders weighed in on the most important tech-enabled shifts that have become permanent in the past two years. Among them are the online cashless ecosystem for restaurants – it’s now a customer expectation to be able to order via an app or a delivery service, no cash needed. Flexibility to order/collect via multiple channels has also become critical – and technology is key to helping your staff juggle all of those streams simultaneously. Finally, tech continues to fine-tune our capability to order and pay at the table. (So despite the pushback that QR codes get from some guests, the flexibility and speed they offer operator and guest alike may give them staying power.)





Smokehouse Apple Pie

Ingredients:

Whole Chef Pierre® Apple Unbaked Hi-Pie®
1 C Cheddar cheese, shredded
3 Applewood smoked bacon strips, prepared
¾ C Apricot preserves
1 Tbsp Hot water



Expand your definition of dessert

At a time when restaurants need to find every opportunity they can to carve out a profit, your dessert menu needs to earn its keep. That can be difficult when desserts are often shared by guests, there is a limit to how expensively they can be priced, and they increase the time it takes to turn a table in-house. To help, consider adding some lighter and more savory items to the menu to balance any heavier, sweeter items that many guests feel they must try to resist. Reduce portion sizes where possible so ordering an individual portion of dessert doesn't feel like such a splurge. Finally, suggest some alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages to complement your dessert offerings.

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Instructions:

1. Remove pie from packaging and thaw at room temperature for 1 hour.
2. Preheat convection oven at 350° F with sheet pan on middle rack.
3. Starting inside of the crimped crust, cut through the top crust around the pie and remove the top.
4. Combine the apples in the pie with the cheddar cheese.
5. Chop the prepared bacon and evenly distribute onto apple-cheese mixture.
6. Break apart removed pie top into medium-sized random pieces (silver dollar size).
7. Place dough pieces evenly on top of apple mixture. Place pie on preheated sheet pan and bake for 50 minutes, rotating 180° after 30 minutes.
8. Combine apricot preserves and hot water and brush mixture over pie crust.
9. Return pie to oven for 10 more minutes.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Sara Lee Bakery



All hands on deck

This holiday season, consumers are especially eager to gather and celebrate – and restaurant teams could be stretched more thinly than before. Now is an important time to ensure your staff is on board with critical food safety measures, especially frequent, thorough handwashing. Make sure your handwashing stations are stocked with soap and paper towels, and remind employees to wash hands with soap and water before and after preparing food, after touching raw meat, eggs or unwashed vegetables, and before eating or drinking.



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Don't let paper processes compromise food safety

If you're like many operators managing a high degree of employee turnover right now, you're having to prioritize both constant onboarding of new and/or temporary staff, as well as enhanced cleaning procedures. If you're continuing to use any manual processes to conduct and track safety checks, this can enable staff to tick boxes on checklists without actually completing necessary tasks, exposing your operation to food safety problems. Using a digital system to ensure safety protocols are followed can also make it easier to conduct self-audits between third-party audits, so you can ensure your business stays on track between inspections.



Foodservice Updates

Preferred packaging

Your off-premise business no doubt looks a lot different than it did just a couple of years ago. According to research from NPD Group, off-premise restaurant orders were up 20 percent in September compared to where they were in 2019. But what happens when you're not only struggling to source key ingredients but also the cups and containers you need to enable your food to get out the door? Ongoing global supply chain challenges have resulted in increased costs and scarcity of these items, with key suppliers having to limit the number of cases restaurant customers can purchase from them. Some major brands are finding alternatives that have fringe benefits. Sara Burnett, who leads sustainability efforts for Panera Bread, told CNBC that the brand had switched to a compostable thermal wrap for their sandwiches – and it happens to use 60 percent less material, is easier to transport and has a smaller carbon footprint. But as the pandemic ebbs, there may be less consumer concern about the need for single-use items – and perhaps an opportunity for restaurant brands to revive the pre-pandemic programs they had in place for reusable containers. As Nation's Restaurant News reported recently, Tupperware has created reusable packaging for Tim Hortons as part of the brands' partnership with the zero-waste platform Loop.



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