

Foodservice Updates

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The year of the back-up plan

Supply challenges could persist for the remainder of 2022 and into next year, according to the prevailing commentary from restaurant industry analysts. Consumers are well aware of the shortages and are experiencing them at grocery stores themselves, along with higher prices as compared to restaurants. But with a little planning, you can entice guests to order from you and avoid reminding them of the inventory (and staff) you may lack week to week. Now is a good time to develop a contingency plan for the year, to cover recipes, ingredients, promotions and equipment. First, scrutinize your recipes and look for ways to flex them with a range of ingredients – swapping in different vegetables, grains, sauces and spices, for example. For each dish, have a roster of back-up ingredient options that you can turn to if a key ingredient isn't available. Be able to make quick adjustments to your physical and online menus based on your supply so guests aren't in the position of ordering an advertised dish only to be told it's unavailable. This is yet another year when operators will have to do more with less, so consider how you can serve guests in a way that is as resource-efficient as possible (and then incentivize guests to support you in that way). If you want to elevate your takeout business to ease the burden on your staff or manage better with a skeleton crew, for example, you could offer a discount when guests submit an order for collection before 5:30pm – or whenever your dining room normally begins to get busy. Finally, look at your cooking equipment and try to forecast what is likely to need a replacement or repair. Then, look to simplify your preparation and menu so you aren't so heavily reliant on individual pieces of equipment that could let you down and take extra time to be repaired or replaced.



Tapping into tech to boost back-of-house efficiency

Even if you have already embraced digital ordering, QR codes and other front-of-house technology to help your operation run more smoothly, your kitchen may still look like it did a decade ago. The Spoon predicts the digitization of the restaurant kitchen will take off this year, enabling restaurants to run more nimbly and, by extension, better manage labor, monitor inventory and portion sizes, and reduce waste. Powerhouse Dynamics and Perfect Company are just a couple of the players bringing more real-time management and automation to the back of the house. Do you currently use just-in-time tools in your kitchen that allow you to flex in the moment with what's happening in your business?



Lean into machine learning

Elevating your loyalty program is key to retaining guests and maintaining profitability. Increasingly, artificial intelligence (AI) integrated with a restaurant's POS, online ordering and overall payment system is being used to ensure that the loyalty offers restaurant guests receive are precisely fine-tuned to their evolving preferences. As AI algorithms analyze data from customer orders, they spot patterns and adapt to them continuously – then translate that information into targeted promotions and coupons. These offers can mean the difference between retaining a customer who goes a bit out of their way to collect an order from you versus one who debates whether to use a third-party aggregator to order from you or a nearby competitor.



Fiesta gemelli with pork, black beans, poblano peppers, and chihuahua cheese

Ingredients:

- 1 ¼ Box Barilla® gemelli
- 12 oz. Lean pork, diced
- 4 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
- 3 Garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Can Black beans (15 ounces), drained
- 1 Cup Onion, minced
- 1 Cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 Cup Poblano peppers, diced
- ½ Cup Chihuahua cheese, shredded
- ¼ Cup Cilantro, chopped
- ¼ Cup Green onions, sliced thin
- 1 Tsp. Paprika
- 1 Tsp. Cayenne pepper
- Salt & black pepper to taste

Raise your pasta game

Is there a better foundational ingredient than pasta? At a time when operators need to make the most of their inventory, pasta is an especially valuable tool. It can add dimension to your salad menu, be upscaled with seafood, or add bulk to ingredients in a global dish. Yet it also shines alongside simple, fresh ingredients. Depending on the shapes used, it can make a dish feel more comforting, surprising or upmarket.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta according to package directions, reserving 1 cup of pasta cooking water.
2. Meanwhile, in a skillet over low heat add oil, paprika, cayenne, and garlic. Cook gently for 1 minute. Add onion, cooking for another minute. Then add peppers cooking an additional minute.
3. Add pork, season with salt and black pepper and cook over medium/high heat until pork is browned.
4. Add beans and tomatoes. Cook for 1-2 minutes.
5. Drain pasta and add to the sauce along with the cooking water. Cook for 1-2 min or until most of the water has absorbed.
6. Remove from the fire, stir in ½ of the cheese, ½ of the cilantro and ½ of the green onion.
7. Garnish with additional herbs and cheese.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla



Reduce slips, trips and falls this winter

The spread of the Omicron variant – not to mention the typical seasonal illnesses taking a toll on staff – can make it easy for operators to overlook other important health and safety hazards in a restaurant that can lead to insurance claims. Slips, trips and falls are among the most common risks – and winter precipitation can increase the slippery spots in your facility that create hazards for staff and guests. In addition to regularly scanning floors to keep them clean, dry and non-slippery, Markel Insurance advises operators to clear spills with a clean mop and the recommended proportion of cleaning product in the water to remove grease. Remove clutter from walkways and work areas and keep them well-lit. Use slip-free mats in high-traffic areas and mark or fix any areas that may pose a tripping hazard, such as uneven flooring or bumps in carpeting.



#FoodSafety

Keep these guests away

A warm, fragrant restaurant kitchen is an inviting shelter for pests. In addition to sealing cracks, keeping doors closed, wiping spills and keeping foliage away from the perimeter of your facility, make sure you're taking some additional steps to avoid enticing unwanted guests. Clean your food preparation and storage areas regularly. Keep close watch on your inventory – to include rotating damaged or expired stock often and storing fresh items in sealed containers in your pantry. Bag your food waste tightly (and minimize it wherever possible so there is less to discard) and ensure dumpsters are emptied often and closed securely at all other times.



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Show your value

The end of the year is a time restaurant operators can count on for strong performance – with December typically the most profitable month of the year. But Black Box data from December points to sales growth of just 4.1 percent, compared to 8.4 percent in November. It marked the weakest month for the industry since the 2.7 percent growth reported in March 2021. In light of those results, a recent Restaurant Business report suggested guests may be questioning restaurants' value amid steeply climbing costs. It's no wonder – amid ingredient and labor shortages, along with escalating costs, something has to give. But all the same, operators can only turn those figures around if they can demonstrate the value of choosing a restaurant meal over one prepared at home. Staffing shortages can cause service to take a hit, but you may be able to help compensate for this with improved speed of preparation: Simplify your menu with speed-scratch ingredients or other elements ready to be added to a number of dishes. Remove friction from the process guests must go through when searching for you online and placing an order. That means monitoring your restaurant online to ensure information about your menu, hours and contact information is up to date on review sites, search engines and social media, as well as testing your online ordering functionality to remove glitches and ensure repeat guests are recognized in your system. Speaking of loyal guests, double down on your loyalty program and guest personalization, which will make it feel more worthwhile for guests to support your business (either in your dining room or through order collection), as opposed to having a third-party vendor drop off their delivery order. Finally, aim to appeal to guests' own values by supporting local suppliers and sharing their business names with guests – an expensive meal feels more worthwhile to a guest when they know it supports their broader community.



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