

Foodservice Updates

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Build a battle-ready business

Like constant change? Probably not. Even for those who are more comfortable with change, the past year has likely forced too much of it. But what if you could adjust your mindset and your business so that you could better weather, anticipate and (perhaps) even welcome change? A September TD Bank survey of 250 restaurant operators around the U.S. aimed to take the pulse of the industry and find out what strategies have worked for restaurants that have managed to succeed in such a tumultuous year. Three key findings emerged: Off-premise sales are critical and restaurants need to be able to accommodate them (particularly via such consumer conveniences as mobile ordering and delivery). Payment methods including mobile, online and contactless are helping restaurants encourage consumer confidence. Finally, many of the traditional physical characteristics of restaurants are changing to accommodate drive-thrus and pick-up areas, shift to ghost-kitchen formats and decrease overall footprints. So how can this information help restaurants set themselves in a more powerful, less reactionary position for the future? First, scrutinize your off-premise menu and sales to ensure they are practical and profitable. Then adjust. Get comfortable trying new ideas regularly – it will not only help you see what works and what doesn't, but it will also give you something new to promote to customers. Next, evaluate your payment methods: Do they help you limit face-to-face interactions with customers and also enable you to expedite payment and get a faster, clearer picture of your sales? Finally, take advantage of this time of disruption. Look for new partners and investors, and talk to bankers, landlords and suppliers to identify opportunities to secure more beneficial arrangements.



Use tech to remove the hunches from your scheduling

Even in more normal times, there is often waste lurking in a restaurant's labor structure. You might have too many or too few employees on hand to serve customers or close for the night, or simply have too many occasions when your staff have idle minutes between tasks. Using tech to manage your labor isn't about replacing your people with machines, but about accumulating evidence to demonstrate what labor is required to complete various tasks and then ensuring you deploy the ideal number of people to execute those tasks. You may feel that after many years running a restaurant, you have a good gut feel for how many people you need and when – but you might be surprised by the hidden waste that tech can reveal to you. (Noodles & Company learned recently via the use of HotSchedules, for example, that having five or six employees handle closing-shift duties was taking one hour, while the same duties took just 45 minutes when they scaled the number of closing-shift staff down to four people.)



When a cloud improves the forecast

As COVID-19 has forced many businesses to have their employees work from home, restaurant operators haven't had that option – at least for front-of-house staff. But cloud-based technology systems have at least allowed restaurants to move their business data to a central location where managers can access it remotely and ensure they pay paychecks and invoices promptly and manage other back-office functions in real time to keep the business on track. Think of the transition to the cloud as not simply a convenience or safety measure during a temporary pandemic, but as a long-term strategy that will enable your business to be more agile going forward – enabling you to adapt more flexibly to new business models and sales and labor structures as your business evolves.





Sweet Chili and Sesame Asian Pasta Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 Box, Barilla Whole grain penne 1 Tbsp, Toasted Sesame oil
- 2 Red bell peppers, sliced thin 2 Green Bell peppers, sliced thin ¾ Cup, shredded red cabbage 3 Cups, Chopped broccoli
- 1 cup, shredded carrots
- ¼ Cup, Soy Sauce
- ¼ Cup, Sweet chili sauce
- 3 Tbsp, Rice Vinegar
- 3 Tbsp, Toasted Sesame oil
- 1 Bunch, Green onion
- ½ Cup, Cilantro
- Salt to taste
- ½ Cup, chopped peanuts

Great grains

You can help your customers eat healthfully this year – without skimping on taste – by making small tweaks to key ingredients. Incorporating more whole grains into your menu can elevate the content of fiber, B vitamins and other key nutrients in your entrées and sides. Consider offering a whole grain bread as an alternative to sourdough on your sandwiches, or whole grain pasta in place of the traditional variety you use in hot pasta dishes and cold salads.

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Instructions:

1. Bring a large pot of water and season with salt, cook the pasta according to the directions but drain 1 minute less than required cooking time.
2. Toss the pasta with 1 Tbsp sesame oil and place on a sheet tray to cool down.
3. In a large bowl combine the soy, sweet chili sauce and rice vinegar then stir to combine.
4. In the same bowl add the remaining ingredients. Once the pasta is cool fold the pasta in with the remaining ingredients.
5. Let the pasta rest for approximately 30 minutes before eating so the flavors have time to meld.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla



Five steps to cutting contamination

Cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting have taken on new importance in restaurants – and have even become a selling point in the past year. At a time when we're battling the spread of not only COVID-19 but also seasonal viruses, make sure your team isn't cutting corners on keeping your restaurant safe. The National Restaurant Association advises restaurants take a five-step approach: First, remove any crumbs and spills with an absorbent, disposable towel or cloth. Then, with a new disposable wipe, use a surface-safe cleaning solution to dissolve any residue. Next, rinse the surface with water (the presence of leftover cleaning chemicals will prevent the sanitizer from working). Sanitizing is the critical next step in preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses – and restaurants often use a quaternary- or chlorine-based sanitizer for the job, along with a foodservice wipe (using a disposable one will prolong the life of the solution). Finally, allow time for air drying. Sanitizers generally need 60 seconds of contact to kill germs on the surface. Allowing a few extra seconds of drying time can make a difference to your safety. Knowing how often to clean and sanitize is important too: StateFoodSafety.com advises cleaning and sanitizing equipment and food contact surfaces after handling meat, after changing the food being prepared, after four hours of constant use and after taking a break.

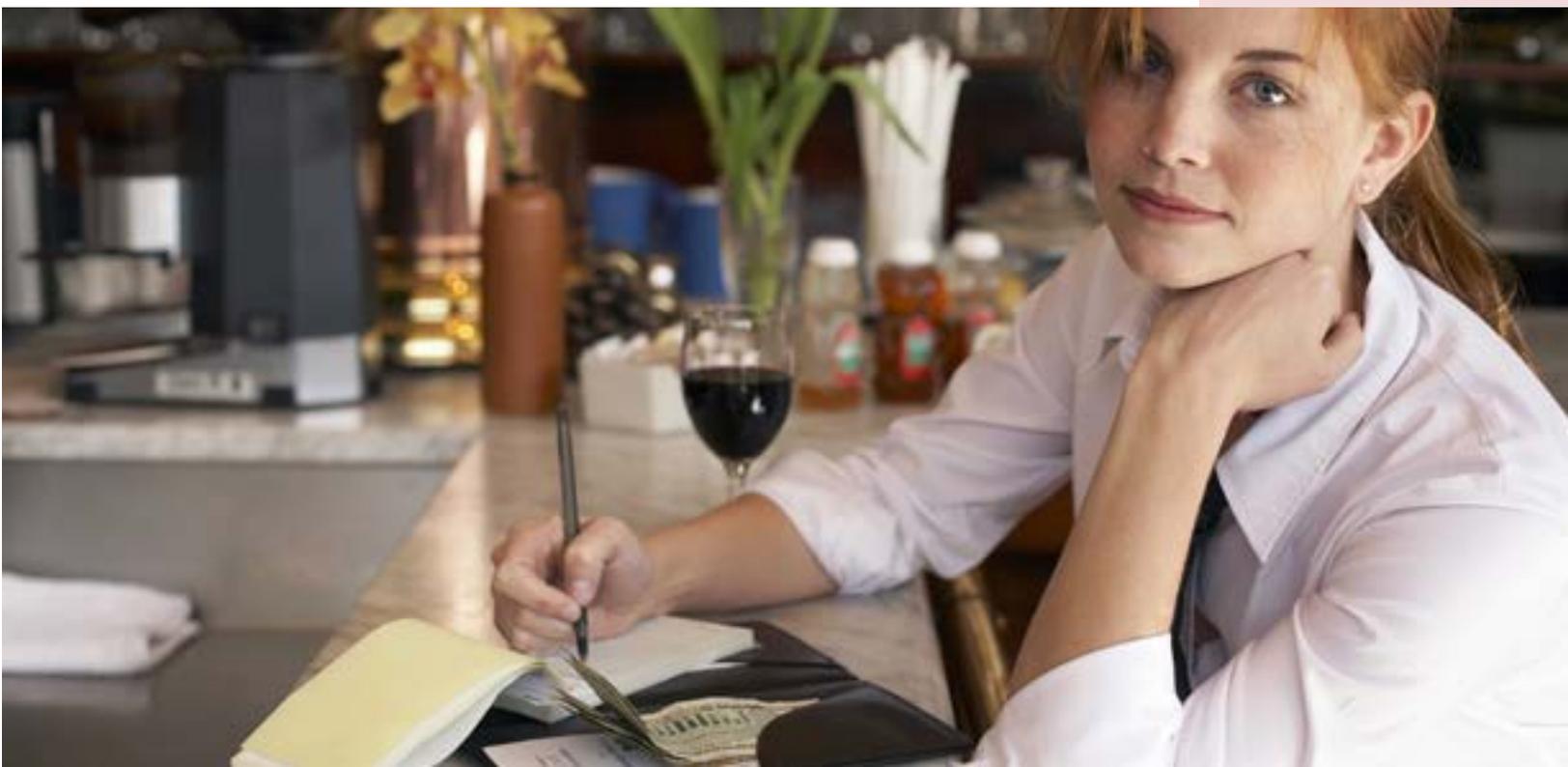


#FoodSafety

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Promote health – but don't punish illness

When one of your employees is sick, do they feel there will be negative consequences if they report it to you? To be sure, restaurants are shouldering existential challenges right now and need to be able to rely on their teams. But make sure you prioritize safety – even if it means being temporarily short-staffed. The Centers for Disease Control have been emphasizing employee self-reporting of symptoms during the pandemic – and encouraging transparency with your team may help you avoid a larger safety problem. You can help by keeping up with daily health screenings for all employees, along with regular training to reinforce that you value the safety of your people and want everyone to be healthy – but won't take punitive action if they aren't.



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Boost your plant appeal

You know plant-based foods are here to stay when a French, vegan restaurant earns a Michelin star. That's just what happened in January when the restaurant ONA received the accolade, along with a green star recognizing its ethical practices. The restaurant joins increasing numbers of vegetarian and vegan restaurants around the world that have earned Michelin

stars, but having such a restaurant rise to the top in meat-loving France demonstrates that even committed carnivores may find something to love in plant-based food. For restaurant guests and owners alike, there are benefits to offering these choices: Consumers are happily incorporating more plant-based foods into their diets as their available options become tastier, more plentiful and make them feel more ethical. On the flip side, restaurants can tap into new sources of positive publicity by offering inventive vegetarian and vegan options. They may find new potential funding sources too. (Chef Claire Vallée,

who opened ONA in 2016, relied on crowdfunding and loans from a bank specializing in ethical funding to get her restaurant off the ground.) If you're looking to test your customers' tastes for plant-based foods, promote a meat-free Monday as a low-commitment way to encourage flexitarians to try cutting back on meat. While you're at it, highlight higher-protein options that are more likely to satisfy a skeptic, as well as other consumer-friendly benefits to plant-based diets, like a lower BMI and improved cardiovascular health.



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:

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