

Foodservice Updates

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Thinking beyond the food in 2024

It's a theme that has persisted since the pandemic: Consumers simply want more from restaurants than quality food and drink these days. As factors such as food inflation, threats of recession, and the slimming down of menus and staff rosters have made ordering restaurant food a harder sell for consumers, more operators have turned up their experience factor to help attract traffic. The result is a restaurant that feels like it's as much about the atmosphere and excitement of the experience as about the food on the menu. As a recent Forbes report details, experiential dining can involve such elements as immersive themes, interactive elements, storytelling or entertainment. This can be achieved by changing up guest expectations through rotating pop-up concepts, themed dining events, or collaborations with guest chefs or complementary businesses, for example. Similarly, US Foods reports that more restaurants are boosting their experiential vibe with entertaining tableside prep, such as fancy knifework displays and avant-garde, Instagram-worthy cocktails. These approaches also provide natural opportunities for businesses to promote their offerings on social media, entice guests who are active on social platforms to share content from their visit, and forge partnerships with online influencers who can further spread the word. Even if you're not looking to put on a show for guests, think of experiential dining as simply a means of keeping things interesting for guests. This can be a natural outgrowth of the way you have had to make regular changes on your menu due to supply chain snags or the changing of the seasons. Consider rotating in more limited-time offerings or specials, or featuring a reinvented menu of drinks, appetizers or entrées each season to keep the experience new and fresh for your guests.

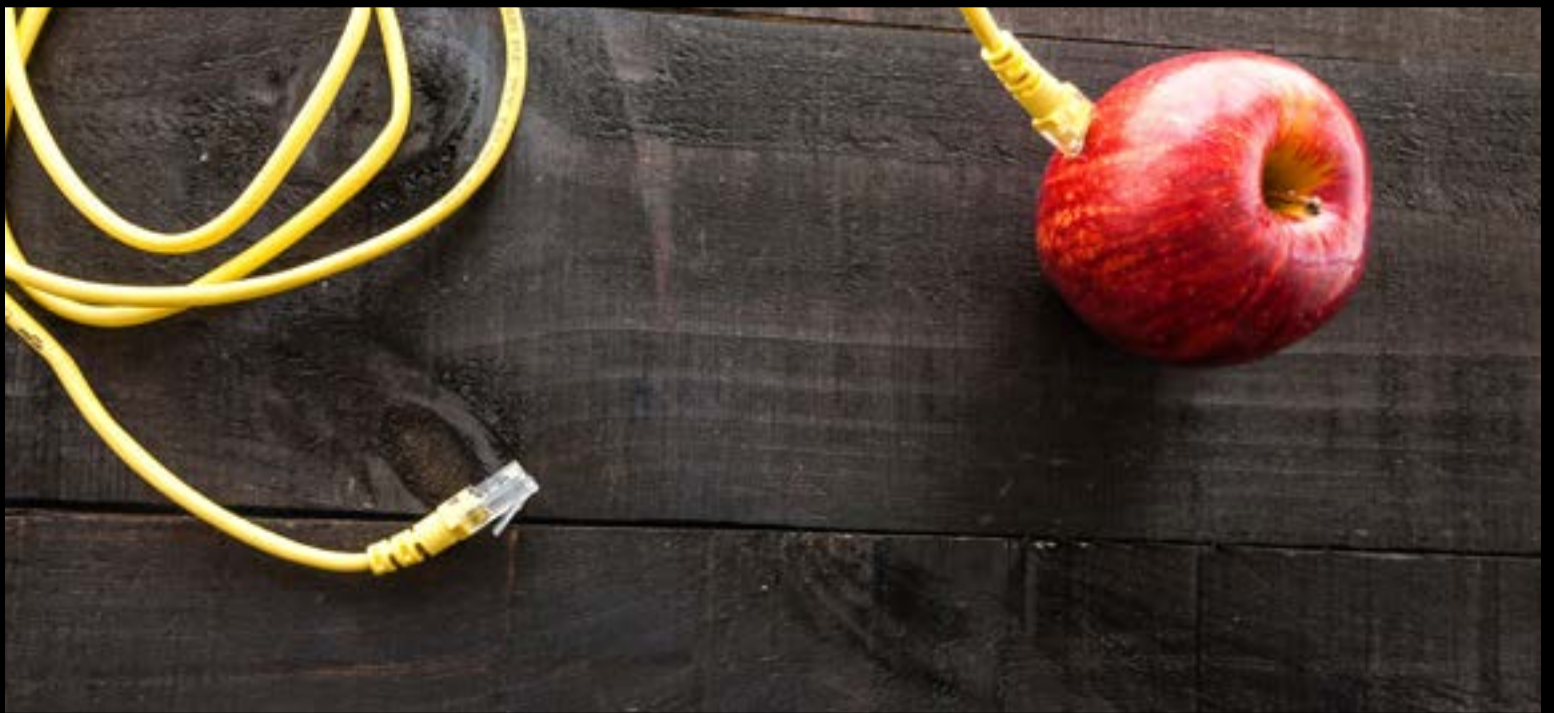




Tech Talk

Connected kitchens boost guest personalization

How smart is your kitchen? While the Internet of Things (IoT) is making it possible for more restaurant kitchens to track food supplies and minimize waste, IoT-connected sensors are also enabling what can be a key selling point for today's restaurant guests: hyper-personalization. Specifically, the connection of the IoT and your customer relationship management system can help you deliver more personalized service to the growing number of consumers who have food allergies or other specific dietary needs. By collecting and analyzing guest data, you can be reminded of a guest's needs and preferences at the time of their order, which, in turn, can help you ensure their order is safe for them to eat, help your staff prepare it quickly without having to take time to confirm food sensitivities with the guest, and thereby drive guest satisfaction and loyalty.



Enhance your risk management culture

Taking a more proactive approach to risk management in your business can save you significant money and time in the long run – helping you avoid costly insurance claims, repeat safety inspections, business interruptions and other drains on resources that you'd rather direct to improving your overall operation. Could risk management be woven into your culture more tightly this year? It can help to look across your operation to assess risks as diverse as your potential for equipment problems, food safety concerns and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Connect your risks to daily tasks that help you identify and respond to problems. Assess where staff training is needed to reinforce the actions your business needs to take to manage these issues day to day. Then make it possible to track these actions – by tying each task to a person on staff and using automated dashboards and checklists that make it easy to monitor when jobs are completed and missed. To manage evolving risks to cybersecurity, conduct regular testing with the help of your vendor, limit system access to key personnel, and ensure you're using protections such as multifactor authentication and encryption as additional data safeguards.



#FoodSafety

Foodservice CEO

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How does working for you benefit your staff?

Even as restaurant operators are turning to automation to handle more tasks across their businesses, hospitality remains a human business. Restaurants continue to need to be able to attract and retain talented people – and losing staff is a costly, time consuming and persistent challenge, with average annual turnover in the industry near 80 percent. Improving employee benefits can help chip away at that turnover by making restaurant work into more of a career path than it has been in the past. (And offering such improved benefits is becoming more important as brands such as Chipotle make headlines for offering Gen Z-focused benefits supporting financial savings and investment, as well as mental health.) If you are among the 88 percent of operators who say they are likely to hire additional employees this year, consider what people in the demographics you hire tend to value. A recent report from Modern Restaurant Management suggests that workforce education remains in high demand among job applicants, especially support for building IT skills, learning languages, and financial support for earning subject-based certifications and bachelor's degrees. Fortunately, offering such benefits has also become far more economical for employers with the advent of online education programs. But retaining your best people can also be about keeping communication channels open with staff so you can learn about what they need – whether it's development opportunities, a prompt paycheck, a flexible schedule, or a supportive work environment.



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