

# Foodservice Updates

## In This Issue

- [A new kind of ghost?](#) | [Compelling combos](#) | [Spreading the advantages of safety benefits](#) | [Help your staff receive the right messages](#)
- [Investing in new tech? Start with the kitchen](#) | [Harness the training power of tech](#)

## Rethink what it means to be a restaurant

In recent years, restaurant operators have experimented with new service models and streams of income that they may not have considered before. Yet even though the Covid-19 pandemic is behind us – we can only hope – and your guests likely no longer think of you as a reliable source for paper towels and cases of beer, a lot of restaurant brands are finding resourceful ways to hang on to pandemic-era approaches to business and expand upon them. As a result, the definition of a restaurant has become more layered and diversified. Restaurant food can come to guests via a virtual kitchen, retail meal kit, an online video or the dining room itself, so take advantage of the business opportunities that may exist even several degrees of separation from your guests. Have a colorful chef or team? Consider creating a podcast, blog, or TikTok video series around them. Or perhaps you have a popular recipe or spice mix that guests rave about. Building that into a recipe subscription or making it part of a larger retail arm may help you stretch your reach to people far beyond your city – and result on some extra eyeballs on any additional content you’re creating too. This can help you transform the typical restaurant job too, creating some opportunity for people to build careers with you for the longer term.



## Investing in new tech? Start with the kitchen

The most appealing customer-facing tech doesn't matter if your kitchen can't complement it with speedy, accurate, safe order preparation and service. That may be why a number of casual dining brands, including the likes of Chili's, are stepping back from sexier tech like robot servers and drone deliveries to focus more resources on tech that can help fine-tune kitchen operations, Nation's Restaurant News reports. What may be most helpful are kitchen display systems that take the mental work out of juggling multiple order streams, as well as tech that can identify areas for improvement in food safety. Where are your bottlenecks in the kitchen? Even if you don't know where they exist and how much of an impact they are having on your operation, there is likely a tool that drills down on that information for the benefit of your business.



## Harness the training power of tech

Restaurant hiring is again creeping back up after a rocky few years. Tech-enabled training can help you engage new staff and ensure they have the knowledge to manage not only your processes but also the demands that challenging guests can pose. Specifically, by providing mobile-accessible training that staff can digest easily and dip into on a continuous basis, you can make training more relevant by updating it with lessons the business is learning in the moment. That kind of support helps staff do their job with the confidence you're providing them with the tools they need to perform it well. And according to research from the employee engagement software firm Axonify, that kind of support is rare: They found that 37 percent of workers say they have yet to receive training for handling dangerous or challenging events.

# Food Trends

## Soft Pretzel with Mac and Cheese and Pulled Pork

### Ingredients:

- 1 5 Oz. Bavarian soft pretzel
- 4 Oz. Stouffers white cheddar mac and cheese
- 1 Oz. Great Lakes shredded carolina reaper cheese
- 2 Oz. Chandler vinegar pulled pork
- 1/2 Oz. Sugar foods crispy jalapeno
- 1 Oz. Sweet Baby Rays garlic buffalo sauce
- 1 Tbs Sweet Baby Rays Nashville hot



### Instructions:

1. Salt pretzel and bake at 350 for 5 minutes
2. Remove from oven and top with hot mac and cheese and shredded reaper cheese
3. Return to oven and cook till cheese is melted and starts to brown
4. Warm pulled pork and toss with garlic buffalo sauce
5. Remove pretzel from oven and plate, top with pulled pork
6. Finish with crispy jalapeno

Recipe and photo courtesy of J&J Snacks

## Compelling combos



More restaurants are shrinking their menus in an effort to maximize efficiency – and that places some extra pressure on each menu item to deliver on value and experience. If you're struggling to cut popular menu items from your roster, is there an opportunity to combine complementary foods to create a memorable dish that guests aren't likely to find elsewhere? Developing some hybrid dishes may help you retain the best features of several popular items in an appealing new format.

## Spreading the advantages of safety benefits

In an effort to recruit and retain staff in a tough labor market, restaurant operators are making changes to their benefits packages to demonstrate the safety and flexibility of their working environments. But these offerings don't need to be hidden behind the scenes. Some brands are taking these changes as an opportunity to present the brand in a positive light with guests – and even offer them some perks in the process. Take Noodles & Company, which has made a commitment to supporting employees' mental health through benefits including free counselling and mental wellness support through the HR platform LifeWorks. In January, Noodles & Company translated this into a guest-facing offer: They partnered with the online therapy company BetterHelp to offer a month of free therapy to up to 4,000 guests who purchased from the restaurant during the month.



**#FoodSafety**

# #FoodSafety

## Help your staff receive the right messages

We have all been on the receiving end of a person who over-communicates – too many instructions and too many details can make a person tune out the extra information. But in the context of communicating with staff, tuning out key information can generate harmful risks. Are there any key messages that tend to get lost in a sea of instructions? Lean on your best frontline staff to boil down the most important information you need to communicate for a given task and account for employees' need to absorb it in different formats. Some information is best learned when a person has to do a related task or teach it to others, while other procedures can be presented in quiz form for a team contest. It also helps to take the temperature of your team on a regular basis: Does everyone have a nonpunitive means of asking questions and accessing information when they need it?



# Foodservice Updates

## A new kind of ghost?

It wasn't so long ago that ghost kitchens felt like a must-have tool in a restaurant operator's portfolio, offering flexibility with menu offerings, greater control over overhead costs, and simply a means of getting restaurant-quality food to consumers during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, as people look to restaurants as gathering places and lean on grocery stores for more of their at-home dining needs amid high inflation, many ghost kitchens are facing headwinds. While some ghost kitchen brands are growing, particularly when they have backing from large restaurant conglomerates, there have been more closures of virtual brands in recent months – even for well-established restaurants including Chili's and Wendy's. Industry analysts say that consumer concerns about quality control and uneven familiarity with tech-driven and restaurant-driven ghost kitchen brands could be part of it. As a result, expect to see new hybrid ghost kitchen models emerge that may lack dining rooms but do have physical locations, staff and even event space that guests can visit to better connect with the brand. It's another lesson for restaurant operators in how times and consumer habits can shift so quickly, calling for rapid adaptations. Having the tools, systems and menu flexibility that allow you to be nimble may be the best investment. It's important to be able to scale different parts of your business up or down based on the insights you're gaining from your data – and retain the power of your brand in the process.



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](http://www.teamfourfoods.com) and [www.valuefour.com](http://www.valuefour.com)