

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

Reframe your snacks | Sustainable seafood to elevate your menu
I Don't forget about the ice | New tools to support buffet food safety | Chef-quality food without the chef? | Tech contingency planning

Give your loyal guests the LTOs they crave

The limited-time offers you provide can help you tempt guests who want to take advantage of the scarcity of a meal item that won't last for long, test new ideas that might deserve to be on your menu for the long term, and reward the guests who have been your most loyal supporters. According to Technomic research, the most craveable LTOs tend to be comforting, indulgent foods. However, if you build offers that deliver on the specific feedback your most loyal guests provide, your LTO lineup has the best chance of strengthening – and becoming an extension of – your relationships with these guests. Every time they place an order with you, consider it an opportunity to learn about their preferences. What are their favorite menu items? What doesn't work for them? What do they wish you would offer? How can you make them feel like their feedback matters to you – and that they are part of an exclusive club? For example, could you invite them to vote for their preferred LTO, have them sample the contenders, or provide them with early access to the one you decide to promote?

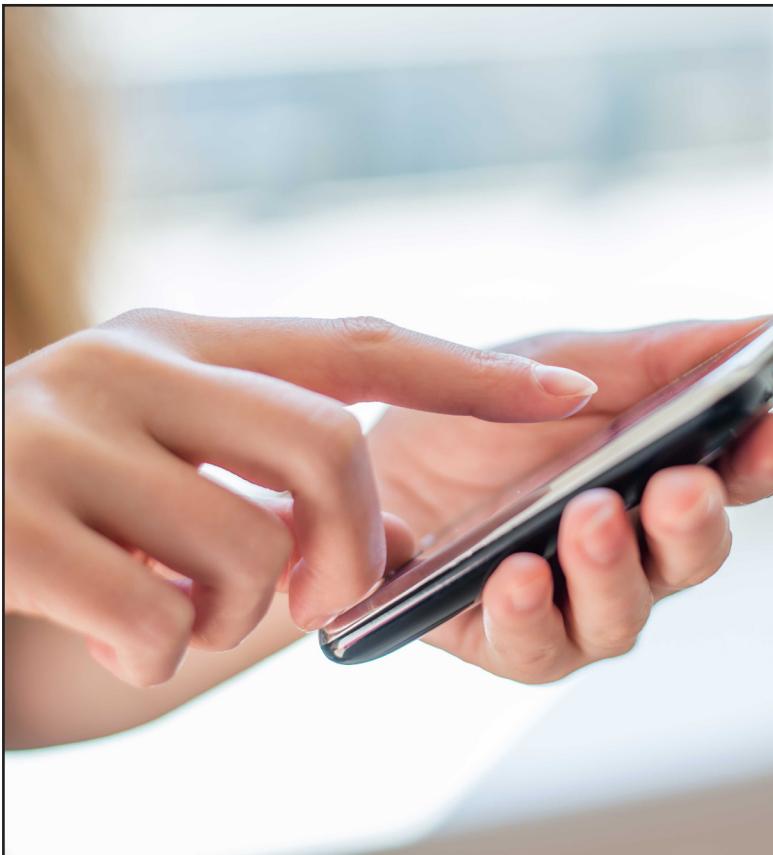


Chef-quality food without the chef?

You may already be introducing new tech tools in your kitchen that can increase its connectivity – such as temperature sensors that can alert a manager to a malfunctioning cooler or systems that can process multiple order streams and churn out directions to help kitchen staff prepare orders at the appropriate time. Going forward, this kind of connectivity with external hardware systems may even help restaurants bring the dishes of top chefs into their businesses without the trained staff generally required to prepare them. One new company called CloudChef aims to be “Spotify for food” with the help of a cloud software platform that uses sensors and cameras to capture and share the process of a chef working through a recipe. All cooking decisions are done by the software, while human staff are still needed to portion and plate food, as well as to move it around the kitchen during preparation. The company’s only U.S.-based, company-owned kitchen so far is in Palo Alto, Calif. (meals are available through third-party services like DoorDash), but it offers a window into how restaurants and labor needs may evolve in coming years.

Tech contingency planning

There is little doubt that automation and artificial intelligence-powered solutions are changing the game in restaurants and dangling carrots like speed, scalability, profitability and freedom from labor woes. (Take Sweetgreen, which is planning to test fully automated restaurants next year.) It’s also true that for every successful test of new restaurant tech, even at well-resourced global brands, there is an unsuccessful one that restaurant leaders decide to sideline. In a recent report from Restaurant Business about the ups and downs of automation, Technomic’s Rich Shank advises planning for contingencies when implementing new tech, as well as “being clear-eyed about the inevitability that these systems will fail.” As important as new tech can be for a business, so are responsive, effective tech support and the availability of low-tech capabilities to complete tasks when problems arise.



Food Trends

Chickpea Spaghetti with Crab, Snow Peas, and Spinach

Ingredients:

20 oz. Barilla® chickpea spaghetti
1 lb. Lump crab meat (cooked)
3 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
2 Tbsp. Butter
2 Garlic cloves, minced
8 Oz. Cremini mushrooms, sliced
12 oz. Snap peas, julienned
12 oz. Baby spinach
1/2 cup Roasted red pepper, diced
½ cup pecorino romano (grated)
Salt & black pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. In a skillet over medium heat add olive oil, butter, snap peas, and spinach.
2. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta according to package directions. Reserve 2 cups of pasta cooking water.
3. Add 1 ½ cup of pasta cooking water to skillet with ½ cup of parmesan, and ½ of the red pepper.
4. Add crab to the skillet.
5. Drain pasta and add to the skillet. Add additional cooking water if needed.
6. Toss well; garnish with remaining red pepper and cheese.
- 7.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla

Sustainable seafood to elevate your menu



Adding seafood to a dish can help you upgrade your menu with healthy, budget-friendly protein. It can also give you a good story to tell guests at a time when more consumers seek out foods with a lower environmental impact – recent research has found that seafood is a low-emissions protein in relation to other animal proteins. If you're looking for seafood that can help you upgrade your menu in climate-friendly ways, talk to Team Four and also look to Seafood-watch.org, which recommends --- and allows you to search for – domestic and imported sources of seafood that are fished or farmed in environmentally sustainable ways.

Don't forget about the ice

Amid the focus on keeping and serving food at the right temperature, it can be easy to overlook contamination risks in the beverages you serve. Ice machines can be havens for mold and other contaminants if they are not cleaned, sanitized and handled properly – so much so that you can find TikTok videos of HVAC service people discovering a range of unappetizing health risks lurking in ice machines. Beyond regular cleaning and preventive maintenance of the machine by a professional vendor, make sure your staff know how to scoop ice safely and are trained to take notice of insect activity, improper drainage, dust accumulation and other potential hazards in and around the machine.

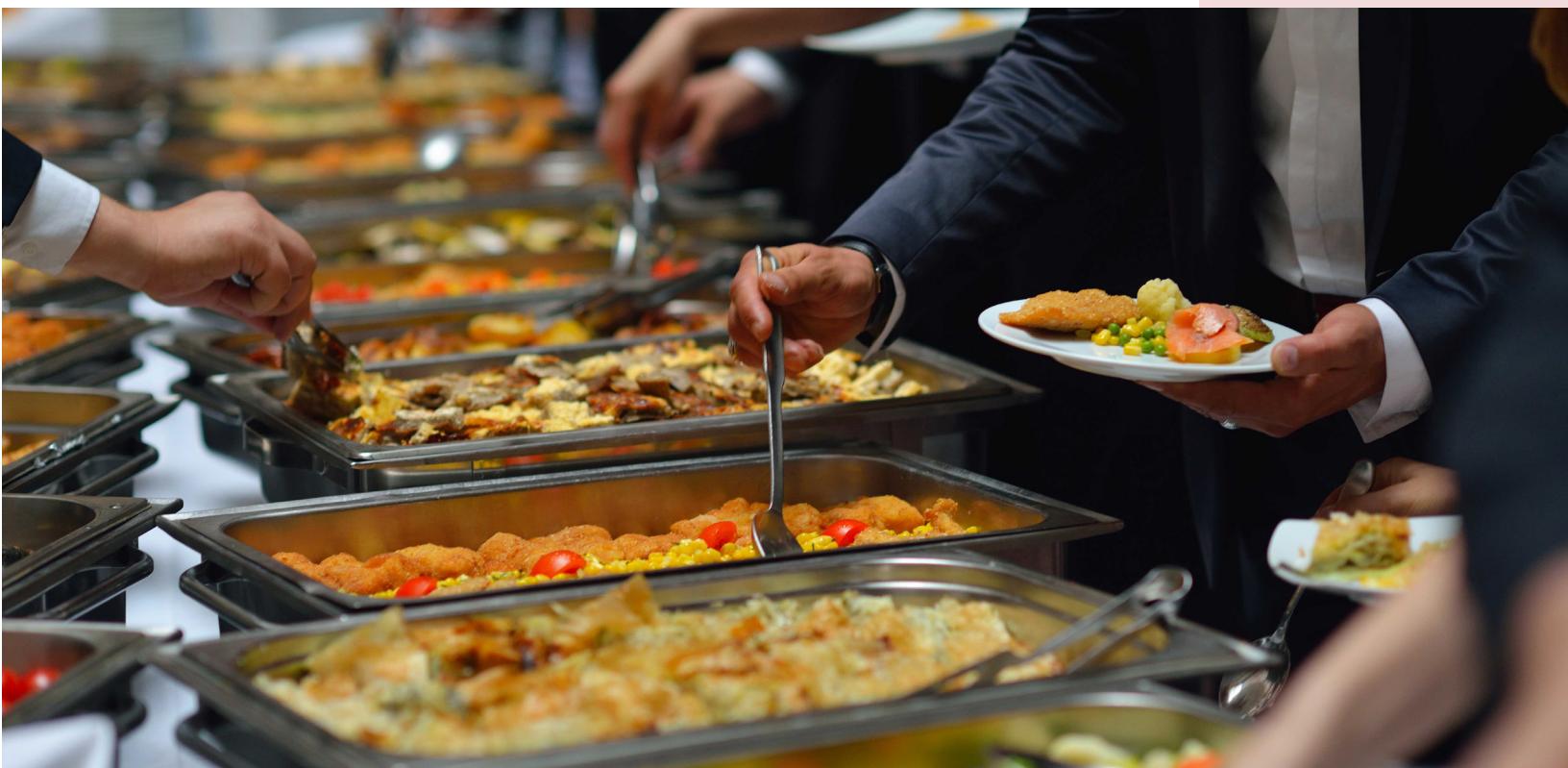


#FoodSafety

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New tools to support buffet food safety

Covid-19 ushered in a period when safety became the new hospitality – and equipment that supports this shift is now coming to market. That has injected new possibilities into some aspects of foodservice (like labor-saving buffets) that have become less practical in the past few years. For example, Nation's Restaurant News reports that at the recent North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers show, new solutions included a salad dispensing machine that can automatically portion out salad ingredients, as well as a hot and cold buffet station that can keep foods at multiple temperatures on the same buffet line. If your restaurant relies on buffet service – or once did – how can you automate tasks that tend to pose food safety challenges?



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Reframe your snacks

As consumer work habits have shifted over the past few years, restaurant dayparts have blurred too, making it feel appropriate to eat meals at in-between times previously relegated to snacks and drinks. But while this shift has, in theory, created some opportunities for restaurants to appeal to guests between meals, other challenges – notably inflation – have made operations more difficult in recent months. Although signs point to the U.S. experiencing decreased inflation and (as of the timing of this writing) possibly avoiding recession, economic uncertainty has still affected how consumers are spending in restaurants. Guests' desire for value has meant that when they go to a restaurant, they are more likely to do so for a meal than for a snack. But that doesn't mean your snack menu is obsolete. In fact, it could actually help you upsell to your guests and increase perceived value if you change how you frame these items. For example, try offering snack-sized portions on your appetizer menu or position them as small plates that can help guests feel like they are maximizing the experience they are getting for their bill total. Or, as a recent Restaurant Business report advised, you can offer some of these items as add-ons or combo deals.



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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