

Foodservice Updates

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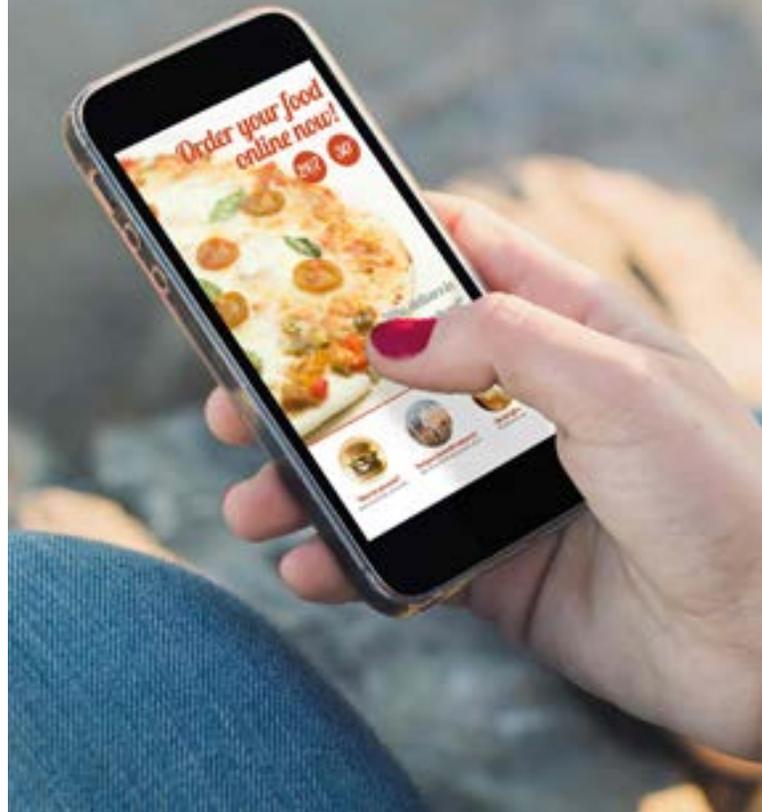
Profitability through sustainability

The pandemic has put the supply chain in the spotlight and revealed the pressing need for more local, sustainable sourcing – not only to help foodservice businesses be more environmentally friendly but to help them sustain operations altogether. Increasingly, it’s an issue that more Americans are thinking about: According to Statista research, 41 percent of Americans are interested in sustainable meat and 59 percent in sustainable seafood. While developing a more local, sustainable supply chain may sound more feasible for larger, resource-rich restaurants that consumers expect to have frequently changing menus – not so much for burger chains with more static options – this is another belief that the pandemic has turned on its head. Jill Taylor, the outgoing CEO of the regional burger chain Burgerville, recently spoke with Bloomberg about how she has brought a regional, sustainable focus to a quick-service chain – and how leaning into that focus during the pandemic has helped the brand to maintain profitability throughout. That has meant sourcing local mint and offering mint milkshakes on the menu in certain Pacific Northwest locations, and being open to changing up menus with local specialties in other regions of the country depending on what’s available. While the chain’s commitment to supporting local, sustainable producers has resulted in a more expensive burger, more consumers may be willing to support a business that holds (and promotes) these values. Do you know how your guests feel about sustainability? Would they spend a few more dollars on their meal if they felt good about the origins of the food on their plate?



Lean into convenience tech

Boosting certain convenience technologies you use in your restaurant could elevate your check totals – or result in your leaving money on the table. That’s according to recent research from Pymts.com, which surveyed consumers about the technologies that most influence their purchasing. The most popular features among respondents were the ability to order online, which 41 percent favored as part of their experience in a restaurant, as well as loyalty programs, which came in at a close second with 39 percent of respondents saying the programs drive them to make a purchase.



Hiring with the help of an app

As labor challenges persist for the time being, consider adopting technology that takes some of the more tedious and time-consuming aspects of the recruitment process off your plate. App-based systems – Fliptable and JobToday are just a couple of examples – can help a business find new employees and manage the details of onboarding them, making it easier for existing staff to share job postings with others, candidates to apply, and employers to track a candidate’s progress in the hiring process – all through a simple swipe on a phone.





Candy Apple Cheesecake Pops

Ingredients:

- 1 Whole Sara Lee® New York Style Pre-Sliced High-Rise Cheesecake (16 slices)
- 2 C Candy apple coating
- 1 C Pecans
- 1/2 C Brown sugar
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/4 tsp Cinnamon
- 2 Tbsp Water
- 1 C Dried apple pieces, chopped
- 32 Lollipop sticks

Make it memorable

Consumers are eager to get restaurant meals – but soaring consumer prices (inflation is at its highest rate in 40 years) can create a barrier. This often means that a meal eaten at a restaurant or taken out has to be extra special. Are there ways you can level up the experience of your menu with a memorable presentation or ingredient? Your appetizer and dessert menus are ideal places to start, since your guests may not prepare multi-course meals for themselves at home.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Cut cheesecake into 2-inch triangles and insert a lollipop stick into each. Set aside.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment and set aside.
3. Add brown sugar, salt, cinnamon and water to a saucepan and bring to a boil.
4. Add pecans, stirring constantly, and cook mixture for about 3 minutes, or until the liquid cooks down to glaze the pecans.
5. Pour pecans on the parchment-lined baking sheet and allow to cool.
6. Once pecans are completely cool, coarsely chop and set aside.
7. Coat cheesecake pieces with candy apple coating.
8. Top with candied pecans and apple pieces.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Sara Lee Bakery



Risk management for restaurants

Restaurant operators are having to do more with less these days – and that can expose them to risks they were able to manage more easily before the pandemic. The current operating environment calls for a robust risk management plan that reflects today’s challenges and the need to cut corners. Your insurer can help you assess your existing operation and get a clearer sense of your biggest liabilities – whether they relate to your property, worker’s compensation, delivery, cyber, employment practices or some other aspect of business – and advise you of what steps to take now to prevent those risks from becoming costly problems.



#FoodSafety

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Scheduling to ensure customer and staff safety

The labor shortage, along with the spread of the Omicron variant, have resulted in many restaurants modifying their hours in an effort to manage concerns over customer and worker safety. A recent Fortune report said McDonald's U.S. locations are open 10 percent fewer hours than before the pandemic and 9,000 Starbucks locations have also modified their hours. In your restaurant, do you know how to best ride the line between serving customers competently and protecting the safety of everyone who comes through your doors? Throughout the course of a shift, can you identify the precise number of employees you need on hand at various stages to complete the work that must be done? Would temporarily modifying your hours help ensure you have enough minimum staff on hand during the hours you are open?



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Meals in the metaverse?

Even if not, get creative with virtual experience.

It seems that with each passing week, more restaurant brands – both new and established – are preparing for a future in which our actions in the metaverse, the fast-developing virtual reality world, can help us enjoy restaurant meals in reality. Panera and McDonald's are among the larger restaurant brands that have invested in non-fungible tokens (NFTs) that serve as virtual currency. In the not-too-distant future, it could be possible for a person to, say, play a video game in the metaverse in which they walk into a virtual restaurant, place a Panera order, and then have it arrive on their (real-life doorstep) within a period of minutes. To be sure, this is not a future that every restaurant will see in its business plan. But this merging of virtual and real worlds is something for every restaurant operator to think about because it creates a new dimension in the experience of eating in a restaurant. It will change the competitive landscape and provide new ways for restaurants to establish and promote their brands. Even if you're not planning to dip your toe into the metaverse, think about your restaurant's online presence. How can you make it a more authentic, brand-elevating expression of the experience you offer in your dining room?



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