

Foodservice Updates

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Seize the full power of QR codes

If your guests have resisted using QR codes to facilitate their interactions with you, perhaps thinking they are just a relic of the pandemic, they may need you to demonstrate how much these tools can enhance their experience with you. After all, when a guest is waiting in a line out your door to be seated, what's not to like about being able to scan your menu, see photos of every dish, get the latest updates about what is available, and even place their order (with great accuracy) at the very moment they arrive at their table? Or how about when a guest wants to place an impulse order of extra drinks or desserts? QR codes can help you capitalize on those moments (and even upsell guests on additional items) while taking pressure off your front-of-house staff and helping them turn tables more quickly. You can promote QR codes as a sustainable step too – fewer paper menus and receipts can send a positive message about your business. And these codes aren't going away – according to research from Statista, approximately 89 million smartphone users in the U.S. scanned a QR code on their device in 2022, an increase of 26 percent over 2020, and QR codes are expected to reach 100 million users in the U.S. by 2025. Across restaurant categories, there are ways to use these codes to boost your efficiency – and the morale of both staff and guests. Have you tapped into their full potential?



Tech Talk

Boost the accuracy of your off-premise orders

The off-premise restaurant experience has become as important as the on-premise experience. What does yours say about your restaurant? A new report from Fast Casual indicates that inaccuracies in digital orders can most often be traced back to one place: the kitchen. It said many restaurant brands experience 15 percent lower guest satisfaction on digital orders. Improving upon these outcomes is about having a more unified solution for managing and fulfilling business coming from multiple streams. Your kitchen display system is a key tool in helping you manage the flow and throttling of orders, as well as in allocating team members to manage tasks accordingly.



How do guests respond to your tipping technology?



In the heart of the pandemic, when consumers were feeling especially grateful their favorite businesses were open, they often reflected their gratitude through generous tips made via the low-contact payment platforms they were beginning to use. But as things have returned to business-as-usual, the preset tip requests that are generally made by these platforms have continued to take off. They often prompt consumers to leave a 15 percent, 20 percent, or 30 percent tip, for example, above often-smaller prompts that allow for a “custom tip amount” or “no tip.” Now, even businesses that haven’t traditionally requested tips are now opening the door to that expectation. (The writer of a recent New York Times report about coercive tipping practices mentioned the awkwardness of being prompted to tip generously by his grocery store cashier and his motorcycle mechanic.) Now that consumers have become more aware of this practice, they may be more apt to push back on it. Ensure that your payment system feels fair – guests shouldn’t feel coerced to tip, or like they need to strain their eyes to find the “no tip” button on your payment platform. If possible, allow the guest to make the decision about tipping while your employee is not standing expectantly in front of them – and monitor your online reviews for any mentions of how your tipping technology may be impacting guests’ decision to dine with you. It’s a final impression you want to get right.

Human Resources

Align goals and rewards to retain new talent

The job market is booming – especially for the hospitality sector. The January jobs report indicated that the U.S. economy added 517,000 jobs in January, marking the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years and dissolving lingering worries about a recession. So how do you keep the talent you're able to attract? Max Wesman, CEO at GoodHire, told QSR web that setting goals is critical – along with providing rewards when those goals are achieved. That could involve setting a specific target for preparation speed, order accuracy, or some marker of customer service provided, then providing an incentive for staff to come together and achieve the goal over a set time period. What motivates your team might be a cash reward or simply getting priority in selecting shifts for the next month or quarter. Assess your biggest pain points and biggest team motivators to make the best matches between goals and rewards.



Simple digital tools as a safety backstop

Digital tools and other systems that enable kitchen automation may at first sound like items suited to deep-pocketed, well-resourced restaurants, but they can help any restaurant save potentially significant money in the long term – by minimizing the labor hours required for tasks and preventing unsafe food from reaching guests. One simple example: Bluetooth thermometers that take food temperatures and then automatically add the results to a digital HACCP log. This removes a time-consuming, error-prone manual process from the to-do list, gives you a ready-made record to present during inspections, and provides a means of prompting staff when temperatures approach the danger zone. The thermometers can alert staff to the problem so they can take immediate steps to ensure the food isn't served to guests.



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Don't put poor hygiene on display

Food trucks can be a great tool for spreading the word about your business – but they can also pose challenges to your food safety procedures and make any slip-ups more visible to customers and passing foot traffic. Make sure you take good care with these major areas of concern when you're operating away from your regular facility: Keep food at the correct temperature – don't allow items that need to be refrigerated to sit out. Ensure staff uphold the hygiene of your business by wearing protective gear, handling food and money separately and with care, keeping long hair tied back and hands and nails clean, and cleaning messes and spills promptly to avoid attracting pests. The Tasting Table also mentions a couple of items that could be red flags for people considering whether or not to order from a food truck: a large menu (you're more apt to be able to manage safe food storage and preparation if you have a simple menu) and a sink overflowing with dirty tools and dishes (it makes people suspect that washing up – whether utensils or hands – isn't a priority for staff).



Foodservice Updates

Preparing for the FDA's final food traceability rule

The FDA recently announced its final rule for food traceability, which establishes new requirements for additional traceability records for certain foods. This is being done to facilitate the identification and removal of potentially contaminated food from the supply chain. The FDA will enforce compliance beginning January 20, 2026 but organizations throughout the food supply chain – including restaurants – will need to make operational changes leading up to that time to prepare to carefully track foods on the traceability list. It's a change that will require adjustments in how labor is trained and allocated at the supplier level, how restaurants communicate with suppliers, and how restaurants store the data they must retain for two years as part of the rule. In a recent webinar from the National Restaurant Association, Laurie Williams, a consumer safety officer at the FDA, addressed broadly how the rule will impact restaurants and also pointed to several online tools that can help restaurant operators navigate the changes and prepare for compliance on a store-by-store basis. Google these two resources for more information: the Food Traceability Final Rule (Federal Register) and search for “restaurant” to zero in on aspects of the rule that apply to restaurants, and the FSMA Final Rule on Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods. The latter resource is on a page of the FDA website that also includes frequently asked questions (you can submit your own queries too) and a tool that helps you determine if you have a restaurant location that is exempt from the rule.



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